AYUSHMAAN BHARAT
PM-KISAN
UNEMPLOYMENT ISSUE
ANGEL TAX - STARTUPS
PULWAMA ATTACK

FEBRUARY 2019

IASBABA'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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PREFACE

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

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

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

This is the **45th edition** of IASbaba's Monthly Magazine. This edition covers all important issues that were in news in the month of **FEBRUARY 2019** 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."

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HISTORY/CULTURE/GEOGRAPHY

Guru Padmasambhava (also known as second Buddha): Founder of Tibetan Buddhism

Part of: GS Prelims I – Indian Art and Culture; Ancient History

In news:

- Odisha Chief Minister unveiled a 19-foot-high statue of **Guru Padmasambhava** at Jirang in Gajapati district, Odisha.
- Padmasambhava, also known as **Guru Rinpoche**, is considered to be the **founder of Tibetan Buddhism**.
- The statue is placed in the middle of 'Padma Sarovar', a large tank near **Padmasambhava Mahavihara, the largest Buddhist monastery in eastern India**.
- The Dalai Lama had inaugurated this monastery in 2010. Tibetan refugees settled in this region over six decades ago.

Pic: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/19/Guru_Rinpoche_in_mist_2.jpg

Do you know?

- Historians claim that Guru Padmasambhava, also known as **second Buddha**, was born and brought up in Odisha before he left for Tibet.
- An International Conference on 8th century Himalayan sage Guru Padmasambhava was held in New Delhi.
- The conference was organised as part of events to commemorate **50-years of formalization of diplomatic ties between India and Bhutan**.
- There is an image or painting of the Guru Padmasambhava in every Bhutanese home or temple.

- Guru Padmasambhava is also considered to be the founder of Nyingma tradition, oldest of the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

Place in news: Man Sagar Lake

Part of: GS Prelims I and III – Indian Geography; History; Conservation of birds

In news:

- 22nd Indian Birding Fair was organised on the banks of Man Sagar Lake, Rajasthan.
- The Jaipur birding fair was dedicated to conservation of waders.

Do you know?

- Wading birds are tiny birds mostly confined to the edges of water and are observed feeding across moist surfaces.
- The Indian subcontinent hosts 84 species of wading birds, 64 of which are migratory.
- Wading birds such as little stint, green sandpiper, small pratincole, pied avocet, Jerdon's courser, black winged stilt and many more species were spotted on the occasion.

About Man Sagar Lake

- It is an artificial lake named after Man Singh, the then ruler of Amber and a trusted general of Mughal Emperor Akbar.
- Man Singh had built it in 1610 AD by damming the Dravyavati river.
- A palace, Jal Mahal, is situated in the middle of the lake.

Drought less probable this year

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains I – Geography

In news:

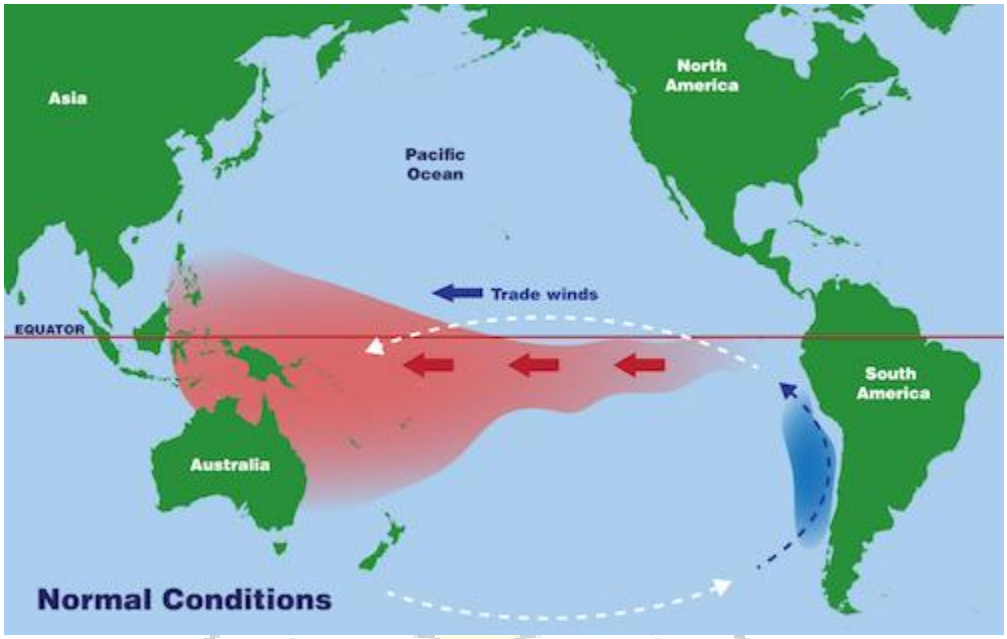
According to Skymet (private weather forecaster) -

- There's unlikely to be a drought in 2019 as the El Nino — a climate phenomenon linked to poor monsoon in India — is likely to peter out by the beginning of the season.

Do you know?

- Indian climatic conditions are shaped by many factors; one of them is El-Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO).

- The El Nino-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is a recurring climate pattern involving changes in the temperature of waters in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean.
- El Nino and La Nina are the extreme phases of the ENSO cycle.



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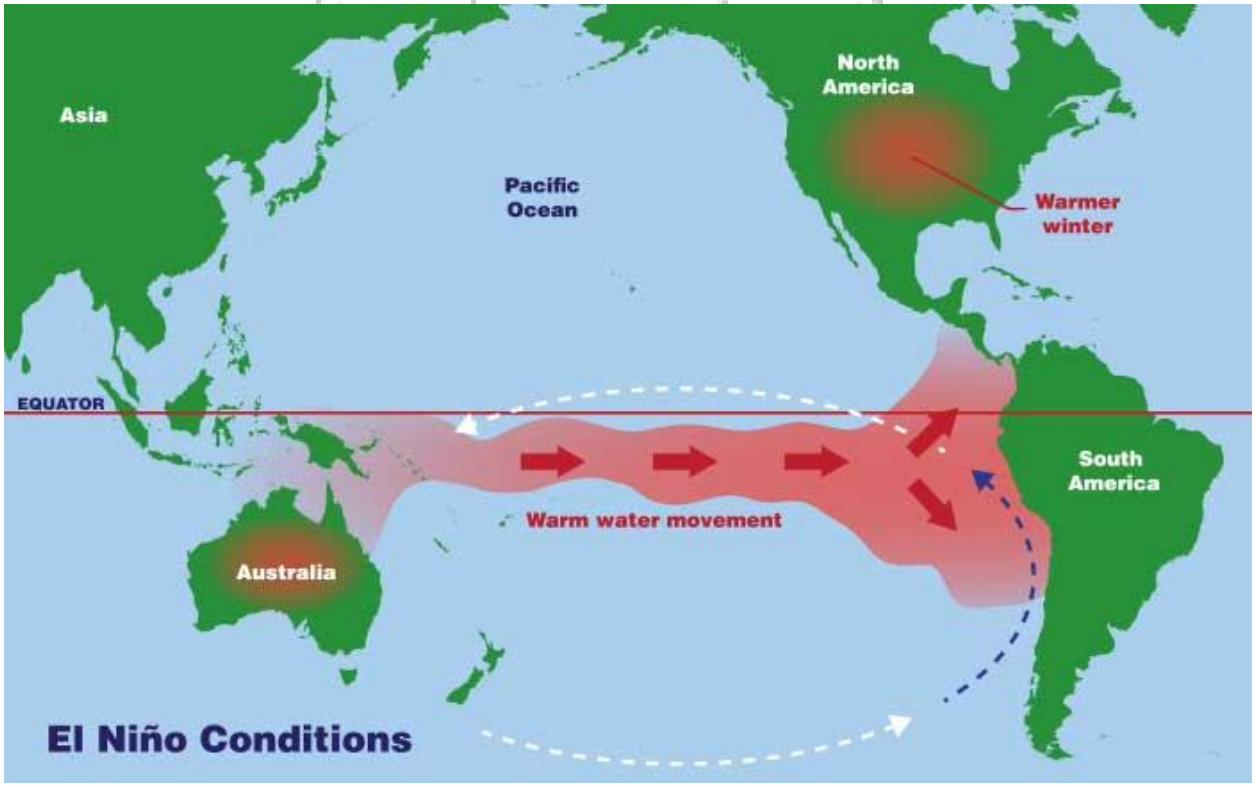

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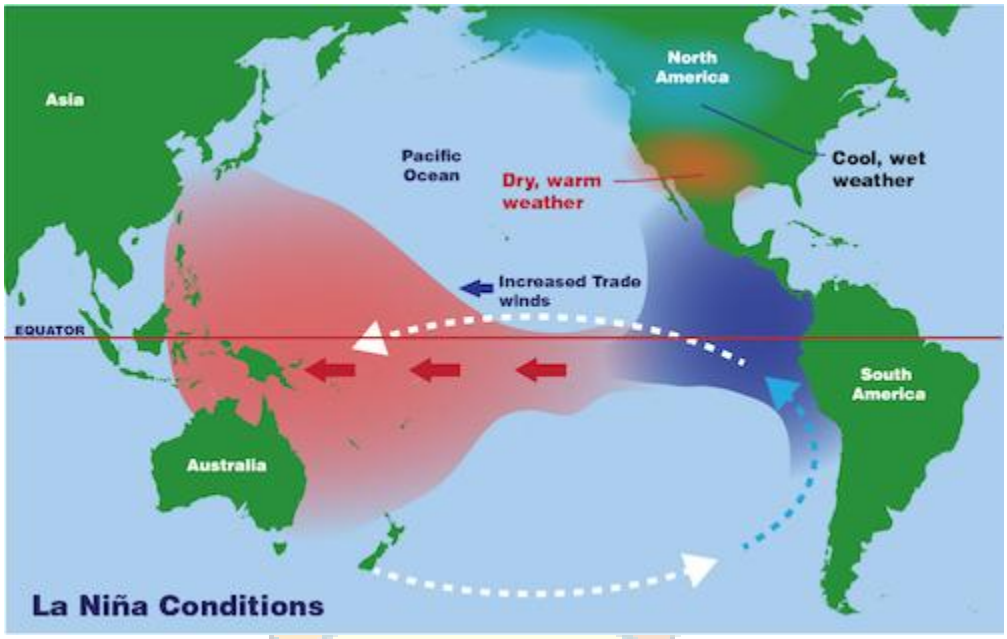

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El Nino

- Phenomenon of warming of the ocean surface, or above-average sea surface temperatures (SST), in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean is known as El Nino.
- The low-level surface winds, which normally blow from east to west along the equator ("easterly winds"), instead weaken or, in some cases, start blowing the other direction (from west to east or "westerly winds").
- This reversal of winds creates unusual warming and low pressure near the Peruvian Coast, and causes heavy rainfall.

La Nina

- Phenomenon of cooling of the ocean surface or below-average Sea surface temperatures (SST), in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean is known as La Nina.
- The normal easterly winds along the equator become even stronger.
- This situation causes heavy rainfall (monsoon) on western Pacific areas.

Effects of El-Nino and La-Nina on India's climate

- For India, El Nino during winter results in development of warm conditions.
- During summer, it leads to dry conditions and deficient monsoon, leading to droughts and water scarcity.
- Whereas La-Nina brings rains and stronger monsoon in India, it may cause flood like situation in coastal areas.

- El-Nino and La-Nina are complex unpredictable phenomenon and Agriculture being the important occupation, climatic changes due to these are grave for India.

Seaplane operations in Andamans and Lakshadweep

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains I and III – Geography; Infrastructure

In news:

- Four islands in the Andamans and three in Lakshadweep have been identified for seaplane operations.
- Bids invited for private sector participation in tourism-based projects.

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Do you know?

- Islands Development Agency (IDA) is chaired by Union Home Minister.
- IDA was constituted in 2017 for the holistic development of islands after giving due consideration to unique maritime and territorial bio-diversity of the islands.

- The IDA had identified 10 islands for development which include 5 islands in A&N Islands (i.e. Smith, Ross, Long, Avis and Little Andaman) and 5 in Lakshadweep (i.e. Minicoy, Bangaram, Thinnakara, Cheriyam, Suheli).

Scientists discover massive mountains under Earth's crust

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains I – Geography; Physical geography - Interior of Earth; Structure and feature of Earth's interior

In news:

- Scientists have discovered massive mountains in the Earth's mantle, an advance that may change our understanding of how the planet was formed.
- We know that Earth has three layers: a crust, mantle and core, which is subdivided into an inner and outer core.
- While that is not wrong, it does leave out several other layers that scientists have identified within the Earth.

Do you know?

- Scientists used data from an enormous earthquake in Bolivia to find mountains and other topography on a layer located 660 km straight down, which separates the upper and lower mantle.
- Lacking a formal name for this layer, the researchers simply call it "the 660-km boundary."
- Data from earthquakes that are magnitude 7.0 or higher send out shockwaves in all directions that can travel through the core to the other side of the planet — and back again.
- The presence of roughness on the 660-km boundary has significant implications for understanding how our planet formed and evolved.

POLITY/GOVERNANCE

The Doctrine of Basic Structure of the Indian Constitution: A Critique

Introduction:

- One of the most fundamental and equally ambiguous concepts that underlies Indian Constitutional Law is the **'basic structure doctrine'**.
- It has now been more than 45 years since the Supreme Court ruled in **Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala** that Parliament's power to amend the Constitution was not unlimited, that the Constitution's basic structure was infrangible.

Criticisms:

While there is no denying its significance the doctrine has often been criticized –

- It is **ambiguous** and **allows the judiciary to tread on the toes of other branches of Government**.
- The phrase **"basic structure" finds no mention anywhere in the Constitution**. Therefore, some experts even call it undemocratic as unelected judges can strike down a constitutional amendment.
- The doctrine accords the judiciary a power to impose its philosophy over a democratically formed government – **"tyranny of the unelected"**.

Of recently there has been severe disapproval of the document, because of the Supreme Court's occasionally confused interpretation of what the Constitution's basic structure might be.

Positives of the doctrine:

However, rejecting the doctrine altogether is not a good idea, as –

- **It possesses substantial moral value important to strengthen democracy** as it **limits the power of a majoritarian government** to undermine the Constitution's central ideals.
- It **implies limitations on the amending powers** of the Legislature. Restrains Legislature from stepping into the treacherous realm of arbitrariness by misusing article 368 of the Indian Constitution.
- It is critical to upkeep the spirit of the constitution document.
- It performs an important democratic role in ensuring that majoritarian governments do not destroy the Constitution's essential character.
- To protect the country's federal structure, safeguard human rights and established constitutional principles such as the state's democratic and social order.

- Parliament is a creature of the Constitution. It should not, therefore, make changes that have the effect of overthrowing or obliterating the Constitution itself.
- Basic structure doctrine is a safety valve against majoritarianism and authoritarianism; it safeguards citizens' liberties and preserves the ideals on which the Constitution is based.

Conclusion:

A Constitution needs to be a living Constitution, to endure the tides of time and adapt to the changing requirements of generations.

A Constitution is like a machine, 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.

The basic structure doctrine is a mean to give a momentum to the living principles of the 'Rule of Law' and connotes that none is above the Constitution and the Constitution is supreme.

Connecting the dots:

- Does in your opinion the basic structure doctrine undermine parliamentary sovereignty? Critically examine.
- Examine the doctrine of basic structure, its evolution and significance.

Institutional Decay and Role of Institution in Democracy

Context:

- We recently read about unreleased National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) report which revealed that India's unemployment rate touched a 45-year high of 6.1% (especially after demonetization).
- Despite getting all required clearances, the government chose not to publicly release the NSSO report.
- This suppression of data/information has created massive controversy and resignation of two members of the National Statistical Commission, a statutory body which releases the NSSO reports.

By suppressing its own data on current employment, or rather job loss, the current Government has, thereby, **compromised the autonomy and the standing of the National Statistical Commission**.

Institutional decay

- Under the current NDA's rule, an unprecedented and dire situation has arisen, as key institutions – pillars of the republic – have squirmed under the **overbearing pressure of interference**.
- Although institutions have always had to negotiate with political rulers, and there have been periods in India's past when things came to a flash point, but never before has such a sweeping discontent been visible to the people.
- It **poses a danger for the country's democracy** if institutions like the Supreme Court, RBI, Election Commission, CBI, CIC etc. are pressurised to function for political ends.

Such sordid story of institutional decay in India is not confined to current ruling government but even the previous governments undermined key institutions.
The internal Emergency imposed on the country from 1975 to 1977 initiated the process.

- The then government tried to tame bureaucrats as well as the highest court in the land.
- Postings and appointments were manipulated to suit the ruling dispensation.

However, the current government has earned the dubious distinction of sabotaging the autonomy of several political institutions in rapid succession.

Why institutional decay needs to be checked?

- Institutional decay affects ordinary citizens in disastrous ways.
- Arbitrary expansion and unlawful exercise of power by democratically elected government violates constitutional rights to freedom, equality and justice.

Therefore, there is a need to limit the power of government.

Role of institutions

- Institutions, as the embodiment of formal and informal rules, **assure citizens that the government exercises power according to some norms** that enable as well as regulate state capacity.
- Institutions embody 'strong evaluations'. Institutions, which stand independently of us, **give us standards** that allow us to evaluate what is right and wrong, better and worse, and higher and lower.
- It provides us a position to judge whether the power exercised by political parties is fair or unfair.

