IASBABA'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE SEPTEMBER 2018

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

VALUE ADDITIONS 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."

CONTENTS

HISTORY/CULTURE/GEOGRAPHY

Bal Gangadhar 'Lokmanya' Tilak

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains I – History; Role of freedom fighters and their contributions

In news:

Of late there have been heated arguments over – who organised the first public festivities? — the 19th century **physician Bhau Laxman Javale** or freedom fighter **Bal Gangadhar 'Lokmanya' Tilak.**

According to our books, in 1893, the Indian freedom fighter **Lokmanya Tilak** praised the celebration of **sarvajanik Ganesha utsav** in his newspaper, **Kesari**, and dedicated his efforts to launch the annual domestic festival into a large, well-organised public event.

It is unclear when the festival started, it became a major social and public event with **sponsorship of Shivaji after Mughal-Maratha wars**, and again in the 19th century after public appeal by Indian freedom fighter **Lokmanya Tilak**, who **championed it as a means to circumvent the colonial British government ban on Hindu gatherings** through its anti-public assembly legislation in 1892.

Swachh Iconic Place - Ajmer dargah

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains I and II – Heritage; Health issue

In news:

- **Ajmer dargah** is included among the **Swachh Iconic Places**, a clean-up initiative focused on iconic heritage, spiritual and cultural places through a multi-stakeholder approach model.
- MoU signed to give facelift to Ajmer dargah - Ajmer Municipal Corporation and Hindustan Zinc to spend ₹5.68 crore to clean and manage the shrine.
- In Ajmer, the Collector will act as the project's nodal agency with the Dargah Committee and 'khadims' (workers) being the primary stakeholders.
- The campaign was initiated under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan in 2016.

Important Value Additions:

- Ajmer dargah - is a 13th-century Sufi shrine of sufi saint, Moinuddin Chishti. (located in Rajasthan)
- The Dargah Committee, appointed by the Government, takes care of the maintenance of the shrine.

Do you know?

- The Swachh Iconic Places - project envisioned by the Prime Minister is being coordinated by **Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation** with the support of State governments and local administration.

Culture: Martial Arts Gatka (Shastar Vidya)

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains I – Indian Art and Culture

About Gatka:

- Originating from the state of Punjab, Gatka is believed to be a battle technique created by Sikh warriors during the martial period of great Sikh Gurus.
- A style of stick fighting between two or more practitioners, Gatka is a toned-down version of the deadlier Shastar Vidya, the fighting style of the fearsome Akali Nihangs, the blue-turbaned sect of Sikh fighters banned by the British after the Anglo-Sikh wars.
- The sharp swords of Shastar Vidya have been replaced by wooden sticks (soti) and shields (farri) in Gatka.
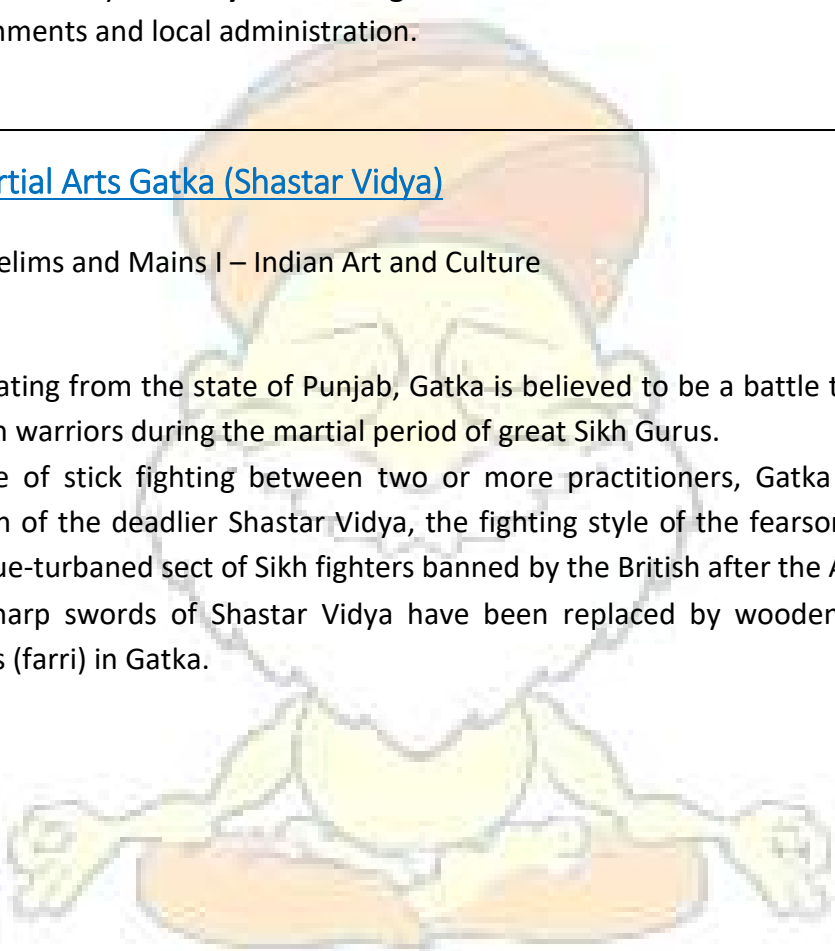
Pic: A Sikh youth performs 'Gatka' (martial arts) during a religious procession at the Golden Temple in Amritsar

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Changes in ASI Act opposed

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains I - Heritage and Culture; Conservation of monuments; Urbanisation issues

About:
- As per original **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958** (AMASR Act 1958), an area of 100 mtrs from protected boundary has been declared as prohibited area and an area of 200 mtrs further beyond prohibited limit has been declared as regulated area, in which construction activities are regulated
- New constructions are not allowed in prohibited area. However, no restriction on sale and purchase of land.

- **Concern:** However, a recent note of the culture ministry to the cabinet has a proposal to amend the law that accords protection to heritage sites in the country.

Ministry of Culture's note suggests following amendments
1. It suggests giving **legal powers to the Central government** with respect to new construction in protected sites by superceding existing bodies like the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and National Monuments' Authority (NMA) respectively.
2. In other words, the amendments suggested tends to do away with the prohibited zones around protected national monuments whenever it chooses to do so for some supposed **"public" purpose**.

If above amendment or suggestion is implemented, several new constructions could happen in the immediate vicinity of protected properties of national importance.

However, the government had announced that such restrictions on new construction within the "prohibited area" adversely impact various public works and developmental projects of the Central Government. This amendment will thus pave the way for certain constructions, limited strictly to public works and projects essential to the people, within the prohibited area and benefit the public at large.

In news:
- Historians have opposed changes to the **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958. (AMASR Act)**
- The amendment proposes to **allow the construction of Centre-approved public infrastructure within a 100 metre radius** of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)-protected monuments**.**

Hindi Divas

Part of: Prelims and mains GS I- CULTURE

In news
It is celebrated on 14 September because on this day in 1949, the Constituent Assembly of India had adopted Hindi written in Devanagari script as the official language of India.

Do you know?
Hindi's Popularity in other countries
- Fiji: The island country in the South Pacific Ocean is the only other country, apart from India, where Hindi is designated as an official language.

- The migration of the language to Fiji can be traced back to the late nineteenth century, when it became a British colony and when the colonial authorities needed imported labour in order to sustain the sugarcane industry there.
- Today, about 37 per cent of Fiji's population consists of Indians, a large majority of whom are the descendants of indentured labourers from India.
- Mauritius: The island nation on the Indian Ocean passed on as a colony from the Dutch to the French to the British over the course of three centuries.
- Indian presence in Mauritius can be traced back to the time when it was a Dutch colony and a large number of slaves and convicts were brought in from Bengal and South India.
- The trend followed during the French colonial period as well.
- With the British occupying the island in 1810 and the indentured labour system being established from the 1830s in order to meet the requirements of the sugarcane industry, Indian presence in Mauritius entered a whole new period.

Hurricane Florence

Part of: GS Mains I and II and Prelims – International; Geography (World)

In news:
- Hurricane Florence to hit America
- Emergency declared for both North Carolina and South Carolina

Important Additions:
- A hurricane is a type of storm called a tropical cyclone, which forms over tropical or subtropical waters.
- Hurricanes are large, swirling storms. They produce winds of 119 kilometers per hour (74 mph) or higher. That's faster than a cheetah, the fastest animal on land.
- Hurricanes form over warm ocean waters. Sometimes they strike land. When a hurricane reaches land, it pushes a wall of ocean water ashore. This wall of water is called a storm surge. Heavy rain and storm surge from a hurricane can cause flooding.

How Does a Storm Become a Hurricane?
- A hurricane starts out as a tropical disturbance. This is an area over warm ocean waters where rain clouds are building.
- A tropical disturbance sometimes grows into a tropical depression. This is an area of rotating thunderstorms with winds of 62 km/hr (38 mph) or less.
- A tropical depression becomes a tropical storm if its winds reach 63 km/hr (39 mph).

- A tropical storm becomes a hurricane if its winds reach 119 km/hr (74 mph).

What Makes Hurricanes Form?
- Scientists don't know exactly why or how a hurricane forms. But they do know that two main ingredients are needed.
- One ingredient is warm water. Warm ocean waters provide the energy a storm needs to become a hurricane. Usually, the surface water temperature must be 26 degrees Celsius (79 degrees Fahrenheit) or higher for a hurricane to form.
- The other ingredient is winds that don't change much in speed or direction as they go up in the sky. Winds that change a lot with height can rip storms apart.
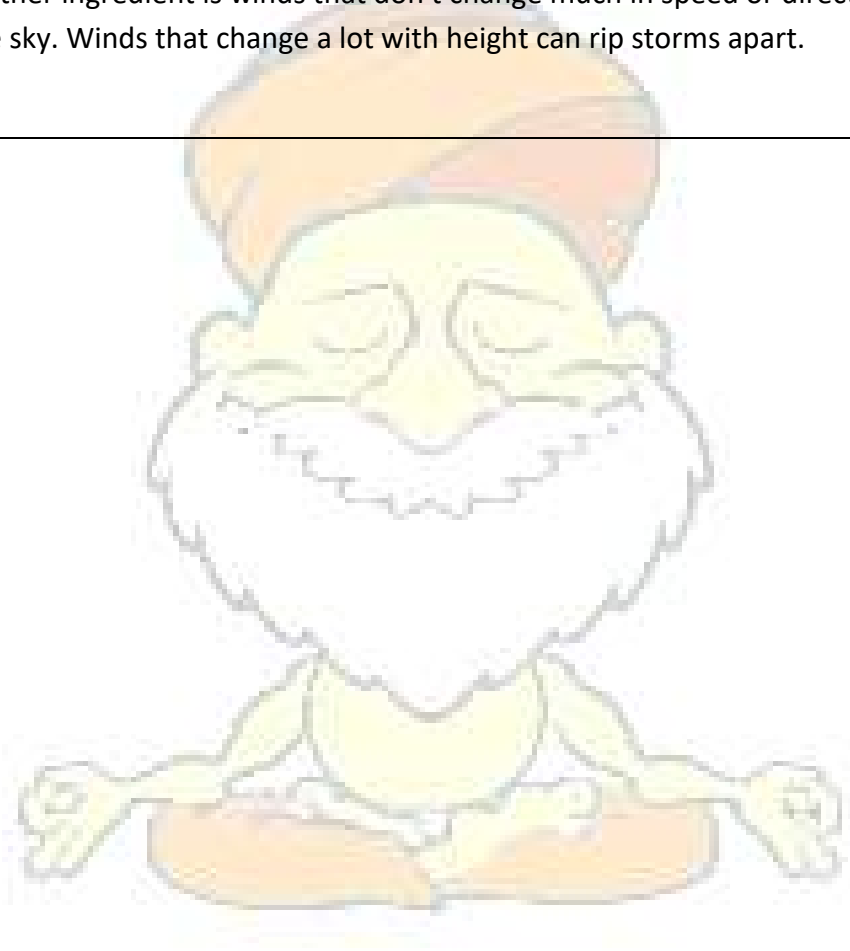
POLITY/GOVERNANCE

Pardoning powers of President and Governor

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Indian Polity

In news:
- Tamil Nadu Cabinet recommended to Governor that all seven life convicts in the former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi assassination case be released under **Article 161** of the Constitution.

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.
- The Governor of a State shall have the power to grant pardons, reprieves, respites or remissions of punishment or to suspend, remit or commute the sentence of any person convicted of any offence against any law relating to a matter to which the executive power of the State extends.

Important value additions:
- Governor can only pardon in the cases which are related to state's law not the central law.
- Governor can reduce the sentence or can completely pardon it. It is up to him but remember case must be within that state's law.
- He doesn't have any power if the offender has been awarded with the death sentence, whether by the state's law or central law. If the capital punishment has been given then only president of India can pardon it however governor can delay it.
- Governor doesn't have any power on the matters related to military rules like court-martial however president can pardon or alter them too.

Law Commission on Uniform Civil Code (UCC)

Part of: GS Mains I and II – Indian Polity; Issues affecting secularism and integrity of the nation

In news:

Law Commission of India views on Uniform Civil Code (UCC)

- UCC is "neither necessary nor desirable at this stage.
- Secularism cannot contradict the plurality prevalent in the country.
- In other words, 'Cultural diversity cannot be compromised to the extent that our urge for uniformity itself becomes a reason for threat to the territorial integrity of the nation'.
- Diversity, both religious and regional, should not get subsumed under the louder voice of the majority. At the same time, discriminatory practices within a religion should not hide behind the cloak of that faith to gain legitimacy.

Multiple lessons Apart from the Uniform Civil Code, the consultation paper also went into questions of marriage, divorce and confessions

AGE OF MARRIAGE
- The consultation paper suggested that 18 years be the minimum legal age for men and women to get married
- It said that different ages of marriage led to "the stereotype that wives must be younger than their husbands"

DIVORCE
- The consultation paper stresses that upon divorce, a woman should get an equal part of the property gained after marriage

CONFESSIONS
- In its paper on 'Reform of Family Law', the panel did not favour a ban on church confessions. The NCW had last month recommended such a ban. The panel mooted the idea that confessions could "eventually include nuns"

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Do you know?
- Uniform civil code is the ongoing point of debate within Indian mandate to replace personal laws based on the scriptures and customs of each major religious community in India with a common set of rules governing every citizen.
- **Article 44 of the Directive Principles** expects the state to apply these while formulating policies for the country.
- Apart from being an important issue regarding secularism in India & fundamental right to practice religion contained in Article 25, it became one of the most controversial topics in contemporary politics during the Shah Bano case in 1985 (dealing with Triple Talaq issue).
- Although Article 44 of the Indian Constitution guarantees UCC to all citizens,the debate arouse when the question of making certain laws applicable to all citizens without abridging the fundamental right of right to practice religious functions.

The progressive way

Introduction

- In a consultation paper released recently, the Law Commission of India has boldly said that a uniform civil code (UCC) is neither feasible nor necessary at this stage.
- There is a consensus that the state is not the only source of law. History has many instances of pluralistic legal systems where multiple sources of law existed.
- The Law Commission has rightly recognised the plurality of diverse personal laws and proposed internal reforms in personal laws to make them compatible with the constitutional provisions of equality and non-discrimination.

Debate on UCC

- In the Constituent Assembly, there was division on the issue of putting a UCC in the fundamental rights chapter. The sub-committee on this was so sharply divided that the matter was eventually settled by vote.
- It finally held that the provision was outside the scope of fundamental rights and thus non-justiciable. We need to appreciate the distinction between justiciable and non-justiciable rights.
- B.R. Ambedkar explicitly said in the Assembly, "No government can use its provisions in a way that would force the Muslims to revolt. If a government acts thus [imposing a common civil code], such a government would be insane in my opinion."
- In ABC v. State (2015), SC observed: "Our Directive Principles envision the existence of a uniform civil code, but this remains an unaddressed constitutional expectation."
- Here, the court was not dealing with some religious or personal law but with a statutory provision of the Guardians and Wards Act, 1890. Thus the reference to a UCC was unwarranted.
- In Sarla Mudgal (2015), the Supreme Court made observations that those who stayed back after Partition knew that India believes in one nation and therefore no community can claim separate religious laws. Loyalty to the nation and uniformity in laws are not related to each other.

Preserving legal diversity

- We need to appreciate that in Article 44, the framers of the Constitution have used the term 'uniform' and not 'common' because 'common' means one and same in all circumstances whatsoever and 'uniform' means 'same in similar conditions'.
- It is an erroneous perception that we have different personal laws because of religious diversity. As a matter of fact, the law differs from region to region.

- It seems the framers of the Constitution did not intend total uniformity in the sense of one law for the whole country because 'personal laws' were included in the Concurrent List, with power to legislate being given to Parliament and State Assemblies.
- Preservation of legal diversity seems to be the reason of inclusion of Personal Law in the Concurrent list. The Law Commission has given due weightage to this diversity.
- It is a myth that we have uniform criminal laws. States have made amendments to the Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860, and the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.
- For example, Punjab recently introduced Section 295AA to the IPC — life term in all sacrilege cases.
- Another myth is that Hindus are governed by one homogenous law after the enactment of the Hindu Code Bill. It is also true of Muslims and Christians.
- The Constitution itself protects the local customs of Nagaland.
- It is repeatedly mentioned that Goa already has a uniform code. But Hindus there are still governed by the Portuguese Family and Succession Laws.
- The reformed Hindu Law of 1955-56 is still not applicable to them.
- In the case of Muslims, the Shariat Act 1937 has not been extended to Goa. Thus they are governed by Portuguese and Shastric Hindu law, and not by Muslim personal law.
- The Special Marriage Act (a progressive civil code) has not been extended to Goa.
- Even in Jammu and Kashmir, local Hindu law statutes do differ with the Central enactments. The Shariat Act is also not applicable and Muslims continue to be governed by customary law which is at variance with the Muslim personal law in the rest of the country.

Forgotten issues
- It is distressing that no one talks about the non-implementation of other Directive Principles which are far more important than the enactment of a uniform code.
- Some of those important Directive Principles are, the right to work, living wages, distribution of community resources to sub-serve the common good, avoidance of concentration of wealth in few hands and the protection of monuments.

Conclusion
- Amendments to a community's personal law with a view to bringing about changes for its betterment is one thing; but to tinker with the enactment with the sole purpose of introducing 'uniformity' is quite another.
- Just laws are far more important than uniform law. Gradual reforms should be the way forward.

Connecting the dots:

- Uniform civil code neither necessary nor desirable at this stage; critically comment on the Law panel's statement.

The sedition debate: Section 124-A of IPC

Introduction:
Controversial Section 124-A of IPC, regarding sedition, is being hotly debated. Whether such draconian provision deserves a place in the statute of a modern democracy like India?

About Section 124-A and Criticism on it
- Rulers everywhere tend to treat trenchant criticism as attempts to excite disaffection and disloyalty.
- That is perhaps the only reason that Section 124-A of the Indian Penal Code, enacted under colonial rule, remains on the statute book.
- The foremost objection to the provision on sedition is that its **definition remains too wide.** 'Overbroad' definitions typically cover both what is innocuous and what is harmful.
- Under the present law, strong **criticism against government** policies and personalities, slogans voicing disapprobation of leaders and stinging depictions of an unresponsive or insensitive regime are all likely to be **treated as 'seditious'**, and not merely those that overtly threaten public order or constitute actual incitement to violence.
- In fact, so mindless have some prosecutions been in recent years that **the core principle enunciated by the Supreme Court — that the incitement to violence or tendency to create public disorder are the essential ingredients of the offence — has been forgotten.**
- However, as long as sedition is seen as a reasonable restriction on free speech on the ground of preserving public order, it will be **difficult to contain its mischief.**

Misuse of Section 124-A
- There have been repeated instances of its misuse. Regimes at the Centre and the States have often been shown in poor light after they invoked the section against activists, detractors, writers and even cartoonists.
- Since Independence, many have seen the irony of retaining a provision that was used extensively to suppress the freedom struggle.
- Despite all this, Section 124-A has tenaciously survived all attempts by successive generations to reconsider it, if not repeal it altogether.
- In particular, it has raised the pertinent question: how far is it justified for India to retain an offence introduced by the British to suppress the freedom struggle, when Britain itself abolished it 10 years ago?

Law Commissions' observations

- The Law Commission, for the third time in five decades, is now in the process of revisiting the section.
- Its consultation paper calls for a thorough reconsideration and presents the various issues related to it before the public for a national debate.
- In an earlier report in 1968, the Law Commission had rejected the idea of repealing the section.
- In 1971, the panel wanted the scope of the section to be expanded to cover the Constitution, the legislature and the judiciary, in addition to the government to be established by law, as institutions against which 'disaffection' should not be tolerated.
- The only dilution it mooted was to modify the wide gap between the two jail terms prescribed in the section (either three years or life) and fix the maximum sanction at seven years' rigorous imprisonment with fine.

Conclusion

There can only be two ways of undoing the harm it does to citizens' fundamental rights: Either it can be amended so that there is a much narrower definition of what constitutes sedition, or the far better course is to do away with it altogether.

Connecting the dots:

- Do you think that difference between dissent and sedition is diminishing day by day? Critically comment.

Protecting the dissenters

Introduction:

- Recent arrest of activists has started Political debate on right to dissent and right to ask questions on grounds of state accountability.
- India's constitutional democracy is predicated on the people's right to call state power to account.

Do you Know?

Right to Dissent

- **The Supreme Court observed that "dissent is the safety valve of democracy".** Therefore, Right to dissent, right not to agree becomes very important aspect of any democratic institution
- The citizens' have right to disagree with, denounce, and decry a situation or state of affairs that is unjust and oppressive.
- This pluralism of views and liberty to express any thought process within constitutional boundaries is one of the salient features of a democracy.

- Recently, while hearing a **petition on the ban of protest on the Jantar Mantar** in New Delhi, the **SC held that Right to peaceful protest is the fundamental right** guaranteed under the constitution.
- This particular right is also subject to **reasonable restrictions** in the interest of sovereignty and integrity of India, as well as public order.
- A distinguishing feature of any democracy is the space offered for legitimate dissent, which cannot be trampled by any executive action. Thus, the Court recognises that legitimate dissent is a distinguishable feature of any democracy.
- Also observed that, every individual or a group of individuals, whether they are minority or poor or marginalised, have the right to express their dissent to the government policies and fight their social circumstances.
- **Protest strengthen representative democracy** by enabling direct participation in public affairs where individuals and groups are able to;
  o Express dissent and grievances
  o Expose flaws in the governance
  o Demand accountability from state authorities as well as powerful entities

Article 19 Freedom of speech

- The **constitution under Article 19(1)(a) provides for freedom of speech and expression** and also under **Article 19(2) provides for reasonable restrictions** on such freedom.
- Like other fundamental rights, **it is not absolute and is subject to;**
  o Sovereignty and integrity of India
  o Security of the state
  o Friendly relations with foreign states
  o Public order
  o Decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court
  o Defamation or incitement to an offence

Hate Speech

- **Law commission of India in its 267th report on "hate speech" suggested adding new provisions** to make speech inciting hatred and speech that causes fear, alarm or provocation of violence, a criminal offence under Indian Penal Code (IPC).
- **Hate speech is an expression which is likely to cause distress or offend other individuals** on the basis of their association with a particular group or incite hostility toward them.
- In order to protect this group from discriminatory attitude and practices, it is necessary to curb such forms of expressions that have the potentials of inciting fear, hatred or violence and such speeches must be regulated by law.

- **Hate speech can be curtailed under Article 19(2)** on the grounds of public order, incitement to offence and security of the state.

Sedition

- **Section 124A of IPC defines sedition** as "whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representations, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring hatred, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards the government established by law in India, shall be punished for imprisonment for life. The disaffection includes disloyalty or all feelings of enmity."
- In the **kedarnath singh vs State of Bihar 1962**, a constitutional bench ruled in favour of thee constitutional validity of Section 124A (sedition) in the IPC, but said that- a person could be prosecuted for sedition only if his acts caused "incitement to violence or intention or tendency to create public disorder or cause disturbance in public peace".
- Comments expressing disapprobation of the measures of the government, with a view to obtain their alteration, without exciting or attempting to excite hatred, contempt or disaffection, do not constitute an offence of sedition.

Conclusion:

- The course of democracy anywhere in the world is defined by events that test the resilience of democracy and also add to it.
- The philosophy of dissent and democracy has also inspired our freedom movement and defines India's constitutional democracy, which is predicated on the people's right to call state power to account, albeit within the constitutional framework.

Connecting the dots:

- What do you understand by sedition? Critically comment on the way the courts have interpreted the Section 124(A) of the penal code.

The nature of dissent

Introduction

Recent arrests of activists in certain states of India, started a debate on importance of Dissent in Democracy.

General trait of Dissent or disagreement

- Disagreeing with each other is a fundamental human trait. There is not a single individual who does not disagree with something or the other all the time.

- Philosophers argue that a baby meaningfully attains its sense of the self — its recognition of 'I' and the concept of 'mine' — when it first begins to say 'no'.
- At a primordial level, we become individuals only through this act of stating our disagreement.
- There is no family without dissent between parents and the children, or between the siblings. A family which learns to deal with dissent rather than authoritatively dismissing it is a more harmonious family.

A way of being
- We dissent at home, with our friends and with our colleagues in the places we work. It is through these ways of dissenting that we establish a relationship with them.
- Our relations with our friends and family are based as much on how we learn to live with our disagreements as on other things.
- If our friends and family consist only of those who agree with us all the time, then we will not have any friends and family.
- Learning to live with others, the first requisite for a social existence is about learning how to live with them when they disagree with us.
- Dissent is so ingrained in us that we don't even need others to disagree. We argue with our own selves all the time as if each one of us is an individual made up of many selves.

Social dissent and Democracy
- Dissent is thus a condition of existence and the real problem is not dissent but silent assent. When we agree collectively, we are silently assenting, agreeing with what is being said and done.
- This is really not the existential characteristic of a human being but only that of a 'bonded mind'.
- However, some might say that assent is the way societies come together, and it is needed for a stable society. But this is plain wrong.
- We will have a stronger identity of what our society and nation are through forms of dissent. Dissent, paradoxically, is the glue which makes a decent society possible.
- A group made up of people who agree to everything all the time is not really a society but an oligarchy. A mature society is one which has the capacity to manage dissent since members of a society will always disagree with each other on something or the other.
- No society has survived without making changes to what was present earlier. New knowledge and new ways of understanding the world, for good or bad, has always been part of every society.

- Democratic societies are the best of the available models in managing dissent with the least harmful effect on the dissenter. This is the true work of democracy; elections and voting are the means to achieve this.

Dissent is progressive in nature

- Academics and research are two important activities where dissent is at the core. Many new ideas arise by going against earlier established norms and truths.
- Science, in its broadest meaning, is not possible without dissent since it is by finding flaws with the views of others that new science is created.
- No two philosophers agree on one point, and no two social scientists are in perfect harmony with each other's thoughts.
- Artists are constantly breaking boundaries set by their friends and peers. Buddha and Mahavira were dissenters first and philosophers next.
- The Ramayana and Mahabharata are filled with stories of dissent and responsible ways of dealing with it.
- Thus, when academics dissent, it is part of their job expectation to do so! Dissent is not just about criticism, it is also about showing new perspectives.
- The scientific community does not imprison scientists for dissenting, so do the same applies to social scientists and artists. They should not be targeted in the name of dissent.

Why Dissent is necessary?

- It is not that dissent is necessary only for democracy — it is necessary for the survival of the human race.
- Any society which eradicates dissent has only succeeded in eradicating itself. We cannot afford to forget the examples of Nazi Germany or Stalinist Russia.
- A sustainable, harmonious society can only be formed from practices which deal with dissent respectfully and ethically.

Ethics of dissent

- There are two ethical principles associated with dissent.
- First, its relation to non-violence (Satya Graha), a principle which is so integral to the unique Indian practices of dissent from ancient times to Gandhi and Ambedkar.
- Second, dissent is an ethical means of protecting those who are worse off than others (Gandhi's Talisman). Dissent is not mere complaint which all of us, however privileged we are, indulge in.
- Social dissent is a necessary voice for all those who are oppressed and are marginalised for various reasons. This is the only thing they have in a world which has denied them the basic dignity of a social life.

- This is the truly ethical principle that can sustain a mature society. Thus, when we hear the voices of dissent from the oppressed and the marginalised, it is ethically incumbent upon those who are better off than them to give them greater space and greater freedom to dissent.

Conclusion

- Dissent and disagreement is part of human nature, suppressing it may lead to destruction of society and democracy.

Connecting the dots

- Write an essay; "For Democracy to succeed, Dissent is a key"

Note: For better understanding, read this article along with, **"Protecting the Dissenters"**, mains focus, **IASbaba current affairs, 4 September 2018**.

SC decriminalises consensual gay sex

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Social issue; Vulnerable Section

In news:

- A five-judge Constitution bench of the Supreme Court unanimously decriminalised part of the 156-year-old colonial law under **Section 377 of the IPC** which criminalises consensual unnatural sex.
- The apex court struck down Section 377 as being **violative of right to equality**.
- The judgment set aside its own verdict in the **Suresh Kaushal case.**
- The Apex Court, however, said other aspects of Section 377 of IPC dealing with unnatural sex with animals and children shall remain in force.
- Sexual act without consent continues to be a crime under Section 377.
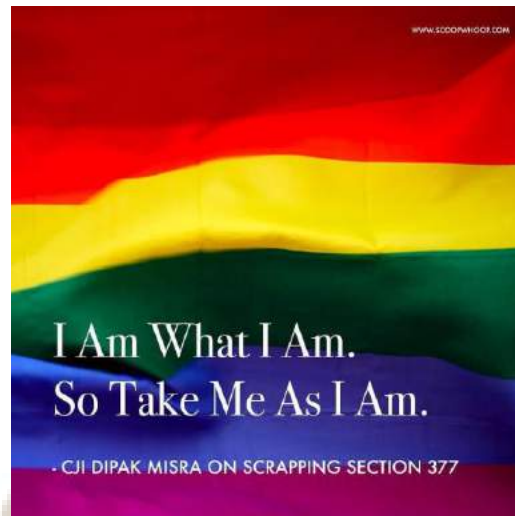
Do you know?

- Section 377 discriminated against a minority based solely on their sexual orientation.
- It violated the right of the LGBTQ community to "equal citizenship and equal protection of laws."
- Choice of a partner was part of the fundamental right to privacy.

A greater transformation

Introduction

- In its decision in **Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of Indi**, the Supreme Court has struck down the colonial-era law criminalising homosexuality and the lives of LGBTQ persons.
- In its four concurring judgments, the court traversed the protections of fundamental rights in the Constitution to find that **the provision violated the rights of LGBTQ persons to dignity, equality, privacy and expression.**

Observations of the Court: 'Personal matters' and a stereotypical morality

- Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code indifferently **intruded into a zone of intimate decision** which is entitled to constitutional protection.
- "The choice of a partner, the desire for personal intimacy and the yearning to find love and fulfilment in human relationships have a universal appeal."
- "**The state has no business to intrude into these personal matters.** Nor can societal notions of heteronormativity regulate constitutional liberties based on sexual orientation."
- The opinion of the Chief Justice of India, **stresses the right to develop one's individuality** against the demands of social conformity.

- **The guarantee of equality at its heart was the guarantee of equal citizenship.** The criminalising ambit of Section 377 violated this guarantee as it "singles out people, by their private choices" and "**marks them as less than citizens — or less than human**".
- The harm of Section 377 was not just that it **prohibited a form of intimate and personal choice** but that it **encoded a stereotypical morality** which has deep-ranging social effects.
- **Section 377 "perpetuates a certain culture", based on "homophobic attitudes"** which make "it impossible for victims to access justice".
- Constitutional guarantee of the **right to develop one's personhood and the right to equal citizenship** is firmly anchored in the **notion of constitutional morality**, as referenced by Justices of the SC.
- The denial to LGBT persons of the right to dignity is incompatible with the morality of the Constitution.

Significance of the judgment

- **The right not to be discriminated against on grounds of one's sexual orientation** is violated by the prejudicial stereotypes about the LGBTQ community fostered by Section 377.
- By explicitly setting out the **Court as a guarantor of minority rights,** regardless of the opinion of "popular or legislative majorities", the Court has signalled its **determination to defend the Constitution.**
- In a time when lynchings have become the order of the day and government remains a mute spectator, **the role that the judiciary** has to play in safeguarding the right to life of minorities of all stripes and hues cannot be overstated.
- The **idea** that **majority opinion should prevail over the right to dignity and liberty of the minority was explicitly rejected.**
- The logic of Navtej Singh Johar is anchored within what bench called **"a transformative Constitution".**
- According to judges, **"the purpose of having a constitution is to transform society"** to **"embrace therein" the "ideals of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity".**
- **The mandate to transform society** in allegiance to the Constitution is a task vested in the state, the judiciary and the citizen.

Way forward

- If a law has taken root in the social, cultural and legal consciousness, **the challenge of wiping out the prejudice which the law has fostered is still immense.**
- Similar Example; the **prejudice and violence Denotified Tribes still face** at the hands of the state and society even after the colonial-era Criminal Tribes Act was repealed.

- Court mandated the Union of India to give **"wide publicity to the judgment"** and conduct **"sensitisation and awareness training for government officials and in particular police officials in the light of observations contained in the judgment"** to combat the prejudicial attitudes encoded in Section 377.
- **The implications of a transformative Constitution** are wide ranging and its power **can be harnessed by inter-caste, inter-religious and same sex couples,** all of whom are **battling a** form of **social morality** which is at odds with the Constitution.
- The court observed, **"The right to love not just a separate battle for LGBTQ individuals but a battle for us all".**
- If **respect for dignity, equality and fraternity, against all the forms of discrimination by a conservative social morality,** becomes more widely accepted, India will be **less of a majoritarian democracy and more of a form of constitutional democracy.**

Connecting the dots:
- SC judgments and striking down of provisions such as Section 377, is beginning of the war against discriminatory social morality. Elucidate.

Cow Vigilantism and Lynching: Rule 3 of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – National; Issues affecting secular character and integrity

In news:
- Rule 3 in the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Establishment & Regulation of Societies for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) Rules, 2001, empowers "civil society groups" to protect animals.
- According to Rule 3(5) of PCA Rules, 2001 – a State can confer powers upon "any society" in district to prevent cruelty against animals.
- Rule 3 is providing State accreditation to cow vigilantism.
- Rule also providing police powers to civil society groups to stop vehicles, search premises and seize animals.
- Supreme Court expresses shock over this Rule.

Bail over jail

Introduction

The power of arrest is an extraordinary one, conferred on the police to be employed with discretion and deliberation, not as a tool of oppression and harassment at the hands of prosecuting authorities or the government of the day.

Arrests: Provisions and observations

- **The Supreme Court has emphasised that arrests should never be a reflexive response** to an allegation of an offence, or even its commission.
- The law that empowers the police to **arrest people without warrants (Section 41 of the CrPC) is reasonably stringent,** demanding that some conditions be met, including that such arrests be carried out to prevent commission of further offences, tampering of evidence, and influencing of witnesses.
- The Supreme Court noted in **Arnesh Kumar v. State of Bihar (2014)**, arbitary use of power to arrest, affects the liberty of citizens and which can **'bring humiliation… and cast scars forever'**.

Examples of questionable arrests

- Recently, Tamil Nadu has attracted attention in this connection, particularly for the heavy-handed treatment of **those opposing the Chennai-Salem eight-lane highway project.**
- Tamil Nadu was witness to another example recently, when a **student was arrested and remanded to 15 days judicial custody** (before eventually being let off on bail) for **political sloganeering on an aircraft**.
- The recent and shocking **arrests of activists**, over their alleged links to Maoists, have focussed attention on the severe restrictions on bail when booked under the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.**

Issues

- In most cases arrests without warrant follow a dishearteningly familiar course, with the accused sent to custody after the police oppose bail.
- In this prosecutorial ecosystem, jail succeeds in trumping bail almost every time and magistrates, who are empowered to refuse remand and grant bail, continue to issue orders mechanically.
- The dilemmas over maintaining the right balance between individual liberty and the interests of society invariably become more acute when the charges against the accused, well-established or otherwise, are serious.
- Under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, the prosecution has 180 days to file a charge sheet, a period during which bail is routinely denied.
- After the charge sheet is filed, bail is extremely difficult to secure, dependent as it is on the accused establishing his or her innocence, a reversal of the usual burden of proof.
- If the Supreme Court decides that justice will be secured only by its intervention in the case, it will probably be forced to invoke its extraordinary powers under Article 142 of

the Constitution, another reminder of the need to break the customary chain of arrest, custody and remand.

Conclusion

- The chain of arrest, custody, and remand must be linked only by due process.
- Provisions of arrest without warrant must be used ethically and in a more just ways.

Connecting the dots:

- Arbitrary arrests without warrant are becoming a political tool to silent thee dissent. Critically comment.

Good Governance: Delhi launches doorstep delivery of govt. services

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

In news:
- Delhi government launched its ambitious project to **deliver public services at the doorstep** of residents.
- From driving licences to marriage certificates, Delhiites can now **apply for 40 government documents** to be delivered at their homes for a fee of ₹50 per service.
- The applicant would have to **call 1076** and fix an appointment with a **mobile sahayak**, who will go to their home and help with filling forms, payment of fees and collection of documents.
- The mobile sahayak would then submit the documents at the government office concerned, which would post the certificate or licence once issued.

What's on offer

Delhi residents can dial 1076 to place a request for doorstep delivery of services, which will be provided from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Some services offered:

Driving licence | Marriage registration | Ration card | Birth certificate | Water connection

Fee: ₹50 more than the normal fee for such services

Day 1 of 'Door Step Delivery of Services' as of 6 p.m.

Calls attempted: 21,000
Calls connected: 2,728
Calls answered: 1,286
Appointments fixed: 369
Documents collected: 7

Source: Delhi government

Pic:

https://d39gegkjaqduz9.cloudfront.net/TH/2018/09/11/DEL/Delhi/TH/5_01/743478ae_2383537_101_mr.jpg

Criminal politicians: special courts to be set up to fast-track the long-pending trials of lawmakers

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Governance, Constitution, Polity

In news:
- 25 States and UTs did not respond to repeated Supreme Court orders for information about the number of criminal cases pending against their MPs/MLAs and the setting up of special courts to exclusively try them.
- Due to lack of enthusiasm on the part of the States, the Supreme Court would monitor the compliance of its orders to form special courts to try MPs/MLAs and the functioning of these courts.
- SC also directed authorities to provide information on the functionality of 12 special courts which have already been set up in 11 States.
- It has also sought information on the volume of cases required to be transferred to the special courts and whether there is a need to set up more such courts.
- Of the 11 States, Delhi has two special courts while Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh have one each.
- The Supreme Court had in December 2017, ordered special courts to be set up to fast-track the long-pending trials of lawmakers.

Performing moderately: the state of democracy in South Asia, especially India

Introduction

Today, the world celebrates the 11th International Day of Democracy (15 September) in pursuance of a UN resolution.

Rise of Democracy
- The world saw a huge wave of democratisation after World War II.
- The newly-liberated states in Latin America, Africa and Asia adopted democratic forms of government after centuries of colonial subjugation.
- Today more people live under various forms of democracy than ever before.
- More than 120 of the 192 countries in the world have some form of democracy — only 11 parliamentary democracies existed in 1941.
- This indicates the appeal of democratic ideas and systems.

Current challenges
- Despite the democratic upsurge, there are significant challenges like poverty, inequality, gender injustice, nepotism and corruption.
- Elected despots and authoritarian leaders are weakening democracies across the world. Political experts have argued that democratic values are on the decline, especially in the West.
- People are losing faith in democracy because of corruption, nepotism and unemployment. This often leads to people disengaging with key public policy issues, which in turn makes those in power less accountable.
- Transparency in political processes, accountability of elected representatives, basic freedoms for all citizens, equal rights for women and minorities and high rates of voter participation are the things which contribute to the popularity of democracies.

Study of state of democracy
- The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), an inter-country organisation, tried to evaluate the state of democracy in the world in the light of such worrying claims.
- The Global State of Democracy Index (GSoD) looks at the trends in democratisation from 1975 to 2017.
- With the help of a set of 98 indicators, IDEA aims to study the factors which threaten democracy throughout the world and those that make it strong and resilient.

- The study covers a variety of important indicators such as representative government, fundamental rights, checks on the government, impartial administration and participatory engagement. These have many sub indicators for an in depth indices-based analysis.

Democracy in South Asia

- South Asia is home to 3 per cent of the world's area and 21 per cent of the world's population.
- It's significant that 50 per cent of the world's population living under some form of democratic rule resides in this region.
- When it comes to representative government, India and Sri Lanka have maintained relatively high scores. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan have had periods of non-elected regimes. The general trend in South Asia in this respect has, however, been positive.
- With respect to ensuring fundamental rights, the region's score matches that of Asia Pacific but it is slightly below the global average.
- At the country level, Afghanistan and Nepal have seen the most improvement. Sri Lanka and Pakistan saw a slight decline in the 1970s and 1980s. India's score has been stable since the late 1970s. However, a decline has been observed since 2015.
- South Asia shows a steady improvement on the yardstick that measures gender equality with Nepal standing out.
- India's score was better than the world average till 2003 but there has been a dip in the country's performance on the gender equality yardstick since then.
- When it comes to checks on government, South Asia has shown a steady increase from 1975 to 1994.
- Afghanistan, Nepal and Pakistan have shown the most improvement. Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka have remained relatively stable with scores in line with the global average.
- In the yardstick on impartial administration, South Asia follows both the regional and global trends with no significant change, except in Nepal, which has seen a significant improvement.
- However, the "absence of corruption" sub-indice within the "impartial administration" category shows a worrying tendency in South Asia. The region has the lowest scores in the world despite a slight improvement between 2012 and 2015.
- A robust civil society is essential for deliberative decision making.
- Civil society participation has increased in India by leaps and bounds between 1978 and 2012 after which it declined drastically to fall below the average of Asia Pacific and that of the World. In 2017, it was the lowest since 1975.

- In 2017, the gap between the Indian score and the world average in the yardstick that measures "personal integrity and security" was the widest since 1977. This is worrying.
- In the past 10 years, South Asia's scores for electoral participation are in line with the global average but slightly below the Asia Pacific average.
- Recently, there has been a decrease in voter participation in Bangladesh but a slight increase in India and Sri Lanka.

Democracy in India

- The GSoD report analyses India's performance on all the above-mentioned indicators and shows that the country has done moderately well.
- On yardsticks such as elected government, effective parliament and impartial administration, the country's scores hover around the world average.
- In the last decade, there has been a significant dip in the country's record on civil liberties, personal integrity and security, freedom of association, media integrity, gender equality and basic welfare.
- India's performance on the yardstick to measure media integrity was better than the global and South Asian average between 1994 and 2012. However, the country's score has fallen below the global and Asia-Pacific average in 2017.
- Given that a free and fair media is crucial to a meaningful democracy, this is a worrying tendency.
- The Election Commission has played an important role in conducting free and fair elections in the country. The Commission's Systematic Voters Education for Electoral Participation Programme role has been crucial in this respect.
- An independent judiciary is another reason for the resilience of democracy in India. The apex court has given judgments that keep a check on the government and ensure a transparent and accountable system.

Conclusion

- Democracy does not merely mean voting rights for people, it means empowering people by granting them equality. It also means the creation of mechanisms to resolve differences through dialogue and with mutual respect and understanding.
- India does have the highest rating among South Asian democracies. But its performances on several yardsticks makes it a flawed democracy. If we want the largest democracy to count among the world's greatest, there must be serious introspection among all stakeholders.

Connecting the dots:

- India is world's largest democracy but there is much more to be done to become world's greatest democracy, Comment.

The Supreme Court trans-formed

Introduction
- The decriminalisation of homosexuality in the Navtej Johar judgment holds special relevance for transgender rights.
- Not only was Section 377 used disproportionately against transgender persons, the legal battle also took a new and positive turn from 2014 after the Supreme Court recognised the right to gender identity in NALSA v. Union of India .

Step by step
- When the Supreme Court in 2013 passed the Koushal judgment, overturning the Delhi High Court judgment reading down Section 377 in Naz v. Union of India 2009, the LGBTQ community faced a huge setback.
- The silver lining was that the LGBTQ movement on the ground was growing rapidly, with social acceptance for LGBTQ concerns increasing.
- Transgender persons continued to be the most marginalised and vulnerable group within the community.
- They were routinely arrested and harassed by police, sexually abused, and had to bear the brunt of criminal threats as they were on the streets forced into begging and sex work.
- This changed with NALSA. In 2014, a bench of Justices K.S. Radhakrishnan and A.K. Sikri passed a judgment holding that transgender persons have the constitutional right to self-identify their gender as male, female or transgender even without medical re-assignment.
- The Supreme Court held that the rights to life, dignity and autonomy would include the right to one's gender identity and sexual orientation.
- NALSA judgment immediately gave new grounds and new hope, to revive the Section 377 challenge.
- In 2016, two fresh petitions were filed under Article 32 of the Constitution: the first by Navtej Johar and others, and the second by Akkai Padmashali, Umi and Sana, three transgender activists from Karnataka.
- Both petitions urged the Supreme Court to reassess the constitutionality of Section 377. This was also the first time that transgender voices were before the Supreme Court.
- In 2017 came another big judgment in Puttaswamy v. Union of India , in which the Supreme Court said that there is a constitutional right to privacy inherent in the right to life, equality and fundamental freedoms.

- It went on to hold that the right to privacy specifically includes the right to have intimate relations of one's choice and the right to sexual orientation and gender identity, and that the Koushal judgment was incorrect.
- After Puttaswamy , more petitions and interventions were filed against Section 377.
- Finally, the Supreme Court, in a five-judge Bench led by the Chief Justice of India, unanimously held in Navtej Johar that Section 377 was unconstitutional to the extent that it criminalises consensual relationships of any kind between adults, and overruled Koushal.

Different minorities
- The most far-reaching contribution is the elaboration on the right against non-discrimination on the basis of sex, guaranteed in Article 15 of the Constitution.
- The Supreme Court confirmed that as held in NALSA, 'sex' under Articles 15 includes discrimination on the ground of gender identity.
- It went even further to say that discrimination on the grounds of 'sex' would also include discrimination due to sexual orientation or stereotypes.
- This means that being gender non-conforming or not adhering to society's 'norms' of gender roles, which is the main reasons for violence against trans persons, be it in the way you dress, speak or behave, cannot be a ground for discrimination.
- This inclusion of discrimination on the ground of sex stereotyping will go a long way in dismantling gender stereotypes not just for the LGBTQ community, but also for women.

Conclusion
- The impact of the Navtej Johar decision is unprecedented.The 'Navtej Johar' judgment has created the conditions to dismantle gender biases in diverse ways.
- Justice D.Y. Chandrachud recognised that Section 377 had consigned a group of citizens to the margins and was destructive of their identities, and held that lesbians, gay, bisexual and transgender persons have the constitutional rights to full and equal citizenship and protection of all fundamental rights.
- In this way, with the Navtej Johar judgment, the court has gone far beyond the anti-sodomy judgments from around the world that were referred to it.
- By recognising these twin aspects of gender identity and sexual orientation, the court acknowledges the voices of the most vulnerable sexual minorities within the LGBTQ community and takes the stand that the Constitution protects the rights of all.

Connecting the dots:
- Supreme Court verdict on Section 377 is a landmark judgement but it also will spark many more challenges to inequality, discrimination. Analyse.

CIC wants break-up of how MPLADS funds are utilised

Part of: Prelims and mains GS II – Governance

In news
- Noting that ₹12,000 crore of the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) funds remains unspent, the Central Information Commission (CIC) has asked the Lok Sabha Speaker and the Rajya Sabha Chairman to come out with a legal framework to ensure its transparency and hold parliamentarians and political parties accountable for their obligations under the scheme.

What is MPLADS?
- The MPLADS allots ₹5 crore per year to each MP to be spent on projects of their choice in their constituency.
- The scheme is funded and administered through the **Union Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)**.
- Projects are to be recommended to and implemented by the district-level administration.

What CIC said?
- The CIC's orders asked the leaders of the two Houses of Parliament to consider providing the "necessary legal frame" for the scheme, which would "make all Parliamentary parties and MPs answerable and accountable for MPLADS funds as public authorities under the RTI Act to prevent MPLADS irregularities."
- The framework should make transparency a legal obligation, with all MPs and parties required to present the public and Parliament with a comprehensive report on the number of applications received for their constituency, works recommended, works rejected with reasons, progress of works and details of beneficiaries.
- Liabilities for any breach of duties should also be imposed, said the order. Further, the framework should prohibit and prevent MPs using the funds for their private works, or diverting them to private trusts or to their own relatives.
- District administrations must provide regular information — work-wise, MP-wise, and year-wise details on progress — which are to be compiled by the MoSPI and made available to the public.

Sex offenders' registry launched with 4.4 lakh entries

Part of: Mains II – Social Justice, Governance

In news
- India became the ninth country in the world to have a National Database on Sexual Offenders (NDSO), accessible only to law enforcement agencies for the purpose of investigation and monitoring.
- The proposal to set up a registry was mooted after the 2012 Nirbhaya gangrape case in New Delhi.
- This will not only aid the victims/complainants but also help the civil society organisations and responsible citizens to anonymously report such complaints.

The registry
- The first-of-its-kind national sex offenders' registry has names and details of some 4.4 lakh people convicted for various sexual offences across the country.
- The database is for those convicted for sexual offences 2005 onwards.
- It includes name, address, photograph and fingerprint details of the convict.
- The database will be maintained by the National Crime Records Bureau, that will also track whether the State police were updating the records on time.
- The database will include offenders convicted under charges of rape, gang rape, Protection of Children from Sexual Offenders Act (POCSO) and eve teasing.

Portal
- Another portal was launched, cybercrime.gov.in, that will receive complaints from citizens on objectionable online content related to child pornography, child sexual abuse material, and sexually explicit material such as rape and gang rape.
- There are other features, such as a victim or complainant can track his/her report by opting for 'report and track' option using his/her mobile number.
- The complaints registered through this portal will be handled by police authorities of respective State/UTs.

Is NITI Aayog relevant?

Introduction

- Independent India inherited an economy ridden with poverty and stagnation. For growth of the economy along with equitable distribution of resources India adopted planning method along with a closed economy.
- With the passing time and development of Indian Economy and society, our needs changed. Now we have an open economy and institutions accordingly.

Do you know?