- Rules make our worlds predictable. We know what the boundaries of the freedom of expression are, we know that if the police arrests us tomorrow, we have the right to appoint a lawyer and appeal to the judiciary.
- Without institutions and rules our life would be chancy, unpredictable and fickle.
- We would inhabit a space empty of certainties, expectations, aspirations and evaluations.

Conclusion:

In a democracy, individuals are governed by institutions, and not by men. If we do not live in an institutional universe, we will be at the mercy of capricious individuals.

The present government has tampered with institutions by appointing its own people to positions of authority, and by using the Enforcement Directorate, Income Tax authorities, the Central Bureau of Investigation and the police as bulldozers to flatten out any site of opposition.

In civil society, human rights organisations have been pulverised by blockage of funds, raids and arrests without proper evidence.

All this testifies the government's subversion of the rule of law. Such development contravenes the spirit of the freedom struggle.

Connecting the dots:

- In a democracy, individuals are governed by institutions, and not by men. Elucidate.
- **Essay:** In a democracy, individuals are governed by institutions, and not by men.

Demise of democracy, Rise of authoritarian tendencies

Context:

- One among the major issues that confront the world today – **'demise of democracy with authoritarian tendencies on the ascendant'.**
- Steady weakening and **undermining of institutional and knowledge structures** pose a threat to the world.

Do you know?

- Russia's Vladimir Putin, China's Xi Jinping and Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan are constantly projected as the faces of authoritarianism, but **many democratic leaders reveal a similar authoritarian streak**, which adds to democracy's woes.
- However, it may be too early to predict the demise of democracy, but the reality is that it is not a good time for democratic institutions, or for those who see democracy as the answer to the world's problems.

Examples everywhere

Several examples exist worldwide on how decisions today are handed down, rather than being the outcome of discussion and debate.

1. Cases of deliberate sabotage of international institutions such as the World Bank
2. Brexit, and the Brexit debate, in the U.K. and Europe is a good example of democracy going away from the usual or expected course
3. The U.S. (leading democracy) is also setting a bad example today. Under President Donald Trump, arbitrary decision-making has replaced informed debate. (US decision to withdraw from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty; Trump's determination to build a wall to keep out Mexican immigrants; pulling out of Paris Climate Change Agreement etc.)

Indian context:

In a pluralistic, multi-party federal system, **ignoring democratic conventions** and the **violation of well-entrenched behavioural patterns** are causing irreversible damage to the polity.

Some recent instances has raised strong questions about the intentions of those in authority –

1. **Rift between government and RBI** and a perceived attempt to reduce its functional independence, to compel it to fall in line with the views of the government.
2. Those in authority deem all information not acceptable to them as nothing but **disinformation**. For example, Central government recently rejecting the unemployment report by the well-regarded National Sample Survey Office without giving any valid reason for doing so. Doubts are also being raised about the validity of the government's revised GDP estimates.
3. Those opposed to the government, on the other hand, insist that the government suffers from a **lack of probity**. (Example – Bitter exchanges over the purchase of Rafale aircraft)
4. **Centre-State relations are under strain** and might face the threat of still greater disruption.

5. Interim Budget in an election year – The Interim Budget announced on the eve of the 2019 general election clearly **breaches certain long-settled conventions**, by including many substantial measures that ordinarily would form part of a regular Budget. The intention is plain, viz. build more support for the ruling dispensation in an election year.
6. Alongside the decline in democratic conventions, another cause for concern is the **virtual collapse of key institutions** such as the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Conclusion:

Adherence to democratic norms is very crucial to maintain the independence of institutions and processes. However, an impression exists today that attempts are being made to effect changes in the existing system. This should be a matter of concern for one and all.

Connecting the dots:

- Examine the significance of maintaining the independence of democratic institutions and processes in a pluralistic, multi-party federal system like India.

Sabarimala Row: Faith versus Equality

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Fundamental Rights; Fundamental Duties; Role of Judiciary

In news:

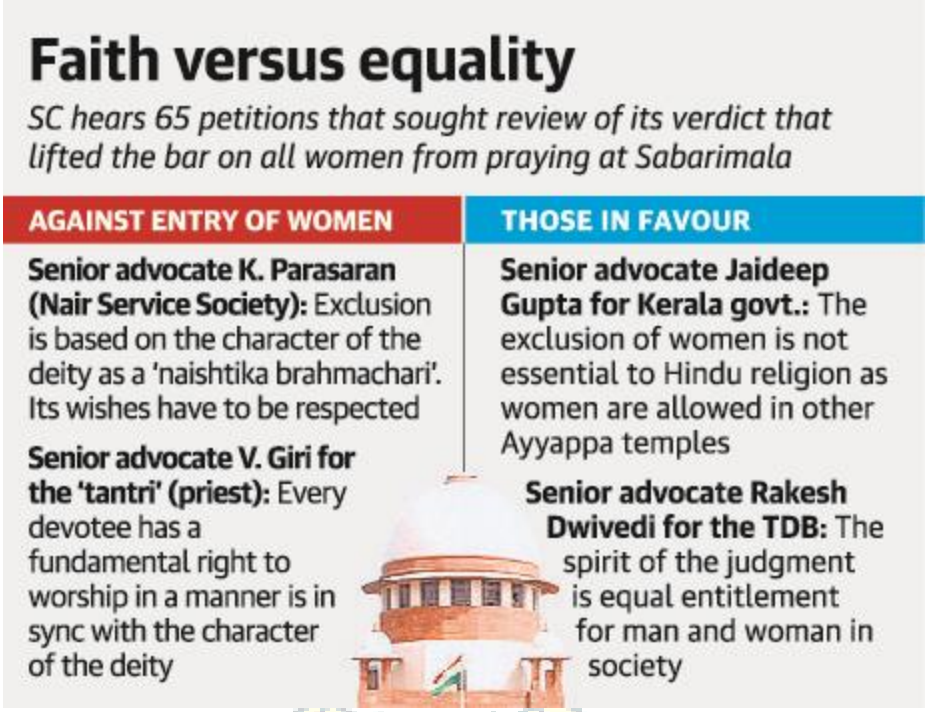
- A total of 65 petitions challenged the authority of the court to intervene in a centuries-old belief that the Sabarimala deity is a **'Naishtika Brahmachari'**, whose penance should not be disturbed by the entry of women worshippers of the menstruating age of 10-50.

Some advocates who fought the odds to enter the temple premises said –

- It was the **fundamental duty of citizens under Article 51A (h)** of the Constitution to **"develop scientific temper, humanism, spirit of enquiry and reform."** That is what the Supreme Court judgment urges citizens to do.
- Restrictions on women based on biological factors is discriminatory and as a result violates **Articles 14 (right to equality)**, **15 (prohibition of discrimination)**, **17 (untouchability)**, and cannot be protected by "morality" based on Articles 25 (freedom to practice and propagation of religion), 26 (Freedom to manage religious affairs).
- Article 25 (1) mandates **freedom of conscience and right to practice religion**. "All persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion…"

However, the Nair Service Society sought a review of the verdict on the ground that the exclusion was not based on gender or sex, but on religious faith in and character of the deity.

The temple's chief priest argued that "every devotee has a fundamental right to worship in a temple in a manner which is in sync with the character of the deity." He further said – "In Hindu religion, God is worshipped in different manifestations...Devotees have to worship in sync with the characteristics of that manifestation to attain salvation."



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Govt. grants divisional status to Ladakh

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Polity, Governance; Centre-State Relations; devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein

In news:

- Jammu and Kashmir Governor **granted Ladakh a divisional status**, thus creating three administrative units of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh in the State.
- There will be a separate administrative and revenue division for Ladakh. It will comprise Leh and Kargil districts, with headquarters at Leh.

- Earlier, Ladakh was a part of the Kashmir division.

Do you know?

- A section in Leh has been demanding Union Territory status.
- **The move leaves the Kashmir valley geographically the smallest division** at 15,948 sq. km, Jammu division at 26,293 sq. km and Ladakh, the biggest division, at 86,909 sq. km.
- Ladakh's Kargil and Leh districts already have separate hill development councils for local administrative powers.
- The Governor's decision has fuelled demands for similar status to Pir Panjal and Chenab Valley regions.

Will Ayushman Bharat hurt the spirit of cooperative federalism?

Context:

We know that –

- Prime Minister had rolled out the centre's flagship Ayushman Bharat
- The scheme includes **National Health Protection Scheme** renamed as Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojna (PMJAY) and Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs).
- The scheme will also subsume two ongoing centrally sponsored health insurance schemes namely **Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojna (RSBY)** and the **Senior Citizen Insurance Scheme (SCHIS)**

About Ayushman Bharat

- It is an **integrated approach** covering primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare through – **access to Health and Wellness centres (HWCs) at the primary healthcare level** and **financial protection for accessing curative care** at the secondary and tertiary levels through PMJAY.
- Ayushman Bharat is assumed to be giant leap towards providing accessible and affordable health care to the common man.
- With PMJAY, the government is taking healthcare protection to a new aspirational level. This would be the world's largest government funded healthcare program targeting more than 50 crore beneficiaries.

Against the spirit of cooperative federalism?

However, some states - West Bengal, Telangana, Delhi and Odisha – have not joined Ayushman Bharat. Therefore, the question arises whether the scheme is hurting the idea of cooperative federalism.

1. Health is State Subject – Since, the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution makes States responsible for hospital services, the States have their own schemes to provide financial risk protection to those seeking medical relief.

The constitution endows upon the state government autonomous powers. They are directly elected by the people of their respective states and are voted to power on certain promises.

2. Entire credit to the current administration – The insistence to prefix Ayushman Bharat to existing State names and the despatch of a personalised letter to 7.5 crore families with only the Prime Minister's photograph were seen as attempts to attribute the entire credit to the current administration, though State governments are equal partners — funding 40% of the scheme, bearing the responsibility of its implementation and covering double the number of beneficiaries.

3. Creating of National Health Authority (NHA) – NHA to provide standardised procedures, costs, build an institutional architecture and access all data for effective monitoring. This **standardisation can stifle innovation** and entail costly structures that **may not accommodate local conditions, preferences, and cost-effective solutions**.

4. Some of the State Schemes are better than Ayushman Bharath – For instance, Punjab's Bhagat Puran Singh Sehat Bima Yojna (BPSSBY) scheme covers 29.3 BPL families whereas Ayushman Bharat covers only 14.96.

Telangana's Arogyashri and Odisha's BSKY is already a step ahead of the Ayushman Bharat Scheme.

Odhisa has a unique PPP project called Affordable Healthcare Project (AHP). Under this project, the state is encouraging private participation not only in providing healthcare but also in building requisite infrastructure by way of providing viability gap funding. The scheme, Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY), is touted to be an improved version of what Ayushman Bharat is. It covers more people with a higher cover.

The AAP government is critical of the scheme because they believe it has been launched without adequate budgetary support or other means of resource mobilization. Moreover there has not been commensurate focus on developing requisite infrastructure to make the scheme of this scale work.

Conclusion:

Providing more funds to the States, subject to achieving certain goals, would have provided more scope to innovate, model the design to fit their context, resource base, epidemiological status, level of development, take total ownership and be accountable for outcomes.

Only when the federal constituents are given freedom to accept or reject proposal by the central government, democracy gets its nutrition and prospers in a sustainable way.

Connecting the dots:

- Will Ayushman Bharat hurt the spirit of cooperative federalism? Critically examine.

Competitive populism

Do you know?

- Competitive populism is a euphemism for providing general population or a segment of population with freebies or huge subsidies to achieve electoral success.

In news:

- Vice-President expressed his displeasure over few schemes announced by the current government.
- **Competitive populism among political parties** and **offers of loan waivers and free power** in the run-up to elections are just temporary solutions that **do not address the need for structural changes** to sustainably develop incomes in the country, Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu said.
- Populist measures may have short-term political gains, but lead to long-term economic problems as they are "unproductive," he said.

Examples of Competitive Populism

- Ahead of poll, T.N. govt. has dished out ₹2,000 to every BPL family and this post-budget announcement to cost the State ₹1,200 cr.
- Last month, the T.N. govt. distributed ₹1,000 as Pongal gift to most ration card-holders, resulting in an outgo of around ₹1,900 crore.

Debate over post retirment jobs for judges

Context:

- Appointments of Judges within a short span of their retirements have raised quite a few eyebrows.
- The below article deals with the debate – ***'Should judges opt for post-retirement jobs or should they not'?***

Why Judges should opt for post-retirement jobs
(Post-retirement jobs: Pros)

- The Constitution does not specifically bar judges from taking up any post-retirement assignment.
- Most of the post-retirement posts are generally constitutional or of quasi-judicial bodies, whose laws more often than not mandate that only retired judges can occupy them.
- Statutes of some tribunals and quasi-judicial bodies mandate the appointment of retired judges.
- Unlike abroad, a judge of the higher judiciary in India retires at a comparatively young age. So he or she is capable of many more years of productive work.
- The valuable experience and insights that competent and honest judges acquire during their service period cannot be wasted after retirement.

Why Judges should not opt for immediate post-retirement jobs?
(Post-retirement jobs: Cons)

- The immediate appointments suggest that decisions regarding their post-retirement assignments had already been taken by the respective governments even during the tenure of the judges. **(Nepotism/Favouritism)**
- It **casts a cloud over judicial decisions** rendered during their tenure. The **sanctity of their judgments** is questioned, irrespective of their merits.
- Pre-retirement judgments are influenced by a desire for a post-retirement job. **(May lead to biased judgments)**
- Judges accepting jobs under the executive certainly **creates situations of conflicts of interest**. It tends to **undermine public faith in judicial independence**.
- **Creates a dent on public confidence** in judicial independence. (**Erosion of credibility of the judiciary** or **erosion of judicial independence**)

Do you know?

- As many as 70 out of 100 Supreme Court retired judges have taken up some or the other assignments.

The way ahead:

- Law Commission has consistently maintained that judges accepting employment under the government after retirement was **undesirable**.
- Many experts have suggested that there should be a **minimum cooling-off period** between retirement and a new assignment to prevent conflict of interest.
- An amendment to the Constitution can be done by incorporating a provision similar to **Articles 148 or 319**.
- A **special law** can also be passed by Parliament prohibiting retired judges from taking up any appointment for two years.

Article 148 (4) - The Comptroller and Auditor General shall not be eligible for further office either under the Government of India or under the Government of any State after he has ceased to hold his office.

Article 319 - the Chairman of the Union Public Service Commission shall be ineligible for further employment either under the Government of India or under the Government of a State

Conclusion:

- The judiciary needs a mechanism to regulate post-retirement government appointments
- The viable option is to expeditiously establish a commission, through a properly enacted statute, made up of a majority, if not exclusively, of retired judges to make appointments of competent retired judges to tribunals and judicial bodies.

Connecting the dots:

- 'Should judges opt for post-retirement jobs or should they not'? Give arguments in favour of your opinion.
- "Not only must Justice be done; it must also be seen to be done." Elucidate.

Article 35A

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Indian Polity; Centre and State Relations; Constitution of India

About:

- Article 35A deals with providing special status to the State and people of Jammu and Kashmir.

- The article empowers the Jammu and Kashmir state's legislature to define "permanent residents" of the state and confer on them special rights and privileges in public sector jobs, acquisition of property in the State, scholarships and other public aid and welfare.
- The provision mandates that no act of the legislature coming under it can be challenged for violating the Constitution or any other law of the land.
- It was added to the constitution through a presidential order of 1954 with the then J&K government's concurrence.
- Article 35A does not allow people from outside the state of Jammu & Kashmir to work, settle or own property in the state.

Why in news?