Background

- During 1947-1991, India had a closed economy with Public sector having dominant role. It was planner, financer as well as implementer. For this we adopted **imperative planning.**
- In 1991, we opened up our economy. It increased the role of private sector as financer and implementer and restricted the role of government to that of planner or facilitator. For this we need **indicative planning.**
- Since the nature of planning changed in India, accordingly it was felt that there is a need to change the institutional mechanism as well. Thus **NITI Ayog was established with a focus on Indicative planning.**
- The New institution NITI Ayog will act as a Think Tank for the government and will act as a systems reform commission.

Achievements of NITI Ayog

A think tank

- It can be visualised as a funnel through which **new and innovative ideas come from all possible sources** — industry, academia, civil society or foreign specialists — and flow into the government system for implementation.
- It has **regular brainstorming** sessions with stakeholders from various industries and sectors.
- Initiatives like **Ayushmaan Bharat,** our approach towards **artificial intelligence** and **water conservation measures,** and the draft bill to establish the **National Medical Commission** to replace the Medical Council of India have all been conceptualised in NITI Aayog, and are being taken forward by the respective Ministries.

An action think tank

- By collecting fresh ideas and sharing them with the Central and State governments, it pushes frontiers and ensures that there is no inertia, which is quite natural in any organisation or institution.
- If it succeeds, NITI Aayog could emerge as an agent of change over time and contribute to the Prime Minister's agenda of improving governance and implementing innovative measures for better delivery of public services.

Role of Systems Reform commission
- It also works to improve coordination between various stake holders.
- For example, India still has the largest number of malnourished children in the world. We want to reduce this number vastly, but this requires a huge degree of convergence across a number of Ministries, and between Central and State governments.
- NITI Aayog is best placed to achieve this convergence and push the agenda forward.

Enhanced Accountability
- NITI Aayog is also bringing about a greater level of accountability in the system. Earlier, we had 12 Five-Year Plans, but they were mostly evaluated long after the plan period had ended. Hence, there was no real accountability.
- NITI Aayog has established a **Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office which collects data on the performance of various Ministries on a real-time basis.**
- **T**he data are then used at the highest policymaking levels to establish accountability and improve performance.
- This performance- and outcome-based real-time monitoring and evaluation of government work can have a significant impact on improving the efficiency of governance.

Competitive and cooperative federalism
- Using such data, we also come up with performance-based rankings of States across various verticals to foster a spirit of competitive federalism. That is another big mandate of NITI Aayog.
- It identifies the best practices in different States in various sectors and then try to replicate them in other States.
- It also plays an important role of being the States' representative in Delhi, and facilitates direct interactions with the line ministries, which can address issues in a relatively shorter time.

Improving innovation
- **The Atal Innovation Mission,** which is also established under NITI Aayog, has already done commendable work in improving the innovation ecosystem in India.
- It has established more than 1,500 **Atal Tinkering Labs** in schools across the country and this number is expected to go up to 5,000 by March 2019.
- It has also set up 20 **Atal Incubation Centres** for encouraging young innovators and start-ups.

Criticism of NITI Ayog

- It has no role in influencing, let alone directing, public or private investment. It does not seem to have any influence in policymaking with long-term consequences (for instance, demonetisation and the Goods and Services Tax).
- NITI Aayog is supposed to be a think tank. This implies that while generating new ideas, it maintains a respectable intellectual distance from the government of the day.
- Instead, it does uncritical praise of government schemes. It sings paeans to the virtues of the private corporate sector as the saviour of the Indian economy without realising, let alone appreciating, the foundational and socially oriented contribution of India's vast public sector.
- Critics say that a country like India cannot transform itself with new ideas and strategies if it doesn't have a paradigm of planning for development.
- It can't lift its poor; it can't be ensured that every working member of the Indian population has a decent job with at least a minimum wage and social/employment security.
- India requires planning that addresses social justice, reduces regional and gender inequalities, and ensures environmental sustainability.

Significance of planning institutions
- Learning from the experience of the now-industrialised countries, the Chinese state ensured that after its market-oriented economic reforms began, its State Planning Commission became more powerful in the state apparatus.
- The result was growth and poverty reduction on a scale unprecedented in history. China became the "factory of the world" — backed by an industrial policy driven by the National Development and Reforms Commission.
- Similarly, in all East Asian and Southeast Asian countries, industrial policy was planned and executed as part of five-year or longer-term plans.
- It was precisely because these countries had planning institutions which went hand in hand with industrial policy that they managed to steer policies through turbulent times in the global economy, thus sustaining growth.
- In most of Latin America/Caribbean (LAC) countries and in Subsaharan Africa (SSA), two full decades of potential economic growth and human development were lost when per capita income barely rose even as populations continued to grow. These countries abandoned planning and became captives of the Washington Consensus.
- On the other hand, the important identifier of East Asian and Southeast Asian countries, which did not experience such "lost decades" in the 1980s and 1990s, were their planning structures, backed by an industrial policy and implemented by learning bureaucracies.

- That is how they were able to ride the wave of their demographic dividend, which comes but once in the life of a nation. India cannot risk going the LAC/ SSA way, since it is already past the midpoint of its dividend.
- While East Asian and Southeast Asian countries still had, and have, five-year plans, what was also integral to their planning was productive use of labour, their most abundant factor, through an export-oriented manufacturing strategy.
- It was this strategy that was lacking in India's planning. Giving 'planning' per se a bad name for poor policy is indicative of an ahistorical understanding of planning.

Way forward

- If NITI Aayog is to implement such a strategy within a planning framework in India, two major changes in governance structures are needed.
- First, planning will have to become more decentralised, but within a five-year plan framework.
- Second, bureaucracy will need to change from generalist to specialist, and its accountability will have to be based on outcomes achieved, not inputs or funds spent. NITI Aayog should spell out how these reforms will be implemented.

Conclusion

- With its current mandate that is spread across a range of sectors and activities, and with its unique and vibrant work culture, **NITI Aayog remains an integral and relevant component of the government's plans to put in place an efficient, transparent, innovative and accountable governance s**ystem in the country.
- It will need to evolve into a much stronger organisation than it is now.
- Though it is introducing new ideas and bringing about a greater level of accountability in the system, but India cannot transform with new ideas without having a paradigm of planning for development.

Connecting the dots:

- Do you think planning in India still relevant today? Critically analyse the role and functioning of NITI Aayog.

Governor's discretion

Introduction

Currently, the discretionary powers of the Governor are once again at the centre of controversy. This assumes importance based on the recent decision on the remission of seven convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case.

Pardoning powers of Governor

- It is important to note that Article 161 of the Constitution provides the Governor with the power to "remit or commute the sentence of any prisoner".
- However, the Governor's decision will be subject to judicial review by the constitutional courts.
- Currently, the immediate question is whether there is an independent, discretionary power vested with the Governor with regard to Articles 161 and 163 of the Constitution.

Prior Precedents:

- In the Nabam Rebia and Bamang Felix v. Deputy Speaker (2016) case, the Supreme Court, speaking through a five-judge Bench, viewed that the discretionary power of the Governor is extremely limited and entirely amenable to judicial review.
- Time and again, the courts have spoken out against the Governor acting in the capacity of an "all-pervading super-constitutional authority".
- Pertaining to the exercise of discretion, in Samsher Singh v. State of Punjab (1974), a seven-judge Bench of the Supreme Court had held that the Governor may do so only "in harmony with his Council of Ministers".
- In an effort to do so, the Governor is prevented from taking a stand against the wishes of the Council of Ministers.
- Currently, the domain being traversed in this case is alien to the Constitution of India, not having envisaged a situation where the Governor exercises his power under Article 161 against the express recommendation of the Council of Ministers.

Conclusion

- Decision taken by governor contrary to advise conferred by council of ministers, may drastically alter the Constitution and its founding principles; the federal structure, Cabinet responsibility and accountable governance.
- This might also be interpreted as the Governor having lost faith in the State government with regard to the performance of its executive functions.
- Either which way, it is believed that to stay true to the spirit of the Constitution, the Governor should desist from conferring discretionary powers to his office where there are none.

Connecting the dots:

- Critically analyse the discretionary powers and pardoning powers of Governor of a state in India.

SC to rule on barring accused in heinous crimes from polls

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Elections

In news

- A five-judge Constitution Bench is scheduled to pronounce its judgment on petitions to bar politicians facing charges of heinous crimes, such as murder, rape and kidnapping, from contesting elections.
- Under the Representation of the People Act, convicted lawmakers are disqualified, but not those facing charges.

Observations

- The Bench, made it clear that the SC could not legislate for Parliament.
- Chief Justice Misra had pointed out the urgency to do something to keep criminals at bay and prevent them from contesting elections.
- The Chief Justice had voiced the Supreme Court's anguish at the helplessness of society to prevent criminalisation of politics at the very entry-point itself.
- The CJI had pointed out that Parliament was obliged under Article 102 (1) (e) (talks about disqualification to stand as a candidate for election to the Lok Sabha from a Parliamentary Constituency) to make a law.
- Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal had submitted that fast-track courts to try cases against politicians was the only solution.

SC forms prison reforms panel

Part of: Prelims and mains II – Judiciary, Social justice

In news

- The Supreme Court on Tuesday formed a Committee on Prison Reforms chaired by former apex court judge, Justice Amitava Roy, to examine the various problems plaguing

prisons in the country, from overcrowding to lack of legal advice to convicts to issues of remission and parole.

- The judgment came on a letter from former Chief Justice of India R.C. Lahoti highlighting the overcrowding in prisons, unnatural deaths of prisoners, gross inadequacy of staff and the lack of trained staff.
- Issuing a slew of directions, the Bench has directed the committee to examine the extent of overcrowding in prisons and correctional homes and recommend remedial measures, including an examination of the functioning of Under Trial Review Committees, availability of legal aid and advice, grant of remission, parole and furlough.
- The panel would also probe the reasons for violence in prisons and correctional homes and recommend measures to prevent unnatural deaths and assess the availability of medical facilities in prisons and correctional homes and make recommendations.
- It would assess the availability and inadequacy of staff in prisons and correctional homes, suggest training and educational modules for the staff and assess the feasibility of establishing open prisons.
- The committee has been asked to recommend steps for the psycho-social well-being of minor children of women prisoners, including their education and health.
- Further to examine and recommend measures for the health, education, development of skills, rehabilitation and social reintegration of children in observation homes, places of safety and special homes established under the provisions of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.
- The court asked the committee to complete the collection of data and information and make submit it in a year.
- The Amitava Roy Committee need not confine itself to these four issues but can comprehensively examine and respond to the dire necessity of reforms in prisons.

Boost to SC/ST quota in promotions

Part of Prelims and mains II – Polity & Governance, Empowerment of vulnerable sections of the society

In news

- A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court on Wednesday modified a 2006 judgment requiring the State to show quantifiable data to prove the "backwardness" of a Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe community in order to provide quota in promotion in public employment.

- It gives a huge fillip for the government's efforts to provide "accelerated promotion with consequential seniority" for Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST) members in government services.

Directly contrary
- The portion of the **M. Nagaraj judgment** of another five-judge Constitution Bench in 2006 was directly contrary to the nine-judge Bench verdict in the Indira Sawhney case.
- **In the Indira Sawhney case**, the Supreme Court had held that the "test or requirement of social and educational backwardness cannot be applied to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, who indubitably fall within the expression 'backward class of citizens'."
- The Presidential List for Scheduled Castes contains only those castes or groups or parts as "untouchables."
- Similarly, the Presidential List of Scheduled Tribes only refers to those tribes in remote backward areas who are socially extremely backward.

March ahead
- The whole object of reservation is to see that backward classes of citizens move forward so that they may march hand in hand with other citizens of India on an equal basis.
- This will not be possible if only the creamy layer within that class bag all the coveted jobs in the public sector and perpetuate themselves, leaving the rest of the class as backward as they always were.
- **Judgment upheld Nagaraj's direction that creamy layer applied to SC/ST in promotions.**
- It said that when a court applies the creamy layer principle to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, it does not in any manner tinker with the Presidential List under Articles 341 or 342 of the Constitution of India.
- The caste or group or sub-group named in the said List continues exactly as before.

Enact 'strong law' to cleanse politics: SC

Part of Prelims and mains II – Elections, RPA acts

In news
- The Supreme Court on Tuesday directed political parties to publish online the pending criminal cases of their candidates and urged Parliament to bring a "strong law" to cleanse political parties of leaders facing trial for serious crimes.

- Rapid criminalisation of politics cannot be arrested by merely disqualifying tainted legislators but should begin by "cleansing" political parties, a five-judge Constitution Bench observed.

Onus on Parliament
- The court said Parliament should frame a law that makes it obligatory for political parties to remove leaders charged with "heinous and grievous" crimes, such as rape, murder and kidnapping, to name only a few, and refuse ticket to offenders in both parliamentary and Assembly polls.
- "The nation eagerly awaits such a legislation," the court told Parliament.
- The Bench made it clear that the court cannot legislate for Parliament by introducing disqualification to ban candidates facing trial for heinous crimes from contesting elections.

Full disclosures
- The court directed that candidates should divulge their criminal past to the Election Commission in "block letters."
- Candidates should make a full disclosure of the criminal cases pending against them to the political parties under whose banner they intend to contest the polls.
- The parties, in turn, should put up the complete details of their candidates on their websites for public consumption.

Cry for decriminalisation of politics

Part of Prelims and mains II – Governance and Election, Polity

In news
- **The N.N. Vohra Committee,** which was set up following a public outcry after the blasts, submitted its report in October 1993 after its study of the problem of criminalisation of politics and the nexus among criminals, politicians and bureaucrats in India.
- The committee had concluded that agencies, including the CBI, IB, RAW, had unanimously expressed their opinion that the criminal network was virtually running a parallel government.
- The committee report mentioned how money power was first acquired through real estate and then used for building up contacts with bureaucrats and politicians.
- The voices within Parliament also felt the need to end the bane of criminal politics.

- The **18th Report presented by a parliamentary committee** to the Rajya Sabha in March 2007 expressed a strong "feeling that politics should be cleansed of persons with established criminal background".
- It said "criminalisation of politics is the bane of society and negation of democracy".
- **The Law Commission of India, in its 244th report**, succinctly put it that "instead of politicians having suspected links to criminal networks, as was the case earlier, it was persons with extensive criminal backgrounds who began entering politics."
- The Law Commission said that in the 10 years since 2004, 18% of the candidates contesting either national or State elections had criminal cases against them (11,063 out of 62,847).
- **The Goswami Committee on Electoral Reforms,** as early as in 1990, highlighted the crippling effect of money and muscle power in elections.

Peppered with wise words

Part of Prelims and mains II & III – Governance and Election, Polity

In news
- On the rapid rise of criminalisation in politics, the Supreme Court on Tuesday reproduced the words of the freedom fighter and last Governor-General of India, C. Rajagopalachari, R. Prasad and Dr. Ambedkar.
- **Rajagopalachari** had said as back as in 1922 that, "elections and their corruption, injustice and tyranny of wealth, and inefficiency of administration, will make a hell of life as soon as freedom is given to us..."
- Similarly, the judgment quotes **Rajendra Prasad,** who said, "A Constitution like a machine is a lifeless thing. It acquires life because of the men who control it and operate it, and India needs today nothing more than a set of honest men who will have the interest of the country before them."
- Finally, it talks about the limitations of a Constitution through the words of **B.R. Ambedkar.** "A Constitution can provide only the organs of State... The factors on which the working of those organs of the State depend are the people and the political parties they will set up as their instruments to carry out their wishes and their politics. Who can say how the people of India and their parties will behave?"

Aadhaar gets thumbs up from Supreme Court

Part of Prelims and mains II – constitution, govt. services, governance

In news

The Supreme Court, in a majority opinion upheld Aadhaar as a reasonable restriction on individual privacy that fulfils the government's "legitimate aim" to provide dignity to a large, marginalised population living in abject poverty.

SC observations

- "The Constitution does not exist for a few or minority of the people of India, but 'We the People'," the Supreme Court observed.
- The majority view declared Aadhaar a "document of empowerment." An "unparalleled" identity proof. A document that cannot be duplicated unlike PAN, ration card, and passport.
- "It is better to be unique than the best. The best makes number one, but unique makes you the only one."
- Technology had become a vital tool for ensuring good governance in a social welfare state.
- Schemes like PDS, scholarships, mid-day meals, LPG subsidies, involve a huge amount of money and "fool-proof" Aadhaar helped welfare reach the poor.
- The majority opinion upheld the PAN-Aadhaar linkage, but declared linking Aadhaar with bank accounts and mobile SIM cards unconstitutional.
- The Supreme Court, in its majority opinion, said the remedy was to plug the loopholes rather than axe Aadhaar.
- The court further directed the government and the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) to bring in regulations to prevent rightfully entitled people from being denied benefits.

Resolution of privacy, Data protection and other issues

- The statute only sought "minimal" biometric information, and this did not amount to invasion of privacy.
- Upholding the passage of the Aadhaar Act as a Money Bill, the Supreme Court said neither were individuals profiled nor their movements traced when Aadhaar was used to avail government benefits under Section 7 of the Aadhaar Act of 2016.
- The court insulated children from the Aadhaar regime. The card was not necessary for children aged between six and 14 under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan as right to education was a fundamental right.

- Statutory bodies like CBSE and UGC cannot ask students to produce their Aadhaar cards for examinations like NEET and JEE.
- Permission of parents and guardians was a must before enrolling children into Aadhaar.
- Children once they attained the age of majority could opt out of Aadhaar.
- It said it was not trivialising the problem of exclusion faced by the elderly, the very young, the disabled and several others during the authentication process.
- Authentication was found to be only having a .232% failure, it was accurate 99.76% times. Dismantling the scheme would only disturb this 99.76%.
- Countering the argument that the Aadhaar regime would facilitate the birth of a "surveillance state", Justice Sikri wrote that Aadhaar exhibited no such tendencies.
- Authentication transactions through Aadhaar did not ask for the purpose, nature or location of the transaction.
- Besides, information was collected in silos and their merging was prohibited. The authentication process was not expanded to the Internet.
- The collection of personal data and its authentication was done through registered devices.
- The Authority did not get any information related to the IP address or the GPS location from where authentication was performed.

Aadhaar Act: Judicial Scrutiny
- The Supreme Court quashed or read down several provisions in the Aadhaar Act in order to de-fang any possibility of the state misusing data.
- For one, the court held that authentication records should not be retained for more than six months.
- It declared the archiving of records for five years as "bad in law." It also prohibited the creation of a metabase for transactions.

Aadhaar survives

Introduction

- In a recent judgement by the Supreme Court of India, four out of five judges on a Constitution Bench ruled that the law enabling the implementation of the unique identification programme (Aadhar) does not violate the right to privacy of citizens.
- The Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of Aadhaar and clarified areas in which it cannot be made mandatory.

- The court is of the view that the project empowers marginalised sections and procures dignity for them along with services, benefits and subsidies by leveraging the power of technology.

Compiled by Varun B. Krishnan | With inputs from Lakshmikumaran and Sridharan Attorneys
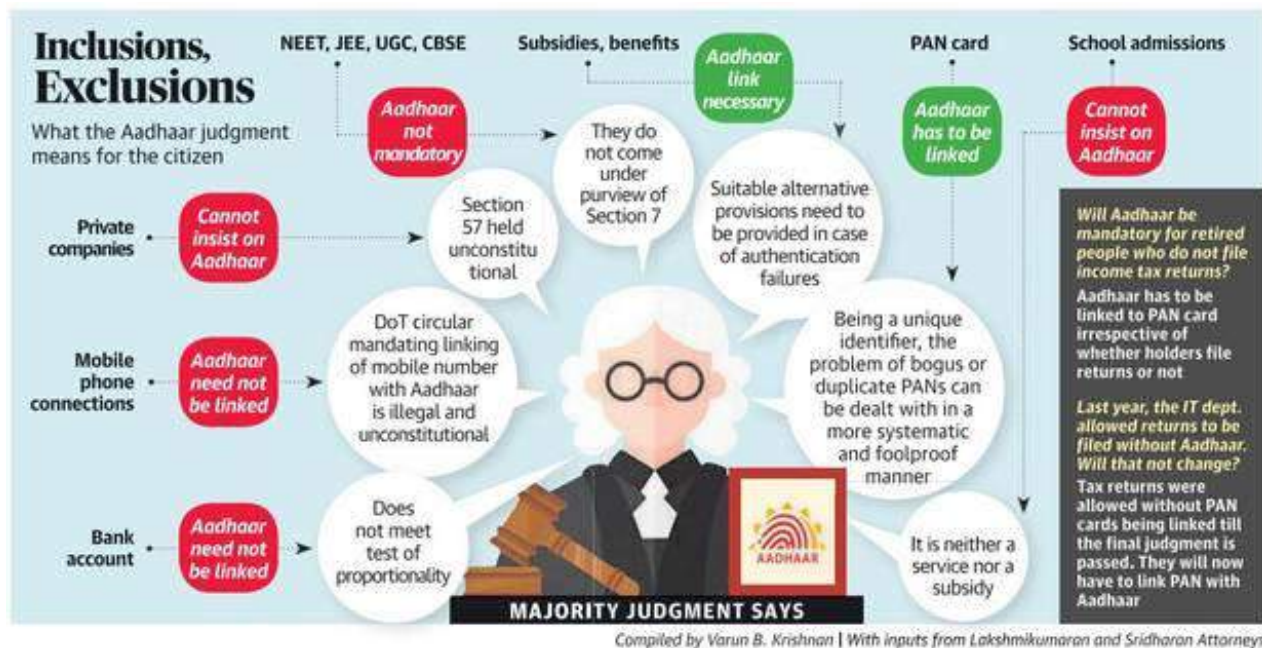
https://www.thehindu.com/news/f8k550/article25051531.ece/alternates/FREE_615/vbk-aadhaar%20graphic

Do you know?

It is important to note that the Aadhaar Act was passed as a money bill. The Speaker of the Lok Sabha had classified this bill as a money bill.

What is a Money Bill?

- According to Article 110 of the Indian Constitution, a Bill is said to be a Money Bill if it only contains provisions related to taxation, borrowing of money by the government, expenditure from or receipt to the Consolidated Fund of India. Bills that only contain provisions that are incidental to these matters would also be regarded as Money Bills.
- A Money Bill may only be introduced in Lok Sabha. This is done so on the recommendation of the President.
- It must be passed in Lok Sabha by a simple majority of all members present and voting. Following this, it may be sent to the Rajya Sabha for its recommendations, which Lok Sabha may reject if it chooses to.
- If such recommendations are not given within 14 days, it will deemed to be passed by Parliament.

Concerns related to Aadhaar

- In recent times, the unique identification programme was projected by sceptics, detractors and activists as an intrusion on citizens' privacy.

- Many sceptics were of the opinion that the Aadhar was a grand project to appropriate personal data for commercial exploitation by private parties and profiling by the state.
- Last year, 2017, a nine-judge Bench had unanimously ruled that privacy is a fundamental right.
- Ever since this decision by the Supreme Court, opinion began to spread that the unique identification programme was vulnerable in the face of judicial scrutiny.

Analysis of the judgment

- On studying this judgement, one draws the conclusion that the Supreme Court has restored the original intent of the programme, which is to plug leakages in subsidy schemes and to have better targeting of welfare benefits.
- Over the past few years, the Aadhaar came to play a large role in the lives of ordinary people.
- The Aadhaar has acquired the shape of a basic identity document that was required to access services, such as: birth and death certificates, SIM cards, school admissions, property registrations and vehicle purchases, etc.
- The recent judgment of the Supreme Court narrows the scope of Aadhaar but provides a framework within which it can work.
- This judgement has two views, The majority opinion and The dissenting opinion.

The majority opinion:

- The majority opinion has sought to limit the import of the scheme to aspects directly related to welfare benefits, subsidies and money spent from the Consolidated Fund of India.
- Relying on official statistics, the majority favoured the scheme's continuance for the sake of the 99.76% of people included under the scheme, rather than show anxiety over the 0.24% who were excluded because of authentication failure.
- The Bench made an important statement by saying that "The remedy is to plug the loopholes rather than axe the project."
- The various controversial circulars and rules making it mandatory to link mobile phone numbers and bank accounts to Aadhaar numbers have been declared unconstitutional.
- Further, Section 57 of the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery Of Financial And Other Subsidies, Benefits And Services) Act, 2016, has been struck down to the extent that it authorised body corporates and individuals to use the Aadhaar number to establish someone's identity.
- Schools have been barred from making the submission of the Aadhaar number mandatory to enrol children.
- A few other provisions have also been read down or clarified.

Dissenting Judgement:
- Justice DY Chandrachud in his dissenting judgement said that the "Aadhaar allows constructing profiles of individuals, which is against the right to privacy and enables potential surveillance."
- Justice Chandrachud said: "Bypassing Rajya Sabha to pass Aadhaar Act amounts to subterfuge and the law can be struck down."
- He further observed that the Aadhaar cannot be treated as money bill and passing a bill as money bill which is not a money bill is a fraud on the Constitution,".
- Justice Chandrachud said if Aadhaar is seeded with every database then there is chance of infringement of right to privacy. He said there was absence of regulatory mechanism to provide robust data protection.
- He went on to add that allowing private players to use Aadhaar will lead to profiling which could be used to ascertain political views of citizens.
- Having said this, he agreed with the majority decision that mobile companies cannot insist on Aadhaar.
- He also highlighted that biometric authentication failures have led to denial of rights and legal entitlements. He sighted the reason for such failures in the project's inability to account for and remedy flaws in its network and design.
- It is important to note that while a dissenting judgement has no force of law, it leaves open the possibility of being referred to a larger bench at a later stage.
- He further ruled that the denial of benefits arising out of any social security rights is "violative of human dignity and impermissible under our constitutional scheme".
- He also observed that there was no institutional responsibility of the UIDAI to protect the data of citizens.

Conclusion

Finally, it was the arguments in favour of benefits to the poor and the practical consequences of abandoning the scheme that won the day. Aadhaar possibly was simply too big to fail.

Connecting the dots:
- Discuss the verdict of Supreme Court with respect to Aadhar and the implications of the verdict?

Finding an equilibrium

Introduction

A thicket of Aadhaar litigation has now ended with the decision of a five-judge Supreme Court Bench, which had reserved its order on May 10, after a marathon 38-day hearing.

The victory of the right to privacy was presaged by K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017), but that nine-judge Bench had left open the question of Aadhaar: whether the "national security" perspective (the vital role of surveillance to curb terror and prevent money laundering and crime financing) and "social welfare state" perspective (Aadhaar ensured that subsidies went to the right people) provided constitutional grounds for "reasonable restrictions" (reasonable because non-arbitrary).

The Money Bill question: under Article 110(3) of the Constitution

- Whether this decision disappoints those who had high expectations or remains enigmatic on key aspects is a question which will be debated for long.
- A very expansive view suggests that any bill which involves recourse to Consolidated Fund of India is a Money Bill and the finality of the Speaker's decision is virtually unchallengeable.
- The other view is that the Speaker, like all constitutional functionaries, is bound to exercise the discretion reasonably; purposive as well as strict pragmatic.
- The scrutiny from Article 14 and 21 must ensue when a large number of bills are tagged with Money Bills.
- This is dangerous because it removes the rationale for bicameral legislatures, because the Constitution does not foreclose the Rajya Sabha's collective right to meaningfully deliberate legislative change.
- Institutions are crucial to democracy. Debasing them can only cause a peril to democratic structures.
- The Constitution is not a political tactic, it is not a mere 'play thing' of a special majority as in Sajjan Singh v. State of Rajasthan (1965), laying the foundations of what became the doctrine of basic structure and essential features.
- Justice Chandrachud fully dissents and holds the law invalid as a "fraud on the Constitution", that is a colourable exercise of constitutional power.
- He maintains that the "notion of absolute power" is offensive to the Constitution and that there is need to "liberate its founding principles from its colonial past".
- Its purpose cannot be to shield an excess of power from being questioned before the court, nor to clothe a high functionary with utter impunity.

The proportionality test

- Any conflict of interest requires balancing, keeping in view constitutional first principles and its vision, values, and the mission.
- This leads to many welcome invalidations and dilutions of some important sections of the Act (See IASbaba current affairs September 28, 2018).

- But on the main aspect whether the right to privacy is violated, there is now posited a conflict with privacy and dignity, which only 'harmonious construction' may reconcile.
- SC felt that some loss of privacy is constitutionally permissible to achieve the public good to the "marginalised sections of society" and there was a collective right to privacy which may override the individual right.

Conclusion

- The tasks of balancing begin only when all interests are translated as individual, social, or public.
- The sanctity of privacy lies in its functional relationship with dignity. But this relationship is "functional" only when "undue intrusion" into the "autonomy on the pretext of conferment of economic benefits" is avoided.
- The majority decision offers a harmonious construction, but the dissenting opinion shows why this is not the only or necessarily the best way.

Connecting the dots:

- The recent SC judgment on Aadhaar Act draws a line between right to privacy and national objectives such as security and welfare state. Critically comment.
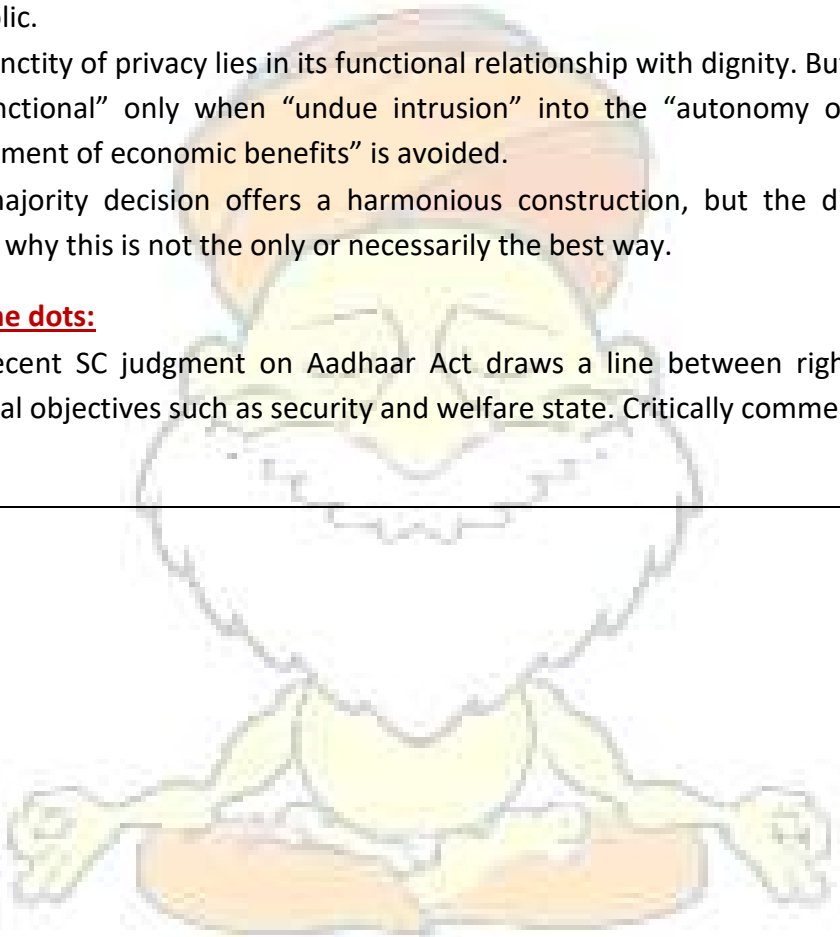
SOCIAL ISSUE/WELFARE PROGRAMMES

Govt. grants 'trust' status to 'Bharat Ke Veer' initiative

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Role of NGO/CSOs

- The government has granted the status of a trust to **'Bharat Ke Veer'**, a private initiative promoted by actor Akshay Kumar, which aids families of paramilitary personnel killed in action.
- Contributions to Bharat Ke Veer have been exempted from Income Tax.

Swachh Bharat catch-up

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Government schemes and Policies; Health issue

About:
- This October marks four years into the Swachh Bharat programme.
- This mission emphasized on making India an **ODF (Open Defecation Free) country** by the **150th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi** (2nd October 2019).

Key facts:
- **Bihar** is the **second worst performing State**, lagging behind with almost 66% coverage.
- **Odisha**, with 62.5% coverage, fares worse.

In news:
- In order to become open defecation free (ODF), Bihar takes new route. It has given up on a model of only allowing **community-based incentives** for toilet construction.
- The State has switched to allowing **individual household-based incentives**.

Do you know?
- Under the Swachh Bharat programme, **States were given freedom to tweak** the way the scheme was implemented.
- Every household building a toilet was eligible for an incentive of **₹12,000**.

Welfare panels cant evaluate dowry complaints: SC

Part of: Prelims and Mains GS II - Social issues

In News
- The Supreme Court modified its earlier order on setting up family welfare committees to look into cases of dowry harassment.

Section 498-A IPC
It is a cognisable and non-bailable offence. A guilty person faces up to three years in prison and shall also be liable to fine.

2017 Order
- The court had ordered 'family welfare committees' to be set up in the districts.
- These committees, composed of eminent citizens, were supposed to act as a vanguard against "disgruntled wives" using the anti-dowry harassment provision of Section 498-A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) as a "weapon" against their husbands and in-laws, young and old, rather than a "shield."
- Even the police could register an FIR only after the committee cleared the complaint as valid and not frivolous.
- SC had raised this concern over abuse of the anti-dowry law and had also said that no arrest "should be affected" without authenticating allegations as a violation of human rights of innocents can't be swept aside.

Current Judgment
- A bench led by Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra withdrew the court's direction from July 2017
- The judges accepted that such a committee would create an extrajudicial entity not envisaged in the Code of Criminal Procedure.
- They also decided to remove another guideline that gave a district judge the power to dispose of proceedings if the parties in a case reach a settlement. Such a power in a non-compoundable provision such as Section 498A exclusively belongs to the High Court, the top court held
- It restored to the police their power to immediately register an FIR and act on a dowry harassment complaint filed by a married woman.
- It further says a designated police officer should be there to probe dowry complaints. It ordered the Director General of Police of every State to provide such officers rigorous training.

Lethal filth – on manual scavenging

Introduction

Five young men who were employed to clean a septic tank in an upmarket residential community died during the process. Around the same time as the Delhi incident, five workers died in a septic tank in Odisha.

Do you know?

What is manual scavenging?
- Manual scavenging is a term used mainly in India for a caste-based occupation involving the manual removal of untreated human excreta from bucket toilets or pit latrines by hand with buckets and shovels.
- Manual scavenging has been officially prohibited by law in 1993 due to it being regarded as a dehumanizing practice (if not done in a safe manner).
- Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013' came into effect from 6thDecember, 2013 replacing Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines(Prohibition) Act, 1993.This Act intends to achieve its objectives of eliminating insanitary latrines, prohibition of employment as manual scavengers etc
- The act says National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK)would monitor implementation of the Act and enquire into complaints regarding contravention of the provisions of the Act.

What does the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 say?
- A violation can be punished with two years of imprisonment or fine or both.
- Under the provision, no person, local authority or agency should engage or employ people for hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks.
- Mechanised cleaning of septic tanks is the prescribed norm.

Issue:
- The law (Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013) is not being enforced, and there is no fear of penalties.
- The workers in Delhi were apparently asked to perform the task in violation of Section 7 of the Act;
- In spite of a well-funded programme such as the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan in operation, little attention is devoted to this aspect of sanitation.

- The requirements of worker safety and provision of safety gear for rare instances when human intervention is unavoidable are often ignored.
- The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation in its manual of 2016 on toilet design acknowledges that in rural areas, mechanical pumps to clear septic tanks are not available.
- In the southern States, sanitation has expanded along with urbanisation, but it has brought with it a higher number of deaths as workers clean septic tanks manually. For instance, Tamil Nadu recorded 144 fatalities of workers engaged for septic tank cleaning in the past three years, according to official data.
- Toilet designs proposed by the government include those in which fully composted waste must be removed from pits every two years.
- In the absence of political will and social pressure, more lives could be lost because more tanks are being built in rural and urban areas as part of the drive to construct toilets.

Way forward:
- If the law on manual scavenging is to be effective, the penalties must be uniformly and visibly enforced.
- It is equally important for State governments to address the lack of adequate machinery to clean septic tanks.
- The Centre must ensure that the proposals for new toilet design does not become a fresh avenue to oppress members of some communities who are expected to perform such work, reflecting social inequalities.

Conclusion:
- The incident is a shocking reminder that India's high-profile sanitation campaign has done little to alter some basic ground realities. India's sanitation problem is complex, and the absence of adequate toilets is only one lacuna.
- The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan should make expansion of the sewer network a top priority and come up with a scheme for scientific maintenance that will end manual cleaning of septic tanks. The law should be enforced vigorously to eliminate manual scavenging in its entirety.

Connecting the dots:
- Comment in brief on Manual scavenging in India. What are the steps taken by government to end this menace?

Ban on adoption by live-in partners lifted

Part of: Prelims and mains II – Social justice

In news
- Individuals in a live-in relationship will once again be able to adopt children from and within India after the country's nodal adoption agency decided to withdraw a circular issued earlier this year disallowing them from doing so.
- The Child Adoption Regulatory Authority (CARA), in an earlier circular, barred applicants in a live-in relationship from adopting a child on the ground that "the Authority would like the children to be placed only with a stable family and individuals in a live-in relationship cannot be considered as stable family."
- It has now decided to withdraw the circular and applications from prospective adoptive parents will be examined on a case-by-case basis.
- The decision will benefit both domestic and international applicants.

Eligibility criteria for adoption
- The eligibility criteria under Adoption Regulations, 2017, permit single women to adopt a child of any gender, while single men can adopt only boys.
- When a married couple seeks to adopt a child, it needs to give its consent for adoption and should be stable marriage for at least two years.
- Applicants have to be physically, mentally and financially stable to raise a child.

WOMEN ISSUE

SC extends compensation plan to minor rape survivors

In news:

- Supreme Court ordered that minor survivors of rape or sexual assault will get compensation on par with women victims.
- The apex court extended to minor children the **National Legal Services Authority's (NALSA) compensation scheme** for women rape and sexual assault survivors.
- The NALSA scheme would be made applicable to minor victims from October 2 until the Centre frames compensation guidelines under the POCSO.

Important Value Additions:

Compensation Scheme for Women Victims/Survivors of Sexual Assault/Other Crimes-2018

- It is scheme, proposed by the National Legal Services Authority, for compensating victims of sexual assault and acid attack.
- Supreme Court has now extended the scheme to make it applicable to child victims of such assaults.

About the scheme:

- As per NALSA's scheme, victim of gangrape in any part of the country would now get a minimum compensation of Rs 5 lakh and up to a maximum of Rs 10 lakh.
- Similarly, in case of rape and unnatural sexual assault, the victim would get a minimum of Rs 4 lakh and maximum of Rs 7 lakh as compensation.
- The scheme also says that victim of acid attacks, in case of disfigurement of face, would get a minimum compensation of Rs 7 lakh, while the upper limit would be Rs 8 lakh.
- In acid attack cases, if the injury was more than 50 per cent, a minimum compensation of Rs 5 lakh would be given, while the maximum would be Rs 8 lakh.

The power of Kudumbashree: A case study on Women participation

Introduction:

In the month of August 2018, Kerala faced the worst disaster in a century. Now, long and tedious process of relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction process is going on. There are many

heroic stories coming to surface about how people are contributing to rebuild Kerala. One of them is of contribution of Kudumbashree.

What Kudumbashree is doing in disaster relief?

- Kumari had contracted leptospirosis while doing relief work in Kerala after the floods, away from her own home which had not been affected. She was a health volunteer and prominent member of the Kudumbashree Mission.
- Volunteers Zarina and Sudha said: "We saw mounds of foul-smelling black mud piled outside the houses blocking the entrances and, in some cases, partially covering the houses. There were dead animals too..... We knew we could fall ill or be stung by poisonous insects or snakes, but we were not afraid. Tribal women and members of Kudumbashree from nearby areas also joined us."
- Like Kumari, Zarina and Sudha, around 4,00,000 women of Kudumbashree self-mobilised across the State to do relief work.
- The Kudumbashree State Mission estimates that Kudumbashree groups cleaned up 11,300 public places and two lakh houses.
- They provided counselling and information assistance as well as shelter to families. They also donated Rs. 7.4 crore to the Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund.
- This scale of voluntary relief work by women is quite unprecedented by any standard.

United in relief work

- The attention is necessary not just to accord women relief helpers like Kumari recognition and appreciation, but also to understand how such an enormous, effective and well-planned intervention could be made across the State by women through their own initiatives.
- Women from working class families, women from the lower middle class and middle class, Muslim women and Dalit women were present.
- They were a microcosm of the 2.43 lakh groups functioning across the State.
- Within a day or two of the deluge, the Kudumbashree members started contacting each other to discuss what they should do.
- They divided themselves into squads of five to six members and started relief work.
- They were helped by the district coordination team of five women, who were on deputation to the Kudumbashree Mission from the government.
- Within a short span of time, there were 7,000 women volunteers engaged in various tasks.
- When the situation in their district improved, some of them set out to neighbouring districts to help.

- Many of these women have family responsibilities, but they convinced their families of the urgency of the work at hand and set off with all the equipment required for cleaning which they themselves had collected through sponsorships.

A unique model
- **Started in 1998, it was envisioned as a part of the People's Plan Campaign and local self-governance, with women at the centre of it.**
- In its conceptualisation, it was markedly different from the self-help group (SHG) movements in many parts of India.
- While the commonality with other States was in the **thrift and credit activities at the grassroots** level through the formations of saving groups, the structures differed.
- **Kudumbashree has a three-tier structure.** The first is the basic unit — the **neighbourhood groups (NGs).** There could be several such units within a ward and they are networked through the **area development societies (ADS)**. All ADSs are federated through the **community development societies (CDS).**
- There are core committees of **elected coordinators at all three levels.**
- Each Kudumbashree member has a vote. Direct elections for the NG coordinators are held every three years. These people, in turn, elect the coordinators of the ADS who elect the members of the CDS.
- A majority of the members of the coordinator groups have to **belong to women below the poverty line or from comparatively poorer sections.** There is reservation for **Dalit and Adivasi women.**
- At the district and State levels, employees/officers of the government are appointed on deputation to help the Kudumbashree groups. Thus, there is a socially representative leadership.
- **This secular composition acts as a facilitator for the secularisation of public spaces.**
- The micro-enterprises undertaken by the women NGs in Kerala also **strengthen community bonds.** These include organic vegetable growing, poultry and dairy, catering and tailoring.
- The concepts and practices have expanded over the years. Today the community farms run by Kudumbashree groups are acknowledged as a critical avenue for the **rejuvenation of agricultural production in Kerala.**
- **Kudumbashree training courses are quite comprehensive** and include women's rights, knowledge of constitutional and legal provisions, training in banking practices, and training in skills to set up micro-enterprises.
- The Kudumbashree groups are therefore often seen as a threat by those who would like women to adhere to socially conformist roles.

Conclusion:
- In a modern democratic India, women are still suffering to prove their existence and abilities.
- This case study is a proof that women are equal half in pair of human. They can significantly contribute to the society as well as economy.
- This model of Kudumbashree can be implemented across India, if it is done with the same secular and gender-sensitive spirit.

Connecting the dots:
- Historically, be it the disaster of world war or floods of Kerala, time and again women proved their abilities. Critically comment in context of role of women in modern society and economy.

Note: Story of Kumari, Zarina and sudha, or story of Kudumbashree can be used in Essay as well as examples in ethics (Humanitarian behaviour in the event of crisis).

Triple Talaq is criminal offence

Part of: Prelims and Mains II – Constitution and Governance

In news
- Union Cabinet cleared an ordinance that makes talaq-e-biddat, or instant triple talaq, a criminal offence that will attract a maximum jail term of three years.

Why ordinance is needed?
- The practice of triple talaq continues in spite of the Supreme Court having annulled it and the Lok Sabha having passed a Bill that is pending in the Rajya Sabha.
- 201 cases had been reported from across the country after the Supreme Court banned triple talaq in August 2017. Since January 2017, 430 cases had been reported until September 13 this year.

Concerns
- Once husband is in jail, who will pay maintenance and/or subsistence allowance to the woman and children?
- Why should the woman and children not have a right to proceed against the estate i.e. movable and immovable property of the husband?

Provisions and safeguards

- Magistrate could exercise discretion to grant bail "after hearing the wife". The magistrate would also have power to decide the quantum of compensation and subsistence allowance for the victim and her minor children.
- Another safeguard that had been added is that the police can lodge an FIR (first information report) only if the complaint is filed by the wife (victim), her blood relations or her relatives by virtue of her marriage.
- Non-relatives or neighbours cannot lodge a complaint under the proposed law.
- The offence of instant triple talaq has also been "compoundable" or a provision that allows the wife to withdraw a complaint or approach the magistrate for a dispute settlement.

Hasty step: Triple Talaq ordinance

Introduction

- The government introduced a slew of changes to the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill.
- It removed the clause that allowed anyone to file an FIR about a triple talaq case, and made the offence cognisable only if the complaint was filed by the victim or her relatives.
- A magistrate was also allowed to compound the offence if the husband and wife arrived at a compromise.
- These changes watered down the Bill's most contentious provision, its criminality clause, and seemed to signal the government's inclination to forge a consensus on a fraught issue.

Concerns
- But these amendments were issued on the penultimate day of Parliament's Monsoon Session, and there was scarcely any time to debate them in the Rajya Sabha. The matter was deferred to the Winter Session.
- The government decided to short-circuit the legislative process and took the route of an ordinance to criminalise triple talaq.
- The ordinance makes "triple talaq null and void" and will land the offending husband in jail for three years.
- The dilutions to the criminality clause, do constitute the core of the new law. However, by all accounts, several of the Opposition's reservations remain unaddressed.

- It has reportedly criticised the provision that puts the onus of proving the pronouncement of triple talaq on the wife, while Muslim leaders have said it's wrong to make the practice a penal offence.
- The government has wielded the argument of gender justice to make a case for the ordinance, and has blamed the Opposition for its intransigence.
- The discriminatory nature of triple talaq is, of course, undeniable, but the government's approach flattens an issue that has more than one dimension.
- The political environment in the country has given rise to fears that the triple talaq issue is a ruse to stamp majoritarianism.
- With Muslims becoming vulnerable and targets of violence, such fears are not unfounded.
- They were left unaddressed when the Lok Sabha passed the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill in December last year without much debate.
- However, in the Rajya Sabha, the Opposition raised apprehensions about the Bill's criminality clause.
- The amendments introduced by the government in August showed its inclination to address such concerns.
- While introducing the changes, Union Law and Justice Minister had said that the government "does not want anyone to misuse the law while ensuring that justice is done".

Conclusion

- Amplifying the message in that statement required the government to step up its engagement with the Opposition. The complexity of the triple talaq issue demanded thorough legislative scrutiny.
- By rushing through with the ordinance, the government has lost the chance to give the law the nuance such a process would have afforded.

Connecting the dots:

Explain freedom of religion according to constitution of India. Do you think Triple Talaq Ordinance is breach of freedom of religion? Elucidate.

Note: For more on triple talaq ordinance see IASbaba current affairs, 20 September 2018.

Special kits to aid rape case probe: The fight against rape

Part of: Prelims and mains II – Justice, governance issues

In news

Police stations in the country will soon have special kits to collect blood and semen samples, besides other evidence, to carry out immediate investigation into sexual assault cases.

Help at hand

- The Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kits (SAECK) or 'rape investigation kits' are designed to carry out immediate medico-legal investigation and aid in furnishing evidence in sexual assault and rape cases.
- The Home Ministry, as part of a pilot project, will initially procure 3,960 rape investigation kits at a cost of ₹79.20 lakh, and 100 such kits will be given to each State and U.T.

Female circumcision issue goes to Constitution Bench

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Health, Social issues

In news

- The Supreme Court on Monday referred to a five-judge Constitution Bench petitions seeking a declaration that the practice of female circumcision or 'khafz,' prevalent in the Dawoodi Bohra sect, amounts to female genital mutilation (FGM) and is a violation of women's right to life and dignity.
- A Bench of Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra and Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and D.Y. Chandrachud observed that the issue deserved to be examined by a Constitution Bench.

Earlier Observations

- Earlier, at hearings, Justice Chandrachud had observed that circumcision leaves permanent, emotional and mental scars in a young girl.
- The Chief Justice had orally observed that the Constitution does not allow a person to cause injury to another.
- The Bench had said the practice should be tested in the light of constitutional morality.

Arguments in favour

- The practice is essential to religion and had been continuing since the 10th century.
- Female circumcision is not FGM.

Adultery is not a crime, rules SC; strikes it off IPC

Part of Prelims and mains II – Social justice, Rights

In news

- A five-judge Constitution Bench held that adultery is not a crime and struck it off the Indian Penal Code.
- The bench observed that Section 497 (adultery) of the Code "commands" married couples to remain loyal to each other.

Court's observations: A matter of choice

- Two individuals may part if one cheats, but to attach criminality to infidelity is going too far.
- There is no data to back claims that abolition of adultery as a crime would result in "chaos in sexual morality" or an increase of divorce.
- How married couples deal with adultery is "absolutely a matter of privacy at its pinnacle".
- Loss of moral commitment in a marriage creates a dent in the relationship, but it is left to each individual to deal with the problem — some may forgive while others may seek divorce. Punishing each other or the wife's lover is unlikely to re-kindle commitment.
- Section 497 treats a married woman as the commodity of her husband.
- Adultery is not a crime if the cuckolded husband connives or consents to his wife's extra-marital affair.
- Section 497 treats a married woman as her husband's "chattel". The provision is a reflection of the social dominance of men prevalent 150 years ago.

Do you know?

Section 497 in The Indian Penal Code

497. Adultery.—Whoever has sexual intercourse with a person who is and whom he knows or has reason to believe to be the wife of another man, without the consent or connivance of that man, such sexual intercourse not amounting to the offence of rape, is guilty of the offence of adultery, and shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to five years, or with fine, or with both. In such case the wife shall not be punishable as an abettor.

Don't bring adultery back as crime: CJI Dipak Misra

Part of Prelims and mains II – Social justice, Freedom and empowerment

In news
- If Parliament, as it had let adultery continue in the rule book, tries to bring it back, the move would affect Article 21 of the Constitution.
- It would violate the dignity of husband and wife and the privacy attached to a relationship between the two, the Chief Justice held.
- The government had argued that adultery should continue to be a crime to maintain the sanctity of marriage.
- "It [adultery] is better to be left as a ground for divorce," the judgment observed.
- Section 497 (adultery) is unlike any other offences relating to matrimonial relationship.
- Several of these other offences are like Section 498-A (dowry harassment), the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, Section 125 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, Sections 306 (abetment of suicide) or 304B (dowry death) or 494 (bigamy) of the Indian Penal Code.

Not a crime: on Supreme Court's adultery ruling

Introduction

The cleansing of the statute books of provisions that criminalise consensual relations among adults continues, with the Supreme Court finally striking down a colonial-era law that made adultery punishable with a jail term and a fine.

Adultery decriminalised
- In four separate but concurring opinions, a five-judge Bench headed by the Chief Justice of India, Dipak Misra, finally transported India into the company of countries that no longer consider adultery an offence, only a ground for divorce.
- They have removed provisions related to adultery in the Indian Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Gender biased provision
- According to Section 497 of the IPC, which now stands struck down, a man had the right to initiate criminal proceedings against his wife's lover.

- In treating women as their husband's property, as individuals bereft of agency, the law was blatantly gender-discriminatory; aptly, the Court also struck down Section 198(2) of the CrPC under which which the husband alone could complain against adultery.
- Till now, only an adulterous woman's husband could prosecute her lover, though she could not be punished; an adulterous man's wife had no such right.
- In a further comment on her lack of sexual freedom and her commodification under the 158-year-old law, her affair with another would not amount to adultery if it had the consent of her husband.
- "The history of Section 497 reveals that the law on adultery was for the benefit of the husband, for him to secure ownership over the sexuality of his wife," Justice D.Y. Chandrachud wrote. "It was aimed at preventing the woman from exercising her sexual agency."

Significance
- The challenge before the court was not to equalise the right to file a criminal complaint, by allowing a woman to act against her husband's lover.
- It was, instead, to give the IPC and the CrPC a good dusting, to rid it of Victorian-era morality.
- It is only in a progressive legal landscape that individual rights flourish — and with the decriminalisation of adultery India has taken another step towards rights-based social relations, instead of a state-imposed moral order.
- That the decriminalisation of adultery comes soon after the Supreme Court judgment that read down Section 377 of the IPC to decriminalise homosexuality, thereby enabling diverse gender identities to be unafraid of the law, is heartening.

Way forward
- It is a matter of concern that refreshing the statute books is being left to the judiciary, without any proactive role of Parliament in amending regressive laws.
- The shocking message here is not merely that provisions such as Section 497 or 377 remained so long in the IPC, it is also that Parliament failed in its legislative responsibility to address them.

Connecting the dots?
- Refreshing the statute books is being left to the judiciary, without any proactive role of Parliament in amending regressive laws. Comment in context of recent SC judgments of Section 377 and Section 497 of IPC.

All women may pray at Sabarimala

Part of Prelims and mains II – Social justice, Rights

In news
- Supreme Court lifted the centuries' old prohibition on women from the age of menarche to enter the famed Sabarimala temple in Kerala.

Why women were not allowed in Sabrimala?
- The prohibition was founded on the notion that menstruating women are polluted and impure;
- Women, in this "procreative stage", would be a deviation from the vow of celibacy taken by the male devotees of Lord Ayyappa for the pilgrimage.
- Besides, the deity in Sabarimala is himself a 'naishtika brahmachari' or an 'eternal celibate.'
- The prohibition was in keeping with the form of the deity and the vow of celibacy of the devotees.
- It is assumed that the presence of women would deviate the celibacy and austerity observed by the devotees.

SC observations
- The main opinion said that the prohibition reduced freedom of religion to a "dead letter", and the ban was a smear on the individual dignity of women.
- Relation with the Creator is a transcending one. Physiological and biological barriers created by rigid social dogma have no place in this.
- Chief Justice held that the ban was actually a product of hegemonic patriarchy in religion.
- The social exclusion of women, based on menstrual status is a "form of untouchability". The notions of "purity and pollution" stigmatised individuals. To exclude women was derogatory to an equal citizenship.
- The notion that women cannot keep thevratham(vow of celibacy) is to stigmatise and stereotype them as "weak and lesser human beings".
- Its effect is to impose the burden of a man's celibacy on a woman and construct her as a cause for deviation from celibacy. This is then employed to deny access to spaces to which women are equally entitled.
- To treat women as the children of a lesser God was to blink at the Constitution.
- The Chief Justice agreed with the view that the "mere sight of women cannot affect one's celibacy if one has taken oath of it. Otherwise such oath has no meaning."

- Devotees did not go to the Sabarimala temple for taking the oath of celibacy but for seeking the blessings of Lord Ayyappa. Maintaining celibacy was only a ritual.

On freedom of religion

- The Supreme Court dismissed the argument that the prohibition was an essential part of religion.
- The Chief Justice said the inclusion of women, rather than their exclusion, is the essential part of the Hindu religion.
- By allowing women to enter Sabarimala temple for offering prayers, the nature of Hindu religion would not be fundamentally altered or changed in any manner.
- The devotees of Lord Ayyappa are exclusively Hindus and do not constitute a separate religious denomination. This temple is a public religious endowment.
- The right to practise religion, as claimed by the thanthris and worshippers, must be balanced with and yield to the fundamental right of women.
- The prohibition violated Section 3 of the Kerala Hindu Places of Public Worship (Authorisation of Entry) Act, 1965, which stated that "places of public worship" like the Sabarimala temple should be open to "all sections and classes of Hindus."
- The law recognises an idol or deity as a "juristic person which can own property and can sue and be sued in the court of law". But it "does not mean the deity necessarily has constitutional rights".
- Fundamental rights are meant for individuals, not deities or idols.

Dissenting opinion

- Justice Indu Malhotra, the lone woman judge on the Constitution Bench, dissented with the majority opinion.
- She held that the determination of what constituted an essential practice in a religion should not be based on the "personal views" of judges.
- She held that essentiality of a religious practice or custom had to be decided within the religion.
- It is a matter of personal faith. India is a land of diverse faiths. Constitutional morality in a pluralistic society gives freedom to practise even irrational or illogical customs and usages.

With Sabarimala verdict, 'Ghost of Narasu' is finally exorcised

Part of Prelims and mains II – Social justice, Rights

In news

- The Bombay High Court in State of Bombay versus Narasu Appa Mali had held that personal law is not 'law' or 'laws in force' under Article 13. This 1951 judgment was never challenged in the Supreme Court.
- The decision in Narasu opined that personal law is immune from constitutional scrutiny.
- This detracts from the notion that no body of practices can claim supremacy over the Constitution and its vision of ensuring the sanctity of dignity, liberty and equality.
- The unchallenged 67-year reign of a Bombay High Court judgment that personal law, religious customs, usages and beliefs are outside the ambit of fundamental rights of equality, life and dignity came to an end.

Observations of SC contrary to Narasu case
- SC held that the reasoning given in the Narasu Appa Mali judgment of the Bombay High Court in 1951 was based on flawed premises.
- Immunising customs and usages, like the prohibition of women in Sabarimala, takes away the primacy of the Constitution.
- Judge observed that custom, usages and personal law have a significant impact on the civil status of individuals. Custom or usage cannot be excluded from 'laws in force'.
- Those activities that are inherently connected with the civil status of individuals cannot be granted constitutional immunity merely because they may have some associational features which have a religious nature.
- Narasu, in restricting the definition of the term 'laws in force' detracts from the transformative vision of the Constitution.

CHILDREN ISSUE

Still too many children out of school

Introduction:

- **Education is the right of every child guaranteed by Indian constitution;** also it is part of **social justice.**
- Objective of universal education will only be fulfilled if sincere efforts are made by the States under the guidance and prodding of a committed Centre.

Do you know?
- The **Directive Principles of State Policy** mandate the state to provide children the **right to access education (Under Articles 41, 45, 46).**
- **The 86th constitutional amendment Act** of 2002 (inserting Article 21A under fundamental rights) and **the RTE Act of 2009** dictate its implementation.

Official Data: How Far it to be reliable?
- The official numbers of out-of-school children in India are **either out of date or contradictory.**
- According to the **2011 Census,** the number of **out-of-school children in the 5-17 age group was 8.4 crore.**
- According to **a survey commissioned in 2014 by the Ministry of Human Resource Development,** the number of out-of-school children in the 6-13 age group was only **60.64 lakh.**
- This is a gross underestimation. It is quite unlikely that the number of out-of-school children came down so drastically from 2011 to 2014, especially given that there were no significant changes in objective conditions, warranting such a miraculous reduction.

Most recent estimates
- **A study on the basis of the 71st round of the National Sample Survey (NSS) carried out in 2014** and taking into account the 6-18 age group, out-of-school children in this age group were more than **4.5 crores in the country, which is 16.1% children of this age group.**
- The proportion of out-of-school children was higher in **rural India (17.2%)** than in **urban India (13.1%)**. In **rural areas**, the proportion of **out-of-school girls (18.3%)** was higher than of **boys (16.3%).**

- The proportion of children from **Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST) was the highest, followed by Other Backward Classes (OBCs).**
- Among religious groups, **the proportion of Muslims was as high as 24.1% in rural areas and 24.7% in urban areas.**
- There are **seven states, Odisha, UP, Bihar, MP, Rajsthan, Gujrat and West Bengal, where nearly one fifth of the children of 6-18** age group, are out of the school.
- **Kerala, Goa, Sikkim, Himachal Pardesh and Tamil Nadu** are the states where out of the school children are **less than the national average.**

Frequent and Common Reasons for dropping out of school:
- The most important reason for **boys** to drop out of school was **to take up jobs** to supplement the family earning.
- For **girls**, it was the compulsion **to participate in household work.**
- There is also a **prejudice against educating girls** that is prevalent in India.
- An important reason for drop-out is the **socio-economic conditions of the parents** of the children. Therefore, calls for a more comprehensive approach that is not reflected in the RTE Act.
- The most important **social reason for drop-out is a lack of awareness of the importance of school education.**
- According to the RTE Act and the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, these **out-of-school children fall under the category of child labour.**
- It is, therefore, not surprising that the largest number of child labourers in the world is in India.

What can be done to bring more children to school?
- We would not have been confronted with this high proportion of drop-outs if all the provisions of the RTE Act had been implemented within the time limit prescribed in the Act (latest by April 2015).
- The Act provided for the availability of a **school at a distance of 1 km from the residence of the child at the primary level and 3 km at the upper primary level.**
- Until an adequate number of schools at the prescribed distances from the children's homes become available, it would be necessary to provide secure modes of **subsidised travel to schools, particularly for girls.**
- If all the **infrastructure facilities prescribed in the Act** would have been put in place, another reason for drop-out (environment not friendly) will disappear.
- Another important provision which ought to have been included in the RTE is **financial support to poor parents,** adequate to enable them to send their children to school.

Conclusion:

- The RTE aimed to provide a framework for private schools to supplement the efforts of the state to uplift disadvantaged sections of society through the means of education.
- We need to act immediately to address the gaps in the implementation of the law. The future of our children depends on it.
- There is need to create awareness of the fact that education is now a legal fundamental right.
- Ironically, education is the most important instrument for creating this awareness. Thus, education is a quintessential example of being vested with intrinsic as well as instrumental value being both the means and the end.

Connecting the dots:

- Even after a decade of enactment of Right to Education Act, 2009, we have not achieved objectives in terms of quantity as well as quality. Critically comment.
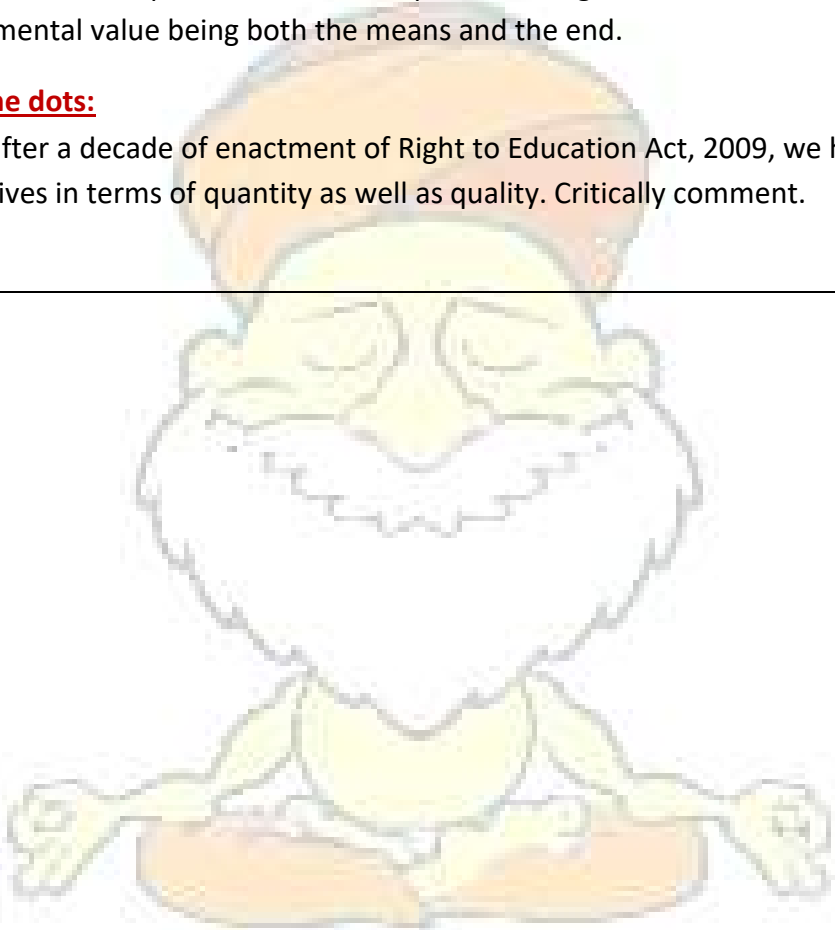
HEALTH ISSUE

Ending TB: "Political Declaration"

Introduction

- After decades spent battling the scourge of tuberculosis (TB) in developing countries, 2018 might be the year that it is finally accorded the gravitas it deserves.
- On September 26, the UN General Assembly will, for the first time, address TB in a High-Level Meeting and likely release a Political Declaration, endorsed by all member nations, to galvanise investment and action to meet the global target of eliminating TB worldwide by 2035.

Do you know?

About TB

- The Mycobacterium tuberculosis bacterium causes TB. It is spread through the air when a person with TB (whose lungs are affected) coughs, sneezes, spits, laughs, or talks.
- TB is, by and large, easily diagnosable and curable. It is unacceptable that it nevertheless remains the leading causes of death from any single infectious agent worldwide.
- Each day, thousands of people with TB die, often because of inequitable access to quality diagnosis and treatment.
- In addition, the rapid emergence of drug-resistant forms of TB (DR-TB) in many countries brings a fresh set of needs including new and comprehensive diagnostic tests and second-line TB drugs, and health systems trained anew to manage DR-TB.

TB in India

- India not only accounts for a fifth of the world's TB burden, it also has the largest number of people living with multidrug-resistant TB.
- India has fought to retain its status as a maker and distributor of generic medicines, thereby protecting the right to health of people in developing countries.
- Indian patent law contains important provisions that help protect and promote public health goals — for example, by overcoming bids by big pharma to evergreen patents of old drugs, through compulsorily licensing for certain drugs, and by permitting pre- and post-grant opposition to patents to challenge unfair patenting practices by big pharma.

Meaning of Elimination of a disease

- Elimination means reducing the number to one case per million people per year.

- It will be impossible without universal, equitable access to affordable, quality TB diagnostics and treatment for anyone who needs it.

Omissions in Political Declaration

- Countries may avail of the various flexibilities under the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights;
- Countries may invoke the Doha Declaration to compulsorily license drugs for use in public health emergencies.
- The option to de-link the pricing of new TB drugs from the costs incurred in their research and development.

Criticism of Political Declaration

- Due to above mentioned omissions; the latest draft is a watered-down version of the original that actively committed to upholding access to affordable generics for all.
- Much to the disappointment of global civil society, issues around access to diagnostics and drugs have been considerably diluted in the most recent draft of the Political Declaration.

Conclusion

- **India aims to eliminate TB by 2025**, ahead of the global targets. These targets **cannot be achieved without access to affordable, quality diagnostics/ drugs.**
- Unless India assumes a **leadership role to restore every possible option** to protect universal access to TB drugs in **the Political Declaration, 2018** may end up being just another brick in the wall.

Connecting the dots:

- TB remains one of the leading causes of death from any single infectious agent worldwide. Comment on the national and global efforts to eliminate the disease by 2035.

Note: For more details and FAQ about TB in India, visit: Central Tuberculosis Division, Government of India

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India's health report reads worse

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Health

In news:

- **The 'India State-level Disease Burden Initiative' report** is a joint initiative of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, along with experts and stakeholders associated with over 100 Indian institutions.

Findings of report on NCDs
- Indians have registered a 50% increase in the prevalence of ischemic heart disease and stroke over the period from 1990 to 2016.
- The number of diabetes cases increased from 26 million to 65 million.
- In the same period, the number of people ailing from chronic obstructive lung disease went up from 28 million to 55 million.
- The proportional contribution of cancers to the total loss of health in India has doubled from 1990 to 2016, but the incidence of different types of cancers varies widely between the States.
- The State-wise disease burden showed that Punjab has been ranked at the top for the burden of ischemic heart disease, followed by Tamil Nadu, and vice-versa for diabetes.
- West Bengal topped with the largest number of stroke cases followed by Odisha, according to the comprehensive analysis of several major non-communicable diseases (NCDs).
- Kerala was ranked at the top for the burden of cancer, followed by Assam.
- Being overweight was found to be a major risk factor for diabetes doubled in every State of India from 1990 to 2016.
- Highest rate of increase in ischemic heart disease and diabetes is in the less developed States of India.
- The proportional contribution of cancers to disease burden in India has doubled since 1990, but the incidence of individual cancers varies widely between the States, the reasons for which need to be understood better to guide prevention and control of cancer.
- Findings of this report are very timely for the planning of Ayushman Bharat, the National Health Protection Mission.

Findings of report on Suicide
- Suicide is the leading cause of death in the 15-39 years age group in India. 71.2% of the suicide deaths among women and 57.7% among men were in this age group.
- India's contribution to global suicide deaths increased from 25.3% in 1990 to 36.6% in 2016 among women, and from 18.7% to 24.3% among men.
- The suicide rate among the elderly has increased over the past quarter century.

- India must develop a suicide-prevention strategy that takes into account these variations in order to address this major public health problem, it stated.
- The ten-fold variation between the States in the SDR for women emphasises the need to better understand the reasons behind these suicides and make concerted efforts to reduce this avoidable loss of predominantly young lives.
- If the trends observed up to 2016 continued, the probability of India achieving Sustainable Development Goals for SDR reduction in 2030 will be zero.
- Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana, which are in the higher-middle and high epidemiological transition level groups, consistently had a higher SDR for both men and women

SC questions 'leprosy-free' tag for India

Part of: Prelims and mains GS II- Health services and issues

In news

Supreme court questioned the leprosy free tag and said the country was declared leprosy-free on December 31, 2005, the reality is "entirely different" in reference with reports of the National Leprosy Eradication Programme (NLEP) which said only 543 districts of the total 642 districts in the country had achieved the World Health Organisation-required prevalence rate of less than one case of leprosy for 10,000 persons.

Details

The underestimation of cases of leprosy and the declaration of elimination of leprosy has resulted in the integration of leprosy in general health services thereby leading to diversion of funds which would have otherwise been dedicated to eliminating leprosy,

Concerns

- Patients and their families continue to suffer from leprosy and its stigma.
- They are denied their fundamental right to food.
- They are not issued BPL (Below Poverty Line) cards to claim the benefit of various welfare schemes such as the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY).
- They are deprived of housing, basic civic amenities, adequate sanitary facilities and rehabilitation programmes.

Constitutional Principles Violated

- Majority of the populace afflicted with leprosy live as a marginalised section in society, deprived of even basic human rights.
- This manifestly results in violation of the fundamental right to equality under Article 14 and right to live with dignity under article 21.

National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) study on AIDS

Part of: Prelims and mains GS II- Health services and issues

In news

According to figures released by National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) it said it would not be an easy battle to end the disease as there are still around 21.40 lakh people living with HIV in India, with the prevalence among adults stood at 0.22 per cent.

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/z28wf5/article24951089.ece/alternates/FREE_660/14-bindu-HIVAIGT84MBSUJ1jpgjpg

Why is this study important?
- The objective of HIV estimations is to provide updated information on the status of the HIV epidemic in India at the national and State/Union Territory level.
- Estimations of adult HIV prevalence, annual new infections (HIV incidence), AIDS-related mortality, and prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) needs are produced as outcomes of HIV estimations.
- The modelled estimates are needed because there is no direct reliable way of measuring these core indicators, which are used to track the epidemic monitor and evaluate response around the world

What does the report say?
- This epidemic is high in some geographical regions and population groups
- The report has noted that the rate of decline in annual new HIV infections has been relatively slower in recent years
- The impact of the HIV/AIDS control programme has been significant, with more than an 80 per cent decline in estimated new infections from the epidemic's peak in 1995.

Some statistics
- There were around 87,000 new HIV infections and over 69,000 AIDS-related deaths (ARDs) in 2017.
- Around 22,675 mothers needed Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) for prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV.
- India's 2017 figures also do not show a significant positive shift from 2015, the previous year for which when such a survey had been carried out.
- In 2015, India had reported 86,000 new HIV infections.
- Of these, children (<15 years) accounted for 12 per cent (10,400)
- Remaining (75,000) were adults (15+ years).
- In 2015, the total number of people living with HIV in India was estimated at 21.17 lakh, while the same figure was 22.26 lakh in 2007.

Way ahead
There should be no place for complacency as the country aims to achieve the ambitious goal of ending AIDS in India by 2030.

Fluoride contamination in Odisha

Part of: Prelims and mains GS II and GS III- Health, Environment and Pollution

In news

- School Children in Odisha's Nuapada district are facing the brunt of Flouride Contamination with potable water sources in as many as 54 schools and anganwadi premises testing for fluoride presence beyond permissible limits.
- Laboratory tests found 5.25 mg per litre fluoride content in water.
- Consumption of water having fluoride content above 1.5 mg per litre is considered dangerous to health.
- In 2018-19, drinking water sources in eight schools in Nayagarh, seven in Balangir and eight in Kalahandi districts were found to be fluoride contaminated.

Health Issues

- Prolonged consumption of fluoride-contaminated water leads to dental and skeletal fluorosis.
- Mottled Teeth and crippled backbone and limbs are manifestation of the disease.
- Bones in children are in formation stage while fluoride tends to damage bones.

UN Report: A child under 15 dies every 5 seconds around the world

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Health

In news:
According to the new mortality estimates released by UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Population Division and the World Bank Group, an estimated 6.3 million children under 15 years of age died in 2017, or 1 every 5 seconds, mostly of preventable causes.

Statistics

- In 2017, 2.5 million newborns died in their first month while 5.4 million deaths — occur in the first five years of life, with newborns accounting for around half of the deaths.
- Globally, in 2017, half of all deaths under five years of age took place in sub-Saharan Africa, and another 30% in Southern Asia.
- Also, a baby born in sub-Saharan Africa or in South Asia was nine times more likely to die in the first month than a baby born in a high-income country
- The most risky period of child's life is the first month.
- The estimates also said that the number of children dying under five has fallen dramatically from 12.6 million in 1990 to 5.4 million in 2017.
- The number of deaths in older children aged between 5 to 14 years dropped from 1.7 million to under a million in the same period.

Disparities within countries

- Under-five mortality rates among children in rural areas are, on average, 50% higher than among children in urban areas.
- In addition, those born to uneducated mothers are more than twice more likely to die before turning five than those born to mothers with a secondary or higher education.

Causes

- Most children under 5 die due to preventable or treatable causes such as complications during birth, pneumonia, diarrhea, neonatal sepsis and malaria.

- Among children between 5 and 14 years of age, injuries become a more prominent cause of death, especially from drowning and road traffic.
- Within this age group, regional differences exist, with the risk of dying for a child from sub-Saharan Africa 15 times higher than in Europe.

Sex offenders' registry launched with 4.4 lakh entries

Part of: Mains II – Social Justice, Governance

In news
- India became the ninth country in the world to have a National Database on Sexual Offenders (NDSO), accessible only to law enforcement agencies for the purpose of investigation and monitoring.
- The proposal to set up a registry was mooted after the 2012 Nirbhaya gangrape case in New Delhi.
- This will not only aid the victims/complainants but also help the civil society organisations and responsible citizens to anonymously report such complaints.

The registry
- The first-of-its-kind national sex offenders' registry has names and details of some 4.4 lakh people convicted for various sexual offences across the country.
- The database is for those convicted for sexual offences 2005 onwards.
- It includes name, address, photograph and fingerprint details of the convict.
- The database will be maintained by the National Crime Records Bureau, that will also track whether the State police were updating the records on time.
- The database will include offenders convicted under charges of rape, gang rape, Protection of Children from Sexual Offenders Act (POCSO) and eve teasing.

Portal
- Another portal was launched, cybercrime.gov.in, that will receive complaints from citizens on objectionable online content related to child pornography, child sexual abuse material, and sexually explicit material such as rape and gang rape.
- There are other features, such as a victim or complainant can track his/her report by opting for 'report and track' option using his/her mobile number.
- The complaints registered through this portal will be handled by police authorities of respective State/UTs.

Protecting persons with HIV/ AIDS: A law to safeguard rights and prevent discrimination

Part of: Prelims and mains II – Health and social justice

In news
- The Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (Prevention and Control) Act of 2017 safeguards the human rights of people living with HIV and AIDS.
- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare issued a notification to bring the Act into force from September 10.

Significance
- The Act was born out of an urgent need to prevent and control the virus and syndrome.
- It has highlighted the necessity for effective care, support and treatment for HIV and AIDS.
- The Act spawns from the commitment to the global community under the Declaration of Commitment on Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (2001) for enhanced coordination and intensification of national, regional and international efforts to combat the virus and syndrome in a comprehensive manner.
- The statute aims to provide equal rights to persons with HIV and bring them into the mainstream.
- The Act gains importance as it makes it a legal obligation to protect the privacy of persons with HIV and AIDS.
- The law addresses discrimination meted out to persons with HIV and AIDS.
- It fortifies the health and medical health-care system for them and introduces legal accountability along with formal mechanisms to inquire into complaints and redress grievances.

Provisions of the Act
- The Act lists various grounds on which discrimination against persons with HIV is prohibited.
- These include the denial, termination, discontinuation or unfair treatment with regard to employment, educational establishments, health-care services, standing for public or private office, and insurance.
- The requirement for HIV testing as a pre-requisite for obtaining employment or accessing health care or education is also prohibited.
- The Act provides that every HIV infected or affected person below the age of 18 years has the right to reside in a shared household.

- The Act prohibits any individual from publishing information or advocating feelings of hatred against HIV positive persons and those living with them.
- Section 37 makes such propagation of hatred punishable with a term of imprisonment which shall not be less than three months but which may extend to two years, with fine which may extend to Rs. 1 lakh.
- As per the provisions of the Act, every person in the care and custody of the state shall have the right to HIV prevention, testing, treatment and counselling services.

Panel approves nutrition norms

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Health and Nutrition, Food security

In news

- The National Technical Board on Nutrition (NTBN) has approved guidelines proposed by Ministry of Women and Child Development, for severe acute malnutrition (SAM).
- The measures are part of the community-based health management of children suffering from SAM.
- The government had, till now, only put in place guidelines for the hospitalisation of severely wasted children who develop medical complications. Those norms were made public in 2011.

Guidelines and role of Anganwadi workers

- The guidelines outline the role of anganwadi workers and auxillary nurse midwives (ANMs) in identifying severely wasted children, segregating those with oedema or medical complications and sending them to the nearest health facility or nutrition rehabilitation centres.
- The remaining children are enrolled into "community based management", which includes provision of nutrition, continuous monitoring of growth, administration of antibiotics and micro-nutrients as well as counselling sessions and imparting of nutrition and health education.
- According to the recommendations, anganwadi workers have to provide modified morning snacks, hot cooked meals and take home ration for SAM children.
- The morning snacks and hot-cooked meals, which are served at anganwadis to children between the age of three to six years, should be prepared freshly and served at the centralised kitchen/ anganwadi centres.

- Locally available cereals, pulses, green leafy vegetables and tubers, vitamin C rich fruits, as well as fresh milk and 3-4 eggs every week have also been prescribed.
- Importantly, the government has also revised the method to be used to measure wasting and advised calculating weight based on the height of children instead of the mid-upper arm circumference.

Do you know?

National Technical Board on Nutrition (NTBN)

- It has been constituted to make technical recommendations on policy-relevant issues on nutrition.
- The role of the board is advisory in nature.
- It has to advise the states and UTs on preventive measures and management of SAM children.
- The board has to coordinate the collation, synthesis of existing scientific and operational research, identify research gaps and make technical recommendations for the research agenda.
- It has to provide technical guidance on the design of nutrition surveys proposed by the states/UTs, other sectors and institutions and their coherence with ongoing National Health and other surveys.
- It has to formulate India specific growth indicators including stunting.

India ranks 158th in 'human capital' score, behind Sudan

Part of: Prelims and mains II – Health, Education and Human resource

In news
- The study is conducted by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the request of the World Bank.
- It is the first of its kind to measure and compare the strength of countries' "human capital".
- The study underscores that when a country's human capital score increases, its economy grows.

Rank of India and its neighbourhood

- India ranks 158th in the world for its investments in education and health care, according to the first-ever scientific study ranking countries for their levels of human capital.
- It is an improvement from its position of 162 in 1990.
- The nation is placed behind Sudan (ranked 157th) and ahead of Namibia (ranked 159th) in the list. The U.S. is ranked 27th, while China is at 44th and Pakistan at 164th.
- South Asian countries ranking below India in this report include Pakistan (164), Bangladesh (161) and Afghanistan (188). Countries in the region that have fared better than India in terms of human capital include Sri Lanka (102), Nepal (156), Bhutan (133) and Maldives (116).
- India is falling behind in terms of health and education of its workforce, which could potentially have long-term negative effects on the Indian economy.
- The study is based on analysis of data from sources, including government agencies, schools, and health care systems.

Stimulating economy
- As the world economy grows increasingly dependent on digital technology, from agriculture to manufacturing to the service industry, human capital grows increasingly important for stimulating local and national economies.
- The study underscores that when a country's human capital score increases, its economy grows.
- Components measured in the functional health score include stunting, wasting, anaemia, cognitive impairments, hearing and vision loss, and infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis. And Learning is based on average student scores on internationally comparable tests.

Ranking of other countries and improvements; an overview
- The study places Finland at the top. Turkey showed the most dramatic increase in human capital between 1990 and 2016.
- Asian countries with notable improvement include China, Thailand, Singapore, and Vietnam.
- Within Latin America, Brazil stands out for improvement.
- All these countries have had faster economic growth over this period than peer countries with lower levels of human capital improvement.
- In addition, the greatest increase among sub-Saharan African countries was in Equatorial Guinea.

Mosquito population made extinct with genetic tweak

Part of: Prelims and mains II & III– Health, Biotechnology

In news

- Scientists succeeded for the first time in wiping out an entire population of malaria-carrying mosquitos in the lab using a gene editing tool to programme their extinction.
- So-called gene drive technology works by forcing evolution's hand, ensuring that an engineered trait is passed down to a higher proportion of offspring — across many generations — than would have occurred naturally.
- In experiments with the species Anopheles gambiae, scientists at Imperial College London tweaked a gene known as doublesex so that more females in each generation could no longer bite or reproduce.
- After only eight generations, there were no females left and the population collapsed due to lack of offspring.
- The next step will be to test the technology in a confined laboratory setting that mimics a tropical environment. It will be at least five-to-ten years before it would be considerd to test any mosquitoes with gene drive in the wild

Need to eliminate malaria causing mosquitos
- This breakthrough shows that gene drive can work, providing hope in the fight against a disease that has plagued mankind for centuries.
- Malaria sickened more than 200 million people worldwide in 2016 and killed nearly 450,000. It remains one of the most deadly of infectious diseases.
- 2016 marked the first time in over two decades that malaria cases did not fall year-on-year, despite aggressive and well-funded anti-malarial campaigns.
- Traditional approaches to controlling mosquitoes — especially the use of insecticides — is becoming less effective, mainly due to the build-up of resistance.
- Previous attempts by the same team and others to induce the genetically programmed extinction of mosquitos in the laboratory ran into "resistance" in the form of mutations that fought back against the high-tech engineering.

Doublesex gene?
The doublesex gene targeted in the experiments is deeply "conserved", meaning that is formed tens or even hundreds of millions of years ago and is today shared by many insects with only minor variations.

Calls for a moratorium

- Some scientists and technology watchdog groups have called for a moratorium on gene drive research.
- According to critics, the ability to eradicate species and natural populations at will with synthetic gene drive is not to be celebrated but should rather sound an alarm.
- There are ecological risks from manipulating and removing natural populations, such as destroying food webs and shifting the behaviour of diseases, as well as social risks of disrupting agriculture and enabling new weapons.
- The issue will be squarely on the agenda in November in Egypt at a UN Biodiversity summit, which has mandated one of its technical committees to assess gene drive's potential risks and benefits.

Punjab plan to eliminate malaria

Part of Prelims and mains II – Health

In news
- The Punjab government in collaboration with the World Health Organization launched a "'micro strategic plan" to eliminate malaria from the State by 2020.
- Punjab is the first State in the country where the WHO will collaborate for elimination of malaria. It would provide technical support to the State to achieve the set target.
- State is committed to micro - level surveillance under which each and every reported case of malaria would be investigated and remedial measures undertaken to prevent its further spread.

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

Smartgram Yojna by Pranab Mukherjee Foundation

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Rural development; Role of CSOs/NGOs
In news:

- Former President Pranab Mukherjee inaugurates **Smartgram Yojna Projects** in Haryana
- The **Smartgram Project** in Haryana started in July 2016, when Shri Pranab Mukherjee adopted some villages as the serving President.
- Under the scheme, Pranab Mukherjee had adopted five villages in 2016, when he was still the President. He had adopted the villages as he wanted the standard of living of the people staying there to be on a par with that in the cities.
- Now its numbers had swollen to 100.
- Pranab Mukherjee said more and more villagers must be connected with the "Smartgram" project to ensure peaceful, happy and prosperous villages.

An education that is in sync

Introduction

- Higher education in India has grown exponentially in recent years.
- A survey by the All India Survey on Higher Education published in July this year shows that the gross enrolment ratio (GER) was 25.8% in 2017-18, up from 10% in 2004-05.

What is GER?
GER is the ratio (expressed as percentage), of the total enrolment within a country in a specific level of education, regardless of age, to the population in the official age group corresponding to this level of education.

GER and issues of higher education India

- For higher education, the survey calculates the ratio for the age group 18 to 23 years.
- Internationally, the age group 18 to 22 is also used. For India, the Survey gives the corresponding figure as 30%.
- The GER for higher education in India is still less than what it is in developed countries, the growth rate is still quite impressive.
- The next step is to ensure that the outcome of academic programmes by higher education institutes (HEIs) is acceptable.

- The debate in the media on higher education is often focussed on issues related to governance and autonomy.
- There needs to be a debate on other important issues, including the content of higher education in HEIs.

Radhakrishnan Commission Report (RCR) (1948-49)

- Just after Independence, a commission comprising educationists from India, the U.K. and the U.S., and chaired by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, was formed "to report on Indian University Education and suggest improvements and extensions that may be desirable to suit present and future requirements of the country".
- The RCR recommended a well-balanced education with 'general', 'liberal' and 'occupational' components.
- Without all-round general (including liberal) education, one could not be expected to play roles expected of a citizen outside one's immediate professional sphere.
- It advocated that general and specialised education should proceed together.
- The study of languages should be given equal importance as one communicated to the outside world only through the medium of language. Therefore, a lack of communication skills could be a handicap.
- The RCR drew inspiration from the emphasis on general education in universities in the U.S.
- It cited a lecture by Einstein (1931) where he said: "The development of general ability for independent thinking and judgement should always be placed foremost, not the acquisition of special knowledge…"

The American parallel

- The National Academies Press (NAP) of the U.S. which represents the national academies of sciences, engineering and medicine published the report, "The Integration of the Humanities and Arts with Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine in Higher Education: Branches from the Same Tree".
- According to the NAP's report, the purpose of higher education is to prepare graduates for work and life, as well as active and engaged citizenship.
- This can be achieved only through the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies related to the profession they chose to specialise in and also written and oral communication skills, ability to work as a team, ethical decision making, critical thinking, and ability to apply knowledge in real world settings.

Significance of RCR and NAP

- Philosophical deliberations in the RCR report that are related to the content of higher education are still relevant today.

- Both the RCR and NAP reports attach the importance to the integration of Sciences, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine and humanities in university teaching.
- The RCR, in turn, talked about including general education as an essential element. But the NAP report goes much beyond what the RCR states and advocates integrating the teaching of humanities in STEM.

Why inter-disciplinary approach is needed?
- Problems in a real-life setting are interdisciplinary and require an appreciation of related fields.
- The NAP report acknowledges that disciplinary specialisation has resulted in many developments but also points out that emerging problems are multi-disciplinary.
- This can be seen in examples: rising demand for energy, and continuing advances in technology. The use of energy on a large scale and the continued availability of energy in an environmental-friendly manner are challenges which cannot be addressed by narrow specialists.
- There are technical advances every day, influencing everyday life in diverse ways. This is also leading to concerns about privacy, technology-driven social and workforce changes, and the evolving need for individuals to retrain themselves to remain in employment.
- In such a scenario, it is important that professionals study the impact of innovations on society in a holistic manner.

Scene in India
- Higher Education Institutions are far from integrated. As far as the inclusion of elements of general education in the curriculum for undergraduates is concerned, the situation is mixed.
- Several engineering, and science education and research institutes have embedded general education programmes at the undergraduate level. Such programmes are missing in most university-affiliated science colleges.
- Rather, there are institutions that cater to a single stream which precludes the possibility of even an informal interaction between students and faculty with different specialisations.

Conclusion
- The concept of general education and specialised education proceeding together needs to be widely adopted in India.
- The focus of undergraduate education should be on classical disciplines, with enough credits for general education. Focus on specialisation can wait until the post graduate level.

- In 1959, C.P. Snow spoke about "The Two Cultures". It is time to bridge the divide between the two cultures in the education system and evolve a third culture where the two sides understand and appreciate each other.

Connecting the dots

- The quality of higher education in India requires major improvement to make it internationally competitive. Do you think that the entry of foreign educational institutions would help improve the quality of technical and higher education in the country? Discuss. (UPSC mains 2015)

Rationalisation of CS schemes mooted

Part of: Prelims and mains II – Government policies and issues arising due to their design and implementation

In news

- Several Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) are just boutique in nature with 'dubious' outcomes, the 15th Finance Commission of the Union Government has noted while calling for urgent rationalisation of the CSSs.
- The pruning of such schemes would give the State governments greater measure of flexibility in financing.

'High costs incurred'

- There are far too many of these boutique schemes with dubious outcomes in the States.
- Even the ones which are operational do not justify the high establishment cost being incurred on them.
- The commission noted the general status of public financing in States remains 'stressed' owing to payments made towards the Seventh Pay Commission, loan waivers given to farmers and debt restructuring under the UDAY scheme.
- The commission is looking at ways to restrict some of these schemes even as the Reserve Bank of India has pointed towards the stress on State finances as result.
- State governments have already demanded an increased flow of untied fiscal resources in place of tied resources that come with CSS.

Mergers in 2013

- The proliferation of the CSSs was debatable until the Ninth Five-Year Plan, when the total number of schemes shot up to 360, accounting for about 60% of Central assistance.

- In 2013, the Planning Commission announced the merger of several CSSs, reducing the count to 66. These were further pruned to 27 following the report of a committee of CMs led by Shivrajsingh Chauhan recently.

Do you know? Finance commission
- Article 280 of the Indian Constitution defines the scope and functions of the commission:
- The President will constitute a finance commission at the end of every fifth year or earlier, as the deemed necessary, which shall include a chairman and four other members.
- Article provides for, the President shall cause every recommendation made by the Finance Commission under the provisions of this Constitution together with an explanatory memorandum as to the action taken thereon to be laid before each House of Parliament.

Drinking water programme not effective in Odisha, observes CAG

Part of: Prelims and mains II – Governance and Public services

In news
- Findings of the CAG report on NRDWP
- The implementation of the **National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP)** has not been effective in Odisha.

Concerns:
- It has reached only 3.70% households against its target of covering 35% households by March 2017.
- Digging of tube wells without conducting scientific survey had led to dry wells which deprived the habitations of drinking water and expenditure incurred on them became wasteful.
- The vision of providing safe drinking water to the people living in rural areas at all times could not be achieved in the State.
- Inefficient fund management, instances of delay in the release of funds by the State government and low utilisation due to the slow pace of execution of works were also noticed.
- The target fixed under strategic plan was largely not achieved and water quality monitoring and surveillance was inadequate.

Do you know?

About National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP)
- The Centre had launched the NRDWP on April 1, 2009, and the Odisha State Water and Sanitation Mission, under the Rural Development Department, implement the programme in the State.
- The aim of the NRDWP is to provide every rural person with adequate safe water for drinking, cooking and other basic needs with a minimum water quality standard, which should be conveniently accessible at all times and in all situations.

PM launches Ayushman Bharat

Part of: Prelims and mains II – Health and Public services

In news
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the healthcare scheme, Ayushman Bharat, also known as the Pradhan Mantri-Jan Aarogya Yojana (PM-JAY), from Ranchi on the 23rd of September, 2018.
- He further declared that the scheme would be a "game changer" globally in health insurance.

Do you know?

Ayushman Bharat; There are two flagship initiatives under Ayushman Bharat:
- The first is to create a network of health and wellness centres that will bring the healthcare system closer to the people.
- The centres will provide comprehensive healthcare, including treatment for non-communicable diseases and maternal and child health services. Besides this, they will also provide free essential drugs and diagnostic services;
- Rs. 1200 crore have been allocated for this flagship programme. The scheme will cover more than 10 crore poor families, which is approximately 50 crore persons.
- It will also setup wellness centres which will give poor people OPD facility near their homes.
- The second flagship programme under 'Ayushman Bharat' is the 'National Health Protection Scheme'. The National Health Protection Scheme will cover over 10 crore poor and vulnerable families.
- It will provide coverage up to 5 lakh rupees per family, per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization.

The primary anchor of a health-care road map

Introduction

- Prime Minister rolled out the Centre's flagship scheme Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Abhiyaan, also known as Ayushman Bharat or the National Health Protection Mission (AB-NHPM).
- This is the world's largest health scheme which will serve a population that equals 27-28 European countries. The beneficiaries are almost equal to the population of Canada, Mexico and US put together.
- The Prime Minister also launched a toll free number 14555 for people to get more information about Ayushma Bharat scheme.

Achieving Universal Health Coverage:
- Universal health coverage is getting prioritised as a part of political reform with the launch of two pillars of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY):
- Ayushman Bharat (AB), where 1.5 lakh health sub-centres are being converted into health and wellness centres.
- The National Health Protection Mission (NHPM), which aims to provide health cover of ₹5 lakh per family, per annum, reaching out to 500 million people.

Align Health entitlement to Income lines
- This 2003 solution of the Vajpayee-era recommended, inter alia, that good governance lies in aligning the income lines for health and housing.
- In other words, de-link entitlement to health care from the poverty line.
- In that event, the income lines for housing could be simultaneously applicable for health entitlement. The PMJAY would help improve availability, accessibility, and affordability for the needy 40% of the population.
- The government could then proceed, to scale the health premium subsidy in line with housing categories — economically weaker sections (entitled to 75-90%), lower income (entitled to 50%), and middle income groups (entitled to 20%).

Build in accountability
- The NHPM is pushing for hospitalisation at secondary- and tertiary-level private hospitals, while disregarding the need for eligible households to first access primary care, prior to becoming 'a case for acute care'.

- Without the stepping stone of primary health care, direct hospitalisation is a high-cost solution. Forward movement is feasible only through partnerships and coalitions with private sector providers.
- These partnerships are credible only if made accountable. The National Health Policy 2017 proposed "strategic purchasing" of services from secondary and tertiary hospitals for a fee.
- Upgrading district hospitals to government medical colleges and teaching hospitals will enhance capacities at the district level.
- Service providers will become accountable for cost and quality if they are bound to the nuts and bolts of good governance outlined above.

Transform primary care
- Elimination of catastrophic health expenditures for the consumer can come about only if there is sustained effort to modernise and transform the primary care space.
- Bring together all relevant inter-sectoral action linking health and development so as to universalise the availability of clean drinking water, sanitation, garbage disposal, waste management, food security, nutrition and vector control.
- The Swachh Bharat programme must be incorporated in the PMJAY. These steps put together will reduce the disease burden.
- Kerala and Tamil Nadu have demonstrated that high-performing, primary health-care systems do address a majority of community/individual health needs.
- The health and wellness clinics must connect with early detection and treatment.
- Robust delivery of preventive, clinical and diagnostic health-care services will result in early detection of cancers, diabetes and chronic conditions, mostly needing long-term treatment and home care.
- Investment in primary care would very quickly reduce the overall cost of health care for the state and for the consumer.

Way forward
- The "best health care at the lowest possible cost" should be inclusive by covering various sections of population, make health-care providers accountable for cost and quality, achieve a reduction in disease burden, and eliminate catastrophic health expenditures for the consumer.
- In addition to above, it should be accompanied by the nuts and bolts of good governance that will support solutions and systems to achieve these objectives.
- Technology and innovation are further reducing costs. AI-powered mobile applications will soon provide high-quality, low-cost, patient-centric, smart wellness solutions.

- The scaleable and inter-operable IT platform being readied for the Ayushman Bharat is encouraging.

Conclusion

- At the 1.5 lakh 'health and wellness clinics', register households to provide them access to district-specific, evidence-based, integrated packages of community, primary preventive and promotive health care.
- The PMJAY is trying to create a major shift in reshaping the horizon of public healthcare space, but the proof of its success lies in its implementation.
- As we integrate prevention, detection and treatment of ill-health, the PMJAY will win hearts if people receive a well-governed 'Health for All' scheme.

Connecting the dots:

- Critically analyse the health care roadmap of India.

Long road ahead: on Ayushman Bharat scheme

Introduction

- Ayushman Bharat has been rolled out as a health protection scheme that will provide guaranteed access to treatment that is free at the point of delivery to about 40% of the population.
- It is the essential first step on the road to universal health coverage.
- Since the Centre has announced that 10.74 crore families identified through Socio-Economic Caste Census data will be given an annual ₹5 lakh cover under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (the insurance component of the scheme).

Making healthcare all inclusive

Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Ranchi, Jharkhand, on September 23. This is being touted as the "world's largest government funded healthcare programme" targeting more than 50 crore beneficiaries

SCHEME BENEFITS

PMJAY will provide a cover of up to ₹5 lakh per family per year, for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation

Cashless and paperless access to services for the beneficiary at the point of service

APPROACH

■ Consists of two inter-related components

● **1,50,000** Health and Wellness Centres will be created to bring primary healthcare closer to people

These centres will provide Comprehensive Primary Health Care (CPHC), covering both maternal and child health services and non-communicable diseases, including free essential drugs and diagnostic services

● Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) will provide health protection cover to poor and vulnerable families for secondary and tertiary care

PILOT LAUNCH OF PMJAY

■ The pilot launch has been done in 22 States / UTs (Arunachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Chhattisgarh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, M.P., Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, U.P., Jammu & Kashmir, Goa and Maharashtra among others)

■ The pilot launch involved over 1,280 hospitals to test the 'Beneficiary Identification System' and 'Transaction Management System'

NO INSURANCE (%)

A look at no access to healthcare insurance/assurance, according the 71st Round of NSSO

85.9% Rural households

82% Urban households
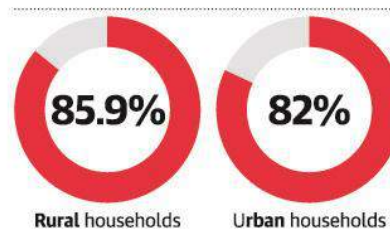
HOW PMJAY PLANS TO WORK

■ PMJAY primarily targets the poor, deprived rural families and identified occupational category of urban workers' families as per the latest Socio-Economic Caste Census data

■ PMJAY will provide coverage up to ₹5,00,000 per family per year, for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization through a network of Empanelled Health Care Providers (EHCP)

■ The EHCP network will provide cashless and paperless access to services for the beneficiaries at both public and private hospitals

NOT ON BOARD

Delhi Kerala Odisha Punjab Telangana

Challenges

- The late start makes it virtually impossible for all those who are technically insured to avail of the services that state agencies must make available, within a reasonable time-frame.
- The allocation of just ₹2,000 crore during the current year to the PMJAY cannot provide the promised cover to the large population sought to be included.
- Not all States and Union Territories are in a position to raise their own share, and a few have not even joined the scheme. The challenge of funding, therefore, remains.
- Without adequate budgetary commitments, the implications of pooling the financial risk for such a large segment of the population through insurers or state-run trusts or societies make the outcomes uncertain.

Solutions

- Guaranteeing health-care access using private or public facilities presumes tight cost control. In the case of the PMJAY, this is to be achieved using defined treatment packages for which rates are prescribed.
- Costs are a contested area between the care-providers and the Centre, and many for-profit hospitals see the government's proposals as unviable.

- In the absence of adequate preparation, the Ayushman Bharat administration is talking of a rate review.
- The State governments should have been persuaded to regulate the hospital sector under the Clinical Establishments (Registration and Regulation) Act, 2010.
- The law broadly provides for standardisation of facilities and reasonable rates for procedures.
- Apprehensions of fraud have prompted Ayushman Bharat administrators to announce that some key treatments should be availed through public sector institutions. But public facilities have been neglected for long.
- It is essential to reduce the pressure on secondary and tertiary hospitals for expensive treatments by investing in preventive and primary care facilities.

Conclusion
- The 150,000 health and wellness centres of the National Health Protection Mission can play a valuable role.
- The first-order priority should be to draw up a road map for universal health coverage, through continuous upgradation of the public sector infrastructure.

Connecting the dots:
- Ayushman Bharat is the essential first step on the road to universal health coverage. Comment.

New telecom policy aims to provide broadband access to all citizens by 2022

Part of Prelims and mains II & III – Governance and Technology

In news
- Union Cabinet approved the **new telecom policy**
- The new policy aims to provide **broadband access to every citizen at 50 Mbps speed by the year 2022.**
- The last telecom policy was announced in 2012.

The National Digital Communications Policy 2018
- The policy envisions attracting $100 billion investments into the country's digital communications sector.
- Aims at creating at least 40 lakh new jobs in the sector in the next four years and train one million manpower for building New Age Skill.