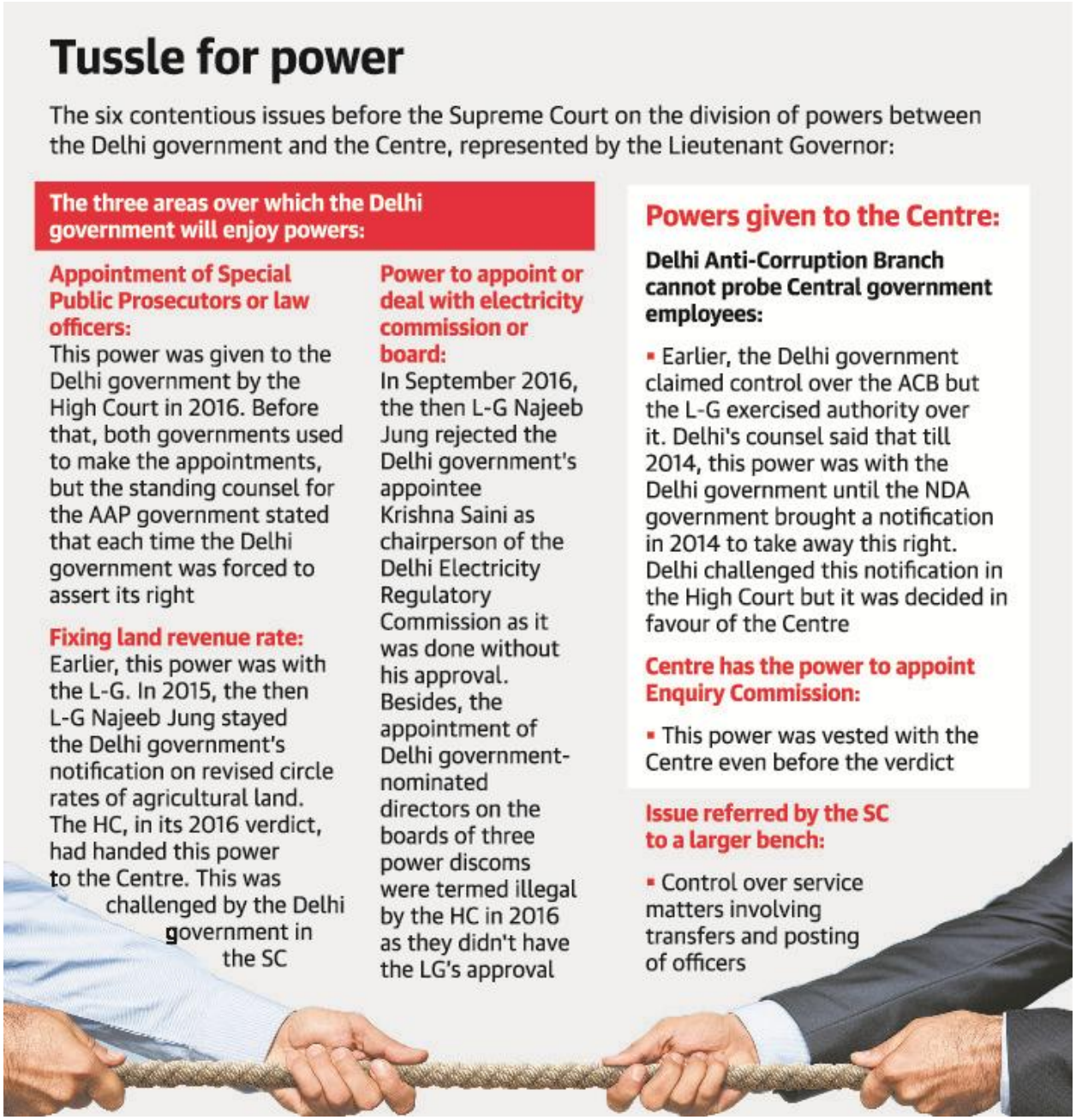
- The Article, which was unknown to the public domain till recent times, has raked up an intense debate in the country when a Kashmiri woman, Charu Wali Khan filed a petition to change the constitutional provision as she wanted succession rights in the state though she is settled outside the state.
-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

Tussle for power: Delhi versus Centre

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains – Indian Polity; Special powers to Delhi; Centre-State/UTs relations

In news:

- Supreme Court verdict said the Centre has exclusive jurisdiction over public services in Delhi.
- In other words, the elected government does not have the right to transfer officers.
- The court also ruled that the anti-corruption bureau will be under the control of the Union government, while other aspects like appointing special public prosecutors, making electricity reforms and revision rates for agricultural land would lie in the hands of the Delhi government.



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Do you know?

- At the core of the tussle between the Union and Delhi governments is **Article 239 AA** of the Constitution, which gives Delhi the special character of a Union Territory with a Legislative Assembly that has a lieutenant governor as its administrative head.
- Last year, a five-judge Constitution bench of the Supreme Court led by Chief Justice Dipak Misra stated that the lieutenant governor's powers in the National Capital were only limited to land, police and public order.

Role of Lt Governor in Union Territories

Context:

- Puducherry Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy, along with his cabinet ministers, had launched an indefinite protest in front of the Lieutenant Governor (L-G) Kiran Bedi office.
- They were protesting against the L-G's dictatorial style of functioning and alleged interference in the running of the government.

Reasons for stand-off:

- The L-G and the CM had been engaged in a war of words for the last two-and-a-half years but the immediate provocation for the agitation appeared to be the decision of the Lt. Governor to "unilaterally" enforce the helmet rule on February 11.
- While the CM believes it can be enforced only after raising awareness, Ms. Bedi wants it implemented immediately.
- In addition, the CM has listed that blocking of 39 welfare schemes of his government, including one for free rice distribution, enhanced scholarship for Scheduled Caste students, besides other administrative matters, as the real issues.

Therefore, the protest brings back focus on the **precarious arrangement of the administration in the Union territories of Puducherry and Delhi**.

The two entities have elected Assemblies and seem to function like state governments. But in reality, these Union territories are administered by the Centre through lieutenant governors, who have veto powers over the elected chief ministers.

The main conflict is the question –

- Whether the L-G is acting within her powers or exceeding her brief in seeking to play a proactive role in the affairs of the Union Territory?
- What purpose do the territory's legislature and executive serve if their decisions can be stalled by the Centre's appointee?

If an Assembly cannot enforce its laws, the very idea of an elected democratic government loses its legitimacy.

L-G Powers:

- Under the Constitution, the territory belongs to the President, who runs it through the L-G as Administrator.

- However, under Section 44 of the Union Territories Act, 1963, the Administrator has to act on the 'aid and advice' of the Council of Ministers.
- Any difference of opinion between them can be referred to the President, and in the meantime the Administrator's action prevails on any urgent matter.

Government of Union Territories Act, 1963 allows the L-G office discretionary powers, but these must be exercised judiciously and only in exceptional circumstances.

This scheme, which gives a clear edge to the Centre, can work only if there is harmony between the Council and the L-G.

Do you know?

- Supreme Court (during the ruling on the limits of the L-G's powers in Delhi) had stressed the **need for the L-G as well as people's representatives to "function in harmony within constitutional parameters"**. The L-G was cautioned against having a hostile attitude towards the Ministers.
- Both Delhi and Puducherry are Union territories with special powers and have elected governments, but certain functions, such as law and order, come under the purview of the L-G and the central government.
- Though the issues in Delhi and Puducherry seem similar, the L-G of the National Capital Territory has more executive powers compared to his counterpart in the southern UT. This is understandable since Delhi is also the home of the Union government.

The way ahead:

- Puducherry has an elected assembly and the task of law making should be entrusted with it. Similarly, public policy and administration must be left to the elected representatives.
- LG should avoid stalling of some of the proposals which were a part of the ruling party's election manifesto and are within the ambit of law.
- The UT Act was legislated more than half a century ago. Much has changed in UTs like Delhi and Puducherry, which have legislative assemblies.
- The office and role of the LG needs to be restructured to recognise the shift in public sentiment towards more democracy. Clearly, there is a need to reimagine the political system in the UTs in favour of the popular government.

Connecting the dots:

- The recent Supreme Court judgement in the Govt of NCT of Delhi v Union of India upholds a basic democratic principle: The responsibility to exercise power on behalf of the people, lies with the elected legislature. Discuss.
- The office and role of the LG needs to be restructured to recognise the shift in public sentiment towards more democracy. Discuss.

- There should be a harmonious functioning between the Lt. Governor and Chief Minister of the Union Territories". Critically Analyze.

Citizenship, triple talaq Bills lapse

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Indian Polity; Centre-State Relations; Citizenship

In news:

- The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019, that had set off a series of violent protests across the northeastern States, lapsed as the government failed to push it through Rajya Sabha.
- Along with the Citizenship Bill, the triple talaq Bill that criminalises instant divorce in a Muslim marriage has also lapsed.

Do you know?

- There have been widespread protests against the Citizenship Bill that proposed to grant citizenship to six religious minorities — Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians and Buddhists — from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, who came to India before December 31, 2014.
- The Bill was seen as violating the terms of the 1985 Assam Accord that had set March 24, 1971 as the cut-off for granting citizenship.

Why Section 66A is frequently violated?

Context:

- In 2015, the Supreme Court struck down Section 66A of the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000, as unconstitutional. (Shreya Singhal v. Union of India)
- But none of this stopped the police from arresting and detaining people for allegedly committing a crime under Section 66A
- Critics argue that there is no point of that landmark decision if the police still jail persons under unconstitutional laws?

Do you know?

- **Just mere declarations of unconstitutionality do not wipe out a provision from the statute book**. Therefore steps need to be taken to ensure people know the provision is no longer valid.
- In addition, **there are no systems in place to ensure that the news of judicial decisions reached all corners** of the state machinery. The news of a penal provision being struck down by the SC has not reached many police stations.
- There are many media reports on the **continued application of Section 66A** and how oft-maligned police are abusing their power. From police stations, to trial courts, and all the way up to the High Courts, Section 66A is still prevailing throughout the legal system.

Reasons: Why there are instances of continued application of unconstitutional penal laws (such as Section 66A)?

1. **Signal failures between different branches of government:** Primary reason for poor enforcement of judicial declarations of unconstitutionality is signal failures between different branches of government.
2. **Lack of effective monitoring mechanism:** Supreme Court performs monitoring function while a litigation is pending but it cannot do so after finally deciding a case, even after directions for compliance are issued. Instead, it needs help from the legislature and executive to ensure its final decisions are enforced.
3. **Active non-compliance to the Court's verdict:** As can be witnessed in Section 66A case, verdict on Fire-crackers etc, Speedy disposal of pending cases against legislators and lawmakers (former and sitting), etc.
4. **Lack of formal system on information sharing:** There is no formal system on information sharing in the hierarchical set-up of the Indian judiciary.

The way ahead:

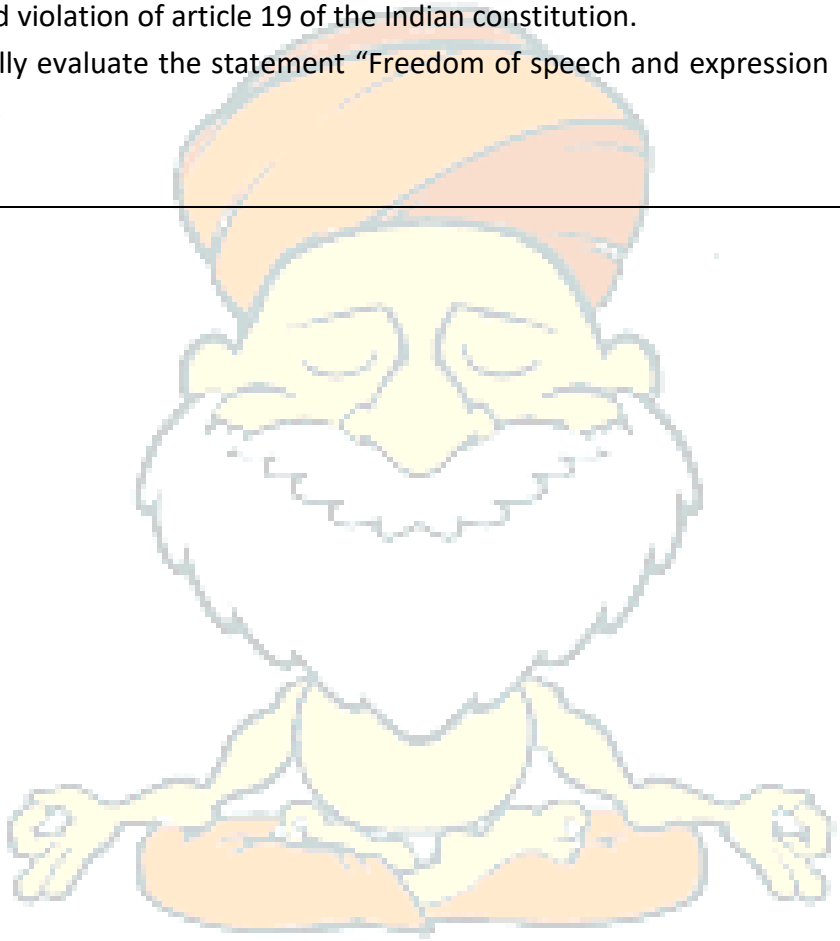
1. **Effective information sharing mechanism:** For any bureaucratic structure to survive, it needs working communication channels for sharing information.
2. **Effective Top Down approach:** The probability of decisions taken at the highest echelons of a system being faithfully applied at the lowest rungs greatly depends on how efficiently word gets to the ground.
3. **Remove the provision declared unconstitutional:** Unless Parliament amends a statute to remove the provision declared unconstitutional, that provision continues to remain on the statute book.
4. **Notifications and circulars:** Notifications and circulars should be issued by relevant Ministries, to share information about judgments declaring a provision unconstitutional.

Conclusion:

- There is a pressing need to move from a system where communication about judicial decisions is at the mercy of initiatives by scrupulous officers.
- Enforcing unconstitutional laws is sheer wastage of public money.
- Until this basic flaw within is addressed, certain persons will remain exposed to denial of their right to life and personal liberty in the worst possible way imaginable.

Connecting the dots:

- Discuss Section 66A of the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000, with reference to its alleged violation of article 19 of the Indian constitution.
- Critically evaluate the statement "Freedom of speech and expression is not absolute in India".



SOCIAL ISSUE/WELFARE

Centre's crackdown hits Greenpeace

In news:

- Greenpeace has been forced to close two of its regional offices and "considerably" reduce its staff in India because of a **government crackdown on allegedly unlawful foreign funding of NGOs**.
- The organisation has been campaigning on environmental issues in India for nearly two decades.

Do you know?

- Greenpeace India had its foreign funding blocked in 2015 as part of a nationwide crackdown on charities.

Rohingya issue and India's moral obligation

Introduction:

- The UN had expressed its concern over India sending back Rohingya refugees to Myanmar without the world body's refugee agency ascertaining if they are voluntarily returning.
- In January, the **UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** called for a report from India on the deportation of a group of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar in October 2018.
- It has sought clarification from India on the circumstances under which the asylum seekers were sent back.

According to the UN –

- Conditions are not safe for the Rohingyas to return home.
- India's repatriation of the refugees contravenes international principles on refugee law as well as domestic constitutional rights.
- Attacks on the Rohingyas that led to their fleeing Myanmar is a case of "ethnic cleansing".

Do you know?

- There are an estimated 18,000 Rohingya refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR in India, living across different locations.
- However, around 40,000 Rohingya refugees are believed to be in India.
- According to **1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees** and **1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees**, "no contracting State shall expel or return a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion." (**PRINCIPLE OF NON-REFOULEMENT**)
- Refugee law is a part of international human rights law.

Indian context:

- It is often argued that since India is not a party to both 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, the principle of non-refoulement is not binding on India.
- However, the prohibition of non-refoulement of refugees constitutes a norm of customary international law, which binds even non-parties to the Convention.
- India lacks a specific legislation to address the problem of refugees, in spite of their increasing inflow.
- The **Foreigners Act, 1946**, fails to address the peculiar problems faced by refugees as a class. It also gives unbridled power to the Central government to deport any foreign citizen.
- **Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights** provides that everyone has the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.
- **Article 51 of the Constitution** imposes an obligation on the state to endeavour to promote international peace and security.
- **Article 51(c)** talks about promotion of respect for international law and treaty obligations.
- Therefore, the Constitution conceives of incorporation of international law into the domestic realm.
- **Fundamental rights** - While all rights are available to citizens, persons including foreign citizens are entitled to the **right to equality** and the **right to life**, among others.

Conclusion:

Thus the argument that the nation has not violated international obligations during the deportation is a mistaken one.

The Rohingya refugees, while under the jurisdiction of the national government, cannot be deprived of the right to life and personal liberty.

The deportation of refugees by India is not only unlawful but breaches a significant moral obligation.

Connecting the dots:

- "Refugee crisis is more of a global security concern than humanitarian crisis". Comment.
- India's reticence on the Rohingya crisis undermines its democracy and global standing. Do you agree? Critically analyse.

Illegal migrants in Assam

Part of: GS Mains II – Welfare/Social issue

In news:

- SC expressed concern over thousands of illegal migrants being kept in detention centres for years in Assam without being repatriated or deported to their countries of origin.
- The Centre assured the court that it would hold consultations with the State on a scheme to expedite deportation or repatriation of illegal foreigners.

Do you know?

- Illegal migrants are convicted under the Foreigners Act, 1946.
- The **Foreigners Act, 1946** is an Act of the Central Legislative Assembly enacted to grant the certain powers to Indian government in matters of foreigners in India. The Act was enacted before India became independent.

Gujjar stir for reservation

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Social/welfare issue; Reservation issue; Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

In news:

- The Gujjar community's agitation in Rajasthan for 5% reservation in government jobs and education has created unrest in the state.
- The Gujjars were demanding a lower scheduled tribe status, instead of their current OBC (Other Backward Class) status. As government refused to yield, they started to agitate.

- Quota based reservations were introduced to bring about a change to those communities or caste who were deprived of growth opportunities. (especially SCs/STs)
- However, over the years, more and more castes have started demanding reservation, leading to violence and agitations.
- Examples – Gujjar Agitation; Jat Agitation; Patidar agitation

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'Only 84% rural households have electricity in four States'

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II and III – Government schemes and programmes; Infrastructure/Energy

In news:

According to a comprehensive private sector survey of 10,000 households –

- **Only 84% of rural households have electricity connection** in the four States of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha and Rajasthan.
- Only 75% of all households used electricity from the grid. In other words, several households that relied on off-grid sources of electricity despite having a connection.

The findings of the Survey is in **contrast to the government's Saubhagya Scheme data**, which shows that 100% household electrification has been achieved in U.P., Bihar and Odisha; and 99.9% in Rajasthan.

Do you know: about Saubhagya Scheme?

- PM launched Rs. 16320 crore **scheme to supply electricity to all households by December 2018**, providing free connection to poor and at low cost to others.
- The **PM Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana** named **SAUBHAGYA** aims to improve environment, public health and education and connectivity with help of last mile power connections across India.

Lakhs of forest dwellers face eviction

Part of: GS Mains II and III – Social/Welfare issue; Tribal issue; Environment and Biodiversity conservation

In news:

- A recent Supreme Court order may lead to the eviction of lakhs of persons belonging to the Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs) categories across 21 States.
- Their claim as forest dwellers have been rejected under the **Forest Rights Act of 2006**.

Do you know?

- Section 6 of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act of 2006 shows a **multi-layered and hierarchical procedure for recognition or rejection of forest-dweller** claims starting at the gram sabha level with multiple appellate committees at the State level.
- The Act is intended to provide a framework to "recognise and vest the forest rights and occupation in forest land in forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers who have been residing in such forests for generations but whose rights could not be recorded."

Analysis: Supreme Court order on the eviction of forest dwellers

Context:

- In previous Daily News Analysis - Lakhs of forest dwellers face eviction, we read about Supreme Court order on the eviction of forest dwellers.
- The court directed various state governments to initiate the process of eviction of Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs) from forestland.
- The SC order raise the questions on the responsibility of the apex court in upholding constitutional claims and equal citizenship as this order negates the claims of citizen under special protection of the Constitution.

Do you know?

- The SC order was issued in the case of **Wildlife First & Ors v. Ministry of Forest and Environment & Ors.**
- The **Forest Rights Act 2006** recognizes the rights of forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes (STs) and other traditional forest-dwellers.

Concerns:

Rejection of claims without proper reasons or wrong interpretation:

- According to the 2014 report of the High-Level Committee on Socio-Economic, Health and Educational Status of Tribal Communities in India or **Xaxa Committee**, "**claims are being rejected without assigning reasons, or based on wrong interpretation** of the

'OTFD' definition and the 'dependence' clause, or simply for lack of evidence or 'absence of GPS survey' or because the land is wrongly considered as 'not forest land', or because only forest offence receipts are considered as adequate evidence.

- The **rejections are not being communicated to the claimants**, and their right to appeal is not being explained to them nor its exercise facilitated.
- The mere rejection of claims by the state therefore does not add up to a finding of the crime of "encroachment", the sheer volume of rejections should instead set alarm bells ringing in the court of procedural improprieties.

Against the Constitution:

- According to Xaxa Committee, 60% of the forest area in the country is in tribal areas and are protected by Article 19(5), Schedules V and VI of the Constitution.
- Importantly, the area marked for eviction falls under areas designated under Schedule V and Schedule VI of the Constitution and there is no reference to the implications for governance in the Scheduled Areas and whether the Supreme Court, in fact, has the authority to order evictions of Scheduled Tribes from Scheduled Areas.
- It raise questions, is it not the supreme obligation of the Supreme Court to protect the Scheduled Tribes and other vulnerable communities from the grave harms of violent dispossession?

Against the spirit of Landmark 1997 Samata Judgement:

- The Supreme Court had delivered an authoritative verdict in favour of the right to livelihood of the tribals inhabiting the scheduled areas of the country.
- It had ruled that the tribal land, and forest land in scheduled areas could not be leased to non-tribals or private companies for mining or industrial operations otherwise it would completely destroy the legal and constitutional fabric made to protect the tribal communities. Such activities can only be done by tribal people or by a government undertaking.

Conclusion:

- In the recent judgments of the apex court on the right to privacy and Section 377, the court has given importance to autonomy, liberty, dignity, fraternity and constitutional morality as the pillars of transformative constitutionalism.
- It is the same court in the same era that has now ordered the dispossession of entire communities protected under the Constitution.
- According to historian and human rights activist Ramchandra Guha, India's tribal populations had, over decades, lost their homes to dams, mines and factories.
- And now a Supreme Court-mandated eviction from their forests had once again proved how "totally vulnerable" these ancient jungle people remain.

Connecting the dots:

- Critically analyze the recent Supreme Court order directed various state governments to initiate the process of eviction of Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs) from forestland.

Supreme Court suspends order evicting forest dwellers

Context:

- The recent Supreme Court judgment on the eviction of forest dwellers (especially STs and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers) had evoked much ire and anxiety.
- The apex court's order would displace more than a million people from their homes in the forests.
- Many had raised the questions on the responsibility of the apex court in upholding constitutional claims and equal citizenship as this order negates the claims of citizen under special protection of the Constitution.
- The Centre and the Gujarat government had moved petitions in the Supreme Court seeking a stay on its order.

Do you know?

- The Parliament had passed the Forest Rights Act in 2006. This law gave back to traditional forest dwellers their rights to access, manage and govern forest lands and resources within village boundaries, which had been controlled by the forest department since colonial times.
- The law made the gram sabha the statutory body for managing forestlands, and protecting them. It provides that no activity should be carried out in these forests until individual and community claims over them have been settled.
- A 2014 report of a high-level committee on socio-economic, health and educational status of tribal communities in India (Virginius Xaxa Committee) noted that – "Gram sabhas were rejecting claims of forest-dwellers without assigning reasons".
- The report had pointed out that the rejections are not being communicated to the claimants, and their right to appeal is not being explained to them nor its exercise facilitated.

Global outlook

According to the Centre's application before the Supreme Court, the scheme of the Forest Rights Act, 2006, is in tune with several international covenants

1 UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights
Recognises the equal rights of the human family. **India is a signatory**

2 UN Convention Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Populations
Seeks to protect ownership rights of populations over lands they traditionally occupy. **Ratified by India**

3 UN Declaration on Rights of Indigenous People
Mandates to protect the rights of indigenous people to lands, territories and resources which they traditionally own, occupy and use. **India is a signatory**

4 UN Convention on Biological Diversity
Advocates preservation of indigenous knowledge and practices. **India is a party**

5 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development
Proclaims indigenous people have a vital role in environmental management

Now in news:

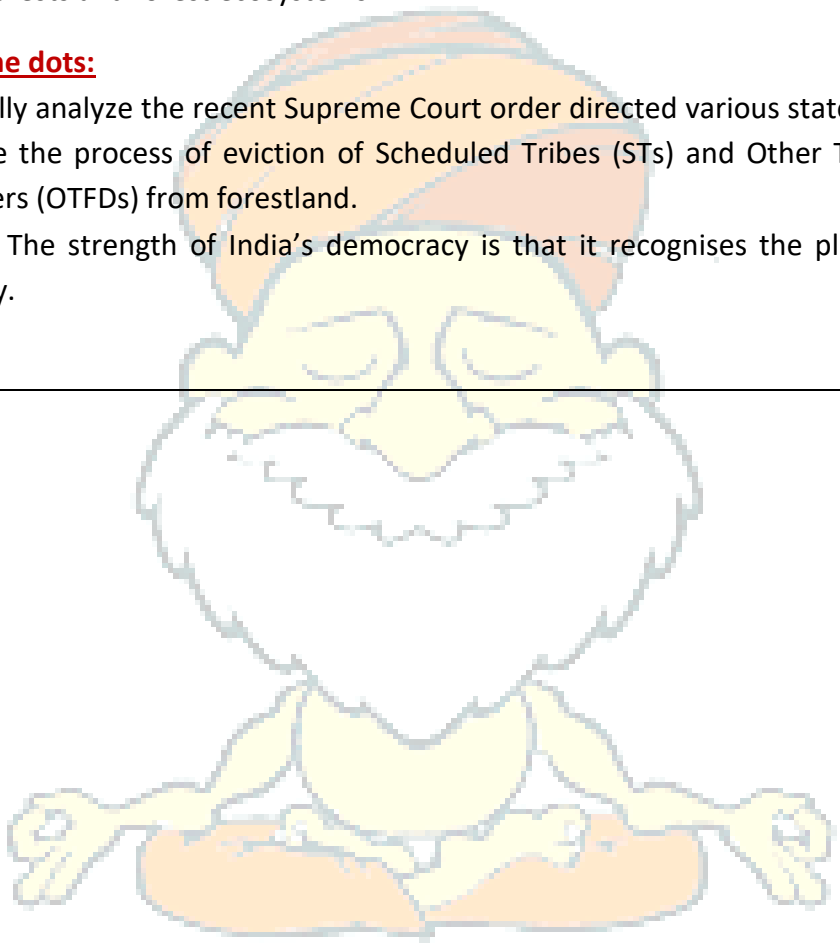
- Supreme Court put on hold its recent order asking states to evict forest-dwellers whose claims on land had been rejected under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006. The court's decision to review its earlier verdict is welcome.
- The apex court acknowledged the need to ask whether due processes were followed by gram sabhas and state authorities before the claims for forest rights were rejected.
- State governments must now take the cue and ensure that due processes are followed in deciding — or rejecting — FRA claims.
- The forest land claims of these tribes and forest dwellers, who live off the forest, are mostly rejected by the States. Being poor and illiterate people who live in remote areas,

they do not know the appropriate procedure for filing claims, the government submitted.

- The gram sabhas, which initiate the verification of their claims, are low on awareness about how to deal with these claims and rejection orders are not even communicated to the forest-dwelling STs and communities.
- There is a need for awareness and sensitisation of field staff about the symbiotic relationship of forest dwelling scheduled tribes and other traditional forest dwellers with forests and forest ecosystems.

Connecting the dots:

- Critically analyze the recent Supreme Court order directed various state governments to initiate the process of eviction of Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs) from forestland.
- Essay: The strength of India's democracy is that it recognises the pluralism of Indian society.

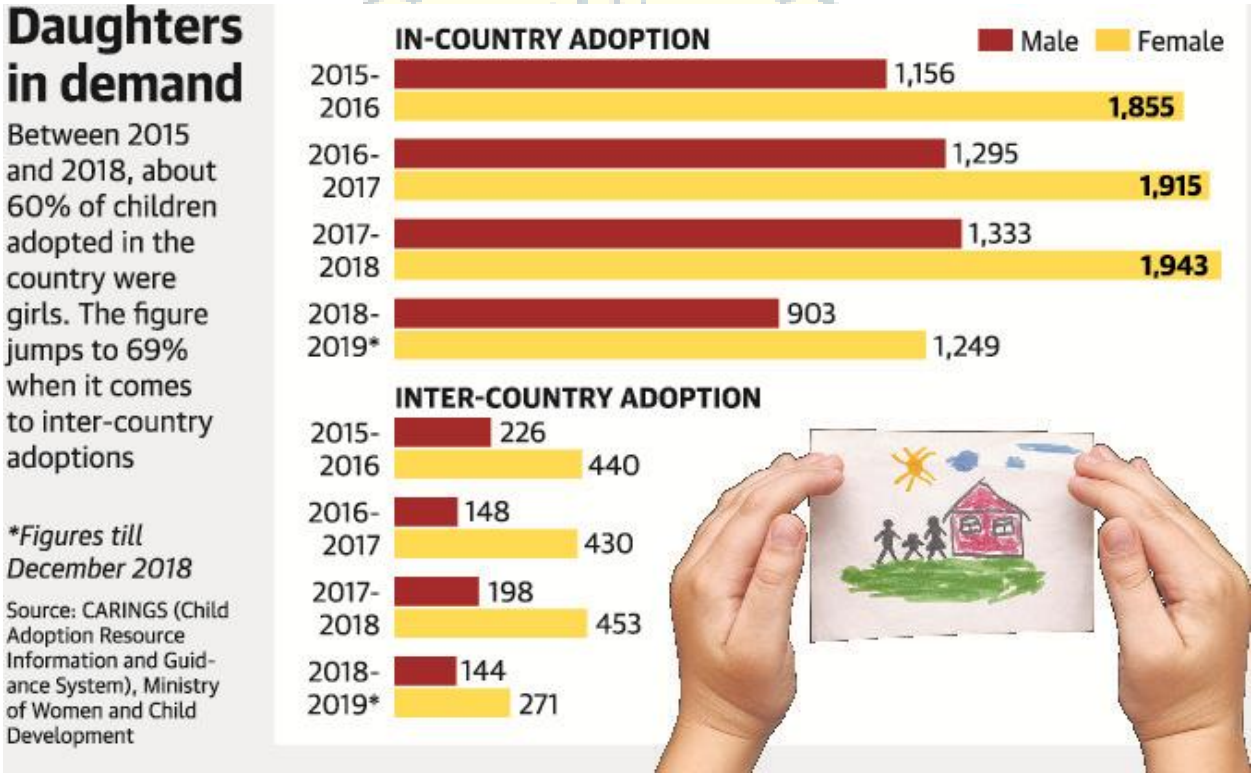


WOMEN ISSUE/CHILDREN ISSUE

60% children adopted in India between 2015 and 2018 are girls

In news:

- Data from the Ministry of Women and Child Development show that of the 11,649 children adopted, 6,962 were girls and 4,687 boys.
- Female child happens to be the first choice when it comes to adoption.
- The number of female children placed for in-country adoptions and inter-country adoptions between 2015 and 2018 are relatively higher than male children.
- All the figures put together, female children comprise almost 60% of all in-country adoptions. When it came to inter-country adoptions, the number of female children was even higher: 69%.



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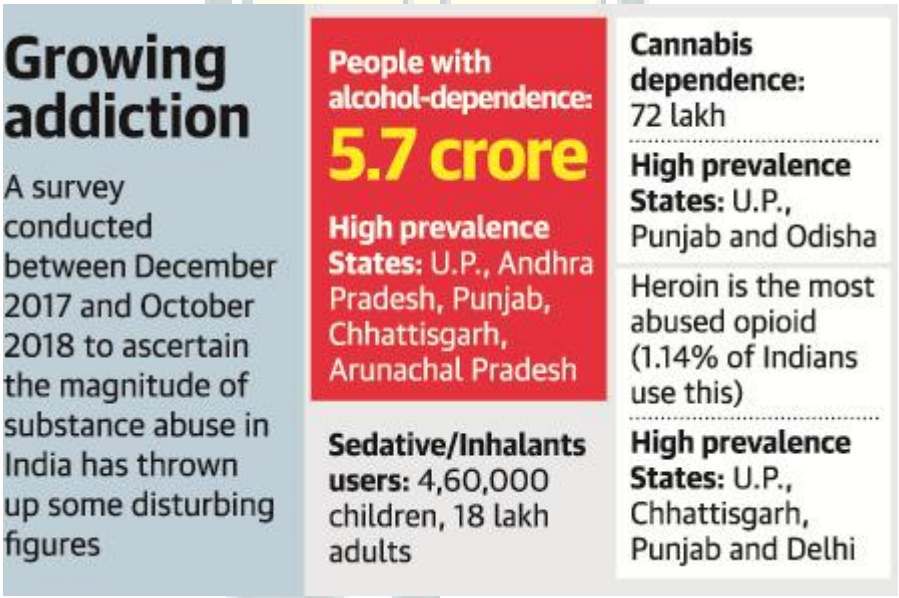
Drug menace in India

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Health issue; Welfare/Social issue; Children issue

In news:

According to a survey conducted by the National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre, AIIMS, Delhi –

- 5.7 crore people suffer from alcohol dependence in India
- More than 4 lakh children and 18 lakh adults are inhalant addicts
- Of the 16 crore people who consumed alcohol across the country, prevalence of alcohol consumption was 17 times higher among men than among women.
- About 3.1 crore individuals consumed cannabis
- The most common opioid used was heroin. The current use of heroin was 1.14%, followed by pharmaceutical opioids (0.96%) and opium (0.52%). The abuse was found most prevalent in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana.



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The survey ascertains the magnitude of substance abuse in the country.

The Ministry for Social Justice and Empowerment maintained that a national guideline would be formulated after detailed consultation with all stakeholders to counter the drug menace in the country.

Do you know?

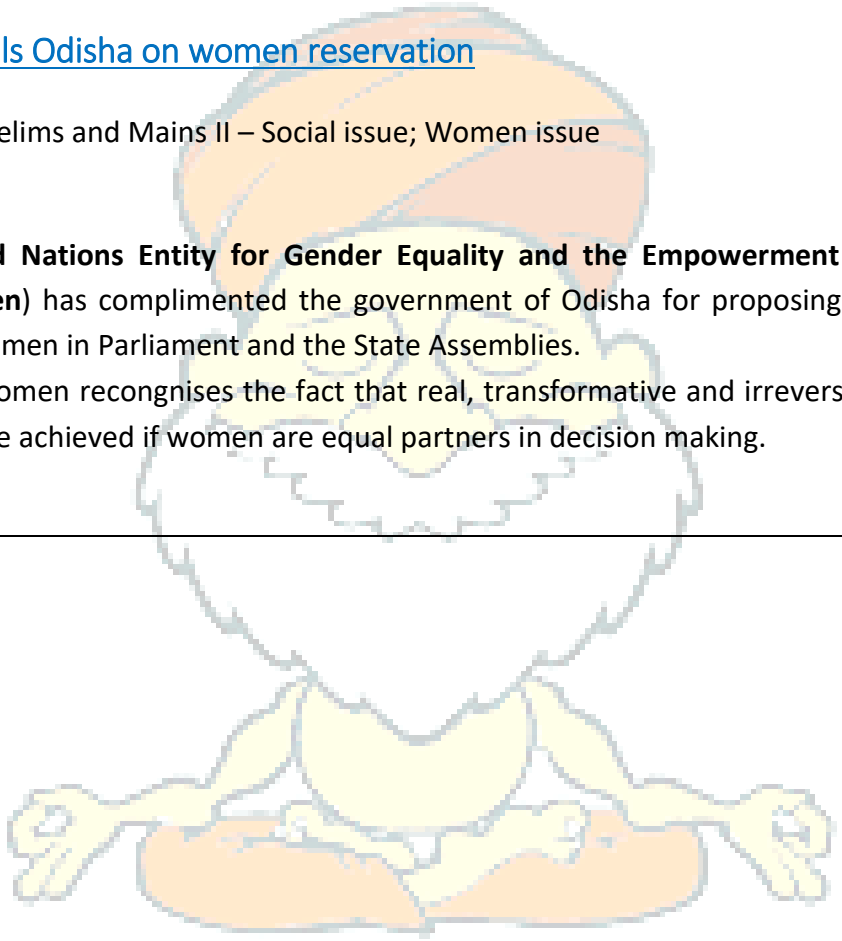
- Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has introduced **Scheme of Assistance for Prevention of Alcoholism and Substance (Drugs) Abuse**.
- The scheme seeks to benefit victims of alcohol and substance abuse.
- Under the scheme, non-governmental organisations have been entrusted with the
- responsibility for delivery of services and the Ministry bears substantial financial responsibility (90% of the prescribed grant amount).