- The policy aims at expanding the IoT ecosystem to five billion connected devices, create globally recognised IPRs in India and create a fund for R&D in new technologies.
- It also pitches for leveraging Artificial Intelligence and Big Data to enhance the quality of services offered, spectrum management and network security while also establishing India as a global hub for cloud computing.
- The policy has called for a review of levies and fees — including licence fee, universal service obligation fund levy and spectrum usage charges, on the sector. This is expected to help the debt-laden telecom sector.
- Establish a comprehensive data protection regime for digital communications that safeguards the privacy, autonomy and choice of individuals.
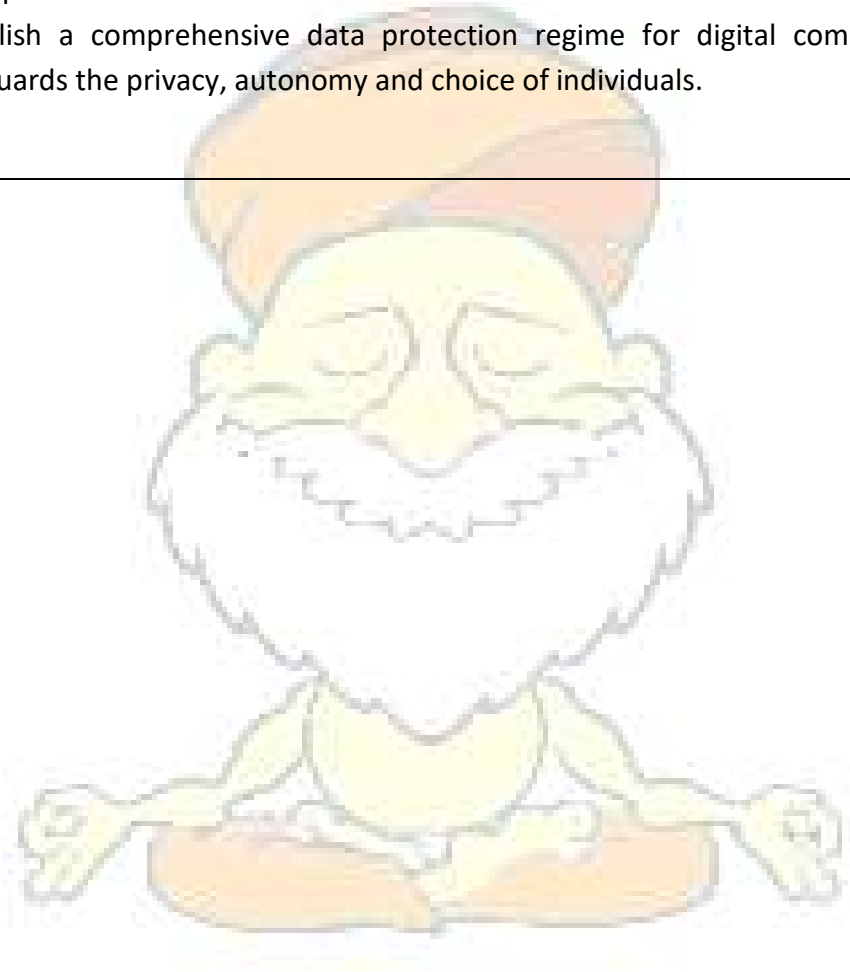
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

UN to regulate High Seas soon

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II and III – Role of International Organization; Environment and Ecology; Conservation of Biodiversity

In news:
- United Nations kicks-off talks on a 2020 treaty that would regulate the high seas.
- Four sessions of talks are planned to take place over two years, with the goal of protecting marine biodiversity and avoiding further pillaging of the oceans.
- Talk will focus on the high seas and the international zone of marine waters – spaces beyond national jurisdictions, or areas that belong to no country in particular.

Important Value addition:

About High Seas
- High Seas: the open ocean, especially that not within any country's jurisdiction.
- High seas cover half the planet yet lack adequate environmental protection.

Do you know?
- In 1982, the UN adopted the **Convention on the Law of the Sea**, but **left the high seas free from restrictions**.
- All States enjoy the traditional freedoms of navigation, overflight, scientific research and fishing on the high seas.
- The convention took effect in 1994, without the participation of the U.S.
- Since then, shipping routes have expanded considerably, and the resources of the ocean deep have aroused significant interest, whether by fishing or mineral extraction.
- Talks will focus on creating protected areas on the high seas, more sharing of maritime resources and technology, and research on environmental impacts.
- U.S. did not ratify the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Conditions in Rohingya camps are disastrous

Part of: GS Mains II – Role of UN or international organization; Refugee/Social issue

In news:
- It's been a year since nearly a million Rohingya refugees poured into Bangladesh and the situation is yet to stabilize.

- UN official warns about the disastrous conditions in Rohingya camps. UN warns of a humanitarian crisis ahead of cyclone season.

Do you know?
- This year's UN joint response plan (JRP) has received only 34% of the funds needed, in contrast to about 85% last year.
- We recently read about Human Rights Council report which spoke about the Myanmar military leadership should be investigated for "genocide" in the violence in August 2017.

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II and III – International; Multilateral organizations; Indian Economy

In news:
- RCEP, 16-nation group, accepts some key demands from India: on differential tariff regimes for different country groups like China, and in allowing a 20-year implementation period of the agreement.
- Another key area where India scored was in establishing a linkage between services and goods negotiations, given that some countries were not as welcoming of allowing movement of labour.

Do you know?
- RCEP includes 10 ASEAN nations + India, China, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea.
- Of the 16 countries that have been negotiating for the RCEP, India does not have Free Trade Agreements with three countries — Australia, New Zealand and China.

BIMSTEC Summit: Green shoots of revival

Introduction

- Fourth BIMSTEC summit is going to held this week at Kathmandu, Nepal.
- Basic aspects about BIMSCTEC has been covered in Mains Focus of 30 August 2018 IASbaba DNA.

- There some positives which this summit is going to contribute in the progress of BIMSTEC and also there are some concerns which needs to be taken care for further developments.

The Positives:
- The work begins now on **drafting a charter for BIMSTEC,** which has functioned so far on the basis of the Bangkok Declaration of 1997, and outcomes of the past three summits and the Leaders' Retreat in 2016.
- **A Permanent Working Committee** will be set up to provide direction during the period between two summits and also **to prepare the Rules of Procedure**.
- **The Secretariat** has been promised **additional financial and human resources** and **enhancement of its role** to coordinate, monitor and facilitate the grouping's activities.
- As the institution has been handicapped due to lack of financial muscle, the leaders took the decision to establish **the BIMSTEC Development Fund.**
- **A push to increase its visibility and stature in the international fora** will also be made.
- Recognising that 16 areas of cooperation represent too wide a spectrum, the BIMSTEC governments will make a serious endeavour to review, restructure and rationalise various sectors, **identifying a few core areas.**
- In this exercise, **Thailand has proposed a new strategy of five pillars** (viz. connectivity, trade and investment, people-to-people contacts, security, and science and technology). This will be considered, although the difficulty in dropping specific sectors dear to individual member-states should not be minimised.

Concerns
- As to the debit side of the balance sheet, it should be noted that of **at least six legal instruments awaiting finalisation**, only one, the Memorandum of Understanding on Grid Interconnection, could be inked in Kathmandu.
- Fourteen years after signing the framework agreement on **Free Trade Area (FTA), final agreement is yet to be signed.**
- The Thai Prime Minister bravely urged participants to accept **making BIMSTEC a Free Trade Zone by 2021 as "our common goal", but this did not find a place in the summit declaration.**
- The Myanmar President pointed out that the grouping had established its **Energy Centre in 2009, but it is waiting for operationalization.**
- India rightly emphasised that **"the biggest opportunity is connectivity** — trade connectivity, economic connectivity, transport connectivity, digital connectivity, and people-to-people connectivity."

- Every participant dwelt on the advantages and potential of connectivity. The Kathmandu Declaration has spelt out a number of measures, old and new, to secure this objective.
- **However, the Motor Vehicle Agreement and the Coastal Shipping Agreement would still need more time for finalisation.**
- **BIMSTEC summit is not an annual or regular affair.** Probably the timing of the next summit will be determined by the degree of progress ministers and officials achieve in the coming months. If the grouping succeeds in holding its next summit in 2019, it will be seen as a healthy sign.

Other facets

- **Plans to revitalise the Business Forum and the Economic Forum** should be welcome if they help in fully engaging business and industry.
- **Cooperation in the security domain** has been progressing satisfactorily, with a new instrument added to the arsenal: **a meeting of home ministers.**
- This will be in addition to **annual meetings of national security advisers** and **the first meeting of army chiefs,** which is due to take place in Pune this month.
- Also envisaged is a **sound plan to establish forums for parliamentarians, universities, cultural organisations and the media community.**
- **The summit articulated a vision for the Bay of Bengal Region** heading towards a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable future. The region is now widely viewed as a **common space for security, connectivity and development.**

Conclusion

- Think tanks are fond of advising governments that they should walk the talk. But the **Nepalese Prime Minister** and the summit chairman asserted: **"Now is the time not just to deliberate, but also to deliver. Now is the time to translate promises into performance."**
- If this prescription is followed by all, **BIMSTEC can become a dynamic, effective and result-oriented organisation.**

Connecting the dots:

- Though there are many prospects and challenges, BIMSTEC is a natural choice for India. Analyse.

BIMSTEC First joint military exercise: MILEX 18 exercise

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

In news:

- MILEX 18 exercise – to be held in Pune – is aimed at helping BIMSTEC nations practise "planning and conduct of counter terrorist operations".
- Each country was asked to send a contingent of 30 personnel including five officers and 25 soldiers in addition to three observers.
- However many countries backed out from sending full contingents and sent only observers.

For a world free of chemical weapons

Introduction

The Chemical Weapons Convention Act was enacted in 2000 to give effect to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction signed by the government on January 14, 1993.

Do you know?

- The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is a multilateral treaty that bans chemical weapons and requires their destruction within a specified period of time.
- CWC negotiations started in 1980 in the UN Conference on Disarmament. The convention opened for signature on January 13, 1993, and entered into force on April 29, 1997.
- The CWC is open to all nations and currently has 193 states-parties. Israel has signed but has yet to ratify the convention. Three states have neither signed nor ratified the convention (Egypt, North Korea and South Sudan).
- The CWC is implemented by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which is headquartered in The Hague.
- The OPCW receives states-parties' declarations detailing chemical weapons-related activities or materials and relevant industrial activities.
- After receiving declarations, the OPCW inspects and monitors states-parties' facilities and activities that are relevant to the convention, to ensure compliance.
- OPCW won the 2013 Nobel peace prize.

Features of the Chemical Weapons Convention Act of 2000

- The Act defines chemical weapons as toxic chemicals, including munitions and devices, specifically designed to cause death or other harm. The definition includes in its ambit "any equipment" specifically designed for employing chemical weapons.

- It empowers the Centre to set up a National Authority to act as the "national focal point" for effective liaison with organisations and other state parties on matters relating to the Convention and for fulfilling the obligations of the country.
- Section 19 of the Act gives full power of inspection of any person who is engaged in the production, processing, acquisition, consumption, transfer, import, export or use of any toxic chemical or discrete organic chemical.
- Inspections extend to any place where any chemical weapon, old chemical weapon, or abandoned chemical weapon is located, or where a chemical weapon production facility exists.
- The Act allows inspections teams to conduct "challenge inspections" of chemical facilities in the company of an Observer. An enforcement officer under the Act shall also accompany the team.
- In 2010, the Act was amended to widen the scope of Section 9 to give the Centre power to appoint any of its own officers, other than those of the National Authority, as enforcement officers.
- Section 16 has also been amended to provide that no person shall transfer to, or receive from, a state which is not a party to the Convention any toxic chemicals.

Functions of National Authority
- Regulation and monitoring the development, production, processing, consumption, transfer or use of toxic chemicals or precursors as specified in the Convention, among others.
- Issue directions and even close down facilities which violate the Convention. It can liaise with other countries to seek or give assistance and protection against the use of chemical weapons.

Conclusion:
- Use of chemical weapons in ongoing Syrian civil war, and Salisbury attack are some of the recent examples, which increases the importance of CWC and OPCW.
- This convention should be not only ratified and implemented globally but also there should be stringent international mechanism to control its violations.

Connecting the dots:
- Use of chemical weapons in civil wars is brutal crime against humanity. Analyse the global scenario in the light of CWC. Also comment on India's measures on the line.

U.S. threatens sanctions on ICC

Part of: GS Mains II and Prelims – International

In news:
- US has threatened to prosecute International Criminal Court (ICC) officials if Americans are charged with war crimes committed in Afghanistan.
- Hague-based court's response - As a court of law, will continue to do its work undeterred, in accordance with those principles and the overarching idea of the rule of law.

Do you know?
- The Hague-based ICC was set up in 2002 with a jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute the world's worst crimes, including genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.
- The court, however, does not have the capacity to arrest suspects and depends on member states for their cooperation.
- The United States has not signed up to the court and in 2002, its Congress passed a law enabling Washington to invade the Netherlands to liberate any U.S. citizen held by the court.

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Uzbek President to invite India to join Afghan rail project

Part of Prelims and mains II – International relations

In news

- India will be invited to help with a key rail link in Afghanistan, during the visit of Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev early next week.
- The rail link of approximately 650 km, connecting the Afghan cities of Mazaar-e-Sharif and Herat, which may later be extended to Kabul, is a major project agreed to by President Ashraf Ghani and President Mirziyoyev last year.
- Uzbek support a greater presence of India in Central Asia, and hope for some benefits of that for Afghanistan. It will open a new page in bilateral relations.
- India's involvement in railway construction is welcomed because of India's proven record and experience, and because of its contribution to bringing peace to Afghanistan.
- The project, for which Uzbekistan has already committed $500 million, could become another major regional connectivity project for India, after its construction of the Zaranj-Delaram Highway in Afghanistan and the Shahid Beheshti port in Chabahar, Iran.
- India is also committed to building another rail route, from Chabahar to Zahedan on the Iran-Afghan border, and President Mirziyoyev is keen to join the transit trade agreement signed by India, Afghanistan and Iran.
- The rail route to Herat, if extended to Kabul, would also link to India's "air corridor", allowing trade, especially dry fruits and agricultural produce to travel along the routes from India to Central Asia and back in much shorter time.
- Uzbekistan has held talks with Iran, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and China, which is already running a rail route into Uzbekistan under the Belt and Road Initiative, for the same project in the past few months.
- Uzbekistan's role in regional security is likely to grow as it will take over the Secretary Generalship of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in January 2019.
- They expressed that SCO is a good platform for India and Pakistan to talk at and to maybe work with other countries on how to bring peace.
- President Mirziyoyev is scheduled to arrive in Delhi on Sunday, and will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi for bilateral talks on Monday.

Officials said more than 30 documents and agreements are expected to be signed during the visit, including trade agreements, media and educational partnerships, and MoUs linking Andijan-Gujarat states, Samarkand-Agra and Bukhara-Hyderabad.

G-4 for UN Security Council reform, multilateralism

Part of Prelims and mains II – International organisations and groupings

In news
- India and other Group-4 (G-4) countries reaffirmed their commitment to multilateralism and called for the early reform of the UN Security Council (UNSC).
- The current composition of the UNSC does not reflect the changed global realities and they stressed that Security Council reform is essential to address today's complex challenges.
- Given the American disinterest in the UN and other multilateral bodies, China, one of the five permanent members of the UNSC, has slowed down the move to expand the body, according to diplomats tracking the process.
- The U.S. has no active opposition to the demand of these four countries to be included as permanent members of the UNSC, but the Trump administration has taken a benign approach to the proposed reform.
- G-4 Ministers noted that despite an overwhelming majority of UN member states supporting Security Council reform, the negotiations launched in 2009 have not produced substantive progress over the 10 years.
- While there is no active American support for reform, Mr. Trump's call for other countries to step up and share the responsibility of managing the UN might support the reform, even in the face of active Chinese opposition.
- Germany and Japan contribute one-fifth of the UN budget while the four countries together have one-fifth of the world population.

INDIA AND THE WORLD

India and Pakistan: Indus treaty talks

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – India and its neighbourhood- relations

In news:
- India, Pakistan will hold two-day discussions (Permanent Indus Commission meeting) on Indus Water Treaty and related issues.
- The Pakistani side will reiterate its objections over two water-storage and hydroelectric projects being built by India during the talks.
- Pakistan would raise its concerns over the **1000-MW Pakal Dul** and the **48-MW Lower Kalnai hydroelectric projects** on the **Chenab river**.

Do you know?

The **1960 Indus Waters Treaty**, brokered by the World Bank and signed by then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and former Pakistan President Ayub Khan, administers how the waters of the Indus River and its tributaries that flow in both the countries will be utilised.

The Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) deals with river Indus and its five tributaries, which are classified in 2 categories:
- **Eastern rivers:** Sutlej, Beas and Ravi
- **Western rivers:** Jhelum, Chenab and Indus

According to treaty,
- All the water of **eastern rivers** shall be available for **unrestricted use in India**.
- India should let **unrestricted flow of water from western rivers to Pakistan**. The treaty says that India can use the water in western rivers in "**non-consumptive**" needs (such as irrigation, storage and even for electricity production).
- The treaty allocates 80% of water from the six-river Indus water system to Pakistan.
- A **Permanent Indus Commission** was set up as a bilateral commission to implement and manage the Treaty.
- Though Indus originates from Tibet, **China has been kept out of the Treaty**.
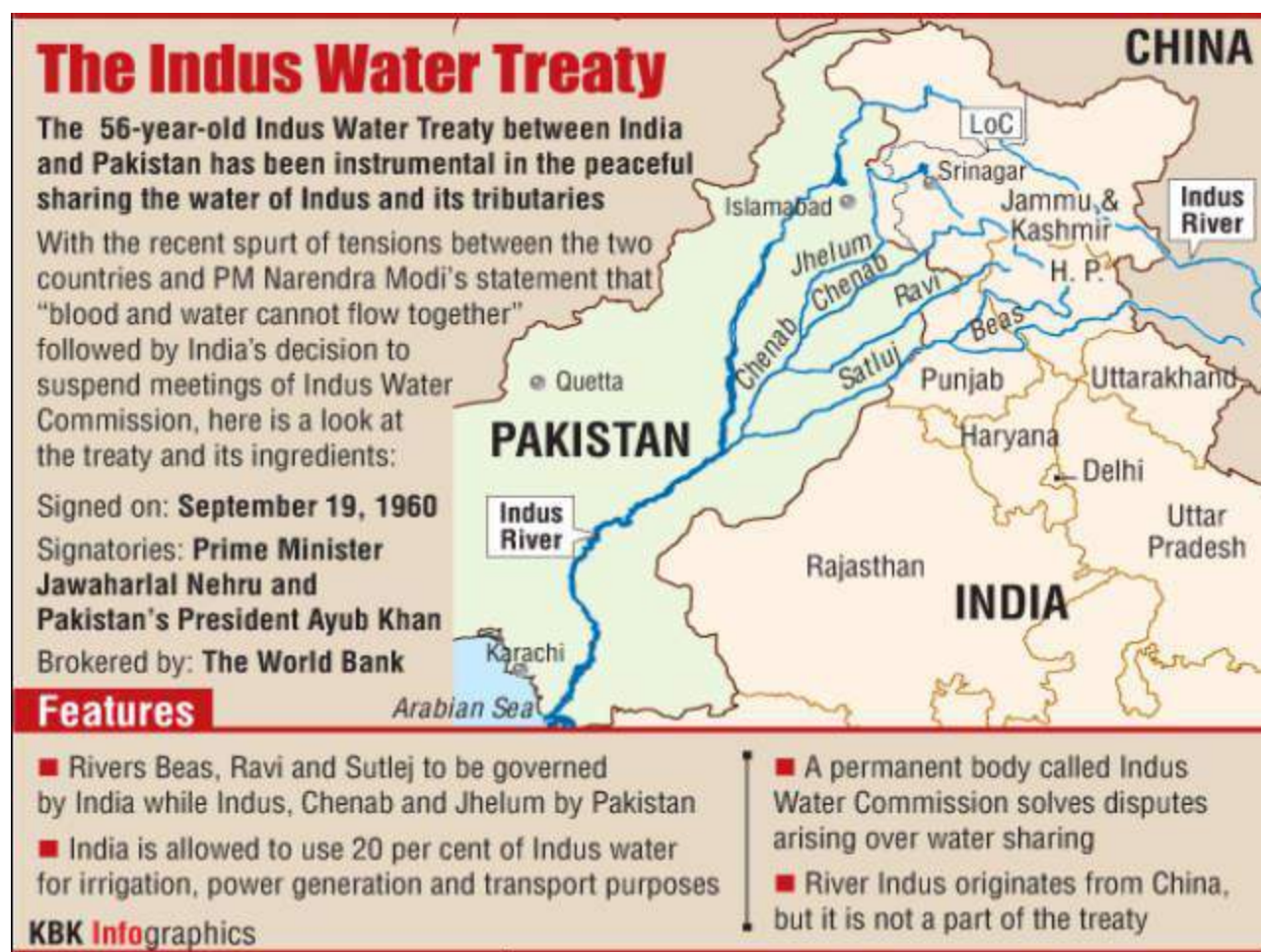
India-Pakistan issues: Permanent Indus Commission (PIC) meeting

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – India and its neighbourhood- relations
In news:

- India and Pakistan concluded the 115th meeting of the India-Pakistan Permanent Indus Commission (PIC) in Lahore.
- India has invited Pakistan to visit sites of the **Pakal Dul** and **Lower Kalnal hydro-electric projects on the Chenab.**
- As per the provisions of the **Indus Waters Treaty 1960**, technical discussions were held on implementation of various hydroelectric projects including Pakal Dul (1000 MW) and Lower Kalnai (48 MW) in Jammu and Kashmir.

India policy towards Naya Pakistan

Introduction:

With Imran Khan, as Pakistan Prime Minister, many committed democrats in South Asia (especially India) hope that – Pakistan is about to emerge into a new dawn and it would also bring to an end many of the issues that afflict India-Pakistan relations today.

However, India must remain cautious as –

- **It is not sure, how far can it be said that real democracy exists in Pakistan today**, even though an election process was gone through?
- **Also it is not clear, can merely a political newcomer turn around the situation** in a country whose attempts at democracy have never been fulfilled all these years?
- The new Pakistan Foreign Minister and many of the other key Ministers in Mr. Khan's Cabinet are holdovers from previous administrations – who hardly endeared themselves to audiences in India.

Role of Pakistani 'deep state'

- Democratic leaders in Pakistan, especially more recent ones like **Benazir Bhutto** and **Nawaz Sharif**, have paid a heavy price whenever they sought to enlarge their democratic constituencies.
- They have been **unable to withstand the machinations of the Pakistani 'deep state'**, which controls almost every single aspect of political activity in Pakistan.
- For the Pakistani 'deep state', the main enemy is India. No democratically elected leader can afford to ignore this fact.

Over the years, the 'deep state' has co-opted some of the key levers of power, including the judiciary, to maintain its stranglehold on Pakistan.

Generals like Zia-ul-Haq and Musharraf openly declared their intention to seek power and take charge of the state.

Today, the 'deep state' adopts more insidious/stealthy means to maintain control over the levers of power.

Hence, India needs to assess the situation in Pakistan in somewhat greater depth, and not jump to any conclusion of better prospects in India-Pakistan relations in the immediate, or even medium, term.

Being optimistic

- History contains well stocked instances or examples of how transformational leaders, who embody particular ideas and ideologies, are able to turn around the fortunes of their countries.
- Can Imran Khan, who has the capability of inspiring people through well-considered and carefully thought out ideas and suggestions, become such transformational leader who can articulate a new vision for Pakistan?
- With regard to India-Pakistan relations, Mr. Khan has expressed desire to initiate talks with India, resolve differences between the two countries, improve trade relations, resolve the Kashmir conflict, and alleviate poverty in both countries.
- Whatever may be the initial excitement, an individual functioning in complex setup where 'deep state' use all kind of tactics, he is unlikely to be able to navigate an independent path that could lead, at least a part of the way, to eventual success.

The way ahead:

India should cautiously design its policy. India will need **to create a framework that leads to realistic outcomes**, given that it genuinely believes in peace with Pakistan.

There needs to be clarity regarding **short- and medium-term goals**, before embarking on the ultimate objective of bettering India-Pakistan relations.

The first step should be an **acknowledgement that the new government in Pakistan faces threats**, from elements both within and outside the government. Furthermore, the threat to better India-Pakistan relations comes from the **'deep state' embedded within the Pakistani establishment**.

Indian state should step back and **provide greater scope for people's initiatives**, strengthen the existing democratic order initiatives driven by people's groups, and enhance the constituency for peace in the subcontinent.

Towards this end, it should coordinate strategies among different agencies within the government on how to enlarge the constituency for peace and liberal tendencies in both countries. The effort should also be on increasing the share of people in Pakistan who recognise the need to act responsibly, and rally the 'likeminded' who seek peaceful co-existence with India. (**In simple, India should encourage people's initiatives to forge a 'coalition of the willing'**)

It should involve appealing to people in Pakistan, much beyond those involved in the administration.

The short message is for **people's groups in India to engage**, and engage with whomsoever it is possible to in Pakistan with a view to creating a suitable climate for peace and better relations.

India should also take steps to **encourage the rest of the democratic world to advance, and defend, democracy in Pakistan**, and implicitly improve relations with India.

Connecting the dots:

- What challenges does India face in cultivating gainful ties with Pakistan? Examine.

India and the U.S. — it's complicated

Introduction
The first round of the India-U.S. 2+2 talks at the level of External Affairs Minister and Defence Minister from India and their US counterparts, is scheduled for September 6 in Delhi.

Significance of 2+2 dialogue
- It is a significant development but one that appears perfectly logical when seen against the two-decade-old trend line of India-U.S. relations.
- The trend line has not been smooth but the trajectory definitively reflects a growing strategic engagement.
- From estranged democracies, India and U.S. can worst be described today as prickly partners.

The emerging strategic convergence

Three factors have contributed to the emerging strategic convergence.
- **First, the end of the Cold War** provided an opportunity to both countries to review their relationship in the light of changing global and regional realities.
- **Second,** with the **opening of the Indian economy,** the American private sector began to look at India with greater interest. Trade grew and today stands at more than $120 billion a year with an ambitious target of touching $500 billion in five years.
- If U.S. foreign direct investment in India is more than $20 billion, Indian companies too have invested $15 billion in the U.S., reflecting a sustained mutual interest.
- The **third** factor is the political coming of age of the **three-million-strong Indian diaspora.** Its influence can be seen in the bipartisan composition of the India Caucus in the U.S. Congress and the Senate Friends of India group.
- The U.S. is used to dealing with allies and adversaries. India is neither, and is also **determined to safeguard its strategic autonomy.**
- Developing a habit of **talking to each other as equal partners** has been a learning experience for India and the U.S.

- **Both countries** also consider themselves to be **'exceptional'**, the U.S. as among the **oldest democracies and India as the largest.**
- Indians become wary of the U.S.'s attempts to drive unequal bargains, and Americans find the Indian approach rigid and sanctimonious.

Growing defence cooperation: Evolution
- The parallel tracks of dialogue **began in the 1990s.**
- The strategic dialogue covering nuclear issues shifted gears following the **nuclear tests of 1998 and imposition of sanctions** by the U.S.
- The over a dozen **rounds of talks** between both the countries **during 1998-2000** marked the most intense dialogue between the two countries. It helped change perceptions leading to the **gradual lifting of sanctions**.
- The **next phase** was the Next Steps in **Strategic Partnership** steered by the then National Security Advisers, Brajesh Mishra and Condoleezza Rice.
- The momentum received a new impulse, thanks to the warmth between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President George W. Bush, eventually leading to **the conclusion of the India-U.S. bilateral civil nuclear cooperation agreement in 2008.**
- **The defence dialogue began in 1995** with the **setting up of the Defence Policy Group** at the level of the Defence Secretary and his Pentagon counterpart and three Steering Groups to develop exchanges between the Services.
- A decade later, **this was formalised and enlarged into the India-U.S. Defence Framework Agreement** which was renewed for 10 years in 2015.
- Today, the **U.S.** is the country with which India undertakes **the largest number of military exercises** which have gradually evolved in scale and complexity.
- During the Cold War, more than three-fourths of **India's defence equipment** was of Soviet origin. This gradually began to change, and in **recent years, the U.S. and Israel emerged as major suppliers.**
- **The Indian Air Force** went in for C-130J Hercules and the C-17 Globemaster aircraft, along with Apache attack helicopters and Chinook heavy lift helicopters.
- **The Indian Navy** acquired a troop carrier ship and the P-8I long-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft. An agreement for 24 multi-role helicopters for the Indian Navy is expected soon.
- **The Indian Army** went in for the M-777 howitzers and artillery radars. From a total of less than $400 million of defence acquisitions during 1947-2005, the U.S. has signed defence contracts of over $15 billion since.
- During the Obama administration, the US Defence Secretary understood that a defence supply relationship needed to be backed by technology sharing and joint development and came up with the **Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTII)**.
- To get around export control licensing and other bureaucratic hurdles, **an India Rapid Reaction Cell in the Pentagon was set up.**
- In 2016, India was designated as a **'Major Defence Partner'** country.

- Another step forward in the middle of this year was the **inclusion of India in the Strategic Trade Authorisation-1 (STA-1) category**, putting it on a par with allies in terms of technology access.
- The U.S. proposed its standard logistics support agreement text in 2003 which was finally concluded in 2016, after it was made into an India-specific text.
- It facilitates logistics supplies during port visits and joint exercises and does not contain any obligations for joint activity or any basing arrangements.
- The India-specific **Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA),** is likely to be signed.
- With the possibility of acquiring armed Sea Guardian drones, COMCASA was necessary to ensure optimal use.

Obligations and challenges
- Acquiring U.S. high technology comes with its own set of obligations in terms of ensuring its security. These take the form of various undertakings often described as foundational agreements.
- **Two difficult issues** loom large and the 2+2 offers an opportunity for addressing these.
- **The first** is the **Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA)** enacted last year which enables the U.S. government to sanction countries that engage in 'significant transactions' with Russian military and intelligence entities.
- The proposed purchase of the S-400 missile defence system would attract CAATSA sanctions. **A waiver provision** has now been introduced to cover India, Indonesia and Vietnam.
- **The second** relates to U.S. sanctions on Iran after its unilateral withdrawal from the nuclear deal.
- **Iranian crude imports have grown significantly** in recent years and **India** also stepped up its involvement in **developing Chabahar port**.

Conclusion:
- Creative thinking will be needed in the 2+2 dialogue to overcome these challenges, which should also ensure that there are no nasty surprises and difficult issues are settled through quiet diplomacy.
- In order to realise the Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region (2015), both countries will have to nurture the habit of talking and working together to diminish some of the prickliness in the partnership.

Connecting the dots:
- Give an overview of India – US defence and strategic relations.

India and the US: 2+2 dialogue

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

Fast recap:

In previous DNA (**India and the U.S. — it's complicated**), we read about –

- Significance of 2+2 dialogue
- Emerging strategic convergence between India and the US
- Growing defence cooperation
- Obligations and challenges
- Crux - Overview of India – US defence and strategic relations.

In news:

- 2+2 dialogue to be held on September 6, in New Delhi
- An announcement could be made about an in-principle agreement between the two sides on the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), but its signing is doubtful

What's in store
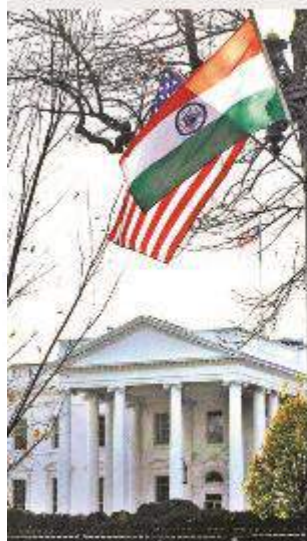
- An in-principle agreement is likely between the two sides on the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA)

- The United States has said that the 2+2 dialogue is an important opportunity to enhance engagement with India

- U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo and Secretary of Defence James Mattis will travel to New Delhi on September 6 for the inaugural dialogue

- At the 2+2 ministerial, the U.S. said it is looking to discuss "how to operationalise India's status as a major defence partner"

Pic:
https://d39gegkjaqduz9.cloudfront.net/TH/2018/09/03/DEL/Delhi/TH/5_01/77018382_236501 1_101_mr.jpg

About COMCASA and other foundational agreements

- COMCASA is 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).
- 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)

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.

India and US: '2+2' talks

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – International Relations

In news:

Inaugural two-plus-two dialogue to be held in New Delhi.

Let us understand few basics –
- What is the '2+2' format?
- What is special about this round of '2+2'?
- Which other countries does the US have '2+2' talks with?
- What issues will India and the US focus on?

What is the '2+2' format?
- It is a format of dialogue where the **defence and foreign ministers or secretaries meet** with their counterparts from another country.
- India holds such talks with select nations. With **Japan and Australia**, the talks are at the foreign secretary and defence secretary level. A similar dialogue with South Korea has been announced.

- **India holds ministerial-level talks only with the US**. The talks were announced when Prime Minister Narendra Modi met US President Donald Trump last June 2017 in Washington.

What is special about this round of '2+2'?
- The dialogue represents an **upgrade in ties**, as it is seen as a platform for both sides to **discuss issues of strategic importance**.
- It is seen as an acknowledgment of **India's rise as a economic and strategic power**.

Which other countries does the US have '2+2' talks with?
- Apart from India, the United States holds such ministerial dialogues only with Australia and Japan.

What issues will India and the US focus on?
- The focus will be on **possible US sanctions on India**, if it does not cut down **import of Iranian crude oil** and **Russian defence equipment**.
- Other issues likely to be discussed are efforts to **boost IndoPacific cooperation**, finalizing a **pact on encrypted defence technologies**, **terrorism**, the Trump administration's decision to make changes in the **H1B visa programme** and **co-development of military platforms**.

Core concerns between India and the US
- Trump administration has sought formal commitment of additional purchases of $10 billion annually for the next three years
- India has a surplus of $23 billion in trade with America, and the U.S. wants to wipe that off by forcing more imports by New Delhi.
- India's core concerns are steel and aluminum tariffs levied by the US and US proposal to review the GSP.

Core concerns

- India has a trade surplus of $23 billion with America

- The U.S. is seeking to wipe out the surplus by forcing more imports by New Delhi

- A draft agreement in the U.S. last month committed additional imports by India in civilian aircraft and natural gas

- India's core concerns are steel and aluminium tariffs levied by the U.S., and a U.S. proposal to review the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) status. GSP is a preferential tariff system that India enjoys

Mike Pompeo in New Delhi. ▪ AFP

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India signs COMCASA with U.S.

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – International Relations

In news:

- India and the US sealed the landmark Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA)
- The move will lead to a new generation of bilateral military partnership.
- Both sides called on Pakistan to stop terrorist strikes on "other countries" and urged for maritime freedom in the Indo-Pacific region.
- COMCASA will facilitate access to advanced defence systems and enable India to optimally utilise its existing U.S.-origin platforms.
- India and the U.S. will also hold a **first-ever tri-service joint exercise on the east coast** of India in 2019.

Do you know?

- India has concluded three of the four foundational agreements with the U.S. that had been planned for years.
- India has already signed two of them — General Security Of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) in 2002 and the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) in 2016.

- The GSOMIA allows sharing of classified information from the U.S. government and American companies with the Indian government and defence Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) but not with Indian private companies.

Core concerns
- We know that - India's core concerns are steel and aluminum tariffs levied by the US and US proposal to review the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP).

About GSP
- Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) is a preferential tariff system extended by developed countries (also known as preference giving countries or donor countries) to developing countries (also known as preference receiving countries or beneficiary countries).
- It involves reduced MFN Tariffs or duty-free entry of eligible products exported by beneficiary countries to the markets of donor countries.

Benefits of GSP to India
1. Indian exporters benefit indirectly - through the benefit that accrues to the importer by way of reduced tariff or duty free entry of eligible Indian products
2. Reduction or removal of import duty on an Indian product makes it more competitive to the importer - other things (e.g. quality) being equal.
3. This tariff preference helps new exporters to penetrate a market and established exporters to increase their market share and to improve upon the profit margins, in the donor country.

For more, refer - https://www.eicindia.gov.in/Knowledge-Repository/Certification/Generalised-System-of-Preferences.aspx

2+2 = ? (Analysis of India US equation)

Introduction

- Recently, 2+2 meeting held in New Delhi between External and Defence ministers of India on one side and their respective counterpart secretaries on the other side from US.
- There are some positive outcomes of the meeting, but also there are many negative takeaways also.

Positives

- The India-U.S. defence relationship has been given a significant boost with **the three agreements signed** after the inaugural 2+2 Dialogue in Delhi: **the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), "hotlines" between the Defence and Foreign Ministers of both countries, and the first tri-services military exercises between the two countries.**
- COMCASA is the third of four "foundational", or enabling agreements signed by India after more than a decade of negotiations, and is perceived as an inevitable consequence of the large amount of U.S. defence hardware it has been purchasing.
- This will increase, going forward, given the U.S. decision to include India in the top tier of countries entitled to **Strategic Trade Authorisation (STA-1).**
- Apart from the defence agreements, both sides said in a joint statement that they had discussed **trade issues, cooperation on fighting terrorism, advancing "a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region"** and promoting **sustainable "debt-financing" i**n the region.
- The last two points are clearly aimed at Beijing's role in the South China Sea and the Belt and Road Initiative projects, respectively.

Negatives

- **India did not receive a clear-cut assurance of its GSP (Generalised System of Preferences)** status being restored, or of waivers on steel and aluminium tariffs imposed by Washington.
- Instead, U.S. officials said clearly that **they expect India to increase imports of American oil and gas as well as aircraft in order to wipe out the trade surplus** India enjoys.
- It is unclear whether the Centre has acquiesced to this blatantly anti-free market demand, but its silence on the matter is disturbing.
- **The U.S.'s other demand, to "zero out" oil imports from Iran** by November, is simply unreasonable. It would hurt India dearly not only because of costs at a time when the dollar is strengthening and fuel prices are going up, but also in terms of its substantial engagement with Iran.
- No public statement was made on what the U.S. will do on India's investment in the Chabahar port once its full sanctions kick in on November 4.
- American officials also gave no firm commitment in their statements that India will receive a **waiver to purchase Russian hardware,** beginning with the S-400 missile system.

Conclusion

- While signing agreements the U.S. has pursued for years, India appears to have taken a leap of faith on its own concerns, expecting that the Trump administration will come through on waiving sanctions and being more flexible on trade issues.
- Delhi must work with Washington in the next few months to ensure that the benefits from the 2+2 dialogue don't add up only on the other side.

Connecting the dots:
- Critically analyse the India US relations and concerns related to it.

Too close for comfort? (2+2 meeting)

Introduction

- The India-U.S. 2+2 meeting between the Defence and Foreign Ministers of the two countries, held recently, appeared to be a singularly one-sided affair.
- While carefully analysing the outcomes of the talks and the future direction of India-U.S. relations, it is difficult to get overjoyed by heart-warming American phrases like "India is a consequential emerging partner" or Washington naming and shaming Pakistan.

Buy American: Trade relations
- The U.S.'s insistence that **India should bring down its oil imports from Iran to 'zero'** in deference to the restrictions imposed by its unilateral withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal.
- The **U.S. recommends that India buy American oil to make up the deficit.** As a matter of fact, U.S. oil exports to India have more than doubled in the past year, thereby helping a booming domestic crude oil industry of US.
- Washington seeks to impose the punitive provisions of a U.S. federal law called **Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA)** on countries dealing with Russian defence and intelligence sectors, making it difficult for India to buy the much-needed S-400 missile system.
- For a country like India, with close to **60% of its weapons systems originating from Russia**, this would be a huge setback, it's clear that the U.S. would like India to buy its weapons instead.
- There is still no clarity on whether India's request for a "one-time waiver" was granted by the U.S. to buy Russian weapons at the 2+2 meeting; the joint statement is silent on this.

- In the run-up to the 2+2 meeting, the U.S. also put considerable **pressure on India to reduce the bilateral trade deficit, which is in India's favour,** by buying more American goods.

Do you know?

The four foundational agreements for military cooperation with US are;

- The General Security of Military Information Agreement **(GSOMIA)**
- The Logistics Supply Agreement **(LSA)** or what is now called the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement **(LEMOA)**
- The Communication and Information Security Memorandum of Agreement **(CISMOA)** or what is now called the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement **(COMCASA)** to suggest a more India-specific agreement
- The Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement **(BECA)**

India signed the GSOMIA in 2002 and the LEMOA in 2016. The Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) is yet to be signed.

COMCASA

- During the 2+2 meeting, the two countries also signed the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement, or COMCASA. The agreement is one of the four considered to be "foundational" for a viable India-U.S. military relationship.
- It is necessary to take stock of the national security implications of these agreements.

Arguments in support of COMCASA

- It will facilitate access to advanced defence systems and enable India to optimally utilise its existing U.S.-origin platforms.
- India's U.S.-sourced P-8I and C-130J aircraft had to use low-tech communication equipment as the U.S. could not provide India with such technologies due to domestic legal restrictions, unless India signed COMCASA.
- In the absence of COMCASA, and the attendant high-tech equipment, the interoperability between Indian and U.S. forces would be severely hampered.

Concerns related to COMCASA

- The India-specific COMCASA is **not a public document,** we do not know the scope of the agreement. Therefore, the government needs to clarify several concerns.
- There is the issue of **visits by U.S. inspectors to Indian bases** to carry out inspections on the COMCASA-safeguarded equipment sold to India.
- Since we do not know **how intrusive this inspection would be,** it is useful to look at the language from a similar agreement signed between the U.S. and South Korea in 2008.

- No doubt, South Korea is a U.S. military ally, which India is not. So one hopes that the provisions of inspections would be less intrusive. But there is no getting away from the fact that **COMCASA will apply end-use monitoring and reconfiguration restrictions on India as well.**
- In any case, by signing COMCASA and by agreeing to reduce the purchase of Russian weapon systems (in line with CAATSA), **India has implicitly accepted the extraterritorial application of U.S. law on itself.**
- The original End-Use Monitoring Agreement (EUMA) was agreed to between India and the U.S., in 2009, New Delhi has now taken the application of U.S. federal law on India to a completely new level.
- EUMA had reportedly ensured that U.S. inspectors would stay away from Indian bases: is that ensured under COMCASA as well? Moreover, did India push for a U.S. presidential waiver for receiving COMSEC equipment and materials without having to sign COMCASA.
- Whether the installation of U.S. communication systems **would compromise the secrecy of Indian military communication systems.**
- The debate ay start on the utility of such India-U.S. agreements since, at the end of the day, the two countries are not likely to be deployed alongside each other in a conflict situation.

Balancing China

- Even though the "Joint Statement on the Inaugural India-U.S. 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue" did not explicitly mention China, the section on the Indo-Pacific region implicitly referred to it.
- Both sides said in a joint statement that they had discussed trade issues, cooperation on fighting terrorism, advancing "a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region" and promoting sustainable "debt-financing" in the region.

Way forward

- India must not compromise her economic and strategic interests under the pressure of US, nor should distance herself from US.
- India should make use of American assistance in strengthening its national security, but there should be more clarity on what it entails.
- India is an Asian country, with several Southern Asian security challenges, and its ability to meet those challenges with the help of an offshore (and declining) superpower is at best limited, and counter-productive at worst.
- The India-U.S. relationship shouldn't be allowed to define India's geopolitical character, strategic future or the limits of its other bilateral relationships.

- In a world that is far more chaotic than ever since Independence, India must keep its options open and be multi-aligned, even as the U.S. forms a key part in that scheme of things.

Connecting the dots:
- Comment on significance of India US relations in era of rising Asia.

India – Russia ties: Logistics agreement

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – International Relations

- India and Russia are in the process of concluding a logistics agreement
- The proposed agreement follows a series of such agreements India has signed since the first logistics agreement with the U.S.
- We already know that - India signed the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Understanding (LEMOA), with the U.S. in August 2016 after a decade of negotiations.
- Since then it has concluded several such agreements with France, Oman, Philippines, Singapore and for access to the Sabang port in Indonesia. Australia too has sent a draft agreement.

Do you know?
- Logistics agreements are administrative arrangements facilitating access to military facilities for exchange of fuel and provisions on mutual agreement simplifying logistical support and increasing operational turnaround of the military when operating away from India.

Logistics agreement

- Administrative arrangements which give access to each other's military facilities for fuel and rations between partner countries
- India and Russia have had deep military-to-military cooperation for several decades
- The logistics agreement with Russia will be on the lines of the one signed with the U.S. in August 2016
- Apart from this, India has concluded such agreements with France, Oman, the Philippines, Singapore and Indonesia. Australia, too, has sent a draft agreement

https://d39gegkjaqduz9.cloudfront.net/TH/2018/09/04/DEL/Delhi/TH/5_11/5e771632_2367594_101_mr.jpg

Himalayan divide: India Nepal relationship

Introduction

- Despite several attempts at a reset, ties between India and Nepal continue to be a cause for concern.
- The disconnect between the two governments was most visible at the seven-nation Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation military exercises that concluded recently.

Why Nepal withdrew from military exercise?

- Officials from Nepal government said that they were upset with India's "unilateral" announcement of the multilateral exercises during the BIMSTEC summit on August 30-31, without having formally proposed it to the host(Nepal was host).
- Even the contingent from Thailand did not join the counter-terror exercises because of lack of adequate notice.

Concerns in India Nepal relations

- Nepal's decision to join China for a 12-day Mt Everest Friendship Exercise, but refusing to participate in BIMSTEC military exercise, which is also focussed on anti-terrorism drills, drives the wedge in further.

- Despite New Delhi signalling its discomfiture with the volume of Chinese investment in hydropower and infrastructure and transport projects, Nepal went ahead recently and finalised an ambitious connectivity proposal.
- This connectivity agreement will eventually link Kathmandu to Shigatse by rail; this will give Nepali goods access to Chinese sea-ports at Tianjin, Shenzhen, Lianyungang and Zhanjiang, and land ports in Lanzhou, Lhasa and Shigatse.
- Much of Nepal's bitterness draws from the past. India is still blamed for the 2015 economic blockade against Nepal.
- It is also held responsible for attempts to destabilise Mr. Oli's previous tenure as Prime Minister during 2015-2016.

Way forward

- New Delhi cannot turn a blind eye to these negative developments, and must address them.
- New Delhi and Kathmandu must put an end to the unseemly controversy by renewing diplomatic efforts over the issue.
- India and Nepal don't just share an open border; they have shared the deepest military links, with both countries traditionally awarding each other's Army chiefs the honorary rank of General.
- Such unique ties must not be undermined due to lack of communication. India must fix its lines of communication with Nepal and arrest the drift in ties.
- At such a time, the Army chief's statement on BIMSTEC, that "geography" will ensure that countries like Bhutan and Nepal "cannot delink themselves" from India, could have been avoided; such comments unnerve India's smaller neighbours and are misleading.
- Modern technology and connectivity projects could well take away geography's role as a guarantor of good relations.

Connecting the dots:

- India's neighbourhood first policy has more failures in its account than successes. Do you agree?

S. Korea wants to elevate ties with India

Part of: Prelims and Mains III – International Relations

In news

- One of the major foreign policy initiatives of President of South Korea is the government's **'New Southern Policy'**, with a goal of deepening ties with South East Asian nations as well as India and building an inclusive regional architecture in Asia.

Concerns about China
- India wants to be more vocal about maritime security in the region.
- There are increasing activities by China in the Indian Ocean region.
- There are concerns about the BRI (Belt and Road Initiative) and the South China Sea.
- China is the largest trading partner of most countries in Asia. Whether we like China or not, we have to live with it but a confrontational approach is not good.

South Korea's stand on US - China
- South Korea's main policy objective is not to get subsumed into the U.S.-China rivalry in Asia.
- S. Korea wants an inclusive regional architecture in Asia. Therefore, it wants to build stronger ties with ASEAN and India on multiple fronts — economic, bilateral and strategic.

South Korea and India
- S. Korea views India as a main partner to expand its economy in the South.
- India and South Korea have agreed to boost bilateral trade to $50 billion by 2030 from $20 billion now.
- Seoul wants to elevate ties with India to the level of those with four other major powers around the Korean Peninsula — the U.S., China, Russia and Japan.
- India has huge potential to play a bigger role in international politics. Expert says Seoul wants to strengthen ties on economic and strategic fronts.

South Korea on BRI
- South Korea welcomes BRI. But China is pursuing BRI projects unilaterally or bilaterally. South Korea wants BRI to be more open and transparent.
- Countries that are part of the BRI projects and borrow money from China should be cautious, referring to allegations of debt trap weaker countries get into while welcoming China to build big-ticket infrastructure projects.
- There has to be some kind of rules to deal with debt trap, etc.

Yameen concedes defeat in Maldives presidential poll

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – International Relations

In news

- Maldives President Abdulla Yameen conceded defeat in the presidential election, making way for the joint Opposition candidate Ibrahim Mohamed Solih.
- Senior parliamentarian of the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), Mr. Solih secured 58.3% of the votes, while Mr. Yameen obtained 41.7%.
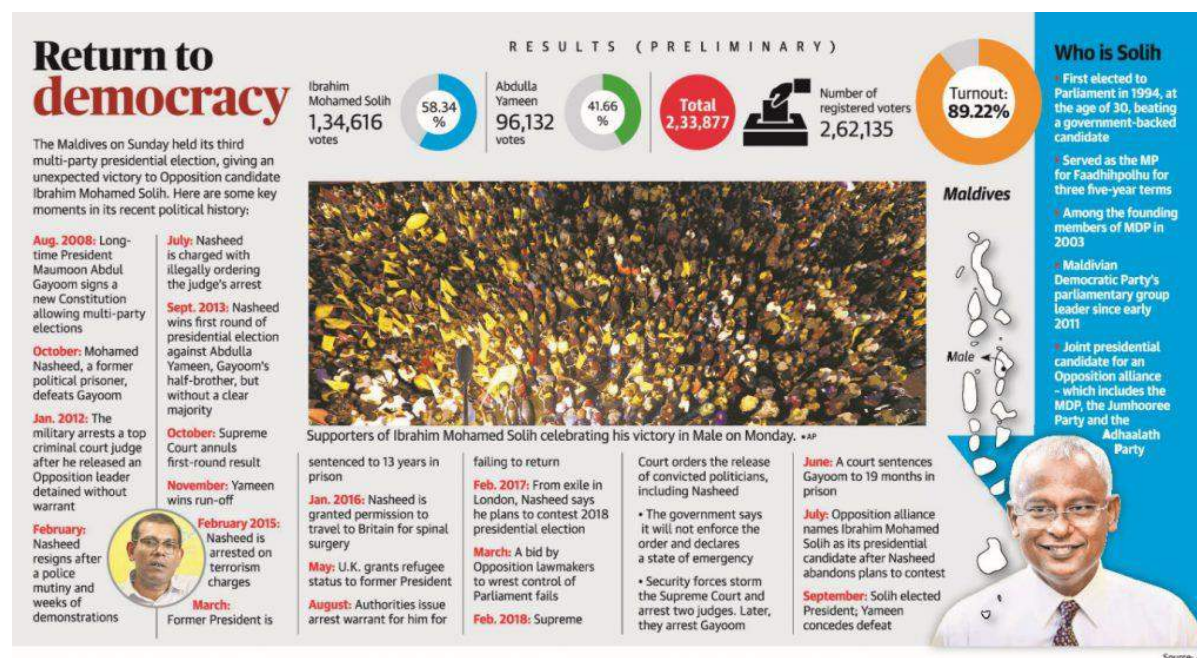
India's reaction

- India has welcomed the result of the Maldives' presidential election and heartily congratulated the winning candidate, Ibrahim Mohamed Solih.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi called the President-elect, and expressed support for better ties.
- The two leaders agreed to work closely together to further strengthen the close, friendly and good neighbourly relations between the two countries.
- The Ministry said the election process amounted to a triumph of democracy in the country where public election was established a decade ago.
- The election marks not only the triumph of democratic forces in the Maldives but also reflects the firm commitment to the values of democracy and the rule of law.
- In keeping with 'Neighbourhood First Policy', India looks forward to working closely with the Maldives in further deepening the partnership, the statement said.

A change in the Maldives

Introduction

- Voters in the Maldives delivered a stunning defeat for President Abdulla Yameen in a contentious presidential election, an outcome regarded as a victory for democracy over authoritarianism in the Indian Ocean island nation.
- The people of the small archipelago in the Indian Ocean voted for change and brought to power the Opposition candidate, Ibrahim Mohamed Solih. They came out in huge numbers with the turnout being 89.2%.

Importance of Maldives: (10 reasons: IMAGE)

10 REASONS WHY MALDIVES IS IMPORTANT FOR INDIA

1. Strategically located in the Indian Ocean, Maldives archipelago comprising 1,200 coral islands lies next to key shipping lanes which ensure uninterrupted energy supplies to countries like China, Japan and India

2. Since China started to send naval ships to Indian Ocean roughly 10 years ago —and right up to Gulf of Aden in the name of anti-piracy operations — Maldives' significance has steadily grown and now it's at the heart of international geopolitics

3. As the pre-eminent South Asian power and a 'net security provider' in the Indian Ocean region, India needs to cooperate with Maldives in security and defence sectors

4. China's massive economic presence in Maldives is a major concern for India. With the country now said to owe 70% of its external aid to China, many believe that Yameen has done to Maldives what Rajapaksa did to Sri Lanka. India had to push back at some stage and the current political crisis might just have offered India the right opportunity

5. A large section of population which supports the opposition parties like Nasheed's MDP wants India to act against Yameen

6. Maldives is also a member of Saarc. It is important for India to have Maldives on board to maintain its leadership in the region. Maldives was the only Saarc country which seemed reluctant to follow India's call for boycott of Saarc summit in Pakistan after the Uri attack

7. Under Yameen, radicalisation grew rapidly and it was often said that archipelago accounted for one of the highest numbers of foreign fighters in Syria in terms of per capita. India can ill-afford a neighbour which fails to check Islamic radicalisation

8. India and Maldives share ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and commercial links. India was among the first to recognise Maldives after its independence in 1965 and later established its mission at Malé in 1972

9. There are 25,000 Indian nationals living in Maldives (second largest expatriate community). Indian tourists also account for close to 6% of tourists Maldives receives every year

10. India is also a preferred destination for Maldivians for education, medical treatment, recreation and business. According to MEA, more and more Maldivians are seeking long term visa for pursuing higher studies/ medical treatment in India

How is China engaging with the Maldives?

- Beijing has made large investments in infrastructure projects in the Maldives during Yameen's time in office.

- They include a US$830 million investment to upgrade the Maldives airport and build a 2km bridge to link the airport island with the capital Male, according to the Centre for Global Development.
- Chinese are also building a 25-storey apartment complex and hospital in the Maldives.
- Meanwhile, some 306,000 Chinese tourists visited the Maldives last year accounting for 21 per cent of the country's total number of visitors. When three Chinese naval ships docked in Male in August last year, it only amplified India's concerns.

Tilt towards China:
- Mr.Yameen's China visit last year, the two nations signed 12 pacts, including a free trade agreement (FTA).
- Mr. Yameen not only fully endorsed China's ambitious Maritime Silk Road initiative but also made the Maldives the second country in South Asia, after Pakistan, to enter into an FTA with China.
- The Yameen government pushed the FTA through the nation's Parliament, the Majlis, stealthily, with the opposition not attending the parliamentary session.

Chinese Investments: Massive Debt trap, according to opposition:
- The opposition accused the Yameen government of allowing a Chinese 'land grab' of Maldivian islands, key infrastructure, and even essential utilities.
- This 'land grab' has raised the concerns of Maldives being increasingly falling into an economic neo-colonial influence of China.

How have the Maldives ties with India fared under Yameen?
- Bilateral ties between India and the Maldives have deteriorated during Yameen's time in power.
- In March 2015, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi cancelled his state visit to the island nation over the treatment of Mohamed Nasheed, the former pro-India Maldivian president who had been jailed.
- The Maldives also declined India's invitation to take part in its biennial eight-day naval exercise, Milan, this year.
- Yameen's government has also rejected visa renewals for Indians who were legally working in the Maldives.

Concern areas that need to be improved between India and Maldives –
- No FTA with India; Maldives and India do not have a Free Trade Agreement. However Maldives and China entered into Free Trade Agreement.
- Maldives growing "closeness" with China; Both China and Pakistan stepping up their strategic inroads into the Maldives

- Religious radicalization; The 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.
- Yameen government had 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.
- By changing to more democratic form of government in Maldives, India can engage with Maldives to establish much more friendly relations than previous government era to protect the safety and security of entire Indian Ocean region.

Way Forward:
- For New Delhi, the results are especially heartening as they present a chance to reset ties with Male, which have been on a downward spiral for several years.
- India can also now renew talks over the fate of Indian Coast Guard and Air Force personnel stationed in the Maldives as well as other Indians in Maldives, whose visas have been pending.
- Going forward, New Delhi must stay clear of partisan positioning on the internal politics of the Maldives.
- The larger agenda must be to partner the Maldives in its stability and development rather than engaging in a tug of war with China.

Connecting the dots:
Discuss the political developments in Maldives in the last two years. Should they be of any cause of concern to India? (UPSC mains 2013)

ECONOMY

Public Credit Registry

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Indian economy (basics)

In news:

- Recently, RBI Deputy Governor Viral Acharya made a case for **setting up a Public Credit Registry (PCR),** incorporating unique identifiers: Aadhaar for individual borrowers and Corporate Identification Number for firms.

What is PCR?

- A public credit registry is an information repository that collates all loan information of individuals and corporate borrowers. A credit repository helps banks distinguish between a bad and a good borrower and accordingly offer attractive interest rates to good borrowers.
- PCR will address issues such as information asymmetry, improve access to credit and strengthen the credit culture among consumers. A PCR may also help raise India's rank in the global ease of doing business index.

Panel's proposals

- The committee has suggested the registry should capture all loan information and borrowers be able to access their own history. Data is to be made available to stakeholders such as banks, on a need-to-know basis. Data privacy will be protected.

Why PCR is necessary?

- Credit information is now available across multiple systems in bits and pieces and not in one window. Data on borrowings from banks, non-banking financial companies, corporate bonds or debentures and external commercial borrowings, among others, are not available in one data repository. PCR will help capture all relevant information about a borrower, across different borrowing products.
- It can flag early warnings on asset quality by tracking performance on other credits.

The need for growth in Indian biosimilars

Introduction (Background)

- Due to a **soaring demand for generic drugs, India's pharmaceutical producers emerged as world market leaders** in this sector and were a major business success story **in the 2000s.**
- In the process, Indian producers made a valuable contribution to **reducing costs and to expanding access to life-saving treatments for patients**, both in emerging markets and in developed countries.

Emerging challenges

- Globally, and especially in developed countries, **waves of consolidation** among pharma retailers, **stiffer competition from Chinese pharma** manufacturers and **wider acceptance of generic drug applications** have combined to put downward pressure on drug prices.
- **India's stock market** has reacted quite negatively to these developments, **wiping nearly 20% off the value of Indian pharma** stocks between August 2016 and August 2018.
- Given these adverse headwinds, it is imperative that India's pharmaceutical manufacturers create new markets to **restore market confidence** in their growth prospects.

Some positive moves

- There is a new push to produce more so-called **complex generics.** These are hybrid medicines that often contain **complex active pharmaceutical ingredients** (the part of the drug that produces its effects) or formulations, or routes of delivery.
- Things are still at an early stage in this segment but the signs are promising, with **Indian firms having succeeded in capturing 19% of the global market** in complex generics thus far.
- Another, they would be well-advised to pursue is to expand their footprint in the **biosimilars market.**
- **Biosimilars are the generic versions of biologics** medicines **made from animal or plant proteins as opposed to chemicals.**
- Biologics are notable for **targeting the underlying causes of diseases** as opposed to just the symptoms, with **fewer side effects.**
- Biologics are important market disrupters because they are transforming how we treat diseases, including certain types of cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, and multiple sclerosis.
- The growth in the biosimilars market is welcome from a human development standpoint because they are more affordable than biologics, the high cost of which often puts them out of reach of many patients.

- While it is encouraging to see Indian firms beginning to ramp up biosimilars production, there is a lot of room for additional growth. Biosimilars currently account for just $5 billion of the $240 billion global market in biologics.

Non-communicable diseases

- There is an **alarming spike across developing countries** in the prevalence of non-communicable diseases. To take one example, **diabetes is fast becoming an epidemic** in developing countries, with rates rapidly catching up with those of the developed world.
- In **India** also, with 69 million diabetics in 2015, a number projected to exceed 100 million by 2030, according to the World Health Organization.
- The number of diabetics across the South-East Asia region, which includes Bangladesh, India, and Indonesia, rose more than fivefold between 1980 and 2014, WHO has reported.
- Therefore, **promoting the production of complex generics and biosimilars** can have a positive development impact given how targeted they are toward treating non-communicable diseases such as cancer, asthma, and arthritis.

Way forward

- Governments can support growth in **production of complex generics and biosimilars** by clarifying the regulatory framework for them, which is still evolving in many countries.
- China is a recent example, where the government has identified biopharma, including biosimilars, as a priority area for the country.
- Biosimilars, like biologics, **require a large investment** outlay both because of the **high cost of product development and regulatory compliance,** and the significant amount of time it takes to bring a product to market.
- **For private sector, partnerships can make for a more cost-efficient pipeline**. For example, it is often in manufacturers' best interest to forge partnerships with contract research organisations that have the scientific expertise to develop that specific product, and such other partners.
- They can partner up with companies that are specialised in commercialising and marketing these products and have acquired the know-how to meet the regulatory requirements.
- There are many ways that partnerships can be structured but the bottom line is that new business models that increase patients' access to innovative and cost-effective treatments should be encouraged.

Conclusion

- It is increasingly clear that the segment of the pharmaceutical market where we will see **demand grow the fastest** in the coming years is products that **treat non-communicable diseases**.

- We should, therefore, strive to **promote strong, indigenous producers of complex generics and biosimilars** as this has enormous potential to improve public health in emerging markets.

Connecting the dots:

- Write a brief not on Role of India in global pharma market. Give an overview of opportunities and challenges ahead.

Gutkha scam

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III and IV – Indian Economy and associated issues; Anti-corruption & Bribery in India; Ethics

In news:
- CBI searches houses of T.N. Ministers and police chiefs in connection with the gutkha scam.
- It is alleged that they had received bribes from a leading gutkha manufacturer to allow the sale of the banned tobacco products in Chennai.

Do you know?
Laws and Provisions in India to tackle Corruption
- Indian Penal Code, 1860
- The Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 – PCA
- The Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Act, 1988
- India and the United Nations Convention against Corruption 2003 (UNCAC) - provides for international co-operation and mutual legal assistance in investigating cases of corruption and recovery of assets. India signed the UNCAC in December 2005.
- Prevention of Money Laundering Act 2002 (Article 23 of the UNCAC) - PMLA
- Foreign Exchange Management Act 1999 – FEMA
- Right to Information Act 2005 – RTI
- Cases referred by the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) and the Chief Vigilance Officers (CVOs) of other Government Departments
- Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the state Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB)
- Freezing, Seizure and Confiscation of Properties – The Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance, 1944 (Article 31 of UNCAC)
- Creation of an independent ombudsman (the Lokpal and the Lokayuktas) - to investigate and prosecute cases of corruption by Public Officials (including Ministers)

- Service Rules of Government Officials
- Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, 2010 – FCRA
- Companies Act 2013
- Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) and Imposition of Tax Act, 2015

Even in 4th century B.C., 'Corruption' had been a key theme as reflected in **Kautilya's Arthashastra**, an ancient Hindu treatise on statecraft, economic policy and military strategy penned during the time.

Role of CCI and 'unfair pricing' of private hospitals

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III and IV – Indian Economy and associated issues; Ethics

In news:

- **Competition Commission of India (CCI)** widens probe into 'unfair pricing' by Delhi pvt. Hospitals.
- CCI has directed its investigative arm, the Director General, to probe into alleged violation of provisions of Section 3 and 4 of the **Competition Act, 2002**, relating to imposition of **unfair prices by private super-speciality hospitals**.
- According to DG, Huge profit margins are being earned by sale of products to the locked-in in-patients to the detriment of such patients.

Important Value Additions
Role of Competition Commission of India (CCI)

- CCI is a **statutory body** of the Government of India responsible for enforcing The **Competition Act, 2002** throughout India and to prevent activities that have an appreciable adverse effect on competition in India.
- Goal of CCI is to create and sustain fair competition in the economy that will provide a 'level playing field' to the producers and make the markets work for the welfare of the consumers.

Competition Act – The Act prohibits anti-competitive agreements, abuse of dominant position by enterprises and regulates combinations (acquisition, acquiring of control and M&A), which causes or likely to cause an appreciable adverse effect on competition within India.

All about India Post Payments Bank (IPPB)

Introduction:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the India Post Payments Bank (IPPB)
- IPPB will act as a financial service provider that will operate under the country's age-old postal department.
- The new India Post Payments Bank can hasten financial inclusion.

Benefits:

- The primary rationale behind the launch of IPPB is to help in the government's goal of **achieving financial inclusion**, especially to the rural and unorganised sectors of the economy. (In short it will help in bringing the unbanked into the banking system).
- It will also **help reinvigorate the postal system**, which has a wide network of branches across India. (Holders of postal savings accounts are worth over ₹85,000 crore.)
- IPPB will also have a digital platform that is expected to **make financial services more accessible** even from remote locations.
- IIPB will also focus on providing **basic payments services** such as social security payments, utility bill payments and money transfers.
- It will also provide access to **third-party financial services** such as mutual funds, insurance, pension, and loan products.

Do you know?

- IPPB has been set up as a **100% Government of India owned Public Limited Company** under the Department of Posts.
- It will initially have 650 branches and 3,250 access points in post offices across the country.

What are Payment Banks?

Payments Banks are banks with the following features:

- They will provide a limited range of products such as acceptance of demand deposits and remittances of funds.
- They will not perform the function of lending money in the form of loans.
- These banks will have a wide network of access points particularly in remote areas.
- They will supplement their own network with business correspondents and even depend on network provided by others.
- Technology will be extensively used to add value.

Important Features of IPPB:

- IPPB is offering 4% interest to its savings account customers.

- IPPB is currently not offering its customers an ATM or debit card.
- IPPB account holders will be issued a QR Card with a unique QR code. The QR card in an ATM since it is not an ATM card.
- The QR code will be used to identify India Post Payments Bank account holders through smartphones or micro-ATMs. Further, after verification using biometric data, the customer is paid in cash.
- According to RBI guidelines, one can hold a maximum of Rs 1 lakh in a savings account of a payments bank.
- Funds exceeding Rs 1 lakh in the regular savings account can be transferred to the account holder's linked Post Office Savings Account (POSA).
- There is no cap on the number of withdrawals in a month. You can make unlimited deposits in a month, subject to the Rs 1 lakh limit.
- Cheque book facility is not available.
- There are no cash deposit or withdrawal charges. But for doorstep banking services, India Post Payments Bank will charge Rs 15 for digital transactions and Rs 25 for cash-based transactions.
- Account holders can also use the mobile banking app for checking balance, statement, bill payments and for online transfers.

How India Post Payments Bank savings account differs from post office savings account?
1. Post Office Savings Account (POSA) offer ATM facility.
2. Cheque facility is available. (Min. balance 500rs)
3. For non-cheque facility account, the minimum balance of Rs 50 has to be maintained.
4. POSA offers 4% interest to account holders.
5. At least one transaction of deposit or withdrawal in three financial years is necessary to keep the POSA active.

Key challenges:
- Whether it can manage to earn the profits required to survive as a standalone business entity, given the severe restrictions imposed by the Reserve Bank of India on how payments banks in general can employ their funds.
- The first wave of new payments banks that commenced business last year — Airtel, Paytm and Fino — have not exactly set the market on fire.
- IPPB plans to charge nominal fees on money transfers and other financial services while investing idle customer deposits in safe government securities in order to earn interest. Whether this will be sufficient to cover interest and operational costs remains to be seen.

- IPPB is also likely to face stiff competition from private companies, which are generally more nimble in adapting to business realities and far more customer-friendly compared to the government-owned behemoths.

Areas of Caution

Two areas where a cautious approach needs to be adopted are the understanding of the business model as well as the objective of financial inclusion that they seek to achieve.

However, if it succeeds, the new payments bank could usher in a new era of rapid financial inclusion across rural India.

Connecting the dots:

- Payment Banks are the next big thing for the government's success in financial inclusion. Comment. Highlight the hurdles in the way of their success and their integration with the existing banking system.

SEBI reforms on FPIs

About:

- Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) are currently allowed to invest up to 10% in a single listed Indian company.
- According to SEBI's circular, their total investment in all the investee companies put together cannot exceed this limit.
- As of now, entity owning a majority stake in a fund is considered a beneficial owner (BO). A BO is one who directly or indirectly derives the benefits of ownership.
- However, according to SEBI's recent circular, it said Resident Indians (RIs), Non Resident Indians (NRIs), Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) and Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs) cannot be the beneficial owner (BO) of a fund investing in India.
- In other words, SEBI asked FPIs to determine ownership based on both shareholding and control.

In news:
- SEBI-appointed panel has suggested a few amendments to the circular.
- The panel, headed by former RBI Deputy Governor H.R. Khan suggested NRIs, OCIs and RIs be allowed to manage foreign funds that invest in India subject to certain holding limits. Second, a single NRI, OCI or RI cannot hold more than 25% of the assets under

management of the foreign fund and the aggregate holding of such entities has to be below 50%.

- The Centre had told SEBI that it need not use the BO definition laid down under Prevention of Money Laundering Act. SEBI has been asked to consult the Centre to evolve a more objective criteria for defining high-risk jurisdictions.

SEBI reforms on FPI consent norms

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II and III – Government schemes and Policies; Indian Economy and related issues

In news:
- Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to give final shape to the regulations governing investments by foreign investors especially those managed by Non-Resident Indians (NRIs).
- Decision after feedback on **Khan panel recommendations**.
- The FPI norms have been in the news in the recent past with overseas investors objecting to a circular issued in April that barred NRIs, along with Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) and Resident Indians (RIs) from managing the investments of SEBI-registered FPIs.

Small loans could turn bad: Former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II and III – Government schemes and Policies; Indian Economy and related issues

In news:
According to Former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan –
- the next crisis in India's banking sector could come from **loans given to the unorganised micro and small businesses**, called **MUDRA loans**, and credit extended through the **Kisan credit card**.
- Government should refrain from setting ambitious credit targets or waiving loans.
- **Credit Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs**, run by the Small Industries Development Bank of India, needs to be examined with urgency (as it is "a growing contingent liability").
- A large number of bad loans originated in the period 2006-2008, when economic growth was strong and it is at such times that banks make mistakes.

Do you know?

- As per the data from the Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency (MUDRA) website, a total of ₹6.37 lakh crore has been disbursed under the scheme by public and private sector banks, regional rural banks and micro-finance institutions till date.
- MUDRA loans are offered under the Prime Minister Mudra Yojana or PMMY, launched in 2015 by the NDA government.

Important schemes

IASbaba recommend you to have different perspective and assessment of following schemes for this year Mains or for next attempt.

- MUDRA Scheme
- Kisan credit card
- Credit Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs

Nuggets from the 'note' What Raghuram Rajan told the parliamentary panel

Why did NPAs occur
- Over-optimism of promoters and banks, growth slowdown, delay in statutory approvals, loss of interest in delayed projects, malfeasance among bankers and frauds

Did RBI create the NPAs
- Bankers, promoters and circumstances created NPAs.
- The RBI is primarily a referee and not a player

Why asset quality review
- Banks were not recognising bad loans, not making adequate provisions for long-time NPAs and had slowed down credit growth

Eye on the future
- Govt. should refrain from ambitious credit targets and loan waivers
- Need an empowered group to clean up banks

Pic: https://d39gegkjaqduz9.cloudfront.net/TH/2018/09/12/DEL/Delhi/TH/5_01/ef4309a5_2385654_101_mr.jpg

Prison of patriarchy: Why India's female workforce participation is so low

Introduction

Marriage is a career stopper for the majority of Indian women and this cultural abhorrence towards women working is a not-so-subtle way of ensuring that the escape routes out of a marriage are minimised, if not entirely closed.

Female workforce in India

- India's female workforce participation is among the lowest in the world.
- The Economic Survey 2017-18 revealed that women comprise only 24% of the Indian workforce.
- In fact, as India grows economically, the number of women in workplaces is declining steadily.
- Though the enrolment of girls in higher education courses is growing steadily — to 46% in 2014 from 39% in 2007.

Causes of Low women workforce
- In India's leaking pipeline of women employees, the first and most significant drop-off point is between the junior and middle management levels.
- A survey by Catalyst, a management consultancy firm, pegged this number at a whopping 50%, compared to 29% in other Asian economies.
- When plotted against life milestones, this often corresponds to the time women choose to get married.
- The cultural baggage about women working outside the home is so strong that in most traditional Indian families, quitting work is a necessary precondition to the wedding itself.
- The richer the family is, the lower the chances that they allow women to pursue a career. In low-income families, economic pressure sometimes trumps social stigma.
- Childbirth and taking care of elderly parents or in-laws account for the subsequent points where women drop off the employment pipeline.

Consequences of decrease in women workforce
- On the macroeconomic level, this suggests that we're giving up on a 27% boost to the country's GDP.
- At the individual level, without any recourse to financial means, women stay tethered to the family.
- Ending a marriage is such a daunting task — socially and legally — that even the thought of embarking on it without financial independence is terrifying.

Conclusion:
- Having grave consequences at macroeconomic and societal levels, unemployed women suffer at individual level too.
- The Supreme Court has set a benchmark of 25% of a husband's net salary as a "just and proper" amount for alimony, leaving divorced women with full custody of the children at a quarter of the family income.
- Much credit for India's low divorce rate goes to this Stockholm syndrome-like situation of Indian marriages.

- Financially independent women are need of the hour for strong economy as well as egalitarian society.

Connecting the dots:

- With the rise in per capita income, women workforce participation in India is declining. Elucidate.

Government announces measures to stabilize rupee

Part of: Prelims and GS III- Indian Economy

In News

The Government announced a series of measures to boost market confidence, curb the widening current account deficit which touched 2.4% of gross domestic product and stabilize the rupee.

Details

- To attract more Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPI) into the corporate debt market, the government has said it will review a couple of restrictions on their investments.
- So, the condition that FPIs' investment in a single corporate entity cannot exceed 20% of its corporate bond portfolio will be reviewed.
- The condition that FPIs cannot invest more than 50% of an issue of corporate bonds will also be reviewed
- The government will review the mandatory hedging condition for infrastructure loans borrowed under the external commercial borrowing (ECB) route.
- Presently there is no compulsion on borrowers to hedge these loans.
- Manufacturing companies borrowing up to $50 million through ECBs will be able to do so only for a one-year term as against the three-year term allowed earlier.
- Masala bonds will be exempted from withholding tax this financial year and Indian banks will be allowed to become market makers in masala bonds including by underwriting.
- Masala bonds are rupee-denominated instruments issued abroad by Indian borrowers.
- The advantage of these bonds is that any depreciation in the rupee will not affect the borrower.
- The government will take necessary steps to cut down non-essential imports and increase export.

Human Development Index (HDI)

Part of: Prelims and mains GS II & III- Social development and Economic development

In news

HDI was released by the United Nations Development Programme with the findings indicating a glaring inequality in the country though "millions have been lifted out of poverty".

Details

- The HDI is the composite measure of every country's attainment in three basic dimensions:
- Standard Of Living measured by the gross national income (GNI) per capita
- Health measured by the life expectancy at birth
- Education levels calculated by mean years of education among the adult population and the expected years of schooling for children.

Stats with reference to India

- India ranks a low 130 out of 189 countries
- The UNDP report stated that with an HDI value of 0.64 compared to 2017's 0.636, India is categorised as a medium human development and that its rank rose one spot compared to the 2017 HDI.
- According to the 2018 findings, between 1990 and 2017, India's HDI value increased from 0.427 to 0.640, an almost 50 per cent increase, which is an indicator that millions have been lifted out of poverty.
- At the same time, in what signals the glaring inequality in the country, the HDI value declines by more than a fourth when adjusted for inequality.
- The value of India's Inequality-adjusted HDI (IHDI) falls to 0.468, a 26.8 per cent decrease, far worse than the global average decrease in the global HDI value due to inequality at 20 per cent.

Do you know?

- In reference to Women Empowerment
- The report notes that in India women hold only 11.6 per cent of parliamentary seats
- Only 39 per cent of adult women have reached at least a secondary level of education as compared to 64 per cent men.
- India's worst performance on the gender scale is with regards to its female participation in the labour market which is 27.2 per cent compared to 78.8 per cent for men even as

globally 49 per cent women are part of the labour force as compared to 75 per cent men.

- India performs better than its neighbours Bangladesh and Pakistan, ranking 127 out 160 countries on the Gender Inequality Index

Other Countries

- Norway at 0.95 has been ranked the highest on the HDI scale
- Followed by Switzerland, Australia, Ireland and Germany
- Niger is the bottom at 0.35.
- Central African Republic, South Sudan, Chad and Burundi have the lowest scores
- The greatest increase in HDI rank over the last five years is by Ireland
- This is followed by Turkey
- The worst decline was seen in conflict-hit countries of Syria, Libya, and Yemen.

Everything you need to know: When the world collapsed around Lehman Brothers

Part of: Prelims and mains GS III – Economics

In news
It has been ten years since the investment banking firm Lehman Brothers collapsed in mid-September 2008. Shortly after, there was a meltdown in global financial markets, including India.

What triggered the crisis?
- From 2005 to 2007, at the height of the real estate bubble, mortgages were given to many homebuyers who could not afford them, and then packaged into securities and sold off.
- Lehman Brothers bought several mortgage brokerages and posted record profits. But in mid-2007, defaults on sub-prime mortgages rose exponentially.
- A credit crisis erupted in August 2007 with the failure of two Bear Stearns hedge funds while payment defaults triggered massive declines in banks and real estate incomes. In 2008, Lehman Brothers declared bankruptcy.

Was there any 'rescue act' by banks?
In 2008, when America's two biggest banks Merrill Lynch and Lehman Brothers reported high losses due to huge exposure to risk assets, all triggered by sub-prime lending by banking institutions, Bank of America came to the rescue of Merrill Lynch while Lehman Brothers had to file for bankruptcy.

What is a sub-prime loan?

- Sub-prime refers to a loan given to a borrower who does not qualify for a regular home loan because of a poor credit record, low income and lack of job security.
- If the customer has a poor credit record, why did banks offer a loan?
- The main reason was banks expected the value of the underlying security or the property to go up.
- So, they increased the mortgage interest rate (higher than the conventional loan) and called it a sub-prime mortgage.
- They could earn more with the higher mortgage interest rate and if the borrowers discontinued repayment, they could sell the property for a higher consideration due to appreciation in property prices.

Was India insulated?

- The impact on the Indian economy was less severe due to lower dependence on exports and the fact that a sizeable contribution to the GDP came from domestic sources.
- Indian banks had limited exposure to the U.S. mortgage market, directly or through derivatives, and also to the failed and financially-stressed global financial institutions.

Public sector banking reforms: Unification of state-owned banks

Part of: Prelims and mains GS III- Indian economy; Banking

In news

Public sector banking reforms

- The Centre proposed the **unification of state-owned banks** - Bank of Baroda, Dena Bank and Vijaya Bank - to create India's third largest bank.
- Merger to provide total business of more than ₹14.82 trillion.
- After getting in-principle approval, the banks will take steps in accordance with the law and SEBI requirements.
- The final scheme will be notified by the Central government in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India.
- The merger will be based purely on commercial considerations.

Why was the decision taken?

- India aspiring to be the fastest growing economy has to be **supported by stronger and globally competitive banks** with increased choices to the stakeholders.

- Dena Bank has been placed under the prompt corrective action framework (It is in a **bad shape with higher NPAs**, **higher cost to income and falling profitability**).
- So the idea is to **merge the weaker bank with stronger bank** (BoB and Vijaya Bank) so that it would be a strong competitive bank with economies of scale.
- The entity would also be positioned for substantial rise in customer base, market reach and operational efficiency.
- The amalgamation is aimed at catering the massive credit requirements of the growing economy, and cutting costs as well as dependence on the government for capital infusion in the longer term.

Do you know?

- The proposal of fewer but stronger state-run lenders was originally mooted in 1991.
- **Narasimhan report** on banking reforms had recommended merger of public sector banks to make them stronger
- It had envisaged a three-tier banking structure with three large banks with international presence at the top, eight to 10 national banks at tier two, and a large number of regional and local banks at the bottom.

Machines will rule workplace by 2025: "The Future of Jobs 2018" report by WEF

Part of: Prelims and mains GS III- Indian economy; Employment

In news

- "**The Future of Jobs 2018**" report by **WEF** predicts that the rise of robotics will result in machines performing more tasks on the job than humans by 2025.
- The trend could displace 75 million jobs globally by 2022.
- The report surveyed executives from different industries around the world, aiming to get a look at how new technologies, like artificial intelligence, will affect the global labor force.

The rise of the machines

In the future, an increasing share of a company's "information and data processing work" will be taken over by machines

Ratio of human ( ) - machine ( ) - working hours, 2018 vs. 2022

Reasoning and decision-making jobs
19% | 28%

Coordinating, developing, managing and advising jobs
19% | 29%

Looking for and receiving job-related information
36% | 55%

Information and data processing jobs
47% | 62%

Pic: https://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/jx4v0t/article24970905.ece/alternates/FREE_615/th18machinescol

Details of the report

- In 2018, humans performed an average of 71% of total task hours across the 12 industries spanning manufacturing, services and high tech.
- By 2025, that will drop to just 48%, according to the WEF. Machines will perform the remaining 52%.
- Globally, almost half of all companies expect automation to cut their full-time workforce in the next four years;
- However, new jobs will still lead to a net gain in employment opportunities if sufficient reskilling is done.
- In India, 54% of employees in these sectors will need reskilling by 2022
- Of this 35% would need at least six months' worth of reskilling,
- 10% would need more than a year of training in order to meet the demands of the new economy

Significance

- Roles that rely on human skills, like sales, marketing and scientific-based positions, will likely see an increase in demand.

- The report calls on businesses and government leaders around the world to create a support system for their employees and ensure a smooth transition as the workforce evolves.

SEBI cuts expense ratio for MF schemes

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Indian Economy

In news:

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has broadly accepted the recommendations of the H.R. Khan Committee on Know-Your-Client (KYC) requirements for foreign portfolio investors (FPIs), while lowering the Total Expense Ratio (TER) for open-ended equity schemes, thereby making it less expensive for investors to invest in mutual funds.
- SEBI has agreed to amend the circular [issued in April] and the new one is largely in line with Khan Committee recommendations.

Do you know?
Expense Ratio

- It is the annual fee charged by the mutual fund scheme to manage money on behalf of individuals.
- It covers the fund manager's fee along with other expenses required to run the fund administration.

Changes made by SEBI

- SEBI capped the total expense ratio (TER) for equity-oriented mutual fund schemes (close-ended and interval schemes) at 1.25% and for other schemes at 1%.
- However, it allowed an extra 30 basis points (bps) for selling in B-30 (beyond top 30) cities. One basis point is one-hundredth of a percentage point.
- The TER cap for fund of funds will be 2.25% for equity-oriented schemes and 2% for other schemes.

Additional expense

- The regulator has, however, allowed an additional expense ratio of 30 basis points for retail flows from beyond the top 30 cities.
- More importantly, the additional expense will not be allowed for flows from corporates and institutions.

Laws managing losses in the Market

- The regulator has framed the SEBI (Settlement Proceedings) Regulations 2018 which bar offences that cause a marketwide impact, loss to investors or affects the integrity of the market, to be settled through the consent route.
- While serious offences like insider trading or front running can be settled through consent, the regulator has said that it would use a principle-based approach while deciding on such matters.
- The regulator will also not settle any proceedings wherein the applicant is a wilful defaulter or if an earlier application for the same offence has been rejected.

Other Measures

- The board of the capital markets has also approved a framework for permitting foreign entities having an exposure in physical commodity market to hedge in the commodity derivatives segment.
- Sebi also reduced the time period for listing after an initial public offering to three days from six, freeing up locked investor funds faster.

Significance

- The regulator is of the view that the lower expense ratio would lead to investors saving ₹1,300 crore to ₹1,500 crore in commissions.
- It will enhance returns for investors. However, the change in TER may impact profit margins of AMCs.
- Early listing and trading of shares will benefit both issuers and investors.
- Issuers will have faster access to the capital raised, thereby enhancing the ease of doing business and the investors will have early liquidity.

Ten years on, in uncharted waters

Introduction

- There have been various economic crises in the past over which economists the world over have deliberated upon and have submitted their observations and analysis.
- The most notable crisis was that of the financial crisis of 2007.

A look at the causes of the financial crisis of 2007

There were multiple causes to the crisis of 2007. Among them included;

- Global macroeconomic imbalances,
- A loose monetary policy system followed by the U.S.,
- The housing bubble in the U.S.

- A misplaced belief in efficient markets, greedy bankers, and the existence of incompetent rating agencies.

All of these factors played their part. However, a major causative factor for the implosion of the financial sector in 2007-08 was in the failure of regulation.

The Failure of Regulation:
- Firstly, banks were allowed very high levels of debt in relation to equity capital.
- Secondly, banks in advanced economies moved away from the business of making loans to investing their funds instead in complex assets known as "securitised" assets.
- These securitised assets consisted of bundles of securities derived from sub-prime loans, i.e, housing loans of relatively higher risk.
- The switch which was made from loans to securitised assets had enormous implications for banks. It is important to note that with a loan, losses are recognised over time.
- As housing prices began falling and securitised assets lost value, it translated into enormous losses for the banks. As a consequence, these losses eroded bank capital and created panic among those who had lent funds to banks.
- The third element in the failure of regulation was allowing banks an excessive dependence on short-term funds.
- Besides this, there were other failures of regulation. These included: Banks had low standards for making housing loans.
- These were not confined only to the U.S. They were witnessed across banks in Europe and some in Asia as well.

How did such a massive failure of regulation occur?
- Experts attribute this to two things a) 'regulatory capture' b) 'revolving door' syndrome.
- The term regulatory capture refers to the ability of financial institutions to influence policies of governments and regulators. These financial institutions are a big source of political funding.
- 'Revolving door' syndrome: This refers to the situation wherein we observe that bankers in the U.S. and Europe hop on to jobs in government and regulation. On the other hand, we also witness that government officials and regulators land lucrative jobs and assignments with banks.
- As a consequence of the 'revolving door', we witness havoc in matters concerning regulation. This also explains the lack of accountability of bankers for the havoc they created. No top banker has been prosecuted or jailed.
- As a matter of fact, banks have paid up massive fines for assorted violations- with the fines coming from the pockets of shareholders.

The Indian Perspective:

- India hasn't suffered much on account of the financial crisis.
- Although growth has slowed down to 7%, but these figures are in line with the trend rate over the past two decades.
- Many forward-looking policies have helped India. For example, she has not embraced full capital account convertibility. India has kept short-term foreign borrowings within stringent limits.
- Further, India did not open up to foreign banks despite pressure from the U.S. and the international agencies. In the wake of the crisis, foreign banks retreated from overseas markets- this caused a severe credit crunch in places such as Eastern Europe. India was insulated from this.

Core Issues that need to be Addressed:

- Firstly, there has been a tradition wherein some banks, just by the virtue of them being large, are deemed to be such that they cannot be allowed to fail. This notion needs to be changed.
- The second aspect is the very size of debt itself in various forms in the world economy. As a matter of fact, the overhang of debt itself for the global economy as a whole, poses some serious challenges.
- The third aspect is that financial globalisation makes the world vulnerable to U.S. monetary and fiscal policy.

Conclusion

- The present crisis in emerging economies highlights how vulnerable emerging markets are to the unpredictability of American economic policy.
- The world needs to be weaned away from its dependence on the dollar. An alternative global financial architecture is nowhere in sight.
- Economists are free to draw their lessons from financial crises but the world is ultimately shaped by political and business interests, not by economists.

Connecting the dots:

- What were the reasons that Indian Economy survived the 2008 crisis, unhurt? Do you think that speedily falling currency values across the developing world is forecast of another global crisis? What is the probability, whether India will survive this crisis too?

Bonds to rescue the rupee

Introduction

Government has taken certain steps to control the failing value of rupee. One of them is raising money from NRIs to boost currency with the help of NRI bonds.

What are NRI bonds?
- These are bonds issued by the Reserve Bank of India to non-resident Indians who are interested in investing their money in India.
- Since these bonds offer higher returns than other similar investments, they can be used as a tool to attract capital during times when other domestic assets fail to attract the interest of foreign investors.
- Many investors view them as a safe investment as these bonds are issued by the Indian central bank.

Why are they in the news?
- The sharp slide in the value of the rupee has led to speculation that the RBI might opt to issue NRI bonds worth $30-35 billion in order to help attract dollar investment into the country.
- The rupee's fall of 13.7% since the beginning of the year has been caused by two factors.
- First, capital has been moving out of India's capital markets. Foreign portfolio investors pulled out Rs. 47,836 crore in the first half of the year, a 10-year high.
- Second, Indian exports have been losing demand, while imports of commodities like crude oil have risen significantly, leading to all time high current account deficit.
- Both these factors have combined to cause an increase in the demand for the dollar, thus leading to the fall in the value of the rupee.

Can bonds save the rupee?
- NRI bonds could theoretically help increase demand for the rupee and stabilise its value against the dollar.
- The actual effect of these bonds on the rupee, however, will depend on how attractive they are to NRIs.
- In 2013, when the rupee witnessed a fall of about 25% in just four months following the U.S. Federal Reserve's decision to taper down its bond-purchase programme, the RBI was able to collect more than $30 billion worth of foreign capital.
- NRI bonds were also issued in 1998 and 2000 to help curb the slide of the rupee.

- While these bonds can provide temporary assistance to the rupee by encouraging capital inflows into the economy, they may not address the fundamental economic issues that are causing the fall of the rupee.

Conclusion

Until the RBI can rein in domestic inflation and the government can take steps to boost exports and curb imports, emergency measures like the issuance of NRI bonds can only offer temporary respite to the rupee.

Connecting the dots

- What are NRI bonds? How they can be used to stabilise the domestic economy?

SEBI revises KYC norms for foreign portfolio investors

Part of: Prelims and mains III – Indian Economy

In news

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has announced the revised guidelines for know your client (KYC) requirement for foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) allowing non-resident Indians (NRIs), resident Indians (RIs) and overseas citizens of India (OCIs) to be part of such FPIs investing in India.
- Such NRIs, OCIs and RIs can be part of a FPI if their aggregate holding in such an overseas fund is less than 50% of the corpus of the fund. Further, the individual share of such entities cannot exceed 25% in an FPI.
- The regulator has also laid down that FPIs can be controlled by investment managers that are owned or controlled by NRIs, OCIs or RIs. Such, investment managers, however, need to be properly regulated in their home jurisdiction and also registered with the SEBI.

Time to fulfil norms

- Existing FPIs will be given two years' time — from the date the new regulations come into force — to fulfill the new eligibility criteria. Also, in case of a temporary breach of the norms, the entity will get 90 days to comply with the regulations.
- Meanwhile, FPIs will be subject to periodic review and any change in material information or disclosure would warrant such a review. For category II and III FPIs from high risk jurisdictions, KYC review would be done annually.

- The new guidelines as laid down by SEBI are largely in line with the **recommendations of the H. R. Khan Committee** that reviewed the earlier circular issued in April after many overseas investors expressed their discomfort with the conditions stated in the circular.
- According to a section of foreign investors, the earlier requirements were such that they effectively barred NRIs, OCIs and RIs from managing foreign funds.
- While an industry body had pegged the potential outflows at $75 billion due to the earlier diktat of SEBI, the regulator had brushed aside those concerns.

Centre finalising tariffs on non-essential imports

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Indian economy

In news

- The government has finalised the list of non-essential items on which it will be imposing import tariffs.
- The list will be notified soon, would include electronics, gems, select items of steel that are also manufactured in India, imported apples, and almonds, among others.
- The main issue under consideration was whether to include gold in it.

Significance

- The government had earlier this month, announced the easing of overseas borrowing norms for manufacturing companies, removal of restrictions on foreign portfolio investment in corporate bonds and tax benefits on masala bonds.
- The imposition of tariffs on the import of non-essential items is expected to bolster these efforts in stabilising the rupee's levels.

Unemployment among educated youth at 16%: study

Part of: Prelims and mains III – Unemployment

Unemployment has risen in almost all States. Kerala (9%), Tripura (14.5%) & Nagaland (25.6) had the highest unemployment in 2011. In 2015, it was Kerala (12.5), Sikkim (18.1) & Tripura (19.7)
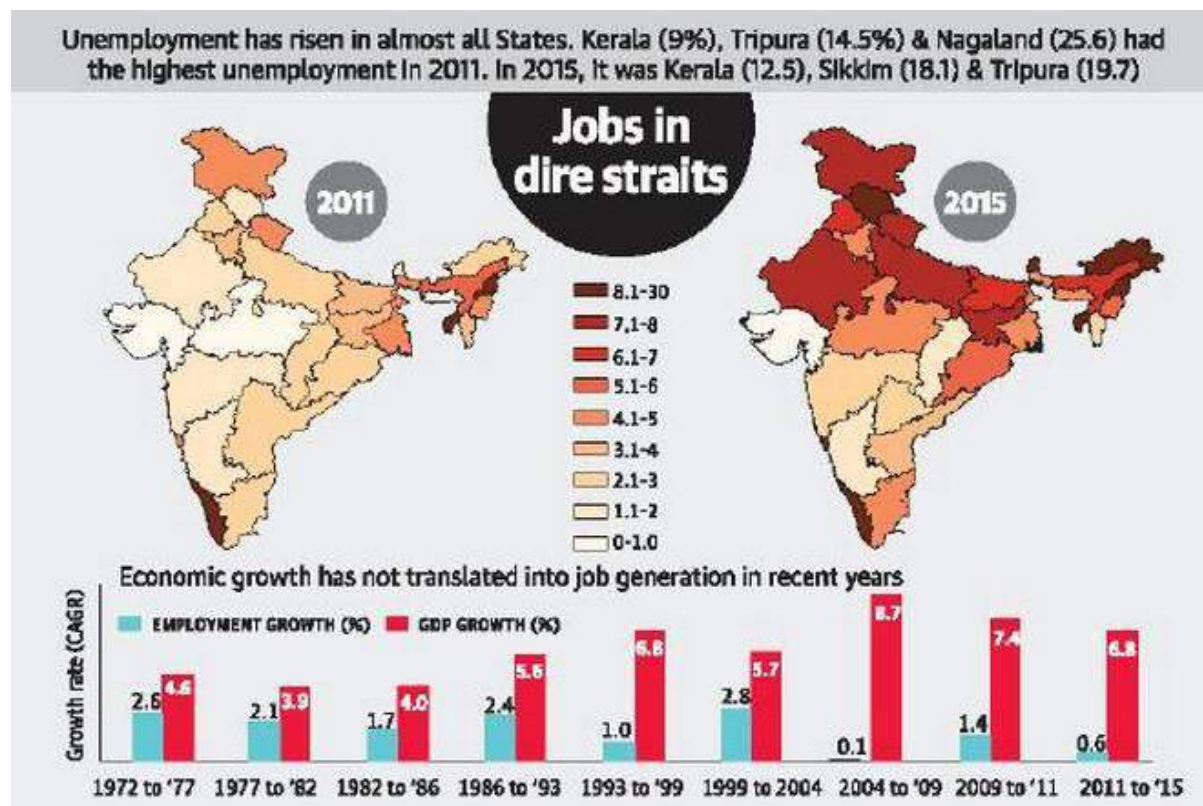
In news

- With higher growth rates not having translated into more jobs and increases in productivity failing to spur a commensurate rise in wages, the government ought to formulate a National Employment Policy.
- Confirming the spectre of jobless growth, the study contends that this divergence between growth and jobs had increased over time.
- In the 1970s and 80s, GDP growth was around 3-4% and employment growth was about 2%.
- Currently, the ratio of GDP growth to employment growth is less than 0.1." That means that a 10% increase in GDP results in a less than 1% increase in employment.
- The study uses government data to show that total employment actually shrank by seven million between 2013 and 2015, and cites private data to posit that an absolute decline has continued in the years since.
- Unemployment has risen to more than 5% overall, and the study slices the data to show that in geographic terms, north Indian States are the most severely affected, while in

demographic terms, young people with higher education levels suffer an unemployment rate as high as 16%.

- While wages are rising in almost all sectors, hidden within the positive data is the worrying fact that rural wage growth collapsed in 2014, and has not risen since.
- In the organised manufacturing sector, though the number of jobs has grown, there has also been an increase in the share of contract work, which offers lower wages and less job security.
- Labour productivity in manufacturing sector is six times higher than it was 30 years ago; however, managerial and supervisory salaries have only tripled in the same period, while production workers' wages have grown a measly 1.5 times.
- Women's participation in the paid workforce is still low, but the situation is unequal across States.
- In Uttar Pradesh, only 20 women are in paid employment for every 100 men, while that figure jumps to 50 in Tamil Nadu and 70 in Mizoram and Nagaland.
- With regard to earnings, the caste gap is actually larger than the gender gap.
- Dalits and Adivasis are over-represented in low-paying occupations, and severely under-represented in higher-paying ones, the study reveals. They earn only 55-56% of upper caste workers' earnings, the data shows.

Short-term rates fall as RBI eases SLR norms

Part of: Prelims and mains III – Indian economy, banking

In news

- Rates on short-term paper was eased after the RBI decided to free up funds for the commercial banks to tide over the present liquidity crunch.
- Rates for three-month commercial paper fell after the RBI eased liquidity coverage ratio norms for banks.
- Following the fund crunch triggered by the crisis at infrastructure financier IL&FS at the beginning of the month, rates on short-term papers rose by more than 100 bps (basis points) with mutual funds becoming reluctant to lend to the non-banking finance companies.
- To ease the situation, the central bank had been infusing liquidity through open market operations.
- Earlier in the day, RBI decided to allow banks to dip into their statutory liquidity ratio (SLR) reserves by another two percentage points to meet liquidity coverage ratio (LCR) norms.

Do you know?

- **Statutory liquidity ratio (SLR)** is the proportion of funds that banks have to maintain as cash or government securities out of the total deposits that they hold.
- **Open market operations (OMO)** refer to the buying and selling of government securities in the open market in order to expand or contract the amount of money in the banking system.
- **Commercial paper** is an unsecured, short-term debt instrument issued by a corporation, typically for the financing of accounts receivable and inventories, and meeting short-term liabilities. Maturities on commercial paper rarely range longer than 270 days.

Govt. creates high-level group to advise on boosting trade

Part of Prelims and mains III – Economy
In news:

- Commerce Minister has approved the constitution of a high-level advisory group (HLAG) to look into the opportunities and ways to address the ongoing challenges in the global trade scenario.

The terms of reference (ToR) of the HLAG are to examine the prevailing international trade dynamics, including, but not confined to;

- The rising protectionist tendencies, especially on the part of major economies,
- The non-engagement by some countries on outstanding trade negotiation issues and commitments, including the Doha Development Agenda,
- Insistence by some countries on pursuing negotiating mandates, in many cases prematurely and without efforts,
- To build consensus and common understanding.

The HLAG would meet regularly over the next two months and make specific implementable recommendations in light of the terms of reference, including on each of the areas, to facilitate the formulation of future trade policies.

The HLAG will be chaired by, Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council Member Surjit Bhalla.

Centre hikes import duty on select goods

Part of Prelims and mains III – Indian economy

In news

The government released a list of categories of items on which it would be hiking import duties, which include white goods such as air-conditioners, refrigerators and washing machines as well as non-essential items such as gems, travel bags and aviation turbine fuel (ATF).

Significance of hikes in import duty

- The Central Government has taken tariff measures, by way of increase in the basic customs duty to curb import of certain imported items. These changes aim at narrowing the current account deficit (CAD).
- The significant increases in customs duties of selective items which the government perceives to be non-essential imports appears to be aimed at reducing the drain of currency reserves and boost domestic demand.
- Curbing imports through tariffs would help in shoring up the rupee to 68-70 levels against the U.S. dollar.
- India had the right to raise import tariffs within a band under the World Trade Organisation rules, this right can be exercised in the best interest of the country.
- The messaging seems to be clear that if you want to access the Indian market, then start manufacturing here. The move, though significant, is not surprising with what is happening globally.
- This increase in duty on imports with the already depreciating rupee would be quite a point of worry for the importers.
- However, this hike in duty may not impact importers who procure from countries with which India currently has beneficial free trade agreements.

Cabinet approves 100% govt. stake in GST Network

Part of Prelims and mains III – Indian economy, tax reforms

In news

The Union Cabinet approved increasing the government's ownership in the Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) to 100% from the existing 49% and also change the existing structure in line with a transition plan.