UN body hails Odisha on women reservation

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

In news:

- **United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women** (**UN Women**) has complimented the government of Odisha for proposing 33% reservation for women in Parliament and the State Assemblies.
- UN Women recognises the fact that real, transformative and irreversible progress can only be achieved if women are equal partners in decision making.



HEALTH ISSUE

Endosulfan agitation ends

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

In news:

- Victims of endosulfan poisoning in Kerala ended their five-day long indefinite hunger strike.
- They have been fighting a long and frustrating battle demanding financial aid, adequate rehabilitation packages and healthcare facilities.
- Environmental activists call it the biggest pesticide tragedy in India.

Why the agitation?

- People living in more than 20 gram panchayats in Kasargod district were exposed to the insecticide endosulfan – a highly potent neurotoxin – between 1975 and 2000, when the public sector Plantation Corporation of Kerala sprayed the chemical aerially on its 12,000-acre cashew estates.
- Its residues spread far and wide via wind and rain, leaving a trail of destruction in the district and neighbouring regions of Karnataka, killing more than 1,000 people. It poisoned more than 6,000 people.
- Thousands of children were born with congenital disabilities, hydrocephalus, diseases of the nervous system, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, and severe physical and mental disabilities.
- The Plantation Corporation of Kerala stopped spraying endosulfan in 2001, but its impact is still being felt in Kasargod – babies continue to be born with genetic disorders and physical deformities.
- Victims have been fighting a long and frustrating battle demanding financial aid, adequate rehabilitation packages and healthcare facilities.

Do you know?

- Endosulfan is an off-patent organochlorine insecticide and acaricide that is being phased out globally.
- Endosulfan became a highly controversial agrichemical due to its acute toxicity, potential for bioaccumulation, and role as an endocrine disruptor.
- Because of its threats to human health and the environment, a global ban on the manufacture and use of endosulfan was negotiated under the Stockholm Convention in April 2011.

Endosulfan pesticide was used widely on crops like cashew, cotton, tea, paddy, fruits and others until 2011, when the Supreme Court banned its production and distribution.

The health effects of the chemical include neurotoxicity, late sexual maturity, physical deformities, poisoning, among others. People, especially newborns, have suffered deformaties, health complications and loss of family members due to exposure to the agrochemical.

67% cancer patients in SE Asia die before 70: WHO

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Health issue

Key facts:

According to WHO –

- In 2018, 18.1 million new cases of cancer developed worldwide.
- 9.6 million people died from the disease in 2018
- 70% of the deaths occurred in low and middle-income countries
- 67% cancer patients in SE Asia die before 70
- In 2017, just 30% of low-income countries reported having cancer treatment services available.
- One woman dies of cervical cancer every eight minutes in India.
- For every two women newly diagnosed with breast cancer, one woman dies of it in India

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India needs a leap in healthcare spending

Concerns in Health Sector:

Poor public health spending

- Government aims to increase public health spending to **2.5% of GDP**. However, current health spending is only **1.15-1.5% of GDP**.
- To reach its target, the government should **increase funding for health by 20-25% every year** for the next five years or more.

Poor allocation in Interim Budget

- The recent **Interim Budget failed** to adequately respond to the needs of the health sector.

- The total allocation to healthcare is ₹61,398 crore (an increase of ₹7,000 crore from the previous Budget). However, there is **no net increase** since the total amount is 2.2% of the Budget, the same as the previous Budget.
- The increase roughly equates the ₹6,400 crore allocated for implementation of the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY).

Per capita spending on health

- Public per capita expenditure on health increased from ₹621 in 2009-10 to ₹1,112 in 2015-16.
- Per capita spending on health for 2018 is approx. ₹1,500.
- Despite the doubling of per capita expenditure on health over six years, the public spending figure is still abysmal.

Comparison between two large democracies

- U.S.'s health expenditure is 18% of GDP, while India's is still under 1.5%.
- In U.S. allocation for healthcare is 23.5% of the Budget. Per capita spending on health in the Budget is $3,150.
- In India, allocation for healthcare is merely 2.2% of the Budget. Per capita spending on health in the Budget in India is approx $30.
- $4,000-$5,000 per capita spending in OECD countries.
- Per capita Budget expenditure on health in India is among the lowest in the world. This requires immediate attention.

High out-of-pocket expenditure

- Out-of-pocket expenditure in India is at a massive 67%.
- The ₹6,400 crore allocation to Ayushman Bharat-PMJAY in the Interim Budget will help reduce out-of-pocket expenditure on health.

The way ahead:

- Increase the public health spending **by 20-25% every year** for the next five years or more.
- Increase the per capita Budget expenditure on health.
- Set up more health and wellness centres
- Health and wellness centres should focus not only on **preventive health, screening, and community-based management** of basic health problems. It should also include **health education** and holistic wellness **integrating modern medicine with traditional** Indian medicine.
- Policies should focus on long-term commitment and resource allocation.

- NITI Aayog has proposed higher taxes on tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy food in order to revamp the public and preventive health system.
- A focused approach in adding tax on tobacco and alcohol, to fund non-communicable disease prevention strategies at health and wellness centres, should be considered.

Do you know?

- ₹250 crore has been allocated for setting up health and wellness centres under the National Urban Health Mission. Under the National Rural Health Mission, ₹1,350 crore has been allocated for the same.
- Nearly 1.5 lakh health and wellness centres would be set up under Ayushman Bharat.
- The non-communicable diseases programme of the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Strokehas been allocated ₹175 crore, from ₹275 crore.
- Allocation to the National Tobacco Control Programme and Drug De-addiction Programme is only ₹65 crore, a decrease of ₹2 crore.

Conclusion:

Increase of GDP alone does not guarantee health, since there is no direct correlation between GDP and health outcomes.

However, improvement in health does relate positively to GDP, since a healthy workforce contributes to productivity.

PMJAY must be linked to quality and health sector must be made a priority area, like defence.

Only if we invest more for the long-term health of the nation will there be a similar rise in GDP.

Connecting the dots:

- Can increase in scope of private financing to fund public health care be a rational option? Evaluate.
- What do you understand by universal health coverage? Explain the measures taken by the government to achieve universal health coverage in India.

E-cigarettes or Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems

In news:

- E-cigarettes, which dispense nicotine by heating a liquid, are a controversial subject.

- Even though their aerosols are thought to contain fewer carcinogens than cigarette smoke, experts are divided about their safety.
- India's Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare favours a ban, and has advised all States to clamp down on the sales and manufacture of these products.

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Do you know?

- The evidence so far indicates that e-cigarettes are safer than combustible cigarettes.
- Because they heat a liquid to generate a nicotine-containing aerosol, instead of burning tobacco, they do not produce toxic tars.
- However, that doesn't mean they are completely safe.
- At high temperatures, e-cigarettes produce carcinogens such as formaldehyde, although these are fewer in number compared to regular cigarettes. They also increase the odds of lung disease and myocardial infarction, but to a lesser extent than normal cigarettes do.

India to eliminate TB by 2025

Part of: Mains GS Paper II- Government interventions; Role of NGOs; Health issue

Key pointers:

- Prime Minister had said **India will fully eliminate tuberculosis by 2025**, a good five years ahead of the global deadline of 2030.

- The **Delhi End TB Summit** was organised by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare jointly with the WHO's South-East Asia Region Office and international coalition Stop TB Partnership.
- India is also implementing the **National Strategic Plan for TB elimination** that is backed by Rs. 12,000 crore in funding for the next three years to ensure every TB patient in the country has access to quality diagnosis, treatment and support.
- The new strategic plan adopts a multi-pronged approach which aims to detect all TB patients, with an emphasis on reaching patients seeking care from private providers and undiagnosed cases in high-risk populations.

In news:

- NGOs working to eliminate tuberculosis have urged the government to ensure that the **National Strategic Plan for 2017-2025** is **fully funded and effectively implemented** to eliminate tuberculosis.
- Several NGOs and stakeholders, including TB survivors, have urged the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, and donor countries to invest substantially in communities to create a person-centred, rights-based and gender-sensitive response to TB.

Examples of some NGOs –

- TB Mukt Vahini-Bihar
- Stop TB Partnership, Geneva
- Global Coalition of TB Activists; Rainbow TB Forum, Tamil Nadu
- Journalists against TB, Bengaluru

Medical devices to be treated as drugs

In news:

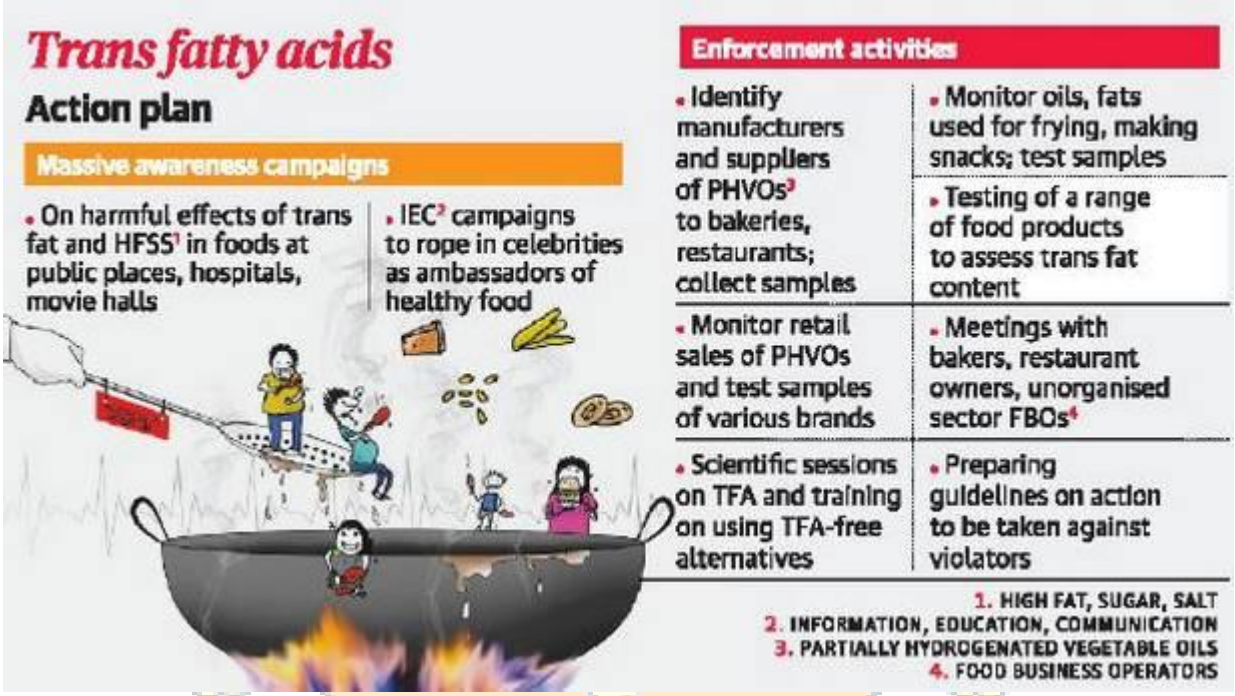
- Centre in a notification said that medical devices — all implantable devices, CT Scan, PET and MRI equipment, defibrillators, dialysis machines and bone marrow separators — will be treated as drugs for human beings with effect from April 1, 2020.
- Majority of medical devices are completely unregulated in India. With this move, all implantable devices and some diagnostic equipment will be brought into the regulatory framework.
- Also bringing medical devices into the regulatory framework is important from a patient safety perspective.

Kerala takes the lead in the fight against trans fat

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

In news:

- Kerala Health Department has drawn up an action plan to generate public awareness on the **harmful effects of trans fatty acids (TFA)** in commercially available food items.
- The action plan will also encourage the local food industry to meet the current statutory limits set for TFA and keep their food TFA-free.
- **Salt being a major contributor to hypertension and stroke**, the action plan also plans to address the high salt content in processed foods, pickles, papads and condiments by encouraging manufacturers to move to low sodium options.



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Do you know?

- Various studies suggest that **an unhealthy diet with a high TFA content** is a significant factor that pushes up metabolic syndrome and the burden of its associated complications.

Action plan for free treatment of hepatitis patients launched

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

In news:

- Patients infected with hepatitis B and C virus will soon be able to avail free treatment.
- Model treatment centres in Maharashtra will roll out free treatment for hepatitis C and B.

About the Action Plan

- According to the action plan, **one model hepatitis treatment centre will be established in each State** in a government institution in the first year.
- While the number of model centres will be increased gradually, by the end of the second year, efforts will be made to establish one such centre at district level.
- **Setting up a national reference laboratory** and State-level reference laboratories is also under planning.

Do you know?

- Viral hepatitis is a global public health problem that kills nearly 2.72 lakh people annually.
- It is an inflammatory condition of the liver caused by five known hepatitis viruses — A, B, C, D and E. Of these, B and C are known to cause 96% mortality.
- The comprehensive action plan will focus on curbing mother-to-child transmission by improving the coverage of hepatitis B injection given at birth.
- While hepatitis B requires life-long treatment which costs around ₹2,500 per month, hepatitis C requires a 84-day long course costing nearly ₹40,000.

Important value additions:

- Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver. The condition can be self-limiting or can progress to fibrosis (scarring), cirrhosis or liver cancer.
- Hepatitis viruses are the most common cause of hepatitis in the world but other infections, toxic substances (e.g. alcohol, certain drugs), and autoimmune diseases can also cause hepatitis.
- There are 5 main hepatitis viruses, referred to as types A, B, C, D and E.
- World Hepatitis Day (28th July) which is celebrated every year, is an opportunity to step up national/international efforts for raising awareness as well as encouraging prevention, diagnosis and treatment of viral hepatitis at global level so as to achieve its elimination by 2030.

National Programme for Control of Viral Hepatitis

- From the 2018-19 financial year, for which a budget of Rs 600 crore for the next three years has been approved.
- With the focus on Hepatitis C, an anti-viral treatment will be provided free at all government health set-ups.
- Sofosbuvir is recommended under the new WHO treatment guidelines for Hepatitis C.

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42 cancer drugs brought under price control

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II - Health issue; Government polciies and schemes

In news:

- The government has brought 42 non-scheduled anti-cancer drugs under price control, capping trade margin at 30%, which would reduce their retail prices by up to 85%.
- The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) has invoked extraordinary powers in public interest, under Para 19 of the Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 2013 to bring 42 non-scheduled anti-cancer drugs under price control.
- As per data available with NPPA, the MRP for 105 brands will be reduced up to 85%, entailing minimum savings of ₹105 crore to consumers.
- Currently, 57 anti-cancer drugs are under price control as scheduled formulations.
- Now, 42 non-scheduled anti-cancer medicines have been selected for price regulation by restricting trade margin on the selling price (MRP) up to 30%, the notification said.

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) Scheme

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Social/Welfare issue; Government schemes and policies

In news:

- PM-KISAN Scheme aims to extend direct income support at the rate of Rs. 6,000 per year to farmer families, having cultivable land upto 2 hectares.
- This income support will be transferred directly into the bank accounts of beneficiary farmers, in three equal instalments of Rs. 2,000 each.
- Around 12 Crore small and marginal farmer families are expected to benefit.
- This programme will be funded by Government of India.
- This programme will entail an annual expenditure of Rs.75,000 crore.
- PM-KISAN would pave the way for the farmers to earn and live a respectable living.

Millet Village Scheme

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II and III – Government schemes and programmes; Agriculture

In news:

- The **Project "Millet Village"** was started in year 2017-18 in **Attapady, Kerala**.
- The project is **intended for rejuvenating the traditional tribal agriculture**.
- The project aims at protecting seeds of traditional varieties of millets and ensures food security and livelihood for tribals.
- Apart from production of Millets, Pulses, Oilseeds, Vegetables and Apiculture, it is proposed to start Procurement, Processing, Packing, Labelling and Marketing of value added finished products of millets. Similar projects will be implemented throughout the State in suitable locations.

Do you know?

- Kerala Agriculture Department has sought Central support under the national-level mission for promoting millets.
- Millets are considered as 'superfood' and 'eat smart' strategies.

- Under the Millet Village scheme, the department had harvested **ragi** (finger millet), **thina** (foxtail millet), **cholam** (**sorghum**) and kuthiravaali (**barnyard millet**) in 1,200 acres.
- Additionally, a pilot scheme for cultivating **Chia, a Central American plant**, which is gaining popularity in India as yet another superfood, was progressing at Attappady.
- High protein content, short growing season, climate change resilience and low water requirement make millets an ideal crop for the State.
- Millets can grow in poor soil conditions with less water, fertiliser and pesticides. They can withstand higher temperatures, making them the perfect choice as 'climate-smart' cereals.