Do you know?

GST Network

- GST network is a not for profit company incorporated in 2013, under companies act.
- The Company has been set up primarily to provide IT infrastructure and services to the Central and State Governments, tax payers and other stakeholders for implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

- The Government of India holds 24.5% equity in GSTN and all States of the Indian Union, including NCT of Delhi and Puducherry, and the Empowered Committee of State Finance Ministers (EC), together hold another 24.5%. Balance 51% equity is with non-Government financial institutions.
- Now it is being made 100% govt. owned.

Note: For more details on GSTN visit: https://www.gstn.org/about-us/

'MDR reimbursement pending from banks'

Part of Prelims and mains III – Indian economy

In news
- The Payments Council of India (PCI) has said that payment service providers and merchant aggregators are yet to be received reimbursement for merchant discount rates from banks even after nine months.
- **MDR is the fee** that a merchant has to pay to a bank for every transaction that is split between the bank which issued the card, the payment service providers, and payment gateways.
- **Payments Council of India (PCI),** the representative body of non-banking merchant aggregators and acquirers, have raised serious concerns over non-receipt of reimbursements of MDR by merchant aggregators, from the related acquiring banks since January 2018.
- This is likely to seriously impact the operating ability of merchant aggregators and dent the efforts to promote digital payments.

Think big: on import duty hike

Introduction

- The government released a list of categories of items on which it would be hiking import duties.
- This includes white goods such as air-conditioners, refrigerators and washing machines as well as non-essential items such as gems, travel bags and aviation turbine fuel (ATF).
- The Centre's decision to increase customs duty on imports of 19 "non-essential" items amounts to tinkering at the margins to address a structural macro-economic issue.

- Using tariffs to curb imports of these items will not have a significant impact on narrowing the current account deficit (CAD), which is the Centre's stated objective.

Do you know?

Current account deficit

- The current account measures the flow of goods, services and investments into and out of the country.
- We run into a deficit if the value of the goods and services we import exceeds the value of those we export.
- The current account includes net income, including interest and dividends, and transfers, like foreign aid.
- India's current account deficit (CAD) is pegged at $13 billion or 1.9% of the GDP in Q4 of 2017-18, which increased from $2.6 billion or 0.4% of the GDP in Q4 of 2016-17.
- However, the CAD moderated marginally from $13.7 billion (2.1% of GDP) in the preceding quarter.
- The Reserve Bank of India attributed the widening of the CAD to a higher trade deficit ($41.6 billion) brought about by a larger increase in merchandise imports related to exports.
- The central bank wants to see the current account gap within 2.5% of the GDP, which is seen as crucial for currency stability.
- For example, the CAD touched a high of 4.8% of the GDP in 2012-13 on rising gold and oil imports, which also impacted the rupee that depreciated rapidly.

Why import duties will not have sufficient impact on CAD?

- The aggregate value of these imported items was just ₹86,000 crore, constitution a little less than 3% of the country's merchandise import bill in 2017-18.
- With the first six months of the current fiscal having elapsed, the impact of this tariff increase in paring the import bill and thus containing the CAD is at best going to be short-term and marginal.
- On the other hand, the decision to double import duties on a clutch of consumer durables to 20% could dampen consumption of these products, especially at a time when the rupee's slide against the dollar is already likely to have made these goods costlier.
- Here, it would be interesting to see if the government's move turns into a psychological 'tipping point' that ends up altering consumption behaviour towards this category of imported merchandise.
- If it does, that could have the salutary effect of fostering greater investment in the domestic production of some of these goods.

- The tariff on aviation turbine fuel — which will now attract 5% customs duty instead of nil — may add to the stress of domestic airline operators, the rupee and rising oil prices having already hurt their wafer-thin margins.

Way forward

- A more robust approach in addressing the widening CAD would be to institute wide-ranging measures to boost exports and simultaneously reduce the import-intensity of the economy.
- Policymakers must renew efforts to ensure that export growth starts outpacing the expansion in merchandise imports.
- This includes expediting the refunds on GST to exporters — smaller exporters have been badly hit by working capital shortfalls.
- Also to working to woo some of the labour-intensive supply chains that are moving out of China to countries such as Vietnam and Bangladesh.
- On import substitution, it is an irony that despite the abundance of coal reserves, thermal coal is one of India's fastest-growing imports.
- This is a consequence of under-investment in modernising the entire coal production and utilisation chain and must be addressed expeditiously.
- With global crude oil prices showing no signs of reversing their upward trajectory, and the sanctions on Iran that may force India to look for other suppliers looming, the government will need to act post-haste to address structural imbalances to keep the CAD from widening close to or even exceeding the 3% of GDP level.

Connecting the dots:

- What is Current Account Deficit (CAD)? Critically analyse the recent fall in rupee value and subsequent rise in CAD.

AGRICULTURE

Green Gold: Bamboo

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains Paper III – Agriculture sector (Indian Economy)

In News:

- In **Union Budget 2018**, government had allocated a whopping **Rs 1,290 crore to promote the bamboo sector** — through restructured **National Bamboo Mission (NBM).**
- Government also removed bamboo grown outside forest areas from the definition of trees.
- However there are some concerns whether all these efforts help to achieve $10 billion market potential of bamboo.

Concerns:

- Failure of National Mission on Bamboo Application (NMBA), National Bamboo Mission (NMB) and North East Centre for Technology Application and Reach (NECTAR)
- Department of Science and Technology (DST) had in 2004 launched the National Mission on Bamboo Application (NMBA) with an outlay of ₹200 crore. NMBA failed. NMBA neither developed any technology nor facilitated technology transfer.
- ₹1,400-crore National Bamboo Mission (NMB) also failed from 2007-2014
- Even related initiative called the North East Centre for Technology Application and Reach (NECTAR) has also failed. NECTAR is an autonomous society registered and headquartered in Shillong with a fund allocation of ₹292 crore. However, even after five years of its creation, NECTAR yet to shift to Shillong headquarters (from New Delhi).
- The entire team that made NMBA a failure was rehabilitated in NECTAR without any responsibilities being fixed. NECTAR functioned under DST and no proper functioning.

About NECTAR

- The Central government had in 2013 approved the creation of an autonomous society registered and headquartered in Shillong with a fund allocation of ₹292 crore. The society was called North East Centre for Technology Application and Reach.

Key pointers:

- Northeast part of India grows 67% of India's bamboo.
- India has the world's largest fields of bamboo. It grows on nearly 13% of the country's forest land.

- The eight North-eastern States – Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura – grow 67% of India's bamboo and have 45% of global bamboo reserves.
- Nearly 35 species of superior quality bamboos are found in the region.

Do you know?
- Centrally Sponsored Scheme of National Bamboo Mission (NBM) is now under National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)
- Department of Agriculture & Cooperation (DAC) under Ministry of Agriculture is implementing a 100% Centrally Sponsored Scheme called Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) in which National Bamboo Mission (NBM) is being implemented as a sub scheme.

GM mustard and GEAC

Part of: Prelims and Mains III – GM Crops; Agriculture; Science and Tech; Biodiversity and Environment

In news:
- Environment ministry and GEAC to decide on field-trial approvals for the controversial **transgenic mustard** developed by the University of Delhi's Centre for Genetic Manipulation of Crop Plants (**CGMCP**).
- CGMCP had applied to grow transgenic mustard (Dhara Mustard Hybrid, DMH -11) in plots in Delhi and Punjab to test the plant.
- GEAC had initially cleared the GM crop for "commercial cultivation", however later backtracked and demanded more tests and additional data on honeybees and other pollinators and on soil microbial diversity.

About GEAC
- GEAC is the apex regulator of genetically modified crops and transgenic products.
- GEAC is constituted in the Ministry of Environment and Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) under 'Rules for Manufacture, Use, Import, Export and Storage of Hazardous Microorganisms/Genetically Engineered Organisms or Cells 1989', under the Environment Protection Act, 1986.
- GEAC is responsible for approval of activities involving large scale use of hazardous microorganisms and recombinants in research and industrial production from the environmental angle

- The GEAC is also responsible for approval of proposals relating to release of genetically engineered organisms and products into the environment including experimental field trials (Biosafety Research Level trial-I and II known as BRL-I and BRL-II)

Addressing soil loss

Introduction

- As the rains abate in Kerala and parts of Kodagu district in Karnataka, the loss of lives and the devastation of infrastructure and crops is apparent.
- However, as rebuilding is planned, what is often ignored is the soil that has been washed away. While roads and houses will be rebuilt, and crop losses compensated partially through insurance, the gradual loss of soil productivity can have a lasting impact on the local economy.

Soil degradation due to flooding is a serious concern.
- A 2014 review of soil degradation in India by multiple institutions shows that an estimated 14 million hectares suffer soil degradation due to flooding annually.
- The impact of floods on soil was also studied in detail following the 2009 floods in North Karnataka, Which caused the loss of thousands of crore.
- Researchers from the National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use Planning (NBSS&LUP) and other institutes estimate that 13 flood-hit districts lost 287 million tonnes of top soil and soil nutrients across 10.75 million hectares of farmland.
- Under market prices, the replacement of nutrients such as nitrates, phosphates and iron would have cost Rs. 1,625 crore, while another Rs. 853 crore would have been spent on replenishing organic material lost.
- To recover and replace the lost would take a long time, and a steadfast programme of recovery. Nine years later, there is no comprehensive scheme for recovery, and the effect of the floods is still visible on the ground.
- A soil profile of a few affected districts, done under the State's integrated watershed scheme, shows large swathes of these areas having "shallow or very shallow" soil depth, organic carbon deficiency, and low productivity of land.
- In the case of Kerala and Kodagu, the undulation and force of the water would have led to severe soil and land erosion.
- Soil, which has taken thousands of years to form through natural processes and through recent inputs by farmers, is being swept away, to be dumped in reservoirs or in the sea.

Soil, a blessing from floods
- Not all floods are bad for the soil, as seen in the oft-occurring floods along the banks of the Ganga, Kosi, Brahmaputra and other rivers taking birth in the Himalayas.
- There, the gushing river emanating from the mountains carries with it loosened alluvial soil (Khadar), and not only washes over farmlands, but also replenishes flood plains with fertile soil.

Conclusion

Soil erosion has grave impact on economy of the affected area. Thus there is a need for Disaster Management in India to take this issue into account. Assessment of Soil and environment degradation should be part of Relief and Rehabilitation under the framework of Disaster management.

Connecting the dots:
- The Disaster management in India fails to take into account the Soil and Environment degradation, and predominantly focuses on construction and rehabilitation. Critically comment.

Food Grain Stocks: Steps to stop the rot

Introduction

- India stores about 30.52 million tonnes of rice, wheat, maize, gram and sorghum in such structures at Food Corporation of India godowns and hired spaces.
- Most grain in India, which is procured from farmers by the government, is stored using the CAP, or cover and plinth method. Very cheap and easy to make, it is described in the preceding paragraph.
- There are many concerns and health hazards related to CAP storage method of FCI.

A comparison
- In other parts of the world, grain is stored in silos. Here, stored grain is kept dry and aired so as to prevent fungal and insect attacks.
- When the North American mid-west came under the plough during the 19th and 20th centuries, the first thing that was done was to build large grain silos and a railway system to export the grain.
- Today, the U.S. has a permanent storage capacity nearly equivalent to its annual grain production.

- But in India, the government has considered only four silos to be sufficient for the nation's needs — one each in Kolkata, Chennai, Mumbai and Hapur-Ghaziabad.
- The last one, in Uttar Pradesh, is the most modern with a storage capacity of 500 tonnes, according to a recent paper.
- The remainder of government-procured grain is stored in conditions so shoddy that it is estimated that there is a 10% loss of harvested grain, of which 6% (around 1,800,000 tonnes) is lost in storage.
- In order to export basmati rice, Punjab has, in a public-private partnership, built modern, temperature-controlled grain silos with a storage capacity of 50,000 tonnes — but this is not for the Indian market.

Invitation to illness
- According to a World Health Organisation paper, titled "Mycotoxins", mycotoxins, which are found in mouldy grain/foods, are associated with human disease and produce aflatoxins (cancer-causing), trichothecenes, ochratoxins, citrinin and other toxins.
- The paper says: "Aflatoxicosis causes abdominal pain, vomiting, hepatitis and (sometimes) death after acute exposure to high concentrations in food. Chronic low dose exposure to aflatoxin can result in impaired growth in children."
- The government is aware of the deadly consequences of grain with mycotoxins.
- Although there are regulations in place to prevent the purchase of mouldy grain from farmers, there do not seem to be any published studies on the extent of mould infection in grain stored using the CAP method.

Conclusion
- Given the weather conditions during the monsoon months, it is not acceptable that our foodgrains, which the public pays to procure, are stored in the open under tarpaulins.
- Even though foodgrain production has been encouraged and increased, there no effort being made to ensure that grain being procured annually is stored properly.
- There is an abundance of steel, cement and other building materials, money and the technological know-how, the government should move on a war footing to store food grains in the proper manner.

Connecting the dots:
- India is one of the largest food grain producer countries, housing largest number of hungry people. Critically analyse the paradox.

2 irrigation facilities in Telangana get heritage tag

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Agriculture and Irrigation; Infrastructure

In news:
- **International Executive Council**, the highest decision making body of **International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID)**, at Saskatoon in Canada last month has accepted Telangana government's nomination of 2 irrigation facilities in the **ICID Register of Heritage Irrigation Structures**.
- Names of the 2 irrigation facilities – **Sadarmatt anicut** across river Godavari in Nirmal district and **Pedda Cheruvu** in Kamareddy district. (over-century-old irrigation facilities)

Do you know?
- **The anicut**, which is English word for Telugu's ana-katta, meaning a rainfall bund.

Cabinet clears new procurement policy

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Agriculture, MSP, PDS, Procurement and storage

In news:
- The Centre has announced a Rs. 15,053 crore scheme to ensure that farmers growing oilseeds, pulses and copra actually get the minimum support prices (MSP) they are promised for their crops every year.

Current status of MSP and Government procurement
- About one-third of the harvest of the two major foodgrains, rice and wheat, are procured by the Centre at the MSP for sale in ration shops.
- However, most of the 21 other crops are sold at market prices, often below the MSP, as the government's procurement operations are temporary.
- Over the last two years, the government has increased the procurement of pulses and oilseeds at MSP under the Price Support Scheme.

About Policy: Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA)
- **The umbrella policy — Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA)** — was approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs.
- It clubs together an existing procurement scheme with newly introduced options — meant for oilseeds only — of additional procurement by private traders or a cash payment scheme.

- The Cabinet approved government credit guarantee of Rs. 16,550 crore for agencies undertaking procurement.
- The government announces minimum support prices for 23 crops every year. This year, these rates were set at 50% higher than the farmers' production costs, including labour cost.

Copra, pulses will still get price support
- **Under the PM-AASHA scheme, the existing Price Support Scheme (PSS) will continue for pulses and copra,** with Central agencies physically procuring the produce whenever the market rates fall below MSP, up to a maximum limit of 25% of the total harvest.
- The Centre will bear the costs, as per existing guidelines.
- For oilseeds, the States will be allowed to choose between the PSS or two new schemes.
- **One, the Price Deficiency Payment Scheme** is modelled on the Bhavantar experiment in Madhya Pradesh last year, where there is no physical procurement at all.
- Farmers will sell their produce in the market, and the government will directly pay them the difference between the MSP and the average market rate.
- The cash payment will be deposited in their bank accounts. The burden will be shared between centre and states.
- **Two,** a pilot scheme where **selected private agencies** will procure the commodity at the MSP, instead of the government.

Challenges
- NAFED has a stock of more than 4 million tonnes [of pulses and oilseeds] because of the last two years' procurement, but their distribution policy is non-existent. Market prices are 30% lower than the MSP, who is going to bear the loss?
- Earlier experiments with private procurement had collapsed once demand fell.

An experiment in unity: collective farming in T.N.

Women's groups now raise millets, improving nutrition value

Part of: Prelims and mains GS I, II, and III– Role of women and women organisation, Social justice and empowerment, Agriculture economy

In news
- An experiment in collective farming, involving only women, is gaining momentum in Tamil Nadu with small groups engaged in raising minor millets and vegetables in 16 districts at a micro level.

- The model, evolved by Tamil Nadu Women's Collective (TNWC) whose members are mostly widows, single women and Dalits, has improved the nutrition value of these marginalised families besides ensuring economic freedom for their women.

Organic farming

- Groups of about 20 members, among whom about 10 actually work in the farm, take up organic farming in small tracts of land in villages.
- About 90 groups, working all over Tamil Nadu, also propagate the value of minor millets and organic farming, according to Ponnuthai of Vasudevanallur, State secretary of TNWC.
- They approach mainly absentee landowners. A majority of groups work in rain-fed areas. One third of the yield is offered to the landowner.
- The TNWC was formed on July 4, 1994, with the objective of building a society that ensures equality and social justice.

More about collective farming in Tamil Nadu

- At Chellayeepuram, Kalanjiyam Women Farmers' Association, has been involved in farming since 2010.
- This experiment ensures right to food since they themselves decide what to sow and eat
- All their family members consume only millets, a habit that has kept the doctor away.
- What enthuses them is the recognition as farmers.
- TNWC members participate in regular training programmes to hone their skills.
- Knowledge-sharing helps them in taking the right decision.
- Farm experts and scientists volunteer to solve issues like pest attack.
- Excess yield is sold in the market directly by the members.
- Neighbouring farmers help these women by sharing water from their wells when in need. All of them get paid for their toil in the farm.
- During off-season, they get work under MGNREGS

Covering the last field – On Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)

Introduction
Excess rains and floods in Kerala, deficit rainfall in eastern and north-eastern India, and associated large-scale crop losses have again highlighted the need for providing social protection to poor farmers.

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY):
- A highly subsidised Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) was launched in 2016 to provide insurance to farmers from all risks.
- The scheme was aimed at reducing basis risk and premium burden of the farmers
- The scheme's total expenses today are almost Rs. 30,000 crore.
- In comparison to earlier schemes, the PMFBY is more farmer friendly, with sums insured being closer to the cost of production.
- The scheme's linkage with parallel programmes like the 'Jan Dhan Yojana' and 'Digital India' makes it a truly inclusive and welfare-based scheme.
- The scheme therefore led to increased coverage of 5.7 crore farmers in 2016 and the sum insured crossed ₹200,000 crore. However, notwithstanding its ambition and intent, the scheme since its operation has been scrutinised more for its misses than its hits.

What are some of the problems inherent in the scheme:
- Outmoded method of crop loss assessment
- Inadequate and delayed claim payment
- High premium rates
- Poor execution

Consequently, in 2017, the expansive coverage of the scheme suffered some setback as seen in a drop of nearly one crore farmers in enrolment (about 17%). Such shortcomings inspired recent announcements such as that of Bihar to start its own scheme, the "Bihar Rajya Fasal Sahayata Yojna".

How can the scheme be made more effective?
In order to make the PMFBY a sustained developmental action for a comprehensive climate risk protection for every Indian farmer, the following action points are suggested:
- **Faster and appropriate claim settlement:** The weakness of the PMFBY is the methodology deployed for crop loss assessment: the crop cutting experiments (CCEs).
- **Crop Cutting Experiments:** are periodic exercises conducted nationwide every season to determine crop yields of major crops. Sample villages are chosen through scientifically designed surveys, and crops are physically harvested to determine yields.
- **Improvement in the efficacy of the PMFBY:** technology use must be intensified. With options available today, such as detailed weather data, remote sensing, modelling and big data analytics, the exercise of monitoring crop growth and productivity can be not only more accurate and efficient but also resource saving. Hybrid indices, which integrate all relevant technologies into a single indicator, are good ways to determine crop losses.

- **Creation of an online portal:** the whole process of monitoring can be made accessible and transparent to farmers, policy-makers and insuring agencies alike through an online portal.
- **Universal and free coverage for all smallholders:** Farmers' awareness about the scheme and crop insurance literacy remain low in most States, especially among smallholders in climatically challenged areas in most need of insurance. To increase insurance coverage a system should be thought of whereby every farmer automatically gets insured by the state.
- **Improved and transparent insurance scheme design:** Insurance companies are supposed to calculate actuarial rates, and based on tenders, the company quoting the lowest rate is awarded the contract. Science has the capacity today to characterise risks and reconstruct reasonably long-time series of yields. The premium rates, and hence subsidy load on the government, can come down significantly if we make greater use of such proxies and appropriate sum insured levels.

Conclusion:
- If a comprehensive social protection scheme is implemented, there would be opportunities for further rationalisation of subsidies.
- The government today spends more than Rs. 50,000 crore annually on various climate risk management schemes in agriculture, including insurance.
- This includes drought relief, disaster response funds, and various other subsidies. Climate-risk triggered farm-loan waivers are an additional expense.
- All these resources can be better utilised to propel farm growth. Reinvigorating the crop insurance scheme will provide better social protection to every farmer.

Connecting the dots:
- There are enough number of schemes and programs for farmers, still large number of farming population is living in poverty. Critically analyse.

Transforming agriculture

Introduction

- India is signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity.
- As **four of the 35 biodiversity hotspots are located in India,** it is biodiversity-rich.
- However, climate change and development without consideration for biodiversity are leading to loss of biodiversity.

Some of the issues

- India gave the world crops such as rice, chickpea, pigeon pea, mango and eggplant. Most keepers of these crops genetic diversity are **smallholder farmers, including women.**
- With the focus on policies that cater to market demands, its **reservoir of indigenous traditional crops has dwindled.**
- **Man-animal conflicts** in the fringes of Protected Areas or animal corridors
- Conflicts over **unsustainable procurement of non-timber forest products (NTFPs)** have been contentious, especially in Odisha and Uttarakhand.

Green Agriculture project and its significance

- **India's National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) recognises the importance of biodiversity for inclusive development.**
- **The Green Agriculture project** implemented by the **Indian government and the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO)** takes a novel approach to support the NBAP and synergise biodiversity conservation, agriculture production and development.
- It is being implemented in **five landscapes adjoining Protected Areas/Biosphere Reserves:** Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand.
- It envisages a transformation in Indian agriculture for global environmental benefits by addressing land degradation, climate change mitigation, sustainable forest management, and biodiversity conservation.
- The approach will be to strengthen their role as **agrodiversity guardians** by developing value chains for their indigenous crops such as traditional rice varieties in Odisha.

Way forward

- **A participatory and landscape approach** can ensure sustainability of conservation efforts.
- Keeping the focus on initiatives for **sustainable NTFP harvest, eradication of invasive alien species, and mitigation of wildlife conflicts** is essential.
- **Biodiversity conservation** is a part of traditional wisdom. Examples include the **Orans of Rajasthan and the village safety and supply reserves in Mizoram.**
- **Traditional farming systems such as jhum encouraged crop diversity.** However, climate change and shortened fallow cycles are undermining jhum cultivation sustainability.
- The landscape approach will aim to restore traditional knowledge systems, such as the conservation of common property resources.
- Participatory learning tools will encourage farmers to adopt more sustainable indigenous soil conservation.

Conclusion

Environmental concerns are inadequately reflected in the development rhetoric. Thus, projects such as Green Agriculture are essential in equipping decision-makers with the necessary instruments to design effective and informed policies to underpin environmental concerns.

Connecting the dots:

- Write a brief note on Green Agriculture prject and India's National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP).

India targets slight increase in 2018-19 foodgrain output

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Agriculture, food security

In news:

The Agriculture Ministry has set a foodgrain production target of 285.2 million tonnes for 2018-19, a marginal increase from the previous year's harvest of 284.8 million tonnes.

What is the expected increase?

Annual targets

The 2018-19 production targets for rice, at 113 million tonnes, and wheat, at 100 million tonnes, are marginally higher than the previous year's harvest. However, the targets for pulses, coarse cereals and maize are slightly lower than the last year's production

2018-19 (million tonnes) projected — 2017-18 (million tonnes) Fourth estimate of production

	2018-19	2017-18
Rice	113	112.9
Wheat	100	99.7
Total foodgrain	285.2	284.8

Issues and challenges

- Access to export markets in the case of high production
- In the years of normal monsoons and record harvests, prices of several commodities have crash, hurting many farmers.

- In case of government procurement, shortage of storage capacity.
- In States like Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, there is no space left in the godowns.

Steps taken by government
- The government has ramped up procurement of pulses and oilseeds in an effort to ensure that more farmers receive the minimum support price (MSP) for these crops even as the market rates fall.
- NAFED is holding 44 lakh tonnes of pulses, 57 lakh tonnes including oilseeds.
- Warehouse capacity is making some States consider the new Central scheme to pay oilseed farmers the cash differential between MSP and market prices.
- Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat have expressed interest in opting for the scheme, which was approved by the Union Cabinet as part of a wider ₹15,053 crore procurement policy.

Ravaged by a caterpillar: on the armyworm invasion in India

Introduction
- Maize crop of Karnataka is being destroyed by a small greenish-brown worm with dark lines along its length and an inverted 'Y' on its head. It looks like any of the thousands of pests that infest fields in India each year, but this one is special.
- Karnataka is one of the largest maize producers in India, and maize is the third most widely produced cereal in the country.

The fall armyworm (Spodoptera frugiperda)
- The fall armyworm (Spodoptera frugiperda), a native of the Americas, first seen in Asia five months ago.
- Since its identification in the State's Shivamogga district in May, the pest has reached as far as West Bengal and Gujarat.
- There are six phases in the fall armyworm's life, and between the first and the last, its appetite changes dramatically.
- Within days, it turns from a light feeder into a voracious eater that can wipe out farms. After pupation, adult moths emerge.

Other alien attacks on farm fields
- This isn't the first time a foreign visitor is poised to wreak havoc on Indian farms.
- In 2008, the papaya mealybug, a central American native, entered the country and destroyed plantations in several States.

- Then, in 2014, the tomato pinworm, or Tuta absoluta, a South American moth, was spotted in Karnataka. Within a couple of years, it had reached Maharashtra, Gujarat, Delhi and other regions, where it caused widespread damage to tomato crop.

The rise in invasives
- Some researchers have argued that India has traditionally been extra vulnerable to invasive species because of its history of political invasions.
- From the Mughals to the British and the Portuguese, everyone brought their share of noxious weeds, insects and trees.
- Consider the case of the Lantana species, camara, which was first introduced by the British as an ornamental hedge in the 19th century.
- Today, it is widespread across India and threatens biodiversity by taking over forest understorey and grabbing resources from other species.
- Another invasive, congress grass, is thought to have piggybacked via wheat shipments from the U.S. under the 1950s PL-480 Food for Peace program.
- But the entry of invasives has been rising the world over in the last few decades, and one likely reason is increased trade.
- Out of several factors such as a country's population density and amount of cropland, it was the degree of international trade that best predicted the number of invasives.

Alien species
- Such alien species which migrate to a new geography from their native lands can be a huge risk to both agriculture and wildlife.
- They could be insects, trees, weeds or viruses. Many of them tend to die out in new environments. Some become naturalised, like a few eucalyptus species have in India.
- Naturalised aliens maintain their population and do not pose a great risk to biodiversity. A small percentage of them turn invasive, and spread uncontrollably.
- The absence of natural predators from their original homes allows them to disrupt ecosystems and cause massive economic losses.
- In 2016, a paper published in Nature Communications, titled 'Massive yet grossly underestimated global costs of invasive insects', calculated that such attacks cost the world around $70 billion a year.
- Such destruction is why countries take strong measures to prevent the entry of these pests.

Destruction caused by fall armyworm
- The earliest published reports of widespread destruction by the fall armyworm come from Georgia, U.S. in the 18th century.

- The fall armyworm was known as a particularly voracious pest. Though it preferred maize, it ate nearly 80 other plants.
- Nearly 200 million people here depend on maize for nutrition, and they are all at risk from the little brown caterpillar.
- One of the worst attacks occurred in 1912. According to reports, the pest swept almost the entire U.S. east of the Rocky Mountains, destroyed the corn and millet in the southern U.S., severely injured cotton and truck crops etc.
- Even today, it continues to be a major cereal pest in both North and South America.
- In 2016, the pest turned up in the west African country of Nigeria. Initially, farmers confused it with another Spodoptera species native to the region.
- Today, two years later, the pest has spread to 43 countries on the continent.
- It is expensive to control it. In June, the Food and Agriculture Organisation said it had invested $20 million in controlling the pest in Africa, and was looking for another $23 million.

There are several reasons why the armyworm is thriving:
- It reproduces rapidly, and the continent's tropical and sub-tropical climates allow it to feed all year round. In contrast, fall armyworms die in Canada's frigid winters.
- Each summer, new populations of the moth migrate to Southern Canada from warmer states in the U.S. like Texas.
- Such migration isn't hard for them; the Spodoptera moth is known to be able to fly around 1,400 km. This is another reason why it spread so quickly to new countries after it landed on African shores.
- Researchers speculate that it might have hitched a ride in cargo containers on commercial aircraft or in someone's cabin baggage, and reached to Africa.
- According to the European Union Notification System for Plant Health Interceptions, Spodoptera frugiperda was intercepted 14 times by EU quarantine officers in 2017.
- It was caught piggybacking on all kinds of organic material — flowers from Kenya, bonnet peppers from Mexico, and cucurbits from Suriname, to name a few.

How did it enter India?
- To get into India, the fall armyworm would have either had to fly here, or make it past India's plant quarantine system.
- This caterpillar has several stages in its life cycle, during which it does not need food to survive. Out of these stages, the pupal and adult moth stages can survive for days without food. Such pupae or moths could easily have hitched a ride on maize shipments into India.

- In 2018 alone, India imported 500 million tonnes of maize. Further, the experience of the European Union shows that armyworms can survive on fresh fruits and vegetables too.
- India's imports of fresh fruits and vegetables are not high, but they are not non-existent either. According to the data from the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, in 2016-17, India's imports of edible vegetables were worth $1,371 million.

India's quarantine system
- The first line of defence is a quarantine system, under which imports of grains and plants that can host such insects are inspected at shipping ports, airports and land border crossings.
- This system is built around the Plant Quarantine (Regulation of Import into India) Order of 2003. The order, in turn, is notified under an Act that is over a century old: The Destructive Insects and Pests Act of 1914.
- Under the Plant Quarantine Order, grains or plant material can come to India only through notified points of entry. Imports at each of these points are to be inspected by officers from the Directorate of Plant Protection.
- In India, this responsibility lies with the Directorate of Plant Protection, Quarantine & Storage, with its headquarters in Faridabad, Haryana.
- Unfortunately, the directorate is failing in its task of policing Indian borders. It is short-staffed and hamstrung by the lack of a strong legislation.
- Quarantine stations do not have key experts and required tools and infrastructure.
- There are also gaps in regulating the import of plant materials by individual passengers.
- Under the Quarantine order, around 2 kg of cut flowers and dry fruits are exempt, but any seeds or larger quantities of flowers must be accompanied by a certificate declaring that they are free of pests and microbes.
- If not, passengers arriving at international airports are required to declare them. 99% of the people don't do that.

Time for a new law?
- The Destructive Insects and Pests Act is subsidiary to the Customs Act, 1962, quarantine officers must wait for customs officers to flag suspicious goods before they can check them.
- The customs officer may not suspect anything, because what they are looking for is entirely different from what a quarantine officer wants to examine.
- In 2013, after widespread recognition of the lapses in the current quarantine system, a new Bill called the Agricultural Biosecurity Bill was tabled in the Lok Sabha.

- The Bill borrowed from some of the most stringent quarantine regimes in the world, such as the U.S., Australia and New Zealand.
- Unlike India's Directorate of Plant Protection, Quarantine and Storage which comes under the Ministry of Agriculture, the U.S.'s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and AQIS are autonomous bodies.
- The Bill envisaged setting up a similar body in India, called the Agricultural Biosafety Authority of India.
- Quarantine officers would have wider powers under this Bill. And the authority could even penalise States for not following its directions in controlling an invasive species outbreak.
- But as of today, this Bill has lapsed.

Way forward
- Quarantine systems to be strengthened at the internationals airports in the State.
- Prominent signboards should be installed in airports warning passengers of the dangers of bringing exotic fruits and flowers into the country.
- Training of plant quarantine officers and for providing them with equipment to detect dangerous species.
- The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS), for example, employs sniffer dogs to detect agricultural material on passengers.
- It also has scanners that can detect organic material such as seeds in baggage. Several Indian airports do not have this. When such items are found, stringent penalties are necessary.
- In 2002, Indian cricketers Harbhajan Singh and Saurav Ganguly famously paid fines of NZ $200 at Auckland airport in New Zealand for not declaring mud on their footwear.

Connecting the dots:
- Poor quarantine system is one of the main reason behind increasing invasions by foreign species on Indian agriculture. Elucidate.

Odisha changes norms in food, procurement policy

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Agriculture economy and food security

In news

- To facilitate entry of more small and marginal farmers and share-croppers into the procurement fold, Odisha is bringing changes in the norms of food and procurement policy for the Kharif Marketing Season (KMS) 2018-19.
- The past practice of deducting towards personal consumption requirement at the rate of three quintals of paddy per member in the family of farmer for computation of marketable surplus of paddy is waived out from KMS 2018-19.
- The Cabinet, which approved the food and procurement policy for KMS 2019 to regulate all aspects of paddy and rice procurement during the ensuing KMS, decided that paddy (Kharif crop) will be procured between November, 2018 and April, 2019. The paddy (Rabi crop) will be procured from May to June, 2019.
- The farmers would be paid the Minimum Support Price (MSP) fixed by the Central government at ₹1,750 per quintal for the common variety of paddy and ₹ 1,770 for Grade-A variety. The money would be directly paid into the bank accounts of farmers within three days of the procurement.

Procurement

- The procured rice will partly be pumped into the Public Distribution System in the State, the Food Corporation of India (FCI) will evacuate the remaining to other States as per the MoU with the Centre.
- Paddy procurement process in all 308 procuring blocks will be conducted through paddy procurement automation system (P-PAS). All documents in connection with paddy procurement shall be generated from computer through P-PAS software to make the process hassle-free and transparent.
- The State government should issue farmer identification cards to all farmers in order to bring more small and marginal farmers and share-croppers into the procurement fold.

Rajasthan farmers benefited from solar water pumps: study

Part of Prelims and mains III – Agriculture, Environment, Conservation

In news
- A scientific study conducted by Birla Institute of Technology & Science, Pilani, has found mismatch between investment in solar energy sources and employment generation in the sector, but has stated that the farmers in Rajasthan have immensely benefited from the solar photovoltaic (SPV) water pumping systems.

- The study has also found a significant decline in the consumption of fuel in the agriculture sector.
- A micro-level analysis indicated that the SPV water pumping systems had provided some direct benefits to farmers, including the saving from diesel generators.
- ICSSR-funded BITS, Pilani project also found a significant decline in the consumption of fuel in the agriculture sector.

'Greenhouse effect'

- Farmers used to operate diesel generators for 6 to 7 hours a day, consuming two litres of diesel per hour. The use of SPV pumps has resulted in a drastic reduction of fuel consumption, which was also a cause of greenhouse effect.
- While the grid-connected electricity is supplied to agriculture sector mostly during the night, the farmers can irrigate the land during daytime with the SPV system, making their access to water easy.
- The SPV system has been found to be cost effective because of the State government's subsidy and the beneficiary's share is recovered in about four years.
- Power supply to the agriculture sector in Rajasthan ranges between 5 and 6 hours a day.
- Facing challenges in the expansion of grid-connected power because of difficult geography, the Rajasthan government has been giving subsidy on SPV water pumping systems since 2011-12.

ENVIRONMENT

Role of NGT in conserving Western Ghats

Part of: GS Mains III – Environment and Ecology; Conservation of Biodiversity
In news:
- Green Tribunal steps in to conserve Ghats
- Curbs States from activities that may have adverse impact

Do you know?
- The six Western Ghats States?
- Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP), also known as the Gadgil Commission after its chairman Madhav Gadgil

Gadgill Committee	Kasturirangan Committee
The entire Western Ghats is an "Ecologically Sensitive Area".	Only approximately 37% of the entire Western Ghats is an "Ecologically Sensitive Area".
Recommends a bottom-up approach to conservation with Gram Sabhas playing a crucial role in decision-making.	Envisages decision-making as a responsibility that lies primarily with the government and the bureaucracy (such as forest officials).
Recommends the recognition of three grades of Ecologically Sensitive Zones and the complete ban on the construction of high-capacity storage dams and sand mining in ESZ-1 areas.	Hydroelectric power plants to be permitted in ESAs only after a detailed study. Recommends a complete ban on quarrying, mining, and sand mining in ESAs.
Constitute the Western Ghats Ecology Authority under the MoEF to regulate and oversee the conservation of the Western Ghats.	Strengthen the current legal framework (such as the State Pollution Control Boards and the State Biodiversity Boards).

Western Ghats and reports:

- Seven years ago, the **Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel** issued recommendations for the preservation of the fragile western peninsular region.
- Madhav Gadgil, who chaired the Union Environment Ministry's WGEEP, has said the recent havoc in Kerala is a consequence of short-sighted policymaking, and warned that Goa may also be in the line of nature's fury.
- The State governments that are mainly responsible for the Western Ghats — Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Goa and Maharashtra — must pay heed to the reports of both the **Gadgil Committee** and the **Kasturirangan Committee**, which was set up to examine the WGEEP report.
- The entire system is globally acknowledged as a biodiversity hotspot. But population estimates for the sensitive zones vary greatly, based on interpretations of the ESZs.
- In Kerala, for instance, one expert assessment says 39 lakh households are in the ESZs outlined by the WGEEP, but the figure drops sharply to four lakh households for a smaller area of zones identified by the Kasturirangan panel.
- The WGEEP had earlier proposed "much larger areas for being included in the eco-sensitive zone" though the Kasturirangan-led High Level Working Group, also appointed by the MoEF and CC to look into the WGEEP report, had reduced it.

Connecting the dots

Write a note on

- Kasturirangan Report
- Madhav Gadgil Report
- B Shah Commission
- Ecologically Sensitive Areas

NITI Aayog panel urges plan to save springs

Part of: GS Mains III - Conservation of Biodiversity and Environment

In news:

- NITI Aayog constituted group of experts urged Government to set up a dedicated mission to salvage and revive spring water systems in the country's Himalayan States.
- NITI Task Force moots an 8-year programme to overhaul spring water management.
- Preparing a digital atlas of the country's springsheds, training 'para-hydrogeologists' who could lead grassroots conservation and introducing a 'Spring Health Card' – are some of the components under the programme.

Why it is important to save Springs?

- Indian Himalayan Region (IHR) has been heavily reliant on these natural groundwater sources, that are under increasing threat from the urbanisation caused by a constant push for development and climate change.
- Almost half of the perennial springs have already dried up or have become seasonal.
- Acute water shortage for drinking and other domestic purposes. (Water Security)
- Shimla crisis – recent example of water crisis

Do you know?

- In the Eastern Himalayan States, Meghalaya with 3,810 villages with springs has the highest number of these water sources.
- Sikkim has the greatest density with 94% of its villages having a spring.
- In the Western Himalayas, Jammu & Kashmir has both the highest number of villages with springs at 3,313 and the greatest density of 50.6%.

Ecological damage to Aravallis

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Environment and Ecology; Conservation of Biodiversity

In news:
- Supreme Court ordered the demolition of structures built illegally in the protected forests of the Aravallis.
- SC bench ordered that all structures built after August 18, 1992 in the area known as 'Kant Enclave' at Anangpur in Faridabad district of Haryana should be demolished.

Important Value Additions:
- Aravalli Range is a range of mountains running in a southwest direction, starting in North India from Delhi and passing through southern Haryana, through to Western India across the states of Rajasthan and ending in Gujarat.
- It is the oldest range of fold mountains in India.
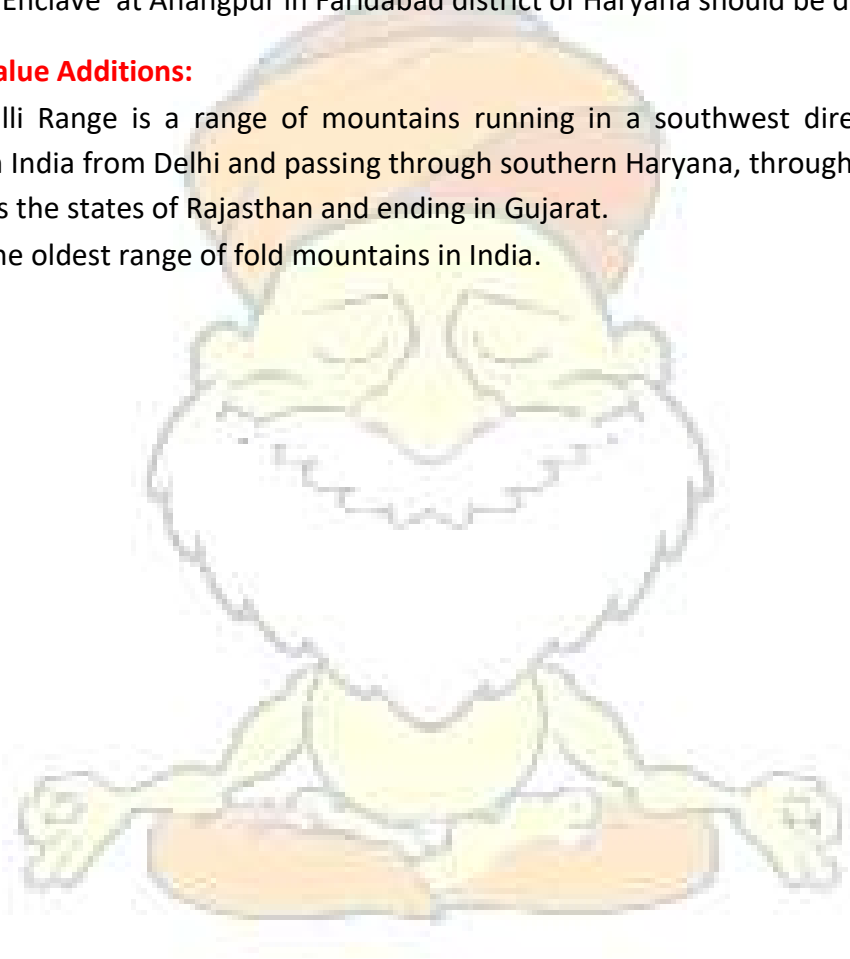
Map work: Locate Aravalli range and other mountain ranges

Influx of alien fish species due to Kerala Floods

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Environment and Ecology; Conservation of Biodiversity

In news:

- The catastrophic floods in Kerala have released several alien species of fish into waterbodies.
- Influx of alien fishes has raised a threat to the endemic aquatic ecosystem and biodiversity.
- Alien species had escaped in large numbers from flooded commercial and ornamental fish farms.
- As per IUCN, proliferation of alien species poses a serious threat to the freshwater ecosystems of Kerala, which is considered to be a global hotspot for fish diversity.

No water aerodrome project in Chilika Lake

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Environment and Ecology; Conservation of Biodiversity

In news:
- Airports Authority of India (AAI) has dropped the proposed water aerodrome project at Chilika Lake in Odisha.

Fast recap:
- AAI had proposed to set up a water aerodrome in Chilika Lake for starting amphibious aircraft operations in Odisha.
- Project faced 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.

Do you know?
- Nearly one million avian visitors come from the Arctic and Eurasian regions to Chilika.

Cloudy forecast: on climate change

Introduction

- **The conference of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Bangkok** was **to draft a rulebook** for the Paris Agreement **ahead of** a crucial international **conference**

in Poland in December, ran into predictable difficulties over the issue of raising funds to help poorer nations.

- **Some developed countries led by the U.S.** has rejected the agreement and are unwilling to commit to sound rules on raising climate finance.

Till now, Emissions done by Developed Countries:
- Those emissions raised living standards for their citizens but contributed heavily to the accumulated carbon dioxide burden, now measured **at about 410 parts per million of CO_2 in the atmosphere, up from 280 ppm before the industrial revolution.**
- If scientific estimates are correct, **the damage already done to the West Antarctic Ice Sheet** is set to raise sea levels; **a 2° Celsius rise will also destabilise the Greenland Ice Sheet.**
- **Failed agriculture in populous countries** will drive more **mass migrations** of people, creating conflict.
- A deeper insight on all this will be available in October when the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change releases its scientific report on the impact of a 1.5° C rise in global average temperature.

India and China: should take Leadership Role:
- **There is international pressure** on China and India to cut GHG emissions. Both countries have committed themselves to a cleaner growth path.
- **India,** which reported an annual CO_2 equivalent emissions of 2.136 billion tonnes in 2010 to the UNFCCC two years ago, **estimates that the GHG emissions intensity of its GDP has declined by 12% for the 2005-2010 period.**
- As members committed to the Paris Agreement, **China and India have the responsibility of climate leadership in the developing world,** and have to green their growth.

Do you know?
Background:
- At COP 21 in Paris, on 12 December 2015, Parties to the UNFCCC reached a landmark agreement to combat climate change and to accelerate and intensify the actions and investments needed for a sustainable low carbon future.
- Under the pact concluded in Paris, rich countries pledged to raise $100 billion a year by 2020 to help developing countries reduce their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and aid populations to cope with extreme events such as floods, droughts and storms.
- However, Mr. Trump in June last year announced his decision to withdraw from the Paris deal, saying the accord would have cost America trillions of dollars, killed jobs, and hindered the oil, gas, coal and manufacturing industries.

- United States of America (USA) is the second largest Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emitter presently.
- However, if cumulative historical emission is considered, USA would be largest GHG emitter.
- So, its withdrawal will affect control of cumulative global GHG emissions. It will also affect the availability of international funds for climate change, as USA was a contributor to climate finance.

India's Contribution to reduce GHGs:
- In the pre-2020 period, India announced its voluntary goal to reduce the emission intensity of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 20-25 per cent from 2005 levels by 2020.
- Government of India is implementing the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) which includes eight national missions being implemented by various Ministries in specific areas:
- Solar Energy, Enhanced Energy Efficiency, Sustainable Habitat, Water, Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem, Green India, Sustainable Agriculture and Strategic knowledge for Climate Change.

Measures and Policies for Tackling Climate Change by India:
Under the Paris Agreement, India has submitted its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the UNFCCC outlining Eight (8) targets for 2021-2030, including
- To reduce Emission Intensity of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 33 to 35 percent by 2030 from 2005 level,
- To achieve about 40 percent cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030 with the help of transfer of technology and low-cost international finance including from Green Climate Fund (GCF),
- To create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO_2 equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.
- The other targets pertain to sustainable lifestyles; climate friendly growth path; climate change adaptation; climate change finance; and capacity building and technology.

Way forward
- Obstructing the transition to a carbon-neutral pathway and preserving the status quo is short-sighted, simply because the losses caused by weather events are proving severely detrimental to all economies.
- Developing countries need a supportive framework in the form of a rulebook that binds the developed countries to their funding pledges, provides support for capacity building and transfer of green technologies on liberal terms.

- Incremental changes along with increasing contributions from renewables and improvements in energy efficiencies would not be sufficient.
- There should instead be major changes in technological innovation, behaviour, values and governance. This is an unprecedented challenge for humanity.
- This is the time for the world's leaders to demonstrate that they are ready to go beyond expediency and take the actions needed to avert long-term catastrophe.

Connecting the dots:

- In the backdrop of negative developments in climate change efforts, on behalf of some developed nations under the leadership of US, do you think that Paris summit (COP21) will be able to achieve its targets?

More river stretches critically polluted: CPCB

Part of: Prelims and mains GS III – Environment and pollution

In news

Based on the recommendations of the NGT, the CPCB last month apprised the States of the extent of pollution in their rivers.

Findings of CPCB

- The number of polluted stretches in India's rivers has increased to 351 from 302 two years ago.
- The number of critically polluted stretches — where water quality indicators are the poorest — has gone up to 45 from 34.
- While the ₹20,000 crore clean-up of the Ganga may be the most visible of the government's efforts to tackle pollution, but several of the river's stretches — in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh — are actually far less polluted than many rivers in Maharashtra, Assam and Gujarat.
- These three States account for 117 of the 351 polluted river stretches.
- Mithi among the worst, from Powai to Dharavi — with a BOD (Biochemical Oxygen Demand) of 250 mg/l, the Godavari — from Someshwar to Rahed — with a BOD of 5.0-80 mg/l; the Sabarmati — Kheroj to Vautha — with a BOD from 4.0-147 mg/l; and the Hindon — Saharanpur to Ghaziabad — with a BOD of 48-120 mg/l.
- In its compilation of polluted stretches in Uttar Pradesh, the Ganga with a BOD range of 3.5-8.8 mg/l is indicated as a 'priority 4' river.

Troubled waters
Maharashtra and Assam have the highest number of polluted stretches on rivers

ASSAM (44)

MADHYA PRADESH (22)

MAHARASHTRA (53)

KERALA (21)

POLLUTED STRETCHES
1   27   53

The Powai to Dharavi stretch of Mithi river in Mumbai is among the most polluted
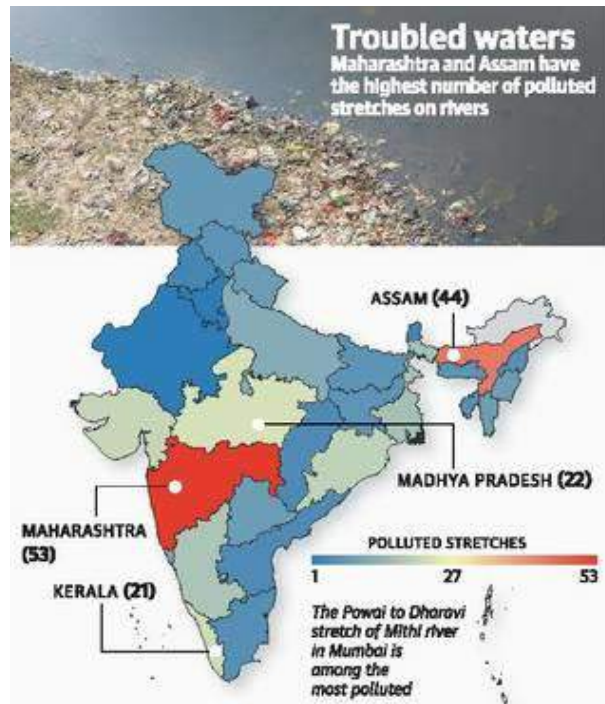
Measuring health of the rivers
- The CPCB, since the 1990s, has a programme to monitor the quality of rivers primarily by measuring BOD, which is a proxy for organic pollution — the higher it is, the worse the river.
- The health of a river and the efficacy of water treatment measures by the States and municipal bodies are classified depending on BOD, with a BOD greater than or equal to 30 mg/l termed 'priority 1,' while that between 3.1-6 mg/l is 'priority 5.'
- The CPCB considers a BOD less than 3 mg/l an indicator of a healthy river.
- In its 2015 report, the CPCB had identified 302 polluted stretches on 275 rivers, spanning 28 States and six Union Territories.
- The increase in numbers reflected higher pollution levels as well as an increase in water quality monitoring stations. Currently, the CPCB has 1822 monitoring stations on rivers and 473 on lakes/ponds/tanks.
- A priority 1 river may show high pollution but it also means more resources for clean up, whereas a priority 4 can mean achieving a clear river with relatively fewer resources.
- Based on its 2008-2012 evaluation, the CPCB published a report in 2015 and asked States to prepare plans for improving these polluted stretches.
- Though the information from the 2016-2017 assessment doesn't indicate improvements, the bulk of the increase in polluted stretches were in priority 4 (6-10 mg/l) and priority 5 river stretches

In managing water, Surat takes lead

Part of: Prelims and mains GS III – Environment; Water conservation

In news
- India's 'Diamond City' offers a lesson for the country's ever-expanding cities on water management and the optimal use of water.
- Surat's civic body is setting up **state-of-the-art sewage treatment plants (STPs)** to ensure every drop of waste water is treated and reused for purposes other than drinking.
- From March 2019, the Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) will be supplying 115 MLD (million litres per day) treated water to industries located within the city, in order to meet the entire industrial requirement of water through treated or recycled water.
- The entire quantum of water will be treated from domestic sewerage water in tertiary treatment plants, for supplying to mainly textile factories.
- Surat was the first city in the country to start selling recycled water to industries in 2014.
- Surat's cost effective water management system is most advantageous for its contribution towards reducing the dependency on conventional resources of water, and thus optimal use of the resource.
- So far, the SMC has invested ₹ 280 crore in creating tertiary water treatment facilities in the city.

Recycling technology
- The civic body's efforts to create infrastructure for water management is in line with the State government's policy of promoting the use of recycled water for non-drinking purposes, and reducing dependence on ground water.
- Gujarat is a water scarce State, so it have to be innovative in managing water resources in the most efficient manner.
- The civic body intends to go further and supply recycled water to industrial clusters like Hazira, outside the city.

Fact check
- India is facing its worst water shortage in history, according to a new report prepared by the Niti Aayog.
- Nearly 600 million Indians faced high to extreme water stress.
- About 2,00,000 people die every year in the country because of inadequate access to safe water.

'Carbon taxes key in climate fight'

Part of: Prelims and mains III – Environment and climate change

In news
- Fighting global warming will necessarily require taxing carbon emissions, or setting a price on carbon pollution, the World Bank's chief executive said at a recently held G7 environment meeting in Canada.
- **Shadow price for carbon** is a method of calculating a price per tonne of carbon that includes the social costs of pollution.
- At least 46 countries and 26 sub-national governments have established a carbon pricing policy as of April 1.

Do you know?
The Group of Seven is a group consisting of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. These countries, with the seven largest advanced economies in the world, represent more than 62% of the global net wealth.

Saving rivers

Introduction

- Based on the recommendations of the National Green Tribunal, the CPCB last month apprised the States of the extent of pollution in their rivers.
- The number of polluted stretches in India's rivers has increased to 351 from 302 two years ago.
- The number of critically polluted stretches where water quality indicators are the poorest has gone up to 45 from 34, according to an assessment by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).
- The Rs. 20,000 crore clean-up of the Ganga may be the most visible of the government's efforts to tackle pollution, the CPCB says several of the river's stretches in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are actually far less polluted than many rivers in Maharashtra, Assam and Gujarat.
- These three States account for 117 of the 351 polluted river stretches.

Do you know?
Bio-Chemical Oxygen Demand:

- BOD is the amount of dissolved oxygen needed (i.e. demanded) by aerobic biological organisms to break down organic material.
- BOD is a proxy for organic pollution. If BOD is higher, the worse is the river. The health of a river and the efficacy of water treatment measures by the States and municipal bodies are classified depending on BOD.
- When BOD is greater than or equal to 30 mg/l, it is termed as 'priority 1,' while that between 3.1 & 6 mg/l is 'priority 5.' CPCB considers BOD less than 3 mg/l, an indicator of a healthy river.

Reasons behind the river being more polluted:
- Rapid urbanisation is widening the gap, since infrastructure planning is not keeping pace with growth in housing.
- There is poor infrastructure available in a large number of cities and towns located near rivers.
- Managing sewage requires steady funding of treatment plants for all urban agglomerations that discharge their waste into rivers, and also a reliable power supply.
- There is failure of several national programs run by the Centre for river conservation, wetland preservation and water quality monitoring.
- The sewage and industrial effluents freely flow into the rivers in several cities.
- Low priority is accorded to the enforcement of laws by SPCBs and pollution control committees.
- River water at the barrage was diverted to treatment plants for water supply. Reports pointed out that 37 per cent of the sewage treatment plants (STPs) in Delhi were under-utilized as they did not receive sewage because of lack of drainage system in many areas.

Way Forward:
- A 2013 World Bank study estimated that environmental degradation is costing India at least $80 billion a year, of which losses to rivers form a significant part. This is indeed a problem of catastrophic dimensions.
- Government should be to ensure that there was a limit to the amount of water that can be drawn from the river.
- The immediate plan should be to expand the supply of treatment plants.
- All liquid effluent discharge from the textile units and tanneries should be brought down to zero and it is to be pursued rigorously. Assistance to be given to industries to choose the best technologies for recovery of waste waters for reuse.

Connecting the dots:
- Write a brief note on: River Pollution in India, Causes, concerns and solution.

Agencies to do eco-impact checks

Part of: Prelims and mains III – Environment and ecology; EIA

In news
- The Union Environment Ministry proposes to allow research organisations and accredited agencies to monitor if companies are complying with environmental conditions.
- The Central Government proposes to introduce the concept of randomised third-party compliance monitoring of the environment clearance conditions through national-level reputed and competent government institutions to be empanelled by the Ministry.

Environment impact assessment in India
- India's environmental laws require project developers to submit themselves to the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA), under which an independent agency, commissioned by the project developer, ascertains the likely environmental impact of a proposed project.
- The preparation of an environment impact assessment report and an environment management plan ensures that the adverse environmental impact of projects and activities are assessed and studied and mitigation measures are taken in the implementation of the project to avoid or minimise the adverse environmental impact.
- Currently, depending on the size of projects, they are cleared or rejected — with accompanying caveats that must be adhered to — by the expert appraisal committees of the Central government and the States and the district environment impact assessment authorities.
- The process obligates the project proponent to file a six-monthly compliance report, and regional offices of the Ministry are supposed to check whether industries are complying with these norms.
- However, these offices are frequently understaffed; therefore, to ensure that the rules are complied with, environment and forest ministry proposes to have institutions like the IITs and accredited expert organisations conduct the compliance monitoring.

Big shift
- Independent observers describe the proposal as a "big shift" in how projects are appraised.
- The core issue of the affected people being kept out of the monitoring and compliance paperwork is embedded in this proposal.

ANIMALS/NATIONAL PARKS IN NEWS

National Park in news: Orang National Park

Part of: GS Prelims III – Environment and Conservation of Biodiversity

About:

- Orang National Park also known as Rajiv Gandhi Orang National Park is located in Assam.
- The park has a rich flora and fauna, including great Indian one-horned rhinoceros, pygmy hog, elephants, wild buffalo and tigers. It is the only stronghold of rhinoceros on the north bank of the Brahmaputra river.

Animal in news: Indian Roofed Turtles

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III - Conservation of Biodiversity and Animal

About:

- Indian Roofed turtle – got its name because of the peculiar shape of its shell (carapace).
- It is a part of the Asian river turtle family, Geoemydidae. It is most commonly found in Southeast Asia (India, Bangladesh). It is locally known as the Kori Kaitta.
- IUCN – Least Concern

Pic http://www.kidzone.ws/animal-facts/turtles/images/roofed01.jpg

In news:

- Indian Roofed Turtles are usually found in temple ponds and were struggling to survive due to the pollution caused by devotees throwing oil, incense sticks, flowers and other ritual offerings into the small waterbody.
- Innovative idea helps revive these turtles – through tapping religious sentiments of devotees
- An idol of Vishnu in his Kurma (turtle) avatar was installed at the temple complex (Lota Devi temple, Kolkata), therefore devotees can place their offerings near the idol rather than directly polluting the pond.

Animal in news: Endangered 'Pondicherry shark'

- 'Pondicherry shark', an endangered species protected under the provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, was spotted in Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh.
- Known as 'Pala Sora' in the local parlance, the 'Pondicherry Shark' is on the verge of extinction even according to the conventional fishermen. Fishermen, however, are unaware of its conservation status which is on a par with the tiger.
- IUCN status: Critically Endangered.
- This is very rare Indo-West Pacific species.

Citizen science initiative helps save hornbills

Part of: Prelims and mains III – Environment and biodiversity

In news
- A recent citizen science initiative of documenting Indian hornbills is providing valuable inputs for the conservation of this unique bird.

The Hornbill Watch initiative
- The Hornbill Watch initiative (www.hornbills.in) is an interactive web interface that allows a person to report on hornbills anywhere in India. People can record the observation of a live hornbill, note its call or report a dead, hunted or captive bird.
- The data on the presence of hornbills outside protected areas would be crucial in identifying and protecting their habitats from possible threats and development projects.
- States from where the most sightings were recorded are Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

- Hornbills were reported from across 70 protected areas in the country. While 41% of the observations were made within protected areas, 59% were made outside.

Some Important Hornbills: There are nine hornbill species in India.
- The endangered Narcondam hornbill is restricted to an area of 6 sq.km. of the Narcondam Island in the Andamans.
- The rufous-necked hornbill is a vulnerable or near threatened species.
- Further, the Austen's brown hornbill and the great hornbill were observed in several States in northeastern India.
- Other important species of hornbill include the oriental pied hornbill and the Indian grey hornbill.

INFRASTRUCTURE/ENERGY

SAHI - India's future mobility

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Infrastructure; Transportation

In news:
- SAHI – Safe, Adequate, Holistic Infrastructure
- PM Modi recommends for SAHI at Global Mobility Summit (held in New Delhi)
- As fuel prices soar, PM Modi's push for public transport at global summit got attention.
- NITI Aayog report also called for efficient and convenient public transport to answer the twin problems of pollution and congestion.
- PM Modi elaborated on '7Cs' for the future of mobility — common, connected, convenient, congestion-free, charged, clean and cutting-edge.
- Absence of good public transport system led to rapid rise in private vehicle ownership.
- In crux - Public transport must be the cornerstone of India's mobility initiatives.

Paying at the pump: On the causes and consequences of soaring fuel prices

Introduction

From last six months, **petrol and diesel prices continuing to rise.** There are many causes of it, some local and other global.

Why are petrol and diesel prices continuing to rise?
- In June 2017, India's state-run oil marketing companies switched to a dynamic pricing approach to set pump prices of petrol and diesel on a daily basis.
- The move was aimed at helping ensure a market-driven approach to fuel pricing by enabling oil firms to factor in day-to-day fluctuations in crude oil prices as well as movements in the exchange rate of the U.S. dollar to the rupee.
- As a result, with both crude oil and the dollar becoming significantly dearer over the last six months, petrol and diesel prices have remained on a steady upward trajectory countrywide.
- According to the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), petrol hit a record high of Rs. 88.26 per litre on September 11 in Mumbai, where fuel prices are the highest among India's four major metros. At that level, the cost of petrol to consumers had climbed 8.4% in this fiscal year.

- Besides the cost of crude oil and the exchange rate, the incidence of Excise Duty (levied by the Centre) and VAT (charged by the respective States), along with a nominal dealer commission that the oil companies pay to fuel pump owners, ends up approximately doubling the final price consumers pay.
- To illustrate: a consumer in Delhi paid Rs. 79.15 for a litre of petrol that was delivered to the dealers in the city at a cost of Rs. 39.21.

What are the major consequences of this trend in fuel prices?
- Diesel is used to transport goods and commuters and therefore has a direct pass-through impact on retail inflation.
- When consumers end up facing higher fuel bills for using their petrol-powered two-wheelers or cars, and are also unsure of how the overall increase in the cost of living is going to impact their monthly budgets, they are likely to curtail non-essential consumption expenditure.
- Thus, even as inflation accelerates, consumer spending, a key driver of economic growth, could start to soften.

What can the government do to ease the situation?
- Given the extent to which Central and State taxes inflate the final fuel prices paid by consumers; the governments have the option of trimming excise duty and VAT. This would entail foregoing some revenue in the short-term.
- In the longer term, policymakers must look at more enduring structural solutions including ways to reduce the dependence on crude oil imports.

Connecting the dots:
- Consumer goods prices and in general inflation are affected by highly volatile fuel prices. Do you think, bringing down fuel imports will stabilize prices in general? Elaborate alternatives to fuel imports.

Cabinet clears ₹3,466 crore dam improvement project

Part of: Prelims and mains II – Governance and infrastructure

In news
- The government has approved a 65% hike, and extended by two years, a project to improve the stability and working of dams in 11 States.
- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved the Dam Rehabilitation Improvement Project (DRIP) project.

- Out of the ₹3,466 crore cleared, ₹2,628 crore would be funded by the World Bank and ₹747 crore by the States and Implementing Agencies (IAs), and the balance ₹91 crore by the Central Water Commission (CWC).
- Originally, the total cost of DRIP was scheduled closing on June 30, 2018. This has now been extended to June 2020.
- A dam safety Bill that sets directives on how the States and the Centre ought to have an institutional mechanism to better manage dams is still to be discussed in Parliament.

Do you know?

Dam Rehabilitation Improvement Project (DRIP)

In April 2012, the Central Water Commission (CWC) under Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation with assistance from the World Bank, embarked upon the six year Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP) at an estimated cost of Rs. 2100 crore.

The project originally envisaged the rehabilitation and improvement of about 223 dams within four states namely, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Tamil Nadu and later Karnataka, Uttarakhand (UNVNL) and Jharkhand (DVC) joined DRIP and total number of dams covered under DRIP increased to 250; due to the addition / deletion of dams during implementation by partner agencies, presently 223 dams are being rehabilitated.

The project will also promote new technologies and improve Institutional capacities for dam safety evaluation and implementation at the Central and State levels and in some identified premier academic and research institutes of the Country.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Encouraging young minds

Introduction

- When the Fields medals were awarded earlier this year, the Indian media was quick to highlight that Akshay Venkatesh, one of the four medal winners, is of Indian descent.
- There arises a question, did our education system has contributed to Prof. Venkatesh's achievements? and whether, given the present state of affairs, an Indian education can produce Fields medallists?

Do you Know?

- **The Fields Medal** is awarded every four years on the occasion of the International Congress of Mathematicians to recognize outstanding mathematical achievement for existing work and for the promise of future achievement.
- The Fields Medal is regarded as one of the highest honors a mathematician can receive, and has been described as the mathematician's "Nobel Prize".
- This prize awarded to two, three, or four mathematicians less than 40 years of age.

Indian education system and Fields Medals

- Although Prof. Venkatesh was born in Delhi, his family moved to Australia when he was a child.
- The Indian education system hardly played any role in moulding the child prodigy and this was also rather the case with Manjul Bhargava (Fields medal 2014).
- Subhash Khot, who won the Rolf Nevanlinna Prize in 2014, had more of an Indian education — a bachelor's degree in computer science at IIT Bombay.
- Indian education system did not produced any Fields medallists.
- There is no dearth of talent, but the opportunities and training that these talents receive — or fail to receive, rather the lack of these makes them less than others.

Programmes in India for training of mathematics students

- One of the programmes in India devoted to training students of mathematics and identifying and nurturing talent is the Mathematics Training and Talent Search, which was started 25 years ago, in 1993.
- There are also programmes that train students to compete in the Mathematics Olympiad.
- Yet the number of students being trained in these programmes is still small.

- With 36.6 million students enrolled in higher education and 36.4% joining the science and humanities streams (All India Survey on Higher Education data), it is safe to assume that there is a considerable gap between the requirement and the availability of training and nurture.

Global examples

- France, a country with a population close to 6.5 crore, has about 3,000-4,000 scientists. It also boasts of 12 Fields medallists.
- This is comparable to the U.S., which has much more in terms of resources.
- There are schools of talent where a number of Fields medallists were trained in these countries.
- Such schools must be nested in a balanced network of universities, teacher education systems, and most importantly, a solid base in school education.

Conclusion

- It is true that top prizes are not themselves a solution to all problems that beset education in India, but they remain a characteristic of a healthy educational ecosystem.
- Only such an ecosystem can create enough space for young minds to explore abstract mathematical and scientific ideas freely and in turn challenge the boundaries of existing knowledge.

Connecting the dots:

- Give a brief overview of the government steps to promote studies in STEM.

India calling: 5G networks may be in place by 2020

Part of: Prelims and mains GS III – Economy and technology

In news

- Having missed the bus for early adoption of latest technologies in the past, India — one of the fastest growing telecom markets in the world — is pushing for a timely roll-out of 5G technology in the country.
- The Indian government is aiming to commercially introduce 5G services in the country by the end of 2020, almost in line with rest of the world.
- The steering committee has recommended that the 5G spectrum allocation policy should be announced by the end of this year.

- The high-level panel has recommended that 5G programmes be also funded by the government.

What is 5G?

- 5G is the next generation of mobile Internet connectivity that would offer much faster and more reliable networks, which would form the backbone for the emerging era of Internet of Things (IoT).
- Previous generations of mobile networks addressed consumers predominantly for voice and SMS in 2G, web browsing in 3G and higher speed data and video streaming in 4G. The transition from 4G to 5G will serve both consumers and multiple industries.
- Globally, over 150 pre-commercial 5G trials are under way around the world, including South Korea, China and the U.S., 5G trials are yet to begin in India.

Challenges ahead

- Coverage in rural areas remains a challenge.
- Disrupting industries: Once commercialised, 5G is expected to disrupt not only telecom but other industries as well as. 5G is expected to see use beyond delivery of services just on "personal phone platforms." It will also connect new devices to support a much larger range of applications and services.
- This comes at a time when the industry continues to reel under financial stress, weighed down by high debt.

Advantages

- Next generation mobile Internet connectivity will offer faster, more reliable networks that will form the backbone for era of IoT.
- The next generation network will see usage in key government projects such as smart cities and Digital India, besides other business-to-business applications.
- Consumption in terms of using IoT (Internet of Things) devices such as connected refrigerators etc.
- It would enable revenue opportunity for Indian telecom operators by 2026.
- The largest opportunity would be seen in sectors like manufacturing, energy and utilities followed by public safety and health sectors.

Maharashtra to set up cyber varsity

Part of: Prelims and mains GSIII- Technology, Security issues: cyber security

In news

The Maharashtra Government has taken the first step towards setting up a varsity dedicated to mitigating cyber threats. It has set aside 80 crore for the first round of its funding.

What was the need?
- A 2015 skill gap analysis for Maharashtra by the consultancy firm KPMG had pointed to a gap of 1.5 crore professionals in 10 sectors. Of these, there was a greater shortfall in the IoT and Cyber Forensics sectors. The new varsity will bridge this skill gap
- The current supply of cyber professionals in the country is about a lakh while the demand hovers around 30 lakh.
- A cyber-attack is taking place every 10 minutes as opposed to 12 minutes previously. The varsity will remedy this.

Details
- The new Cyber University will train 3,000 professionals to fight online space cyber-attacks, internet crimes, and conduct cyber forensics.
- It will also impart training in 15 other Internet of Things (IoT) areas such as Data Analytics and Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- The government will provide different levels of training and enable affiliated colleges to impart certification for the 15 courses. The State will also supply infrastructure for training and education.

Cost of courses
- The varsity will provide for and prepare internet professionals on the lines of the Microsoft Certified Professional Program.
- The courses will cost less than 5 lakh for courses in data analytics, cloud computing, blockchain, AI, cyber forensics and cyber investigations.

Background
- Maharashtra is already in the process of setting up its version of the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team to ward off external cyber threats.
- In 2016, the State had even appointed a consortium of M/s C-DAC (Centre for Development of Advanced Computing) and Railtel Corporation of India for the 838-crore project.
- The consortium in its analysis used the same technology as GARUDA, India's national grid computing initiative, and the Graphics and Intelligence Based Script Technology.

Do you know?
- GARUDA (Global Access to Resource Using Distributed Architecture)
- GARUDA initiative is a collaboration of the Scientific, Engineering and Academic Community to carry-out research and experimentation on a nationwide grid of

computational nodes, mass storage that aims to provide the distributed data and compute intensive High Performance Computing solutions for the 21st century.

- It will deploy a distributed networked infrastructure for universities, research labs, industry and government throughout India.
- Department of Information Technology (DIT) has funded the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) to deploy the nation-wide computational grid, GARUDA.
- It connects 45 institutions across 17 cities, with an aim to bring Grid computing to research labs, industries and academic institutions.
- GARUDA is part of the National Knowledge Network (NKN), an initiative to build a high-speed national network backbone with reliable quality of service (QoS) and security.
- Read more on: GARUDA

ISRO to tap small cities for innovations

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Science and technology, Space research

In news:
- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) launched a space technology incubation centre in Tripura capital Agartala on Tuesday. It is the first of six such centres planned nationally to build capacity in new locations.
- More such space research activities will be splashed in a big way across small cities to tap their talent and include them in the space footprint.
- incubation centre in Tripura capital Agartala will help in taking technology programmes to the remote northeast India.
- The space agency's new Capacity Building Programme directorate will invest ₹2 crore in incubation facilities in Jalandhar, Bhubaneswar, Tiruchi, Nagpur and Indore.
- These are the locations that have a good presence of academia and industry but do not have activities related to space. The centres will bring out prototypes and innovations for ISRO in electronics, propulsion and others.
- The annual event of the India Electronics and Semiconductor Association (IESA) has enlarged its ambit to space electronics this year.
- Domestic industry should increase the production of critical electronics items needed in space and other programmes, as 75% of it is now imported.
- Indian space market offers big opportunity to industry as it is estimated to grow to $1.6 billion by 2023.

ISRO setting up launch pad for Gaganyaan mission

Part of: Prelims and mains III – Science and Technology; Space research

In news
- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is setting up a third launch pad at Sriharikota to undertake the Gaganyaan manned space flight programme.
- In addition, ISRO is scouting for a location on the western sea coast near Gujarat to set up another launch pad for Small Satellite Launch Vehicles (SSLV).

Manned mission to space
- In the Independence Day address this year from the Red Fort, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced that an Indian will go to space by 2022.
- Following this, ISRO has announced an ambitious roadmap to put a three-man Indian crew in a low earth orbit for 5-7 days by the 75th Independence Day.
- ISRO has begun work on the manned mission in 2004, and that many of the critical technologies required for human spaceflight have already been validated through various tests — Space Capsule Recovery Experiment, Crew Module Atmospheric Re-Entry Experiment and Pad Abort Test.
- ISRO will use its GSLV Mk-III launch vehicle, which can carry the heavier payload of the Gaganyaan, and this will take off from the new launch pad.

Small satellite launch
- In addition to the third launch pad at Sriharikota, ISRO is also scouting for a new location near Gujarat for the SSLV.
- ISRO is developing the SSLV to offer affordable launch options for smaller satellites through Antrix, the space agency's commercial arm.
- ISRO currently piggybacks smaller satellites on the PSLV and GSLV along with bigger satellites.
- The SSLV is expected to reduce the launch time as well as cost less to launch small satellites, which are much in demand.
- ISRO is ready to transfer the entire SSLV "as a whole" to the private industry while the agency would provide the initial hand-holding. The SSLV is expected to be cleared by next year.

Celestial misfit: Debate on Pluto

Introduction

- In the year, 2006 the International Astronomical Union (IAU) voted to remove Pluto's planetary status. This decision ended years of debate on whether or not Pluto is a planet.
- The IAU, in 2006, designated Pluto as a 'dwarf planet'. This designation was done along with Ceres in the asteroid belt and Xena, which is an object in the Kuiper belt.
- Some researchers are challenging the decision made by the International Astronomical Union (IAU) in the year 2006. These researchers cite the manner in which scientific tradition has dealt with the taxonomy of planets.

What is the Kuiper belt?
- The Kuiper belt is an icy ring of frozen objects that circle the solar system beyond Neptune's orbit.
- The Kuiper Belt is a doughnut-shaped ring of icy objects around the Sun, extending just beyond the orbit of Neptune from about 30 to 55 AU.
- Short-period comets (which take less than 200 years to orbit the Sun) originate in the Kuiper Belt.

Criteria for a celestial object to be called a planet:
There are three conditions for a celestial object to be called a planet:
1) It must orbit the Sun;
2) It should be massive enough to acquire an approximately spherical shape;
3) It has to 'clear its orbit', which means that the object that exerts the maximum gravitational pull within its orbit.

Case of Pluto:
- Pluto is affected by Neptune's gravity. Further, Pluto also shares its orbit with the frozen objects in the Kuiper belt. Based on this, the IAU deemed that Pluto did not 'clear its orbit'.
- Dwarf planets, on the other hand, need only satisfy the first two conditions.

A counter-narrative:
- The above rationale was questioned by Philip Metzger who is a planetary physicist. He and his team have come up with several exceptions to the third rule.

- In a paper published in the journal Icarus, they point out that the only work in history that used this rule to classify planets was an article by William Herschel in 1802.
- They further argue that this work was based on reasoning and observations that have since been disproved.

Concluding Remarks:
- If Pluto were to be re-designated a planet, many more complications would arise.
- Charon, Pluto's moon, is much too large to be called a satellite. Judging by this, the Charon-Pluto system should then rightly be called a binary planet system.
- This would then lead to classifying several other sets of bodies as binary planets.
- Recent research shows that both the Kuiper Belt and the Oort cloud, a shell of objects that surrounds the entire solar system far beyond the Kuiper belt, contain objects that can then be called planets, thereby complicating the issue.
- Denying planetary status to Pluto is then nothing less than a sweep of Occam's razor, and Pluto remains a dwarf planet, albeit an exceptional one.

Do you know?
- The Oort Cloud is essentially an extended shell of icy objects that exist in the outermost reaches of the solar system. It is a shell of objects that surrounds the entire solar system far beyond the Kuiper belt.
- This region of space is named after astronomer Jan Oort, who was the first who theorised its existence.
- The Oort Cloud is roughly spherical, and is thought to be the origin of most of the long-period comets that have been observed till date.

Connecting the dots:
- What is the difference between a Planet and a Dwarf planet? What are the reasons behind declaring Pluto as dwarf planet?

Zoological Society of London honour for A.P. scientist

Part of: Prelims and mains III – Science, Biodiversity

In news
For millions of years, tiny creatures have thrived in the darkest of places, they give us insights into life before the Continental Drift.

Biospeleology

- Biospeleology, also known as cave biology, is a branch of biology dedicated to the study of organisms that live in caves and are collectively referred to as troglofauna.
- Biospeleology is still in its infancy in the country

Dr. Shabuddin Shaik

- A faculty member of the Acharya Nagarjuna University, Dr. Shabuddin Shaik has several firsts to his credit.
- He has to his credit the discovery of 40 new cave fauna species, including five new genera.
- One micro-crustacean discovered by him even has his name — Andhracoides shabuddin.
- Dr. Shaik has worked extensively in the caves of the undivided Andhra Pradesh, including the Belum and Borra caves, which are major tourist attractions.
- He found the micro-crustacean named after him in the Guthikonda cave in Guntur district. Based on his work, the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), which has had Fellows like Charles Darwin, Alfred Russel Wallace and Ernst Mayr, has nominated Dr. Shaik for its fellowship.
- He found another micro-crustacean of the same genus, Andhracoides (named after Andhra Pradesh), in Belum cave and named it after German Speleologist Herbert Daniel Gebauer, who mapped the famous cave.

Boost to research

- Unlike the Belum cave, Borra cave is not in the ground but inside a hill. It goes three to four storeys down and opens to the Gostani River, which flows at the foot of the hill.
- The ZSL fellowship was a boost to taxonomy and biodiversity research in India. These frontier areas of research have been neglected.
- The very fact that Dr. Shaik could discover 40 new species proved that the Indian caves support rich, unique and highly diversified phylogenetically and biogeographically significant fauna that will throw light on the evolution of various life forms that are millions of years old.
- 3,169 species have been identified in the caves of the world, but more than 94% of cave fauna was waiting to be discovered.

Editing our genes

Introduction

- American biochemist Jennifer Doudna, one of the pioneers of the gene editing tool Crispr-Cas9, woke up in a cold sweat after she dreamt of Adolf Hitler.

- He was wearing a pig mask, and wanted to understand the tool's uses and implications.
- She acknowledges the "truly incredible power" of the technology, "one that could be devastating if it fell into the wrong hands."

Crispr-Cas9

- Crispr, an acronym for Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats, harnesses the natural defence mechanisms of bacteria to alter an organism's genetic code.
- It's likened to a pair of molecular scissors, a cut-and-paste technology, that can snip the two DNA strands at a specific location and modify gene function. The cutting is done by enzymes like Cas9, guided by pre-designed RNA sequences.
- This pre-designed RNA sequences ensure that the targeted section of the genome is edited out.
- The elegance of this editing tool has transformed medical research, and gives rise to the question: can a faulty gene be deleted or corrected at the embryonic stage?

Examples of gene editing or corrections

- Researchers in China used a variation of Crispr. Instead of snipping strands, they swapped DNA letters to correct Marfan Syndrome, an inherited disorder that affects connective tissue.
- It was done on 18 viable human embryos through in-vitro. Two of the embryos, however, exhibited unintended changes. All were destroyed after the experiment.
- In 2017, American biologist used Crispr to repair a genetic mutation that could cause a deadly heart condition.
- It was done on embryos in such a way that the faulty gene would not be passed down the family tree.
- The findings are the focus of an ongoing debate, with several scientists sceptical of whether the gene was corrected. Can accuracy be guaranteed in early stage embryos?

Significance of gene editing

- As our understanding grows, we will have the potential to edit out genes that cause fatal diseases.
- We will perhaps one day have the potential to use the very same mechanisms to edit out undesirable traits in human beings. This raises the spectre of eugenics.

Concerns

- Bioethicists expressed concern over the clinical application of such research.
- Can we — and should we — control or dictate evolution?

- These are still early days in a new frontier of genome engineering. Researchers are only beginning to understand the power — and fallout — of gene editing.
- Studies have shown that edited cells can lack a cancer suppressing protein.
- Bioethicists fear abuse of gene editing, not just by misguided governments hoping to create a 'superior' race, but also by the private sector preying on a parent's desire to create a perfect child.

Conclusion

For now, it remains a distant prospect, but silencing science or hijacking the debate is not an answer. The burden of this knowledge cannot be borne by science alone.

Connecting the dots:

- What is gene editing? Elaborate in the light of Crisper cas9 and respective examples of application of gene editing technology.
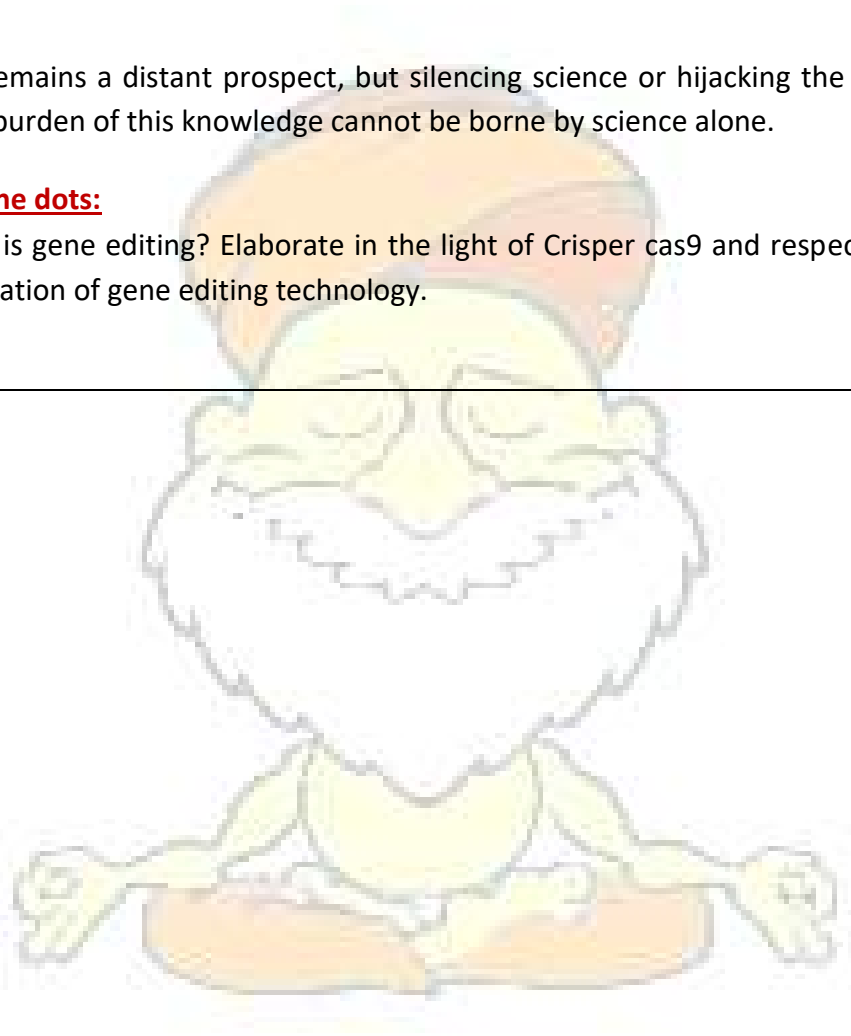
DEFENCE

Integrated Theatre Command: All for one, one for all?

Introduction

- There has been much discussion in the media recently on the integrated military theatre commands.
- There are apprehensions that the creation of integrated commands would seriously hamper the effective application of air power, particularly because of the limited resources available with the Air Force.

Do you know?

- **Kargil committee report and Naresh Chandra Committee report** focused on **restructuring of higher defence organisation** with an aim to improve synergy among different tools of state crafts such as bureaucracy, Military, R&D, intelligence and internal security mechanisms, etc.
- Through all these reports, for such synergy a regular **concept emerged as Integrated Theatre Command, also known as Unified Command.**
- **An integrated theatre command** envisages a unified command of the three Services, under a single commander, for geographical theatres that are of security concern.
- The commander of such a force will be able to bring to bear all resources at his disposal — from the IAF, the Army and the Navy — with seamless efficacy.
- The integrated theatre commander will not be answerable to individual Services, and will be free to train, equip and exercise his command to make it a cohesive fighting force capable of achieving designated goals.
- The logistic resources required to support his operations will also be placed at the disposal of the theatre commander so that he does not have to look for anything when operations are ongoing.

Initial steps

- Moving ahead towards integrated commands without any meaningful restructuring in the higher defence organisation is premature.
- The initial steps should have been an integration of the Ministry of Defence and the appointment of a Chief of the Defence Staff.
- This would have put in place structures and practices that would encourage a jointness among the three services and perhaps pave the way in future towards integrated organisations.

Differences among three Arms of military

- Keeping in view the character of future wars, Air force officers are opposing the idea of integrated command, considering the importance of air force.
- The Army and the Navy challenge this assertion with their opinions on the importance of land and sea power.
- The real problem lies in the fact that all three services have their own vision of how future conflicts could unfold and the primacy of their own arm in winning wars.
- The start point is therefore a common understanding between the services on the nature and character of wars that India could fight in the future.

Nature and character of future wars

- According to Carl von Clausewitz, the nature of war does not change; it is the character of war that undergoes transformation.
- The enduring elements of the nature of war are its violent character, a clash of wills between two opponents, and political primacy. There is no war without these elements.
- The character of war, on the other hand, is related to how a war will be fought. This depends on our military capabilities, economy, technology, political considerations, civil-military relations, and the opponent's aim and strategy.
- Political purpose will decide the start and termination of wars, and the manner in which they will be fought.
- The services have made their operational plans based on a proactive (cold start) strategy, with the assumption that the war will be short and swift.
- Maximum combat power is to be harnessed and applied across the border in a series of strikes that will rapidly degrade the military potential of the enemy.
- The weakness with this strategy is that it seldom takes political objectives into consideration.

Examples of the recent past where military force was used or contemplated to be used by the Indian state

- **The Kargil conflict broke out in 1999.** The Pakistan Army had clearly committed an act of war by occupying territory on the Indian side of the Line of Control (LoC).
- While the complete military was poised to strike Pakistan by land, sea and air, the political leadership decided to restrict the conflict to only the Kargil sector and to our own side of the LoC.
- Only a small fraction of the Indian Amy was applied while the Air Force was restricted to bombing posts that had been occupied by Pakistan Army soldiers.
- Despite this, Kargil was a resounding political, diplomatic and military victory.

- The **attack on the Indian Parliament in December 2001**. **Operation Parakram** was launched and the Indian Army mobilised for an impending war against Pakistan.
- The Army remained deployed along the borders for almost one year.
- **The Mumbai attack, November 2008** was the biggest terror strike launched from Pakistan. There was outrage in the country and calls for retaliation against Pakistan.
- The simple answer to why India did not immediately attack Pakistan is that after examining the options at the highest levels of government, the decision-makers concluded that more was to be gained from not attacking Pakistan than from attacking it.

Lessons learned/ Way forward

- Apart from emphasising the need to synergise political and military objectives, another major lesson from these examples is that the importance of a military force lies in its utility to achieve the national aims, and not in the numbers of divisions, ships and aircraft squadrons.
- It is necessary for the three services to sit together and find realistic answers to questions of character and nature of future wars.
- India must be prepared for a whole range of options from non-contact warfare to a full-scale war.
- It is only after these discussions crystallise that we will be able to arrive at a common understanding of how future wars could possibly play out and the kind of joint structures that are required to best fight this conflict.
- We may not get everything right but each service extolling its own importance is not helping our ability to prepare for the future.

Connecting the dots:

- What is an Integrated Theatre Command (ITC)? Do you think it can strengthen India's military muscle?

India's first missile tracking ship

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Defence; Security; Science and Technology

In news:

- India's first missile tracking ship is readying for sea trials
- Built by Hindustan Shipyard Ltd., the hi-tech vessel will enter elite global club
- The ship is being built for the National Technical Research Organisation
- This will be the first of its kind ocean surveillance ship

About NTRO

- NTRO is the technical intelligence agency working directly under the supervision of the Prime Minister's Office and the National Security Adviser.
- The NTRO acts as the primary advisor on security issues to the Prime Minister and the Union Council of Ministers of India. It also provides technical intelligence to other Indian agencies.
- NTRO's activities include satellite and terrestrial monitoring. It cannot, however, legally monitor Internet or other communications; there are nine other agencies authorized to do so. NTRO is also charged with developing technology relevant to Indian national security and intelligence. These technologies include cryptology, cybersecurity and data management.

Do you know?

- Visakhapatnam is considered a strategic location on the East Coast for the Indian defence forces as it is home for Ship Building Centre to build nuclear powered submarine INS Arihant class, Naval Alternate Operational Base at Rambilli, the second naval base after Eastern Naval Command headquarters, training centre for Marine Commandos and headquarters of the submarine arm.

Making waves
India's first missile tracking ship will begin trials in October. A look at the features of the vessel

- The ship will be equipped with a modern e-intelligence network
- It will be propelled by two 9,000 KW diesel engines
- 14 MW power is needed to activate the tracking radars
- The ship can move at an average speed of 21 knots
- Since its inception, Hindustan shipyard has built 179 ships and repaired around 1,953 vessels. Of them, 22 ships were built for the defence sector

Eye in the sea: The ship, referred to as 'VC 11184', will be named after its induction into the Navy. ■ WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Pic:

https://d39gegkjaqduz9.cloudfront.net/TH/2018/09/12/DEL/Delhi/TH/5_07/c2eb2975_2385663_101_mr.jpg

BIMSTEC First joint military exercise: MILEX 18 exercise

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

In news:
- MILEX 18 exercise – to be held in Pune – is aimed at helping BIMSTEC nations practise "planning and conduct of counter terrorist operations".
- Each country was asked to send a contingent of 30 personnel including five officers and 25 soldiers in addition to three observers.
- However many countries backed out from sending full contingents and sent only observers.

New Akash missile gets green light

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Defence and security

In news:
Enhanced features
- The upgraded version will include the seeker technology and possess a 360-degree coverage, and will be of compact configuration.
- It is operationally critical equipment, which will provide protection to vital assets.
- The DAC also gave approval for the development of an individual under-water breathing apparatus for the T-90 tank. The apparatus is used by the tank crew for emergency escape.

About Akash
- DRDO developed Akash as part of the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme which was initiated in 1984.
- It is made by Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL).
- Akash is a surface-to-air missile defense system
- Akash can fly at supersonic speeds, ranging from Mach 2.8 to 3.5
- Akash has a range of 25 km and can engage multiple targets at a time in all-weather conditions.
- It has a large operational envelope, from 30 meter to a maximum of 20 km.
- Each regiment consists of six launchers, each having three missiles.
- Akash missile has an indigenous content of 96 per cent.

India looks to buy Israeli missiles

Part of: Prelims and mains III – Defence, International relations

In news

- A deal has been brought before the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) for approval, about the procurement of the Spike anti-tank guided missiles from Israel through the government-to-government route.
- However, some validation trials have to be held before the deal is signed. These validation trials pertain to that of the infrared seeker (IR).
- The validation trials would be held once the DAC accords approval.
- Currently, the Indian Army is faced with a huge shortage of anti-tank guided missiles.

Do you know? Defence Acquisition Council (DAC):

Objective:

- The objective of the Defence Acquisition Council is to ensure expeditious procurement of the approved requirements of the Armed Forces in terms of capabilities sought and time frame prescribed by optimally utilizing the allocated budgetary resources.

Functions:

- In-principle approval of 15 Year Long-Term Integrated Perspective Plan for Defence Forces;
- Accord of Acceptance of Necessity to acquisition proposals;
- Categorization of the acquisition proposals relating to 'Buy', 'Buy & Make' and 'Make';
- Issues relating to Single vendor clearance;
- Decision regarding 'offset' provisions in respect of acquisition proposals above Rs. 300 crores;
- Decisions regarding Transfer of Technology under the 'Buy & Make' category of acquisition proposals; and
- Field Trial evaluation

Lending a helping hand to coconut farmers

Part of: Prelims and mains III – Agriculture and related issues

In news

Major Challenges before farmers

- Water availability is a major issue. Ground water is available at 1,000 feet.

- Pest attacks on hybrid trees for which farmers has to use common pesticides available in the market.

Project kalpavriksha: Guidance to farmers

- Consumer products company Marico started working on a project in 2014 for coconut farmers and in a year, had 125 farmers in Thanjavur area under its ambit, apart from six agronomists.
- Last year, the project was given shape and unveiled as Kalpavriksha. It now covers almost 6,000 coconut farmers in Tamil Nadu and Kerala.
- The Kalpavriksha mobile application is also available to know about copra rates.
- On an average, the yield had increased 18% for the farmers, according tp Marico. They aims to improve it by about 50% and double the income of farmers.
- The project has field staff in almost 750 villages who visit coconut farms, advise farmers on best practices, disease and yield improvement.
- It has a digital library and toll free number. The number of farmers who drop out of the project is about 10%.
- Going forward, Kalpavriksha will not only cover more farmers and agronomists but will also bring on its platform start-ups, financial institutions, and government agencies.
- Some of them can extend their service at a cost to the farmers.

India should choose local partner if it chooses Gripen: Swedish Air Chief

Part of Prelims and mains III – Defence and security, Economy

In news
- If India chooses the Gripen fighter jet, then the choice of the private Indian company to partner with Sweden's SAAB to build the aircraft should be the Indian Government's and "nobody else's", Swedish Air Force Chief said.
- The Gripen is powered by American GE-414 engine, a variant of which is on the indigenous Light Combat Aircraft Tejas.
- The Indian Air Force issued a Request For Information (RFI) in April to procure 114 fighter jets under the Strategic Partnership model and most of them will be built in India by an Indian private partner under technology transfer.

DISASTER MANAGEMENT

For a shift in gear

Introduction:

- Kerala's unique topography — of coastal plains and rolling hills between the Arabian Sea and the Western Ghats — is vulnerable to several natural hazards, landslides, flooding and coastal erosion being the most common.
- Incidents of flooding have become frequent, aided by human intervention. In thee recent floods, millions were displaced along with an estimate losses of 21000 crore.
- While the Madhav Gadgil-led Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel had recommended the gradation of the Western Ghats into three eco-sensitive zones, with significant restrictions, this was not acceptable to the State government.

Vulnerable country

- **About 70% of its coastal areas are prone to tsunamis and cyclones, about 60% of its landmass vulnerable to earthquakes, and 12% of its land to floods.**
- **Multi-storied housing** is booming in urban India, built on a framework of beams, pillars and brick walls. With parking spaces prioritised at the ground level over **structural stability.**
- Most Indian houses are made of brick masonry walls, with fire/unfired bricks and stones, and yet few if any undergraduate civil engineering courses consider these materials, focussing instead on reinforced cement and concrete.
- **Earthquake engineering** is taught as a specialisation at just **a few universities**, leading to a serious shortage of retrofitting-trained civil engineering manpower

The gaps: Risk management in India is still in its infancy.

- In the case of Kerala, **in 2003, the Home Ministry had proposed the formation of specialist teams to manage disasters** using four battalions from the Central Industrial Security Force and Indo Tibetan Border Police.
- Kerala was required **'to identify a State-level training institution'** for the purpose. The **project has been forgotten.** It has been the same response, **even after the Ockhi** disaster when the Centre proposed forming a special team and funding.
- We are far behind even in **forecasting disasters that occur annually.** Even now, after the Kedarnath floods in 2013, **Uttarakhand still has few if any Doppler radars to provide early alerts** about cloudbursts and heavy rain.
- There are few **guidelines on construction** in flood-prone regions, or even a **map of safe zones.**

- Few States have prepared **emergency action plans for the over 5,000 large dams** in India, with reports of just 200 dams having been covered so far.
- **Mitigation projects for upgradation of the observatory network** have barely commenced.
- The **effectiveness of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)** has been hampered by a **shortage of trained manpower, training, infrastructure and equipment.**
- The **Comptroller and Auditor General highlighted the National Disaster Management Authority's performance** in projects such as vulnerability assessment and mitigation projects of major cities as **"abysmal"**.

On the ground

- Disaster norms are also **skewed more towards rural areas,** focussing on agriculture, fisheries, livestock and handicrafts from a relief perspective.
- Current disaster norms **do not differentiate between States**, offering, for example, the same amount per unit for disaster relief in Bundelkhand as in Goa. Such practices are bound to lead to an inadequate recovery.
- Typically, after **a disaster, revenue officials are responsible for visiting affected** areas and identifying people for relief, in turn offering scope for **misuse and corruption.**
- In addition, any disaster relief will typically **exclude anyone living in an unauthorised area.** Such norms also **exclude share-croppers and agricultural labourers**, while focussing only on small and big farmers.
- **Unlisted disasters** which are not neatly bucketed in the specifications under the Calamity Relief Fund are restricted to a relief of 10% of the fund's annual allocation.

Way Forward

- **Planned urbanisation** can withstand disasters, a shining example being **Japan** which faces earthquakes at regular intervals.
- **The India Disaster Resource Network should be institutionalised** as a repository for organised information and equipment gathering.
- India needs a **strong disaster management agency**. It must be built on anticipatory governance, emphasising studies that embed foresight and foster citizen awareness.
- **Disaster preparedness** should be focussed on meeting the immediate contingency, implementing a conceptual, long-term rehabilitation strategy while maintaining an ethnographic understanding.
- **The NDRF must fill its vacant specialist positions** while being given better control over transfers and deployment of its personnel.
- Need to **revise the norms for disaster relief** in India. Each State and district has different costs for labour and construction, making the idea of a uniform amount for relief redundant.
- It's time to **move on from being focussed only on managing natural disaster emergencies to improving resilience.**

Connecting the dots:

- There has to be a change from focussing only on managing natural disasters to improving resilience. Comment.

Role of CSIR in Disaster Reconstruction and Rehabilitation

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Disaster Management; Science and Technology

In news:
- A seven-member team led by Sanjay D.Patil, senior scientist, from the Central Salt and Marine Chemical Research Institute (CSMCRI) under the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) developed a mobile Reverse Osmosis (RO) plant 10 years ago, at an estimated cost of ₹1 crore.
- The Reverse Osmosis (RO) plant was developed for supplying drinking water to natural calamity-hit areas. The unit fitted to a bus can produce 3,000 litres of potable water an hour at an operating cost of just 60 paise a litre.

What caused the floods in Kerala?

Part of: Prelims and mains II – Governance and Public services

In news

- According to a study by IIT professor, a combination of four factors led to extreme flooding across Kerala this year.
- Above normal seasonal (May-August) rainfall, extreme rainfall events occurring almost across the State during the season, over 90% reservoir storage even before the onset of extreme rainfall events, and finally, the unprecedented extreme rainfall in the catchment areas of major reservoirs in the State led to the disaster.
- First. the summer monsoon rainfall in Kerala from May to August this year was 2,290 mm, which was 53% above normal.
- The average rainfall during the summer monsoon period (June-September) is about 1,619 mm. This makes 2018 Kerala's third wettest year in the last 118 years (1901-2018); 1924 and 1961 were the wettest years with about 3,600 mm of annual rainfall.

- Second, till August 21, the State witnessed few extreme rainfall events covering almost the entire State. These extreme rainfall events have very low probability of recurrence in any given year.
- Third, Kerala received 1634.5 mm rainfall during the period May 1 to August 7, which is more than the average rainfall (1619.37 mm) during the summer monsoon period (June-September).
- As a result, six of the seven major reservoirs in the State had over 90% storage before August 8, well before Kerala received the unprecedented extreme rainfall events.
- Finally, the catchment areas of major reservoirs in the State received extreme rainfall never before witnessed in the State. The role of other factors such as changes in how infrastructure has grown at the expense of vegetation and drainage remains to be studied.

Rethinking disaster management

Introduction
- It is time to stop thinking of the extreme weather events hitting us with increasing frequency as unexpected events.
- Kerala bravely endured the monsoon storms, but it would be a mistake to think that disasters of this magnitude are "once in a hundred year" events.

Disaster management: Proactive, not just reactive
- Weather disasters are being affected by climate change that is caused by humans.
- The devastation is worsened by the collective failure of governments and businesses to invest in building resilience despite the evidence on runaway climate change.
- The lesson from the Kerala floods, Hurricane Harvey (Houston, U.S., 2017) and Typhoon Haiyan (the Philippines, 2013) is that responses to disasters must be proactive, not just reactive.