PM-JAY app and National Health Authority

In news:

- Union Health Minister recently launched PM-JAY app and also inaugurated the newly-constituted National Health Authority (NHA) which aims to effectively implement PM-JAY.
- The app has been introduced within just four months since the launch of the scheme and is aimed at helping users get easy access to information on the scheme, check eligibility, find hospitals nearby and get assisted help.
- The National Health Authority with a stronger mandate would be able to prevent, detect and control frauds, abuse and redress grievances, thus resulting in the reduction of leakages.
- The National Health Authority would be chaired by Union Health Minister and have representation from the Government and domain experts.

About PM-JAY

- Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Abhiyaan, also known as Ayushman Bharat 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 scheme aims to provide cashless treatment to beneficiaries identified through the Central Socio-Economic Caste Census.
- The scheme covers 1,350 medical conditions ranging from caesarean section to coronary stenting and joint replacement.

- It is a government-sponsored health insurance scheme.
- It will provide free treatment for up to Rs.5 lakh a family a year in any government or empanelled private hospitals all over India.

Do you know?

- PMJAY has completed 100 days.
- The project is billed as the world's largest state-funded health scheme.
- The medical journal, Lancet, has praised the prime minister for prioritising universal healthcare through the PMJAY.

PMJAY is one step towards Universal Health coverage. PMJAY has created an excellent opportunity for the country to improve its health care. It is critical for reducing the disease burden of the country.
India spends just 1.4% of GDP on healthcare which is less than even some developing countries. It should increase the funding and involve the private sector effectively.

How Swachh Bharat changed India and became a global inspiration?

Context:

- Nigeria has an estimated population of 191million as of 2018.
- Located in Sub-Saharan Africa, it is a large country with tremendous natural and human resources.
- However, Nigeria faces a critical challenge in its Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sector.
- National access to improved water supply was from 40 per cent in 1990 to 69 per cent in 2015.
- Access to piped water on premises declined from 32 per cent in 1990 to 7 per cent in 2015 in urban areas.
- The national access to basic sanitation stands at a low level of 33 per cent. Nigeria ranks second worst open defecating country in the world (after India).
- Experts are worried that Nigeria may overtake India as number one in open defecation.

Schemes/policies adopted by Nigeria

Country made several efforts towards improving access to sanitation.

- Adoption of the Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach to scale up sanitation in rural areas.
- National and sub-national specific roadmaps were developed on lines of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

- It aims to eliminate open defecation in the country by 2025.
- A new programme, Partnership for Expanded Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (PEWASH) was developed in 2016 to improve the situation and bring sector actors together.

However, the operationalisation of the roadmaps across the country was slow and inconsistent.

Nigeria inspired by Swachh Bharat Mission

- They both share similarities, which include a **large population**, **decentralised government structure** and **WASH challenges**.
- Nigeria had participated in Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Conference (MGISC) and was inspired by India's sanitation story (Swachh Bharat Mission) which has drastically reduced practicing open defecation.
- The acceptance that a toilet is important and needs to be discussed, not just locally, but nationally, was a watershed moment in India's journey to successfully ending open defecation.
- Nigeria also wanted an initiative that would create a mass movement, with every citizen effectively mobilised for action towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Like India, Nigeria has been able to demonstrate a high-level political will for the WASH sector.

On the lines of Swachh Bharat Mission,

- In November 2018, Nigeria President Muhammadu Buhari declared a state of emergency and launched a new National Action Plan for the sector.
- Nigeria proposed an 18-month emergency phase, five-year recovery phase and 13-year revitalisation strategy for the sector.
- It also proposed the establishment of a National WASH Fund to incentivise reform and infrastructure revitalisation.

Do you know?

- India's on-going Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) has **led to a reduction** in the number of people practising open defecation.
- In the past four years, over 50 crore people have shunned the practice of open defecation. Rural India's sanitation coverage has gone up from 39% in 2014, at the launch of the Swachh Bharat Mission, to over 93% today.
- India is on its way to becoming Open Defecation Free by 2019.
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 6.1 and 6.2 deals with water and sanitation respectively.

Conclusion:

India has now become the global leader of the war against open defecation. Several countries want to learn from India's experience and implement similar programmes in their countries.

SBM stands to inspire other countries and is a testimony to the global community that the SDG targets are achievable provided there is strong political resolve, the strategy is appropriate, resources are adequately deployed and the population is sufficiently mobilised.

Following India's example, Nigeria hopes to end the practice of open defecation and to become the next shining example to countries in the African region and across the world.

Connecting the dots:

- The Swachcha Bharat mission is not only a cleanliness campaign but also a socio-economic movement. Elaborate.
- How far has the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) succeeded in addressing the open defecation in India? Critically examine.

Cabinet approves new National Electronics Policy 2019

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II and III – Government schemes and policies; Indian Economy

In news:

- Union Cabinet approved the National Electronics Policy 2019, which aims to achieve a turnover of **$400 billion** (about ₹26 lakh crore) for the **electronics system design and manufacturing sector by 2025**.
- It is also expected to **generate employment opportunities for one crore people.**
- The policy will enable flow of investment and technology, leading to higher value addition in the domestically manufactured electronic products and increased manufacturing of electronics hardware for local use as well as exports.

Do you know?

- NPC 2019 is proposed by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).
- The Policy aims to position India as a global hub for Electronics System Design and Manufacturing – (ESDM).
- To help create an ecosystem, the policy has pitched for 2.0 version of the Electronics Manufacturing Cluster Scheme, under which infrastructure support will be provided for a group of industries that are part of the product supply chain rather than individual industries.

- It has also proposed a sovereign patent fund to acquire intellectual property for chips and chip components.

Salient Features of NPE 2019

1. Create eco-system for globally competitive ESDM sector: Promoting domestic manufacturing and export in the entire value-chain of ESDM.
2. Provide incentives and support for manufacturing of core electronic components.
3. Provide special package of incentives for mega projects which are extremely high-tech and entail huge investments, such as semiconductor facilities display fabrication, etc.
4. Formulate suitable schemes and incentive mechanisms to encourage new units and expansion of existing units.
5. Promote Industry-led R&D and innovation in all sub-sectors of electronics, including grass root level innovations and early stage Start-ups in emerging technology areas such as 5G, loT/ Sensors, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning, Virtual Reality (VR), Drones, Robotics, Additive Manufacturing, Photonics, Nano-based devices, etc.
6. Provide incentives and support for significantly enhancingavailability of skilled manpower, including re-skilling.
7. Special thrust on Fabless Chip Design Industry, Medical Electronic Devices Industry, Automotive Electronics Industry andPower Electronics for Mobility and Strategic Electronics Industry.
8. Create Sovereign Patent Fund (SPF) to promote the developmentand acquisition of IPs in ESDM sector.
9. Promote trusted electronics value chain initiatives to improve national cyber security profile.

Mid Day Meal Scheme

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Welfare/Social scheme; Government schemes and policies

In news:

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the revision of norms under the Mid Day Meal Scheme.
- MDM scheme to be provided ₹12,054 crore for 2019-20, in addition to the subsidy of about ₹8,000 crore borne by Department of Food & Public Distribution.
- A new component of ₹10,000 per kitchen for repair of more than 10-year-old kitchens had been introduced.

- Also, ₹50 crore has been allocated for fortification of food items in a systematic manner. This would address the problems of anaemia and other micro nutrient deficiencies.

About MDM scheme:

- The scheme involves provision of lunch free of cost to school-children on all working days.
- **Key objectives:** Protect children from classroom hunger; Increase school enrolment and attendance; Improve socialisation among children belonging to all castes; Address malnutrition and social empowerment through provision of employment to women.
- Scheme covers all children studying in class I to VIII
- MDM is covered by National Food Security Act, 2013
- Ministry/Department : Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development

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Panic button feature on mobiles launched

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Welfare/Social scheme; Government schemes and policies

In news:

- Centre launched panic button feature on mobiles for safety of women and other emergency services
- The initiative was opened jointly by Home Minister and Women and Child Development Minister
- In order to access an emergency service, such as police, medical and other services, a user can **dial 112** from any phone.
- A smartphone user can also press the power button thrice in quick succession and a user of a basic or feature phone can long press 5 or 9 on the key pad.

Do you know?

- Once a user presses the panic button, five calls will be made to emergency number 112 as well as call log details and the geo location of the victim will be sent by SMSes and emails to police officials at the State, district and local level.
- The panic button facility, also known as the **Emergency Response Support System**, is being **supported under the Nirbhaya Fund** set up for safety of women.

De-odourising sewage

Key pointers:

According to the World Bank estimate –

- More than a fifth of all communicable diseases in India (21%) are caused by contaminated water.
- One in ten deaths in India is attributed to diseases or infections directly or indirectly transmitted through water.
- Over 500 children die every day in India due to diarrhoeal diseases.

According to a study by the Indian Nitrogen Group –

- Amount of reactive nitrogen in a bulk of the water bodies in India is already twice the limit prescribed by WHO.
- Nitrogen pollution from untreated sewage now outstrips nitrogen pollution from the Indian farmer's urea addiction.

Issues in existing Sanitation Policy in India:

1. Issues in Swachh Bharat Mission:

- Under the mission, in the past four years alone, over nine crore toilets have been constructed. Of these, only 60 lakh are in urban areas, where one assumes they are connected to some sort of sewage system.
- However, a study done by the Centre for Science and Environment in 30 cities in Uttar Pradesh found that only 28% of toilets in these cities were connected to a sewage system. Therefore, the rest will be generating fecal sludge, sewage and septage which has no place to go.
- Which means that that too will simply get dumped, polluting land, surface and ground water and killing our rivers and ponds.

2. Poor Sewage Treatment:

According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) –

- 63% of urban sewage flowing into rivers is untreated and gap between sewage generated in urban areas (all Class 1 and Class 2 towns) and capacity for treating that is over 78%.
- Moreover, up to a third of the installed sewage treatment capacity is fully or partly dysfunctional.
- Even where the plants are working, many are not working at full capacity, because the infrastructure needed to feed the raw sewage into the treatment plant (a network of drains, sewers and pumping stations) is inadequate or incomplete.

3. Underfunded Sewage Treatment in Smart City Mission:

- Of the 99 cities in the 'Smart Cities' mission, which are collectively spending ₹2 lakh crore over five years (from 2015), only 2.4% of the money is going to be spent on waste management.

4. Issues with AMRUT Mission:

- Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) also fund such schemes. AMRUT covers a much larger spread which cover 500 'mission cities' across the country.
- Of these, only 217 pitched for a sewage treatment plant as an AMRUT project. Of these, in the last four years, only four have been completed, according to a reply filed in the Lok Sabha.
- Of the 212 schemes, as many as 189 are accounted for by just Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat. Only six other States have one or more projects under way. The rest have no plans.

Conclusion:

- Water is increasingly becoming the biggest challenge faced by most Indian cities today.
- According to NITI Aayog's composite water management index report released last year, 75% of households do not have access to drinking water on premises, 70% households lack piped water (potable or otherwise) and as many as 20 cities will effectively use up all available water resources by 2020.
- Sewage and waste need to come centrestage in our policy debates.
- Sewage treatment should be an electoral issue to properly deal the real risk of eventually either choking or being poisoned by our own waste.

Connecting the dots:

- India need a Solid waste management plans to be implemented alongside maintenance of drainage and sewerage networks. Discuss
- Decentralised sludge management and sewage systems are vital to achieve clean water goals of SDG by 2030. Elucidate.
- Open defecation has long been a major health and sanitation problem in India. Critically analyze the policy measure taken by government to eliminate the problem of open defecation.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

INF and Arms Race

Context:

- THE INTERMEDIATE-RANGE NUCLEAR FORCES TREATY (INF) has been a pillar of arms control for over 30 years. But in recent years it has been crumbling.
- On October 20th U.S. President Donald Trump announced that he intended to withdraw America from the treaty and build up missiles until Russia, believed to be cheating on the pact, and China, which never signed it, "came to their senses".
- On February 1st the U.S. pulled the plug, after Russia failed to meet a deadline to come into compliance with the treaty.

Do you know?

- The INF treaty, which has its origins in the Euromissile crisis of the late 1970s and early 1980s, prohibited not only the erstwhile Soviet and American missiles but also the flight-testing, development and deployment of all ground-based missiles—both nuclear and conventional— with ranges between 500 to 5,500 kms.
- Almost 3,000 existing weapons were destroyed, with the Soviet Union getting rid of twice as many.

China seems to be the most impacted

- China criticised the U.S.'s decision to walk out of the landmark Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty.
- The Chinese expect that the Americans will now reinforce their tactical missiles, both nuclear and conventional, in **Guam**, a large military base in **Micronesia,** at the heart of the **U.S. deterrent in the Pacific**.
- It is also expected that the Americans will pack other U.S. bases in the Pacific, especially those in **Okinawa — a string of islands in the East China Sea** that belong to Japan — with intermediate range missiles.

By doing so, the **U.S. would be able to virtually box in the movement of Chinese naval ships** in the West Pacific, especially by safeguarding strategic gateways to the open sea, such as the **Miyako Strait in Japan**.

Currently, the Americans have no answer to China's mid-range missiles. China's mid-range missiles have been tailored to destroy U.S. aircraft carriers even at a distance of 1,450 km. China has weapons which can deliver a strike on Guam too.

U.S. was at some point likely to propose a fresh arms control dialogue, sharply focusing on China's mid-range missiles. A new treaty was expected to seek termination of the Chinese challenge to Washington's military dominance in the West Pacific.

With America withdrawing from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, China would have no choice but to beef up its conventional deterrence by developing hypersonic missiles and next generation strategic bombers, which can smash into targets at five times the speed of sound.

By taking the miscalculated step of walking out of the INF treaty, the U.S. may have dragged China, as well as Russia, into a new and unpredictable arms race, with the potential of destabilising the Indo-Pacific.

Connecting the dots:

- By walking out of the INF treaty, the U.S. has dragged China and Russia into a new arms race. Do you agree? Comment.
- U.S.'s exit from a Cold War-era treaty could trigger a 3-way arms race. Discuss.

ICJ on Kulbhushan Jadhav case

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

In news:

- The International Court of Justice refused to entertain Pakistan's request to adjourn the hearing in the case of Kulbhushan Jadhav to appoint a new ad-hoc judge.
- Pakistan asked the ICJ to adjourn the case, citing the illness of its ad-hoc judge.
- India urged the ICJ to annul Jadhav's death sentence and order his immediate release, saying the verdict by a Pakistani military court based on a "farcical case" hopelessly fails to satisfy even the minimum standards of due process.

Do you know?

- Jadhav, a retired Indian Navy officer, was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on charges of "espionage and terrorism" after a closed trial in April 2017.
- His sentencing evoked a sharp reaction in India.
- India moved the ICJ in the same year for the "egregious violation" of the provisions of the Vienna Convention by Pakistan by repeatedly denying New Delhi consular access to the 48-year-old Indian national.

France to propose ban on JeM chief

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

In news:

- France will move a proposal at the U.N. in a "couple of days" to ban Masood Azhar, chief of the U.N.-proscribed Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM).
- In 2017, the U.S., supported by the U.K. and France, moved a proposal at the U.N.'s Sanctions Committee 1267 to ban him. However, it was blocked by China.
- This will be the second time France will be party to such a proposal.

Financial Action Task Force (FATF) keeps Pak. on grey list, seeks action

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II and III – International relations; India and its neighbours; Security issues

In news:

- Financial Action Task Force (FATF) – global terror monitor – issued a stern statement to Pakistan to comply with an action plan on terror financing or face further action.
- The 37-member group decided not to remove Pakistan from the 'grey list', but also did not accept an Indian demand to move Pakistan to the 'black list' yet.
- The 'grey-listing' continued despite Pakistan government's last-minute decision to ban Jamaat-ud Dawa (JuD) and the Falah-e Insaniat Foundation (FIF).
- The FATF criticised Pakistan for not demonstrating "a proper understanding" of the terror financing risks posed by "Da'esh (Islamic State), al Qaeda, Jamaat-ud Dawa, Falah-e-Insaniat Foundation, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Haqqani Network, and persons affiliated with the Taliban."

https://d39gegkjaqduz9.cloudfront.net/TH/2019/02/23/CNI/Chennai/TH/5_01/b2521f5b_2754203_101_mr.jpg

Important Value Additions:

About Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

- It is an intergovernmental organization founded in 1989 on the initiative of the G7 to develop policies to combat money laundering.
- In 2001 its mandate expanded to include terrorism financing.
- It monitors progress in implementing the FATF Recommendations through peer reviews and mutual evaluations of member countries.
- The FATF Secretariat is housed at the OECD headquarters in Paris.

Olympic dream under threat

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – International relations; International organizations

In news:

- India's future as a host for sporting events remain uncertain following a decision by the International Olympic Committee(IOC), after India refused visa requests from two Pakistani shooters who are expected to participate in the ongoing ISSF World Cup.
- IOC made it clear to the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) that all future international sporting events in India would be put on hold unless the host gave a written guarantee that there would be no discrimination on participation of athletes.
- According to IOC, India's stand was against the Fundamental Principles of the Olympic Charter, in particular the principles of non-discrimination.

https://d39gegkjaqduz9.cloudfront.net/TH/2019/02/23/CNI/Chennai/TH/5_01/b2521f5b_2754200_101_mr.jpg

Important Value Additions:

About International Olympic Committee (IOC)

- It is a non-governmental sports organisation based in Lausanne, Switzerland.
- Created by Pierre de Coubertin and Demetrios Vikelas in 1894
- It is the authority responsible for organising the modern Summer and Winter Olympic Games.
- It is the governing body of the National Olympic Committees (NOCs), which are the national constituents of the worldwide Olympic Movement.
- It ensures the regular celebration of the Olympic Games, supports all affiliated member organisations of the Olympic Movement and strongly encourages, by appropriate means, the promotion of the Olympic values.

About Indian Olympic Association (IOA)

- It is the body responsible for selecting athletes to represent India at the Olympic Games, Asian Games and other international athletic meets and for managing the Indian teams at these events.
- It also acts as the Indian Commonwealth Games Association, responsible for selecting athletes to represent India at the Commonwealth Games.

Britain should hand over Chagos islands to Mauritius

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – International Relations

In news:

- International Court of Justice (ICJ) in an advisory opinion said that - Britain has an obligation to end its administration of the Chagos archipelago and complete the process of decolonisation of Mauritius.
- It is a significant legal victory for Mauritius and other nations, including India, which supported its case.
- The Chagos Islands — referred to by the British as the British Indian Ocean Territory, but which is not recognised as such by Mauritius — is home to the U.S. military base Diego Garcia.
- It had been part of Mauritius since the 18th century when the French first settled the islands. Later this French colonial territory ceded to the British in 1810.
- In the 1960s and 1970s, inhabitants were removed from the islands.
- Tensions remain, with Mauritius maintaining that the archipelago remains its integral part.

Do you know?

- Sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago is disputed between Mauritius and the United Kingdom.
- Mauritius has repeatedly asserted that the Chagos Archipelago is part of its territory and that the United Kingdom (UK) claim is a violation of United Nations' resolutions banning the dismemberment of colonial territories before independence.
- The UK has stated that it has no doubt about its sovereignty over the Chagos but has also said that the Chagos will be returned to Mauritius once the islands are no longer required for defence purposes.
- Given the absence of any progress with the UK, Mauritius has decided to internationalise the dispute and take up the matter at all appropriate legal and political forums.
- The African Union and the Non-Aligned Movement have expressed unanimous support for Mauritius on the Chagos issue.

INDIA AND THE WORLD

Several Indians held across U.S. on visa fraud charges

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Indian diaspora and Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

In news:

- Several Indian citizens or people of Indian origin have been arrested across cities in the U.S. on **student visa fraud charges**.
- Emerging patterns suggest most of the individuals are of Telugu origin.
- Eight "educational agents" were alleged to be running the racket, to commit visa fraud and to harbour aliens (non-U.S. citizens) for profit.
- An **unspecified number of Indian students have been detained** by the Department of Homeland Security in connection with the case.
- The American Telugu Association has put the number of students arrested at 100 and says it has confirmation of arrest warrants for 600 students based on conversations with attorneys.

India asks UK to stop Kashmir event in London

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

In news:

- India has lodged a strong protest with the UK to stop the hosting of a Pakistan-backed conference on Kashmir to be held in British parliament on February 4.
- Pakistan has alleged human rights abuses in the Valley by Indian Army and also called for the removal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act and the Public Safety Act.
- UK has said that it will not interfere in the matter and said that UK Members of Parliament are independent of government.
- The British, for now, are trying to keep out of this diplomatic war that has found its way to London.
- The UK's longstanding position is that it is for India and Pakistan to find a lasting political resolution to the situation in Kashmir, taking into account the Kashmiri people's wishes.

India inks contract for 72,000 assault rifles

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II and III – India and US ties; Defence

In news:

- Indian Army signed a contract with Sig Sauer of the U.S. for 72,400 SIG716 assault rifles for front-line soldiers deployed in operational areas.
- Of the 72,400 rifles, 66,400 are meant for the Army, 2,000 for the Navy and 4,000 for the Air Force.
- The new rifles will replace the Indian National Small Arms System (INSAS) rifles.

Do you know?

- The Defence Ministry also issued the Expression of Interest (EoI) for a deal to buy 111 naval utility helicopters. This is the first project to be executed through the strategic partnership policy.
- Under this, the chosen Indian private company will team up with the Original Equipment Manufacturer to build the product in India.
- The EoI follows the Request for Information (RFI) and then detailed Request for Proposal (RFP).
- The copters will replace the ageing Chetak fleet.

India, Maldives reverse visa stand-off

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

In news:

- India and Maldives exchanged an agreement to facilitate visas for travel between the two countries in a number of categories.
- **"Visa Facilitation Agreement"** - This Agreement provides a very liberal visa regime for Maldivian nationals to visit India for tourism, business, education & medical purposes.
- It also makes it easier for Indians to travel to Maldives for business purposes.
- Medical visas will also be granted to attendants to accompany patients. The government has also agreed to grant visas for parents and other dependants to live in India while their children attend school here.

India signs defence pacts with Germany and Sweden

Part of: GS Mains II and III – International Relations; Defence Ties; Security issues

In news:

- India concluded defence cooperation and security protection agreements with Germany and Sweden.
- The agreement will enable both the countries to share classified information with each other.
- India and Sweden have had a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the area of defence since 2009.
- Both Germany and Sweden are important suppliers of defence equipment to India and their companies are currently in the race for multi-billion tenders to supply submarines and fighter aircraft.

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and bilateral ties with India

Context:

- In 2016, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia gave itself a goal and a promise in the form of Vision 2030.
- Saudi Vision 2030 is a **plan to reduce Saudi Arabia's dependence on oil**, **diversify its economy**, and **develop public service sectors** such as health, education, infrastructure, recreation and tourism.

Under Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia aims to –

- Focus more towards sustainable development.
- Focus on massive projects directed towards building a vibrant society, a thriving economy and an ambitious nation.
- Get ready for the Post-Oil Age by transforming/diversifying its economy.
- It aims to attract $427 billion in private investments over the next decade to diversify the economy and create 1.6 million new jobs through the National Industrial Development and Logistics Programme.
- Make Saudi Arabia a global innovation hub.
- Transform into an advanced knowledge-based economy built on innovation and entrepreneurship.

Do you know?

- According to World Bank's 'Doing Business 2018' report, **Saudi Arabia has instituted the largest number of business reforms** among countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region as of July 2017.
- Starting a business in the Kingdom now requires only one step and one day!

India and Saudi Arabia

- Saudi Arabia sees India as an important partner in its pursuit for development and stability.
- Ties between both the countries trace their roots to the third millennium BC.
- Nearly 3 million Indians form the largest expatriate community in the Kingdom.
- India has also seen its Haj quota increase consecutively during the last two years.

Bilateral trade potential

- India and Saudi Arabia have **more opportunities today** to tap into than ever before.
- Saudi Arabia and India can **engage in a host of new areas** such as information and communications technology (ICT), health care, defence, biotechnology, education and infrastructure among others.
- India is one of the top countries on the Kingdom's preferred list with **great potential for investment in organic and food processing industries**.
- **Energy partnership** - Saudi Aramco to invest more in Indian companies and value chain from oil supply, marketing and refining to petrochemicals and lubricants. For instance, $44 billion integrated refinery and petrochemicals complex at **Ratnagiri in Maharashtra**, being jointly developed by Saudi Aramco, Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) and a consortium of Indian public sector units (PSUs).
- **India and Saudi @ recent G20 summit** – Both sides agreed to set up a high-level mechanism to boost concrete actions in terms of investment, technology and manufacturing across various sectors.

Conclusion:

- Saudi Arabia and India have a historic opportunity to collaborate in shaping the future of Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Asia regions.
- Combining their respective strengths will pave the way for endless possibilities and accomplishments for the benefit of both the regions.

Connecting the dots:

- Saudi Arabia and India have a historic opportunity to collaborate in shaping the future of Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Asia regions. Critically analyse.

Saudi vows to 'de-escalate' India-Pakistan tensions

Part of: GS Mains II - India and its neighbourhood- relations; International Relations

In news:

- Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister vowed to "de-escalate" rising tensions between Pakistan and India as Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman prepares to travel to New Delhi.

Do you know?

- Pakistan has also been accused by its western neighbour Iran of harbouring militants who carried out an attack that killed 27 Revolutionary Guards last week.

India-Saudi-Pakistan triangle

Context:

- In previous **Daily News Analysis articles**, we had discussed about **Saudi Crown Prince's Vision 2030** plan to transform Saudi Arabia's oil-dependent economy into a vibrant, diversified one better-suited to the economic realities of the 21st century.
- Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) recent visits to Asian countries reflects that Asia is set to become the most important component of the Vision 2030 plan.
- For MBS, the visit to India, Pakistan, China, Malaysia and Indonesia is an opportunity to re-assert Saudi Arabia's role as a major foreign policy player in Asia amid growing criticism over the Yemen war and the brutal assassination of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Istanbul.
- For the Government of India, the visit is an opportunity to cap its pursuit of stronger ties with West Asian nations on a high note.

India-Saudi Relations:

- **Expansion of trade and investment:** Saudi has shown interest in expanding trade and investment in India and collaboration in the energy sector. India could likely absorb $100 billion in Saudi investment.
- **Ratnagiri refinery and petrochemicals complex joint venture**: Saudi Aramco is set to partner with the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company in developing an integrated refinery and petrochemicals complex at Ratnagiri in Maharashtra, a $44 billion joint venture with Indian public sector involvement.

- **Largest supplier of oil:** Saudi Arabia is already one of the three largest suppliers of oil to India.
- **Strategic Partnership Council**: Both the countries have a strong independent strategic partnership and it will be further strengthened with the launching of the Strategic Partnership Council.
- **People-to-people relations:** There were announcements of the release of 850 Indians from Saudi jails, a hike in the quota for Indians making the Haj pilgrimage and an annual upscaling of airline seats to and fro.
- **Comprehensive security dialogue and counter terrorism:** A comprehensive security dialogue between the national security advisers of the two nations has been announced, besides a joint working group on terrorism.
- **Inaugural joint naval exercises soon**: Both agreed to hold their inaugural joint naval exercises at the earliest.

Pakistan-Saudi Relations:

- **Strategic and economic nexus between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan:** Pakistan is far too important to Saudi Arabia for **internal security reasons**. The **Pakistan Army has more than once acted as the Saudi rulers' praetorian guard** and **given the uncertain hold of MBS on his country**, despite impressions to the contrary, he may need the services of Pakistani mercenaries in the near future.
- **Strategic importance of Pakistan in Afghanistan:** Afghanistan has been a point of strategic convergence for Pakistan and Saudi Arabia going back to the 1980s when the Saudis used Pakistan as a conduit for material assistance to the Islamist forces fighting the Soviet Union and its proxy government in Kabul. With U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, Pakistan's strategic value as the Taliban's patron has grown exponentially. Saudi Arabia is interested in curbing Iranian influence in Afghanistan and needs Pakistan to contain Iran's ability to influence events in that country after the American withdrawal through its Tajik and Hazara allies.
- **Aid to Pakistan:** Saudi economic largesse matters greatly to Pakistan, which is in dire economic straits and has been forced to turn to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for loans that are bound to come with strict conditionalities.
- **Saudi investment in Pakistan (especially Gwadar port):** Over and above the $6 billion already promised by Saudi Arabia, MBS has promised a further $20 billion in Saudi investment in Pakistan. A large part is earmarked for investment in the construction of an oil refinery in Gwadar on the Makran coast, which is being developed as a strategic port by China and features prominently in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) plan.

- **Iran-Saudi Arabia Conflict:** Iran is Saudi Arabia's chief adversary in West Asia. MBS has made containment of Iran his top foreign policy priority. Therefore, Saudi perceives Pakistan as a major asset it can use to check the spread of Iranian influence.

Moreover, Pakistan's relations with Iran have hit a new low following the recent terrorist attack in the Sistan-Baluchistan Province that killed 27 Revolutionary Guards. As Pakistan's relations with Iran deteriorate, it is likely to move further into the Saudi orbit.

On the other hand, India deepened its engagement with Iran, be it on oil trade or the Chabahar port. Iran is important for India as it is a gateway to Central Asia.

Conclusion:

- India should take advantage of any benefit that accrues from India's economic relations with Saudi Arabia but should not pin much hope on Riyadh in the political-strategic sphere of Saudi-Pakistan ties.
- While Saudi Arabia is vital for India's energy security, Iran is a gateway to Central Asia. New Delhi is sure to continue this balancing act even as it seeks to strengthen the Saudi pillar of India's West Asia policy.

Connecting the dots:

- Saudi Arabia and India have a historic opportunity to collaborate in shaping the future of Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Asia regions. Critically analyse.
- What challenges does India face in cultivating gainful ties with Saudi Arabia? Examine.
- Give an overview of India – Saudi Arabia defence, economic and strategic relations.

Wuzhen meet and India-Saudi ties

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

In news:

- India and China are expected to hold their first high-level talks on the Pulwama terror attack.
- External Affairs Minister to meet her counterparts from Beijing and Moscow in Wuzhen.

India pitches for global action against terrorism

- India pitched for global action against terrorism while welcoming the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman visit to India.

- Saudi Arabia agreed to share intelligence with India and other countries that were willing to fight terrorism.
- Both countries urged for early adoption of the UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism and pitched for "comprehensive sanctioning of terrorists and their organisations by the UN."
- Both sides also resolved to create a "Comprehensive Security Dialogue" consisting of National Security Advisers and set up a Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism. Both sides also launched a Strategic Partnership Council that will be led by the Prime Minister and the Crown Prince.
- During the visit of Mohammed Bin Salman, Saudi Arabia joined the International Solar Alliance (ISA).

Article 36 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, 1963

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – India and the World; Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

In news:

- India had moved the International Court of Justice stating that Pakistan has violated the rules of Vienna Convention on Consular Relations in detention, trial and conviction of Kulbushan Yadav an Indian Naval officer.
- Indian team at International Court called on the court to **adjudicate on an "egregious" breach of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations**, and to order that Kulbhushan Jadhav be given consular access.
- India insisted that contrary to Pakistan's contention, the Vienna convention is not subject to exceptions on any grounds — including national security and espionage.

About Vienna convention on consular Relations

- The Vienna Convention on Consular Relations of 1963 is an international treaty that defines a framework for consular relations between independent states.
- The **Article 36 of the Vienna convention** is highlighted in the recent fit between India and Pakistan pertaining to the Kulbushan Yadav case.
- Article 36 states that, if any foreign national is detained or arrested on criminal or immigration charges, he/she is entitled to be notified about the right to notify the detainee country's consulate of his/her arrest. If the detained person requests, the police ought to fax the notice to the embassy. It also provides for a regular consultation with the consular officials during the detention and any trial if needed. The essential

core of the article is to provide communication between a national and his/her country's officials when held in a foreign land.

- A consul performs two functions: protecting in the host country the interests of their countrymen, and furthering the relations between the two states.

India's trade-related action against Pakistan: More symbolic than punitive

Context:

- We earlier read that India decided to **withdraw the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status** to Pakistan. (After Pulwama attack)
- Therefore, **India will not treat Pakistan on an equal footing in trade** as is expected of fellow members of the World Trade Organisation.
- India is set to raise tariff duty on imports to 200%.
- Non-tariff measures will also be increased.

Concept: "Beggar-thy-neighbour policy"

- In economics, a **beggar-thy-neighbour policy** is an economic policy through which one country attempts to remedy its economic problems by means that tend to worsen the economic problems of other countries.

However, this policy can act only as a pressure tactic and do little unless stringent actions are taken to **stop informal trade** that has been going on between the two countries for long.

Do you know?

Trade now takes place using three channels:

(1) the **official route**;

(2) the **illegal (informal) route, through smuggling** along porous India-Pakistan land borders and also Afghanistan, which may not be accounted for in the national income; and lastly,

(3) through mainly Dubai and Singapore, which have **free ports and accommodate legal agents of traders** from India and Pakistan.

India's trade-related action will encourage informal trade and propel Pakistan to look for markets beyond South Asia.

Informal trade generally takes place due to following reasons –

- Restrictions on import of specific items on grounds of health and religious beliefs.
- High tariff barriers or transportation costs

- Imposition of non-tariff measures (NTMs)
- Weaknesses in the 'rules of origin' resulting in 'trade routed through a third country
- Leakages in transit trade
- Distortions in domestic policies such as the absence of or relatively low indirect taxes, creating an incentive to transport items illegally to neighbouring countries

India-Pakistan Informal Trade

- Traders have carried out informal trade between Pakistan and India through the **exchange of goods at the border** as well as through the **personal baggage scheme' through "green channel" facilities** at international airports or railway stations.
- 'Informal trade has also taken place through Afghanistan where goods are exported officially from India and later smuggled into Pakistan.
- Indian-made goods smuggled into Pakistan include cosmetics, liquor, stainless steel utensils, ayurvedic medicines, videotapes/CDs, confectionery/cashew nuts, tea, coffee, live animals and spices'.
- In 2012-13, informal trade between India and Pakistan was $4.71 billion, which was double when compared to formal trade.
- India's informal export share to Pakistan was again much higher at $4 billion while its import share was low at $0.71 billion.

Impact of India's trade-related action against Pakistan –

- India's imports from Pakistan are reasonably low at $0.488 billion. In other words, **India exports more than what it imports**. Therefore, major exports from India would be hit. (such as cotton, p-Xylene, polypropylene, and single yarn)
- **Pakistan's loss from major exports to India would be much less**. (India imports dates, portland cement, other petroleum oil, light oils and preparations etc)
- Thus **Pakistan is an important export destination for India but not vice-a-versa.**
- Pakistan imposes a large number of NTMs (143) on Indian exports while India's NTMs are soft barriers which operate as delays or bureaucratic hurdles rather than bans.

Conclusion:

- Crux – Pakistan may not face an exacerbating situation with India withdrawing the MFN status and raising the import duty.
- Informal trade may proliferate, which might not be in India's interest and an appropriate strategy is required to bring it to a halt.
- Such steps may propel Pakistan to look for new markets beyond South Asia and growing prospects of trade through a third country.