Reconstruction
- First, reconstruction efforts must involve rebuilding in a better way.
- Climate proofing in Kerala calls for structures to be built with wind- and water-resistant materials.
- The higher cost will be more than offset by avoided repairs.

Relocation
- Second, people need to relocate out of harm's way.

- After Haiyan's storm surges, distances from coastlines that were considered safe for settling were extended.
- During the 2015 floods, Chennai illustrated the price of unrestricted urban development.

Early warning system
- Third, early warning is vital.
- Because of investments in these systems, Cyclone Phailin (2013) claimed less than 40 lives in Odisha, whereas a superclyclone in 1999 in the State had killed 10,000 people.
- In Kerala, there was no timely forecast from national weather services. The State needs a reliable flood forecasting capability.

Tougher implementation of regulations
- Fourth, there needs to be tougher implementation of logging and mining regulations in fragile ecologies.
- Deforestation worsened the effects of Kerala's floods and mudslides, as the report of the Western Ghats ecology expert panel 2011 had warned.

Reduction in global footprint
- Lastly, there is the climate conundrum: Wayanad, which just saw record rainfall, is expecting a severe drought.
- Kerala by itself has a small carbon footprint, but it can have a voice in helping one of the world's largest carbon emitters reduce its carbon footprint.

Conclusion
- The economic damage from global warming has global ramifications.
- The 2011 floods in Thailand's economic heartland disrupted not just national, but global manufacturing value chains.
- The Kerala floods are estimated to have shaved off about 2.2% of the State's GDP.
- Multilateral agencies including the World Bank and Asian Development Bank may be well-positioned to provide financing, which is vital when budgets are stretched, and, crucially, knowledge solutions to tackle climate disasters.
- Kerala gets high marks for its participatory approach to relief and rehabilitation.
- Invaluable as this is, the new climate reality is raising the bar on disaster resilience. Bolstering resilience must be central to recovery.

Connecting the dots:
- With reference to National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) guidelines, discuss the measures to be adopted to mitigate the impact of the recent incidents of cloudbursts in many places of Uttarakhand. (UPSC mains 2016)

- With reference to National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) guidelines, discuss the measures to be adopted to mitigate the impact of the recent incidents of floods in many places of Kerala and Karnataka.

INTERNAL SECURITY/SECURITY

Extremist right-wing fringe organisations on rise?

Part of: GS Mains III – Internal Security

In news:
- Four thinkers – **Narendra Dabholkar**, **Govind Pansare**, M.M. **Kalburgi** and **Gauri Lankesh** — were killed in Maharashtra and Karnataka between 2013 and 2017.
- Investigations have found that an unnamed group, some of whose members have been associated with the right-wing Hindu outfit, are behind these killings.
- Investigations have identified over 60 recruits, who were radicalised and trained to use firearms. This is an army of highly radicalised youth, trained in arms, to "protect Hindu Dharma".
- Examples of such Extremist right-wing fringe organisations – Sriram Sene, Hindu Yuva Sene, Shivapratishthan Hindusthan and recently formed gaurakshak samitis.

Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS): Smart fencing will end infiltration

Part of: Prelims and mains GS III- Security and border managment

In news
- Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated the first phase of hi-tech 'smart fencing' of 11 km stretch on the International Border (IB) in Jammu.
- CIBMS would provide for round-the-clock laser-guided surveillance of the borders.
- The smart fencing project will initially be implemented to cover gaps in the physical fencing. Eventually, this technology will be implemented across the entire border,
- The smart fencing is a web of surveillance, communication and data storage devices.
- It will enable surveillance during difficult weather conditions and reduce the need for physical patrolling of the borders.
- It will rely on thermal imaging, infra-red and laser-based intruder alarms to stop infiltration.

Amazon arm backs data localisation

Part of: Prelims and mains II & III– Privacy and national security

In news
- Amazon invested in data centres in India so that it can assure the government that all the data stays in the country.
- There is opposition from experts and foreign firms over proposed data localisation norms in India.

The policy
- The draft 'The Personal Data Protection Bill, 2018' proposes that critical personal data of Indian citizens be processed only in data centres located within the country, while personal data may be transferred outside India.
- However, at least one copy of the data will need to be stored in India. The proposal has been termed as "regressive" and a "trade barrier" by experts.

Data accessibility
- Amazon assured that they provide customers with the access to tools so that they can determine where the data is located, they can monitor.
- It is all about data security, it comes down to whether one can be assured that if one hosts data in a particular location, that's going to stay secure and people don't have access [and] who shouldn't have access to it.
- In India, an application called ReUnite uses Amazon Rekognition to find lost children.

ETHICS

Gutkha scam

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III and IV – Indian Economy and associated issues; Anti-corruption & Bribery in India; Ethics

In news:

- CBI searches houses of T.N. Ministers and police chiefs in connection with the gutkha scam.
- It is alleged that they had received bribes from a leading gutkha manufacturer to allow the sale of the banned tobacco products in Chennai.

Do you know?

Laws and Provisions in India to tackle Corruption

- Indian Penal Code, 1860
- The Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 – PCA
- The Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Act, 1988
- India and the United Nations Convention against Corruption 2003 (UNCAC) - provides for international co-operation and mutual legal assistance in investigating cases of corruption and recovery of assets. India signed the UNCAC in December 2005.
- Prevention of Money Laundering Act 2002 (Article 23 of the UNCAC) - PMLA
- Foreign Exchange Management Act 1999 – FEMA
- Right to Information Act 2005 – RTI
- Cases referred by the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) and the Chief Vigilance Officers (CVOs) of other Government Departments
- Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the state Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB)
- Freezing, Seizure and Confiscation of Properties – The Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance, 1944 (Article 31 of UNCAC)
- Creation of an independent ombudsman (the Lokpal and the Lokayuktas) - to investigate and prosecute cases of corruption by Public Officials (including Ministers)
- Service Rules of Government Officials
- Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, 2010 – FCRA
- Companies Act 2013
- Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) and Imposition of Tax Act, 2015

Even in 4th century B.C., 'Corruption' had been a key theme as reflected in **Kautilya's Arthashastra**, an ancient Hindu treatise on statecraft, economic policy and military strategy penned during the time.

Role of CCI and 'unfair pricing' of private hospitals

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III and IV – Indian Economy and associated issues; Ethics

In news:

- **Competition Commission of India (CCI)** widens probe into 'unfair pricing' by Delhi pvt. Hospitals.
- CCI has directed its investigative arm, the Director General, to probe into alleged violation of provisions of Section 3 and 4 of the **Competition Act, 2002**, relating to imposition of **unfair prices by private super-speciality hospitals**.
- According to DG, Huge profit margins are being earned by sale of products to the locked-in in-patients to the detriment of such patients.

Important Value Additions

Role of Competition Commission of India (CCI)

- CCI is a **statutory body** of the Government of India responsible for enforcing The **Competition Act, 2002** throughout India and to prevent activities that have an appreciable adverse effect on competition in India.
- Goal of CCI is to create and sustain fair competition in the economy that will provide a 'level playing field' to the producers and make the markets work for the welfare of the consumers.

Competition Act – The Act prohibits anti-competitive agreements, abuse of dominant position by enterprises and regulates combinations (acquisition, acquiring of control and M&A), which causes or likely to cause an appreciable adverse effect on competition within India.

Misuse of office/power

Part of: GS Mains Paper IV – Ethics

In news:

- Former IPS officer Sanjiv Bhatt arrested in connection with a 1996 narcotics case in which a Rajasthan-based lawyer, Sumer Singh Rajpurohit, was allegedly framed.
- Bhatt, who was then Banaskantha DSP, had arrested a man over possession of 1 kg of drugs. A probe later revealed that the man was falsely implicated to compel him to transfer a disputed property.

Quote in news:

Voltaire's quote – *"I may disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."*

The above quote can be used in topics dealing with - free flow of ideas in a democracy; Right to freedom of speech and expression.

Swami Vivekananda quotes

In news:

- 125th anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's address to the Parliament of World Religions in 1893.
- Swami Vivekananda's ideas of universal tolerance, compassion, and concern for the poor are as relevant today as they were during his lifetime.

Important quotes for exam –
1. Arise awake and stop not till the goal is reached — Swami Vivekananda (This quote can be used in Ethics/Essay answers dealing with Hope/Corruption/Faith)
2. One ounce of practice is worth twenty thousand tons of big talk (Swami Vivekananda – This quote can be used to conclude almost every essay).
3. "It is impossible to think about the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is impossible for a bird to fly on only one wing" – Swami Vivekananda. (On women empowerment)
4. All nations have attained greatness by paying proper respect to women. That country and that nation which do not respect women have never become great, nor will ever be in future – Swami Vivekananda.
5. "All the different religions are but applications of the one religions adapted to suite the requirements of different nations". - Swami Vivekananda. (on Religion)
6. "If in this hell of a world one can bring a little joy & peace even for a day into the heart of a single person, that much alone is true; this I have learnt after suffering all my life, all else is mere moonshine" – Swami Vivekananda (on serving Humanity)

The power of a nudge

Introduction

- According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 202 institutions around the world are applying behavioural insights to public policy.
- While most of them are found in the U.S., the U.K., Europe and Australia, some are found in developing countries in West Asia, Africa and Latin America.
- These institutions partner with behavioural and social scientists and combine psychology, sociology, anthropology, and politics to understand human behaviour to design effective public policies.

Understanding a paradox
- Over the last few years, it has been observed that even the most well-intentioned public policy programmes fail to be adopted by people who would benefit from them the most.
- On the contrary, people repeatedly make decisions that serve neither their own interests nor of others.
- In India, for instance, despite access to toilets, open defecation remains a huge challenge. Finding answers to this paradox is where behavioural frameworks become relevant.
- Until recently, it was assumed that individuals make rational choices, and the right incentives determine the "right choices". But evidence suggests otherwise.
- People's choices and decisions are not rational but determined by a far more complex set of psychological, cognitive and behavioural factors.
- Given their limited attention and computational capacity, people gravitate towards the status quo, which often results in a gap between the policy's intent and action.
- It's therefore not surprising that people discount the risk of stroke and "choose" not to invest in health insurance.
- Decisions also tend to be clouded because of societal perceptions and adherence to norms — for instance, girls are still married young.
- Implementation outcomes can be better understood if we include 'nudges' — small, easy and timely suggestions to influence behaviour.

Behavioural science and socio-cultural aspects of target groups
- While success stories from across the world showcase the potential of informed behavioural adjustments to policies, these can't be simply emulated in developing countries. There first needs to be an analysis of social norms.

- While applying this science it should be considered that the advantages of deploying these insights can only be reaped if national contexts and differences in socio-economic, cultural and political narratives are appreciated.
- One such effort is cognitive scientist Christine Legare's work in Bihar, to improve the quality of health-care service delivery by front-line workers.
- It takes into account popular 'rituals', like keeping a baby away from the ground in a cot (palna), or marking decorations around her hearth (chulah), for transmitting messages that are culturally acceptable.
- Behavioural science can be applied to large-scale programmes.
- The very nature of the science being diffused in a social and cultural context enables it to generate effective and sustained results to public service programmes.
- For example, PENN SoNG (University of Pennsylvania social norms group) is collating the analyses of core social motivators for open defecation and related behaviours in Tamil Nadu and Bihar with culturally appropriate social measures to convert toilet usage into a sustained habit.
- Interventions that are designed using this science can reduce the intent-to-action gap.
- There is a plethora of tools like defaults, reminders, prompts, and incentives that can reduce poor adherence and increase compliance for sustained impact throughout the life of an intervention.
- For example, Kilkari, a mobile service by the government that delivers free, weekly and time-appropriate audio messages about pregnancy, childbirth and childcare directly to families' mobile phones. It focuses on improving uptake of health services.

Way forward
- The data collected and evaluated from a behavioural insights approach can be used for better management of programme performances.
- Rigorous evaluation of behaviour is often missed while measuring programme performances, and often this missing data can help explain the limited impact of well-intended government programmes.
- The impressive work done by the Ministry of Rural Development, on monitoring the implementation of national flagship schemes through DISHA dashboards, can be leveraged for evaluating behavioural change on the ground.
- While DISHA does not include measures on behaviour, it measures implementation of programmes. It shows how India can benefit from the use of behavioural insights in policy decision-making.

Connecting the dots:

- We have enough number of schemes, policies and laws. To drive India from developing to a developed nation, there is strong need of behavioural change. Critically comment.

PERSON IN NEWS

Person in news: Bharat Vatwani and Sonam Wangchuk receives 2018 Ramon Magsaysay Awards

In news:

- Two Indians, Bharat Vatwani and Sonam Wangchuk, receive Ramon Magsaysay awards.
- Ramon Magsaysay Award, is often referred to as Asian version of the Nobel Prize.
- Cambodian activist Youk Chhang, Filipino Howard Dee, Vietnam's Vo Thi Hoang Yen and East Timor's Maria de Lourdes Martins Cruz were also honoured for their work at a ceremony in Manila. All of them have worked for the poor or those who have suffered violence.

Do you know?

- Sonam Wangchuk, a 51-year-old educational reformer from Ladakh, widely regarded as the inspiration for Aamir Khan's character, Phunsuk Wangdu in the film '3 Idiots,' received the award.
- The other is Bharat Vatwani, a psychiatrist who works for mentally ill street people in Mumbai.
- Mr. Vatwani has dedicated his life to rescuing mentally ill people from the streets and providing them with shelter and treatment through his Shraddha Rehabilitaion Foundation.

Person in news: Justice Ranjan Gogoi

- Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra recommends Justice Ranjan Gogoi as his successor and the 46th Chief Justice of India.
- CJI Misra has followed convention by recommending the next senior most Supreme Court judge, Justice Gogoi, as his successor.

In news:

- As the 46th Chief Justice of India, Justice Gogoi will have a tenure of about 13 months, till November 17, 2019.
- Justice Ranjan Gogoi is the first person from the Northeast to claim a top position in the Supreme Court.

- The President of India has appointed Justice Ranjan Gogoi (the most senior judge in the Supreme Court) as the next Chief Justice of India.

Person in news: Jalaluddin Haqqani

- Haqqani network founder - Jalaluddin Haqqani – dies

Pic:

https://d39gegkjaqduz9.cloudfront.net/TH/2018/09/05/CNI/Chennai/TH/5_14/8b52c348_798b873e_101_mr.jpg

## Person in news: Hima Das

In news:

- Hima Das, India's newest sprint star was nicknamed 'Dhing Express' after the little-known town that was the cultural and literary hub of Assam till the 1950s.
- Hima bagged a gold and two silver medals in the recently concluded Asian Games.
- Assam state govt. awards ₹1.6 crore to 'Dhing Express'.

Miscellaneous

In News	Description
1. Census 2021	Census 2021 to collect OBC data, use maps/geo-referencing at the time of house listing
2. Vodafone and Idea merges	Vodafone, Idea merge; overtake Bharti
3. US-Pak Concern areas	U.S. to cancel $300 mn aid to Pak. Pentagon says Islamabad has not taken 'decisive action' in support of America's new South Asia strategy.
4. India's FDI	Mauritius remained the top source of foreign direct investment (FDI) into India in 2017-18 followed by Singapore, whereas total FDI stood at $37.36 billion in the financial year, a marginal rise over the $36.31 billion recorded in the previous fiscal, according to RBI data.
5. India and Cyprus	Both the countries signed two agreements on combating money laundering and cooperation in the field of environment.
6. Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)	• China offers $60 bn aid to Africa - to boost industry, counter hunger and enhance security. • China proposed Africa to tap new multilateral lenders such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the New Development Bank (NDB) of the emerging economies, as well as the Silk Road Fund (marshalled by China).
7. Role of tech on elections	• Google to help EC track political ads
8. Japan to test mini 'space elevator'	• It's the world's first experiment to test travel between two mini satellites in space.
9. Typhoon Jebi	• Typhoon Jebi hit Japan west coast
10. India-Iran Ties	• Iran to proceed with handing over the responsibility of running the port to an Indian company in a month.
11. India- US ties	• COMCASA to help keep a watch over Indian Ocean: As a consequence of CISMOA, India will get access to Combined Enterprise Regional Information Exchange System, or CENTRIXS, which is the secure communication system network of the US.
12. Ocean Cleanup Project	• The Ocean Cleanup Project by the Dutch non-profit group, hopes to clean up half of the infamous garbage patch within five years (in

	Pacific ocean)
13. India on Shrimp production	• India is set to gain the top slot in farmed shrimp production, overtaking China in 2019-20.
14. India's 100th airport opens in Sikkim	• Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated the first airport in Sikkim. • With this, the number of functional airports in the country went up to 100. • The airport at Pakyong, about 30 km from Gangtok and surrounded by mountains, is a major boost to connectivity in the mountainous State. • The airport would be linked to the Union government's UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik) regional connectivity scheme and the airfare for about an hour would come to ₹2,500.
15.	•
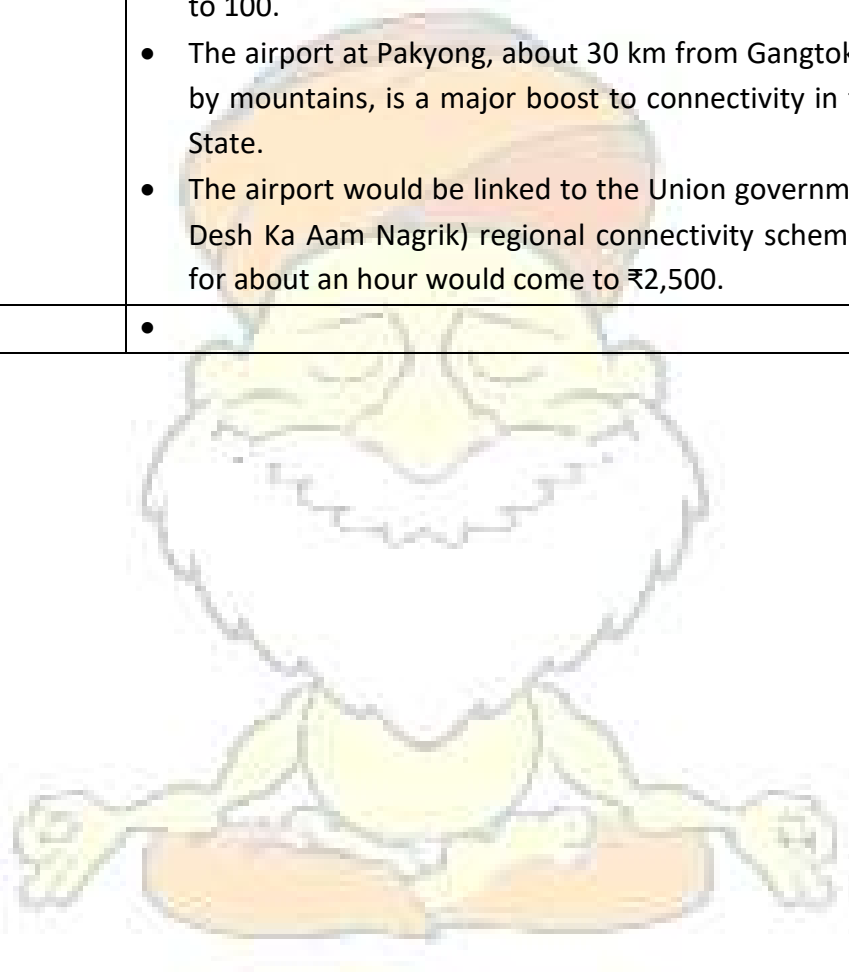
(TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE)

Model questions: (Answers are provided at the end)

Q.1) Uniform Civil Code has been in discussion for quite sometime. Uniform Civil Code refers to the body of laws governing rights and duties pertaining to property and personal matters like marriage, divorce, adoption and inheritance. Which of the following Statements are correct about UCC?

1. Article 45 of DPSP of the Constitution of India speaks about the Uniform Civil Code.
2. It is based on Gandhian Philosophy.

Select the code from below:
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.2) Consider the following statements:
1. The State shall endeavour to secure for all the citizens a Uniform Civil Code.
2. The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or equal protection of the laws.
3. Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters of public employment.

Which of the above given provisions reveal the secular character of the Indian State?
a) 1 only
b) 1 and 2 only
c) 1 and 3 only
d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.3) Consider the following statements with regard to Ramon Magsaysay Award
1. Bharat Vatwani and Sonam Wangchuk are among six who have been declared winners of 2018 Ramon Magsaysay Award.
2. The award was established in 1957 in the memory of British Prime Minister Raman Magsaysay, who started Communal Award during 1930s.

Choose the correct answer:
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.4) Pakal Dul and Lower Kalnal hydro-electric projects, which are in news recently, is over –
a) Chenab river
b) Sutlej river
c) Beas river
d) Jhelum river

Q.5) Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) is associated with
a) European Union
b) Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
c) North Atlantic Treaty Organization

d) None of the above

Q.6) 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.7) 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.8) Rohingya refugee issue is related to which of the following countries?
a) Myanmar and Bangladesh
b) North Korea and South Korea
c) Thailand and Cambodia
d) Myanmar and Thailand

Q.9) Orang National Park is located in
a) Odisha
b) Arunachal Pradesh
c) Assam
d) West Bengal

Q.10) Consider the following statements Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs)
1. Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs) are declared under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972
2. The government can prohibit industrial operations such as mining, sand quarrying and building thermal power plants in these areas

Select the correct statements
a) 1 Only
b) 2 Only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.11) International law identifies which of the following as 'Global Commons'?
1. High Seas
2. Atmosphere
3. Antarctica
4. Outer Space

Select the correct code:
a) 1, 2 and 3
b) 2, 3 and 4
c) 1, 3 and 4
d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Q.12) Consider the following statements about UNCLOS:
1. In 1982, the UN adopted the Convention on the Law of the Sea, but left the high seas free from restrictions.

2. U.S. did not ratify the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

3. Only ratified States enjoy the traditional freedoms of navigation, overflight, scientific research and fishing on the high seas.

Which of the statements above is/are correct?

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

Q.13) Which of the following is correct about Public Credit Registry (PCR)?

a) The purpose of PCR is to manage the foreign exchange of India.
b) The purpose of PCR is to address the twin balance sheet problem of the banking sector and the corporate sector.
c) The purpose of PCR is to keep the records of government borrowings.
d) None of the above

Q.14) Consider the following statements about Swachh Iconic Places

1. Swachh Iconic Places campaign was initiated under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan in 2016.
2. Ajmer dargah is included among the Swachh Iconic Places.
3. The Swachh Iconic Places - project envisioned by the Prime Minister is being coordinated by Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Q.15) Which of the following statements about Bal Gangadhar Tilak is/are correct?

1. He founded the Fergusson College in Pune.
2. He was part of the extremist faction of Indian National Congress.
3. He was associated with the Hindu Mahasabha.

Select the correct answer using code below

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

Q.16) Which of the following was termed as the 'Green Gold' in the Budget 2018-19?

a) Bamboo
b) Electric Vehicles
c) Tendu tree
d) Bonds issued to mobilize funds for Green energy projects

Q.17) As per Indian law, Bamboo is taxonomically a

a) Grass
b) Tree
c) Shrub
d) Weed

Q.18) Consider the following statements

1. Bamboo is called as poor man's timber.

2. Nearly 35 species of superior quality bamboos are found in North-eastern States.
3. India has the world's largest fields of bamboo.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?
a) 2 only
b) 1 and 2 only
c) 2 and 3 only
d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.19) In Union Budget 2018, government had allocated a whopping Rs 1,290 crore to promote the bamboo sector. The fund will be spent mainly through which among the below scheme –
a) National Mission on Bamboo Application (NMBA)
b) Green Gold Mission (GGM)
c) Restructured National Bamboo Mission (NBM)
d) North East Centre for Technology Application and Reach (NECTAR)

Q.20) Consider the below statements with respect to National Bamboo Mission:
1. It is under National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)
2. It is under Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)
3. The Mission is expected to bring more than 100000 ha area under plantation during the period 2018-19 & 2019-20.

Which of the statements above is/are correct?
a) 1 only

b) 3 only
c) 1 and 3 only
d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.21) The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee is constituted under the
a) Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006
b) Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999
c) Environment (Protection) Act, 1986
d) Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972

Q.22) Consider the following statements with respect to Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC)
1. It is under the Ministry of Science and Technology
2. It is the apex body for approval of activities involving large scale use of hazardous microorganisms and recombinants
3. It is responsible for approval of proposals relating to release of genetically engineered organisms and products into the environment including experimental field trials

Which of the following statements is/are correct?
a) 1 and 2
b) 1 and 3
c) 2 and 3
d) All of the above

Q.23) Consider the following statements about Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)
1. It is associated with ASEAN

2. All the members of RCEP are members of Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)
3. Cambodia is the only land-locked country among RCEP members

Select the INCORRECT statements

a) 1 and 2
b) 2 and 3
c) 1 and 3
d) Only 2

Q.24) Which of the following countries is NOT a part of Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)?

a) Myanmar
b) Japan
c) Bangladesh
d) Singapore

Q.25) Which of the following countries is/are NOT a part of RCEP?

1. India
2. Russia
3. China
4. Japan

Select the appropriate option using the code below

a) 2 only
b) 1 and 4 only
c) 2 and 3 only
d) 2 and 4 only

Q.26) Consider the following about Compensation Scheme for Women Victims/Survivors of Sexual Assault/Other Crimes-2018

1. It is scheme announced by the Centre in 2013 after the December 16, 2012 gangrape and murder case in Delhi to support the initiatives on women's safety across the country.
2. The scheme is for compensating women victims of sexual assault and acid attack.

Choose the correct answer:

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.27) Consider the following about Central Bureau of Investigation:

1. The CBI was initially setup to investigate cases of bribery and corruption during World war-II.
2. The jurisdiction of the CBI extends only over Central government Employees.
3. The agency comes under the jurisdiction of Department of Personnel and Training.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 and 3
b) 1 and 2
c) 2 and 3
d) 1,2 and 3

Q.28) To check corruption and redress citizens' grievances in India which of the following are included in the existing legal and institutional framework?

1. Railway Services (Conduct) Rules, 1966

2. Anti-corruption bureaus in states
3. Parliament and its committees
4. Central Bureau of Investigation, 1963

Which of the above statements are true?

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

Q.29) Match the following:

Tropical Cyclones	Place of Occurrence
1. Typhoons	a) North Western Australia
2. Hurricanes	b) Guinea lands of West Africa
3. Tornadoes	c) China Sea
4. Willy-Willies	d) West Indian Islands in the Caribbean

Choose the correct codes from the below given options:

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

Q.30) With regard to the objectives of the Competition Commission of India, consider the following statements.

1. To prevent practices having adverse effect on competition.
2. To prevent monopolistic activities and to promote oligopolistic cartels.
3. To protect the interests of consumers.
4. To ensure freedom of trade.

Which of the above options is/are correct?

a) 1, 2 and 3 only
b) 2, 3 and 4 only
c) 1, 3 and 4 only
d) All the above

Q.31) Consider the following statements about Competition Commission of India (CCI)

1. It is a quasi-judicial body.
2. It is responsible for enforcing Competition Act, 2002 throughout India.
3. It works to protect the interests of consumers.

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.32) Which of the following statements is/are true?

1. Suresh Kaushal case deals with Section 377
2. K. Puttaswamy v Union of India case deals with Right to Privacy

Choose correct answer:

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both
d) None

Q.33) Which among the following is/are outcome(s) of India and US recently concluded 2+2 Dialogue?

1. Signing of Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement.
2. Signing of Generalized System of Preferences (GSP)
3. Signing of three of the four foundational agreements with the U.S. that had been planned for years.

Choose the correct code:

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

Q.34) Consider the following statements:

1. India and the US have agreed to hold their first joint tri services exercise at the inaugural 2+2 dialogue.
2. This will be the first such exercise to be carried out by India with another nation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.35) Consider the below statements:

1. The Animal Welfare Board of India comes under the jurisdiction of Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate change.

2. Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Rules empowers "civil society groups" to protect animals.

Which of the statements above is/are correct?

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both
d) None

Q.36) With reference to Animal Welfare Board of India, consider the following statements:

1. It is a statutory body created under Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.
2. It can order the Central government to make a new law to prevent cruelty on Animals.

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.37) Global Mobility Summit was recently held in -

a) Singapore
b) India
c) Nepal
d) Japan

Q.38) Consider the following statements

1. The Governor can pardon a death sentence prescribed by a state law.

2. The power to pardon is to be exercised by the President on the advice of the Union Cabinet.
3. The President cannot pardon sentences inflicted by court martial.

Which of the above statement[s] is/are *incorrect*?

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) 1 and 3
d) 1 and 2

Q.39) Sadarmatt anicut, which recently got heritage tag by the International Executive Council, the highest decision making body of International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID) is over –

a) River Godavari
b) River Krishna
c) River Sabarmati
d) River Siang

Q.40) Article 142 is news often. The Article is associated with –

a) Special Leave Petition of Supreme Court
b) Advisory jurisdiction of Supreme Court
c) Enforcement of orders of Supreme Court
d) Review of judgments by Supreme Court

Q.41) Which of the following is correctly matched?

1. Hambantota – Sri Lanka
2. Chabahar - Afghanisatn
3. Duqm – Iran

Select the correct code:

a) 1 Only
b) 3 Only
c) 1 and 2
d) 2 and 3

Q.42) Gatka, a traditional martial art associated with

a) Lingayatism
b) Bahá'í
c) Sanamahism
d) None of the above

Q.43) Match List I (Martial Arts) with List II (Associated States) and select the correct answer with the help of the codes given below:

List-I (Martial Arts)	List-II (Associated State)
1. Thang-Ta	A. Andhra Pradesh
2. Gatka	B. Tamil Nadu
3. Silambam	C. Punjab
4. Karra Samu/Kathi Samu	D. Manipur

Select the correct answer:

   1-2-3-4

a) A-B-C-D
b) D-B-C-A
c) D-C-B-A
d) C-A-B-D

Q.44) Which of the following statement is *incorrect*?

a) Andhra Pradesh is the leading fish producer of India.
b) In India, production from marine fishing is higher than inland fishing.

c) Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh is known as the shrimp capital of India.

d) Apatani tribe of Arunachal Pradesh practice fishing in their paddy fields.

Q.45) Health Ministries, NGOs and private sector representatives from 120 countries have signed the Moscow declaration of WHO. The target of declaration is

a) To eradicate polio from the world till 2030

b) To eradicate vector borne infections

c) To eradicate Tuberculosis by 2030

d) To end deaths by hunger in the world by 2030

Q.46) Consider the following with regard to Multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB)

1. Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by Virus

2. MDR-TB is a type of tuberculosis which is unresponsive to at least two of the first line of anti-TB drugs isoniazid and rifampicin

3. Bedaquiline is a medication used in the treatment of MDR-TB

Choose the appropriate code

a) 2 only

b) 2 and 3

c) 1 and 3

d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.47) Consider the following regarding Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)

1. It aims to provide formal access of financial facilities to non-corporates, small businesses.

2. Under the scheme, Pradhaan Mantri Mudra Yojana three categories of

interventions have been named which include Shishu (Loan up to ₹50,000), Kishore (Loan ranging from ₹50,000 to ₹5 lakh) and Tarun (Loan above ₹5 lakh and below ₹10 lakh)

3. Food Processing is an eligible activity for coverage under one of the MUDRA schemes.

Select the correct option

a) 1 and 3

b) 2 and 3

c) 1 and 2

d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.48) Which of the following is not correct about Kisan Credit Card?

a) It was introduced by Indian Banks based on NABARD's Model scheme.

b) Commercial banks, Regional Rural Banks as well as State co-operative banks can provide loans under this scheme.

c) The card holder is also covered under personal accident insurance.

d) The card is valid for lifetime or till the person is in employed in agriculture.

Q.49) Which one of the following mountain ranges is spread over only one State in India?

a) Satpura

b) Aravalli

c) Sahyadri

d) None of the above

Q.50) Which of the following statements are correct regarding the 'Aravalli' ranges of India?

1. It is the oldest block mountain range of India
2. It is highly denuded because of erosion.
3. The highest peak of Aravallis is Guru Shikhar

Select the code from below:

a) 1 and 2
b) 2 and 3
c) 1 and 3
d) All of the above

Q.51) Consider the following about National Technical Research Organisation:

1. It is the technical intelligence agency working directly under the supervision of the Prime Minister's Office and the Home Ministry.
2. It involves in satellite and terrestrial monitoring activities.
3. It also develops technology relevant to Indian national security and intelligence.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Q.52) Choose the correct pair/s from the below:

1. MILEX 18 exercise : : ASEAN
2. Exercise Peace Mission 2018 : : SCO

3. IBSAMAR exercise : : BRICS

Select *incorrect* answer:

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

Q.53) Which of the following statements are correct regarding the 'International Criminal Court' (ICC)?

1. It is primary judicial branch of the United Nations.
2. Rome Statute is the treaty that established the ICC.
3. ICC has the jurisdiction to prosecute individuals for the international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.
4. India is founding member and signatory of ICC.

Choose the correct answer:

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

Q.54) The name, Jebi, was in the news recently. Who or what is it?

a) The rare breed of polar bear
b) A newly found Earth-like planet in a faraway galaxy
c) A deadliest and most destructive hurricane
d) None of the above

Q.55) Which of the following are preconditions for the formation of a tropical cyclone?

1. A low pressure center
2. High temperature
3. Presence of moisture
4. Absence of Coriolis force

Select the code from the following:
a) 1,2 and 3
b) 2,3 and 4
c) 1 and 2
d) 1,3 and 4

Q.56) Cyclones, hurricanes and typhoons, may have different names, but cyclones, hurricanes and typhoons are all violent tropical storms that can generate 10 times as much energy as the Hiroshima atomic bomb. Which one of the following most appropriately differentiates the three?
a) Names of storms according to their rising strength
b) Names of storms in the South Pacific-Indian Ocean, the Atlantic-northeast Pacific and Asia respectively
c) Names of storms according to their shape
d) Name of storms according to frequency of occurrence

Q.57) Consider the following about "Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan" (PM-AASHA) and choose the correct answer:
a) It guarantees a minimum package of antenatal care services to women in their 2nd / 3rd trimesters of pregnancy at designated government health facilities
b) It aims to ensure remunerative prices to the farmers
c) It aims to provide assured, comprehensive and quality antenatal care, free of cost to all pregnant women residing in rural areas on the 9th of every month.
d) It is a flagship social security scheme which ensures food security to the farmers.

Q.58) Decline in interest rates:
a) Will lead to large outflow of foreign portfolio investment
b) Will lead to large inflow of foreign portfolio investment
c) Will not affect foreign portfolio investment
d) May affect or not affect portfolio investment

Q.59) 'Hot Money' refers to
a) Foreign Portfolio Investment
b) Reserves with the RBI
c) Net GDR receipts
d) Net Foreign Direct Investment

Q.60) In the context of India, Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI) relates to –
a) Investment by non-residents in Indian securities
b) Takeover of domestic companies by foreign companies
c) Private remittances to foreign companies
d) Institution established or incorporated outside India which proposes to make investments in Indian securities

Q.61) Consider the following statements with reference to the Masala Bonds

1. These can be issued outside India as well as within India.
2. These are rupee denominated bonds.
3. Both banks and corporate entities can issue these bonds.

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.62) Section 498A of IPC has been in the news for quite some time for its increasing misuse. It deals with which of the following cases?

a) Domestic violence
b) Sedition
c) Anti-National Activity
d) Martial Law

Q.63) Family Welfare Committee was in news related to

a) To control population via family planning.
b) A formal committee in each ward of urban local body to oversee implementation of government health schemes.
c) Committee to look into complaints of dowry harassment set up by District Legal Services Authorities.
d) Committee to oversee the functioning of primary health center.

Q.64) Antiretroviral therapy (ART) is concerned with

a) AIDS/HIV Virus
b) Tuberculosis
c) Blood Cancer
d) Leprosy

Q.65) Increase in Biological Oxygen demand (BOD) in a water body indicates:

a) Increase in microbial pollution
b) Decrease in microbial pollution
c) Absence of microbial pollution
d) Can't say

Q.66) The biological oxygen demand of water is reduced mainly by:

a) Primary treatment
b) Secondary treatment
c) Tertiary treatment
d) None of the above

Q.67) Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) is a standard criterion for

a) Measuring oxygen levels in blood
b) Computing oxygen levels in forest ecosystems
c) Pollution assay in aquatic ecosystems
d) Assessing oxygen levels in high altitude regions

Q.68) Consider the following statements about MPLADS Scheme

1. It is a centrally-sponsored plan scheme fully funded by the government of India
2. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has been responsible for the policy formulation, release of funds and

prescribing monitoring mechanism for implementation of the Scheme

3. Funds from MPLADS Scheme can be converged with MGNREGA with the objective of creating more durable assets

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.69) Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) is constituted under the

a) Environment (Protection) Act, 1986
b) Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972
c) Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974
d) Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981

Q.70) Which of the following are the objectives of part of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna (PMFBY)?

1. To provide insurance coverage and financial support to the farmers in the event of failure of any of the notified crop as a result of natural calamities, pests & diseases.
2. To stabilise the income of farmers to ensure their continuance in farming.
3. To ensure flow of credit to the agriculture sector.

Select the code from below:

a) 1 and 2
b) 2 and 3
c) 1 and 3

d) All of the above

Q.71) Narasimham Committee is associated with

a. Banking Reforms
b. Labour Reforms
c. Taxation
d. Extradition

Q.72) Which one of the following is a major effect of long term consumption of drinking water containing little(less than 0.5 ppm) or no fluoride?

a. Cavity of tooth
b. Erosion of nail
c. Deformation of bone
d. Mottling of tooth

Q.73) Which of the following can be found as pollutants in the drinking water in some parts of India?

1. Arsenic
2. Fluoride
3. Formaldehyde
4. Sorbitol
5. Uranium

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

a. 1 and 2 only
b. 2, 4 and 5 only
c. 1, 2 and 5 only
d. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Q.74) Khan Committee deals with -

a. 'One State-one vote'
b. BCCI should be represented by every State and Union Territory.
c. No full membership to associations with no state entity.
d. Foreign portfolio investors

Q.75) Foreign exchange reserves of India are managed by

a. SEBI
b. Ministry of Finance
c. Ministry of Commerce and Industry
d. None of the above

Q.76) Which among the following is/are Financial Regulator in the Indian Financial Market?
a. NABARD
b. SEBI
c. SIDBI
d. All of the above

Q.77) Akash Missile was developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) as part of the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme. Which of the following statements are correct regarding Akash Missile?
1. It is a medium range air to air missile.
2. It can simultaneously engage multiple targets in all weather conditions
3. It uses high energy solid propellant as the booster.

Select the code from following:
a. 1 and 2
b. 2 and 3
c. 1 and 3
d. All of the above

Q.78) India has successfully test fired its surface to air missile 'Akash'. Consider the following statements regarding Akash:
1. It is the first surface to air missile with indigenous seeker that has been test fired.
2. It has been developed by DRDO
3. It has a strike range of about 25km and carries fragmentation warhead.

Which of the above statements are correct?
a. 1 and 2
b. 2 and 3
c. 1 and 3
d. All of the above

Q.79) Which article of Indian Constitution lays down that a Finance Commission (FC) should be constituted "...within two years from the commencement of this Constitution and thereafter at the expiration of every fifth year or at such earlier time as the President considers necessary..."?
a) Article 180 (1)
b) Article 280 (1)
c) Article 380 (1)
d) Article 80 (1)

Q.80) 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.81) China is bordered with which of the following countries?
1. South Korea
2. Afghanistan

3. Vietnam

Select the correct statements
a) 1 and 2
b) 2 and 3
c) 1 and 3
d) All of the above

Q.82) Which of the following is/are correctly matched?
1. Radcliffe Line – India and Pakistan
2. Durand Line – Afghanistan and Pakistan
3. 38th Parallel – North Korea and South Korea

Select the correct code:
a) 1 and 2
b) 2 and 3
c) 1 and 3
d) All of the above

Q.83) Which of the following closely describes a Solar system?
a) Sun and 9 planets
b) Sun, 8 planets and satellites
c) Sun, 8 planets, satellites and asteroids
d) Sun, 8 planets, satellites, asteroids and meteoroids

Q.84) One Astronomical Unit signifies
a) Mean distance between Earth and Sun
b) Mean distance between Earth and Moon
c) Mean distance between Mercury and Pluto
d) Mean distance between Venus and Earth

Q.85) Consider the following statements about Cave-dwelling animals:
1. Small cave-dwelling animals that have adapted to their dark surroundings are called as Biospeleology.
2. They are highly susceptible to changes in temperature and humidity.
3. They live longer than other terrestrial species.

Which of the above are correct?
a) 1 and 2 only
b) 1 and 3 only
c) 2 and 3 only
d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.86) Which of the following schemes/act have been launched/implemented for improving overall sex ratio in India?
1. Sabla scheme
2. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme
3. POCSO act

Choose an appropriate option using a code given below:
a) 1 and 2
b) 2 and 3
c) 2 only
d) All of them

Q.87) Consider the following statements:
1. India does not have a de jure Carbon tax.
2. Carbon Offsetting is the reduction of emission of GHGs to compensate for

the emission of GHGs made elsewhere or, offset emission of GHGs.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both
- d) None

Q.88) Consider the following pairs:

1. Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary : : Rajasthan
2. Kulik Bird Sanctuary : : Odisha
3. Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary : : Gujarat

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

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

Q.89) Consider the following statements with regard to National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP)

1. It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme aimed at providing every person in rural India with adequate safe water for drinking, cooking and other domestic basic needs on a sustainable basis.
2. Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation is the Nodal Ministry for the overall policy, planning, funding and coordination of NRDWP.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both
- d) None

Q.90) The Gaganyaan mission unveiled in the country on independence day aims to :

- a) To send communication satellites to the ISS.
- b) To send a manned mission to space for the first time.
- c) To send satellites to MARS to study its atmosphere.
- d) To build its own international space station in the outer space.

Q.91) Consider the following regarding 'Central Adoption Resource Authority' (CARA)

1. It is a statutory body of Ministry of Women & Child Development, Government of India.
2. It functions as the nodal body for adoption of Indian children and is mandated to monitor and regulate in-country and inter-country adoptions.

Which of the given statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both
- d) None

Q.92) Which of the following Acts make Environment Impact Assessment mandatory in India?

- a) Indian Forest Act

b) Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act
c) Wildlife Protection Act
d) Environment (Protection) Act

Q.93) Consider the below statements about NITI Aayog:
1. It enjoys the power of allocating funds to ministries and state governments.
2. It includes the Chief Ministers of all States and the Lieutenant Governors of all Union territories in its Governing Council.
3. CEO of NITI Aayog is appointed by the Prime Minister.

Which of the statements given above is/are INCORRECT?
a) 1 only
b) 1 and 2 only
c) 2 and 3 only
d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.94) Consider the following with regard to Ayushman Bharat scheme:
1. It aims to to create a network of health and wellness centres that will bring the healthcare system closer to the people.
2. 'National Health Protection Scheme' is a flagship initiative under Ayushman Bharat.

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.95) Narcondam Hornbill is found in which of the following?
1. Western Ghats
2. Andamans
3. Lakshadweep

Select the correct code:
a) 1 and 2
b) Only 2
c) 1 and 3
d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.96) 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.97) Consider the following statements about 'Great Hornbill'
1. In India, it is restricted to the Himalayan foothills and hill forests in northeast only
2. They are omnivorous birds
3. They are critically endangered according to IUCN status

Select the INCORRECT statements

a) 1 and 2
b) 2 and 3
c) 1 and 3
d) All of the above

Q.98) Which of the following statements are correct about the term 'Malnutrition'?
1. Malnutrition refers to deficiencies, excesses or imbalances in a person's intake of energy and/or nutrients.
2. People are also malnourished, or suffer from over nutrition if they consume too many calories

Select the code from below:
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.99) Which of the following terms associated with the different forms of malnutrition is/are correctly matched?
1. Child stunting: Low Weight for Height.
2. Adult Obesity: Carrying excess body fat with a body mass index > 30.
3. Child Wasting: Low Height for age.

Choose the appropriate option:
a) 1, 2 and 3
b) 1 and 3
c) Only 2
d) 1 and 2

Q.100) Therapeutic food is used for supplementing the nutrients in the diet. Which of the following statements are correct regarding therapeutic foods?

1. They are prepared foods that contain specific calories, vitamins and minerals.
2. These high-energy foods are mainly used to treat malnourished children living in areas were nutrient-rich foods are limited or unavailable.
3. They do not require cooking and have a long shelf life.

Select the code from below:
a) 1 and 2
b) 2 and 3
c) 1 and 3
d) All of the above

Q.101) Which of these are kharif crops in Tamil Nadu?
1. Rice
2. Gram
3. Jowar
4. Cotton

Select the correct code
a) 1,2 and 3
b) 1,2 and 4
c) 2,3 and 4
d) None of the above

Q.102) Which of the following are Rabi crops?
1. Rice
2. Maize
3. Wheat
4. Barley

Select the correct code:
a) 1, 2 and 3
b) 3 and 4

c) 2 and 3

d) 1 and 4

Q.103) The CRISPR-Cas system often in news is related to?

a) Rice Intensification

b) Gene Editing

c) Space Research

d) Cyber Attack

Q.104) Graphical curve which advocates a relationship between inflation and unemployment in an economy is called

a) Laffer's curve

b) Phillips curve

c) Friedman curve

d) Rahn curve

Q.105) About various types of unemployment, consider the following statements:

1. If in an economy, there is surplus workforce in one sector and there is short supply of workforce in the other sector then it is known as disguised unemployment.

2. Disguised unemployment is found in agriculture sector in India.

3. Frictional unemployment is caused by periodical increase and decrease in the growth of economy.

Which of the statements given above is/are incorrect?

a) 1 and 3 only

b) 2 and 3 only

c) 2 only

d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.106) Which among the following is the first State in the country where the WHO will collaborate for elimination of malaria?

a) Bihar

b) Uttar Pradesh

c) Punjab

d) West Bengal

Q.107) Consider the following statements with reference to the special provisions given to certain classes

1. The constitution does not specify the castes and tribes which are to be called the Scheduled castes (SCs) or Scheduled tribes (STs).

2. The expression Other Backward Classes (OBCs) was inserted and defined in the constitution through Sixty-ninth Amendment Act, 1991.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) Only 1

b) Only 2

c) 1 and 2

d) None

Q.108) Article 341 and 342 of the Constitution of India deals with –

a) Election Commission of India powers, direction and control of conducting the elections to the offices of the President and Vice-President of India respectively.

b) Who would be Scheduled castes (SCs) and Scheduled tribes (STs) with respect to any State or Union Territory.

c) Appointment and term of office of UPSC members.

d) Appointment of a Commission to investigate the conditions of backward classes.

Q.109) Which among the following committee was set up to study the problem of criminalisation of politics and the nexus among criminals, politicians and bureaucrats in India?

a) N.N. Vohra Committee

b) M. Nagaraj Committee

c) Indira Sawhney Committee

d) Sri Krishna Committee

Q.110) Route 606, also known as Delaram-Zaranj Highway connects which of the following countries?

a) India and Myanmar

b) India and Bhutan

c) Iran and Afghanistan

d) China and Pakistan

Q.111) Consider the following terms

1. Currency Deposit Ratio- Ratio of money held by public in currency to that they hold in bank deposits.

2. Reserve Deposit Ratio- Proportion of the total deposits commercial banks keep as reserves.

3. Statutory Liquidity Ratio- Policy instrument by RBI, which specifies the fraction of their deposits that bank must keep with RBI.

4. Cash Reserve Ratio- Policy instrument by RBI, which requires the banks to maintain a given fraction of their total demand and

time deposits in the form of specified liquid assets.

Select the INCORRECT statement/s:

a) 1 and 3

b) 2 and 4

c) 3 and 4

d) None of the above

Q.112) If the RBI implements an expansionist open market operations policy, this means that it will?

a) Buy securities from non-government holders

b) Offer commercial banks more credit in open market

c) Sells G-securities (government securities) in open market

d) Openly announces to the market that it intends to expand its credit

Q.113) Saab Group is sometimes in news. It is assocaited with -

a) Swedish aerospace and defence company.

b) Coalition of Saudi Arabia and global "Islamic Alliance" of 34 countries to combat terrorism

c) South Africa's largest weapons manufacturer that is offering Make in India, tech transfer and partnership with local companies.

d) Saudi-led intervention in Bahrain .

Q.114) To reduce the current account deficit in India, which of the below actions government can take?

1. Reduction in export subsidy

2. Devaluing the domestic currency

3. Adopting suitable policies which attract greater FDI and more foreign funds

Select the correct answer using the codes given below

a) 1 and 2
b) 1 and 3
c) 2 and 3
d) 1,2 and 3

Q115) Twin deficits often in news relates to

a) Revenue Deficit and Budget Deficit
b) Fiscal Deficit and Budget Deficit
c) Fiscal Deficit and Current Account Deficit
d) Capital Account Deficit and Current Account Deficit

Q.116) Consider the following statements regarding Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN):

1. It is a non-profit, non-government organization.
2. It will manage the entire IT system of the GST portal.
3. It will provide taxpayers with all services – from registration to filing taxes and maintaining all tax details.

Which of the above statements are correct?

a) 1 and 2
b) 2 and 3
c) 1 and 3
d) All of the above

2018 SEPTEMBER MONTH CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQs SOLUTIONS

1	d	30	c	59	a	88	b
2	d	31	b	60	a	89	c
3	a	32	c	61	c	90	b
4	a	33	a	62	a	91	c
5	d	34	a	63	c	92	d
6	a	35	c	64	a	93	b
7	b	36	a	65	a	94	c
8	a	37	b	66	b	95	b
9	c	38	c	67	c	96	d
10	b	39	a	68	d	97	c
11	d	40	c	69	c	98	c
12	b	41	a	70	d	99	c
13	b	42	d	71	a	100	d
14	d	43	c	72	a	101	d
15	a	44	b	73	c	102	b
16	a	45	c	74	d	103	b
17	a	46	b	75	d	104	b
18	d	47	d	76	b	105	a
19	c	48	d	77	b	106	c
20	d	49	d	78	d	107	a
21	c	50	b	79	b	108	b
22	c	51	c	80	b	109	a
23	b	52	a	81	b	110	c
24	c	53	c	82	d	111	c
25	a	54	d	83	d	112	b
26	b	55	a	84	a	113	a
27	a	56	b	85	c	114	c
28	d	57	b	86	c	115	c
29	a	58	a	87	c	116	d