Connecting the dots:

- How will the economies of India and Pakistan be affected with rising tensions aftermath of Pulwama Attack. Discuss.

India's Dilemma with West Asia

Context:

- Over the past few years, India's relations have show more inclination towards Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) compared to its ties with Iran.
- The current government has demonstrated a preference for working with the three regional powers rather than Iran. India finally appears to be moving away from its traditional "balancing" approach to West Asia.

Background:

- Since the 1990-91 Gulf War, India has officially adopted a "balancing" approach to West Asia. (legacy of non-alignment)
- This approach has allowed India to avoid involvement in regional disputes and de-hyphenate relations with regional rivals including Iran, Israel and Saudi Arabia.
- However, at the same time the policy has also constrained India's ability to press its geopolitical interests in the region.

Current Situation in West Asia and India's Dilemma

Situation in West Asia —

- rise of Shia influence,
- the Iranian nuclear issue,
- tensions between Iranians and their Arab neighbours,
- tensions between Iranians and Israelis,
- the Arab Spring,
- Saudi under MBS and Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed (MBZ) escalation of their battle against political Islamist groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood,
- recent dispute with Qatar,
- tensions between Israelis and Iranian-backed forces in Syria

Therefore, India's interests are interspersed with all these developments. These have entangled India's policy so much so that responding and dealing with them within set parameters has become difficult. The interconnectedness of these issues makes it difficult for India to accept any side or position.

India-West Asia: Recent developments

- Saudi Crown Prince announced to share intelligence with India and other countries that were willing to fight terrorism.
- In recent months, the UAE has also ramped up its security cooperation with India, extraditing at least three suspects wanted in relation to the AgustaWestland case.
- India's defence and security partnership with Israel has already proven useful to its security and military modernisation drive.
- India and Israel have collaborated on a $777 million project to develop a maritime version of the Barak-8, a surface-to-air missile that India successfully tested in January.
- India has also reportedly agreed to purchase 54 HAROP attack drones for the Indian Air Force and two airborne warning and control systems (AWACS) worth over $800 million from Israel.
- Israel has become one of India's top suppliers of military technology.
- Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) visited India recently and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to visit India soon.
- Saudi to invest in $44 billion oil refinery in India - Ratnagiri refinery and petrochemicals complex joint venture - Saudi Aramco is set to partner with the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company.
- Saudi Arabia is already one of the three largest suppliers of oil to India.
- Expansion of trade and investment: MBS said he foresaw up to $100 billion worth of Saudi investments in India over the next few years, including a plan by the Saudi Basic Industries Corp. to acquire two LNG plants.

India and Iran: Current developments

- Iran's support for Islamist militancy (by transferring advanced missile technology to Islamist groups and militias in Lebanon and Syria) has led to an increase in tensions with Israel. (Therefore, India should carefully balance its ties with Israel and Iran)
- Simultaneous attacks that claimed the lives of 27 members of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps and 40 members of India's Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) are likely to bring India and Iran closer together against Pakistan.
- From an economic perspective, U.S. sanctions have turned Iran into an unreliable economic partner.
- India is shoring up plans to find alternative sources as the six-month waiver from the U.S. reaches its term.
- Indian investments in Iran, including the Shahid Beheshti complex at Chabahar and the Farzad B gas field, have languished for years, reflecting the severe constraints on doing business with Iran.

In crux, there is no much momentum in generating better bilateral relations with Iran. However, India's tilt towards Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE is not a risk-free move.

- Iran continues to exercise much influence in West Asia and can help shape events in Afghanistan by shoring up the Taliban against the U.S.
- Iran's Chabahar port represents a strategic investment for India which hopes to use the facility to connect with the International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC) that extends to Central Asia and to bypass Pakistan en route to Afghanistan.

Conclusion:

India could find it difficult to maintain a 'balancing' approach between different West Asian powers. For now, the current government seems to have taken its pick by practically abandoning the "traditional balancing approach".

India has placed its bets on Israel and the Gulf monarchies, relegating relations with Iran to the side.

Connecting the dots:

- What are the dilemmas facing India in dealing with the present crisis in West Asia? Discuss how should India mitigate these dilemmas?
- Discuss how should India balance its foreign policy towards Iran vis-à-vis Saudi Arabia; Iran vis-à-vis Israel; and Iran vis-à-vis the US?

Centre lists projects to stop flow of India's share of water to Pakistan

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

In news:

- Water Resources Ministry issued details of various projects for stopping the flow of water to Pakistan.
- About 2 Million Acre Feet (MAF) of water annually from the Ravi is reported to be still flowing unutilised to Pakistan below Madhopur.
- Among India's various projects, Shahpurkandi project will help in utilizing the water from the Thein dam to irrigate 37,000 hectares of land in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab, and generate 206 MW of power.
- Another facility is the Ujh multipurpose project that will create a storage of about 781 million cubic meter of water on river Ujh, a tributary of Ravi.
- The third project is the second Ravi-Beas link below Ujh.

To read about Indus Water Treaty, visit the link - https://iasbaba.com/2016/10/the-big-picture-indus-water-treaty-can-it-become-the-handle/

India-EU Relations: Time to seize the opportunities

Background:

- India-EU relations date to the **early 1960s**, with India being amongst the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with the **European Economic Community**.
- A **cooperation agreement** signed in **1994** took the bilateral relationship beyond trade and economic cooperation.
- The **first India-EU Summit** took place in Lisbon on 28 June **2000** and marked a watershed in the evolution of the relationship. Since then, **14 annual Summits have been held.**
- At the **5th India-EU Summit** held at The Hague in **2004**, the relationship was upgraded to a **'Strategic Partnership'**.
- The two sides adopted a **Joint Action Plan in 2005** and which was reviewed in 2008.
- Joint Action Plan provided for strengthening dialogue and consultation mechanisms in the political and economic spheres, enhancing trade and investment, and bringing peoples and cultures together.

India- EU relationship

- Jointly, the EU and India represent close to 2 billion people, who can positively influence not only the economic discourse but also the course of human development.
- The EU and India have a strong and long-standing economic relationship and also strategic partnership.
- EU is India's largest trading partner, while India is the EU's ninth largest partner. Bilateral trade in goods and services amounted to over €100 billion in 2017.
- India is among very few nations in the world that run a surplus in services trade with the EU.
- In November last year, the European Union (EU) adopted a communication that set out the EU's vision for a strategy to strengthen its cooperation and partnership with India.
- This new strategy, developed in broad consultation with European and Indian stakeholders, shows how significant the EU considers India's role in international and regional matters and how determined the EU is to further develop and realise the full potential of this partnership.

There is growing convergence between the EU and India on global and regional issues. Both stand to benefit equally from a stronger partnership by addressing together global challenges, promoting economic growth and expanding business opportunities.

However, there is so much more that India and EU can achieve together.

Untapped areas:

1. Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)

- There is a need for EU to further strengthen policy dialogues and cooperation with India, particularly with regard to small and medium-sized enterprises.
- Indeed, SMEs form the backbone for both our economies; both regions have bright and dynamic entrepreneurs, willing to take risks and to launch new initiatives, eager to discover new opportunities and realise their dreams for a better future.
- European companies (start-ups and SMEs) are strong in areas such as technology, environment, communications, energy and infrastructure.
- This wealth of experience and knowledge means the EU has much to offer to India in its quest to grow and modernise, from technology to know-how sharing.

2. EU's Business Support programme

- EU's Business Support programme aims precisely at tapping existing business opportunities and focussing in particular areas such as environment, energy, climate, mobility, urbanisation and ICT, where it already has an advanced cooperation with India.
- Business Support initiative can help to bring together European and Indian SMEs through joint action, business to business match-making and exchanges on best practices.
- It will also support the transfer of advanced EU technologies and innovative practices, which can be adapted for the Indian market.

3. Co-operation in Space

- Space is another key area where both have much to contribute to each other.
- Both the countries are keenly working towards establishing themselves as leading space powers.
- **Copernicus, the EU's observation programme,** that is now the best system of that kind in the world, can provide support to India in tackling many common challenges, from environmental protection, agriculture and climate change monitoring to disaster support and urban development.
- India and Europe can do much more to develop space activities, for instance on satellite navigation and space research.

Connecting the dots:

- What significance does European Union (EU) hold for India? Discuss. Why is India-EU trade well below its potential? Examine the factors.
- India and EU are "natural partners". Discuss India-EU relationship in various spheres.

India-Fiji Relations

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

In news:

- Fiji High Commissioner to India said - Fiji will maintain China-India balance
- Fiji is politically attached to India and the island country in the South Pacific Ocean is the only other country, apart from India, where Hindi is designated as an official language.
- Of the 9,00,000 people of the south Pacific island nation, some 40% are of Indian origin.
- Defence agreement – Both India and Fiji signed a defence agreement in 2017 with a goal to deepen cooperation in maritime security and provide training for Fiji troops.

India-Russia: To ink multi-billion agreement for AK-103 assault rifles

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II and III – International relations; Defence ties; Security

In news:

- India and Russia are close to concluding an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) for a multi-billion deal to locally bulk manufacture AK-103 assault rifles in the next few months.
- India has signed several multi-billion dollar defence deals with Russia in the last couple of years and more are in the pipeline.

Do you know?

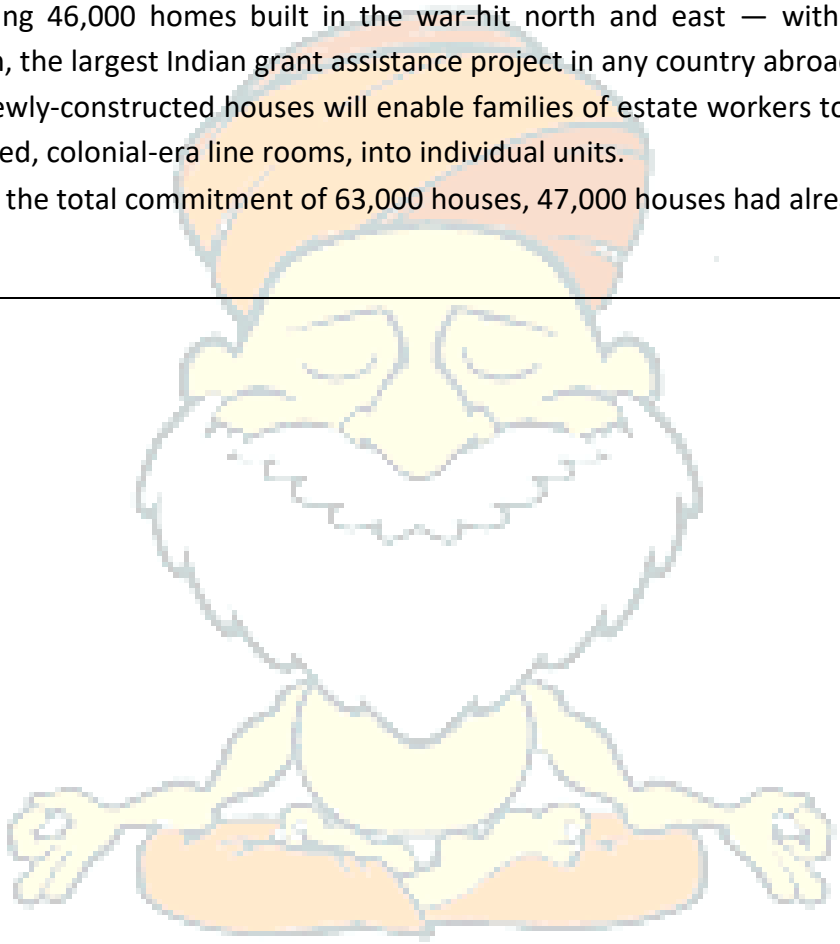
- We had read about the Army recently signing a contract for 72,400 **assault rifles** from **Sig Sauer of the U.S.** These rifles are for frontline troops deployed in forward areas.
- Army is looking to replace the indigenous INSAS (Indian National Small Arms System) rifles in use with a modern rifle.

India-Sri Lanka: India-built houses handed over to Sri Lanka estate workers

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

In news:

- As many as 155 houses, built as part of India's ongoing housing project in Sri Lanka, were handed over to estate workers in Hatton, located in the Central Province.
- The effort is part of India's pledge to help construct 63,000 houses in Sri Lanka — including 46,000 homes built in the war-hit north and east — with a grant of $350 million, the largest Indian grant assistance project in any country abroad.
- The newly-constructed houses will enable families of estate workers to move out of the cramped, colonial-era line rooms, into individual units.
- Out of the total commitment of 63,000 houses, 47,000 houses had already been built.



ECONOMY

3 Key Indices and India's performance

Context:

The below editorial provides assessment of changes since 2014 in three indices for India.

1. 'Ease of Doing Business' (EDB)
2. 'Human Development' (HDI) and
3. 'Environmental Performance' (EPI)

Significance of these indices:

- The above 3 indices are published by separate international bodies and are used to rank the world's countries according to their performance in the related sphere.
- Rankings reveal the level of attainment and they convey how far a country is from the global frontier.

'Ease of Doing Business' (EDB)

- EDB is an indicator put out by the **World Bank**
- It is meant mainly as an index of the **effect of government regulations on running a business.**
- It is also meant to **reflect the extent of property rights in a society**.
- A country's ranking is based on the **extent to which government regulations facilitate the following**: starting a business, obtaining construction permits, getting an electricity connection, registering property, accessing credit, protection of investors, paying taxes, trading across borders, enforcement of contracts and resolving insolvency.

India's EDB performance

- India's improvement is considerable. From a rank of 134 in 2014, India's rank improved to 77 in 2018.
- India is in the top 50% among 190 countries.
- The position is not spectacular but the improvement is.

Concerns:

- World Bank's Chief Economist, a Nobel Laureate, had recently alleged that the past political bias may have crept into the ranking of countries. Many critics argue that India's ranking is not reflecting reality.
- The bigger problem with EDB is that it **measures the effect of government regulations alone**. Ease of doing business is dependent upon other factors too.

- EDB should take into account the **availability of 'producer services'**, with electricity, water supply and waste management etc. This infrastructure has not improved much in India in the last five years. (There is no data available on infrastructural investment after the demise of Planning Commission)

Human Development Index (HDI)

- It is the result of a rare India-Pakistan collaboration in the global discourse on public policy, having been **devised by Amartya Sen and Mahbub ul Haq** for the United Nations Development Programme.
- The Human Development Index (HDI) is a statistical tool used to measure a country's overall achievement in its social and economic dimensions.
- The social and economic dimensions of a country are based on the health of people, their level of education attainment and their standard of living.
- It is published by the **United Nations Development Program (UNDP)**.

The HDI is the composite measure of every country's attainment in three basic dimensions:

- **Income:** 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.

India's HDI performance

- India's ranking has not altered since 2014.
- India was ranked 130 in 2014, and has remained in the same place out of 185 countries in 2018.
- India's HDI ranking has not improved despite it being the world's fastest growing major economy in recent years. (This reveals is that an economy can grow fast without much progress in human development.)
- India's HDI position in the bottom third of countries points to how much it needs to progress to earn the label 'the world's largest democracy'.

Concerns:

- Experts argue that human development is measured by averaging just a small set of simple indicators of health, education and living standards. Development is about much more than income.
- It looks at the health and education achievements in a population, but not about the 'quality' of development.

Environmental Performance Index

- EPI is a biennial report by Yale and Columbia Universities along with the World Economic Forum.
- The report ranks 180 countries on 24 performance indicators. It is spread across 10 categories covering environmental health and ecosystem vitality.
- The issue categories are air quality, water and sanitation, water resources, agriculture, forests, fisheries, biodiversity and habitat, and climate and energy.
- Switzerland leads the world in sustainability, followed by France, Denmark, Malta and Sweden in the recent EPI.
- India is among the bottom 5 countries on the index, at 177th place (2018). This is a drop of 36 points from 141 in 2016.
- The country is today among the worst performing on the environmental front and its ranking has worsened over the past five years. (155 in 2014)

Conclusion:

We now have indicators of the progress India has made in the past five years in the three crucial spheres of business, human development and the natural environment.

The government has aggressively pursued an improvement in the business environment. This appears to have yielded fruit in terms of an improvement in the EDB index.

However, at a time when it has been the fastest growing economy in the world, India's rank on human development has remained unchanged and on environmental performance has slipped close to the last place.

The current government has marginally lowered health and education expenditure as a share of national income and distinctly lowered environmental standards. (For instance, Coastal Regulation Zone Notification of 2018 which allows construction and tourism development on land earlier considered inviolable due to its ecological value.)

[illegible]

Connecting the dots:

- Essay – "Ill fares the land where wealth accumulates, but the social and natural environment suffer."
- India ranks 177 out of 180 in Environmental Performance Index. Examine the factors and reasons responsible for such poor performance. Also suggest measures in order to improve its environmental standards.

Unemployment rate at four-decade high: NSSO survey

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Indian Economy and issues related to it; Unemployment

In news:

According to the National Sample Survey Office's (NSSO's) periodic labour force survey (PLFS) –

- The country's unemployment rate stood at a 45-year-high of 6.1 per cent in 2017-18.
- The unemployment rate was at its highest level since 1972-73.
- The report said that joblessness stood at 7.8 percent in urban areas compared with 5.3 parts in the countryside.
- To compare, the unemployment rate in the country had gone down to 2.2% in 2011-12, according to NSSO data.
- This data was collected by the NSSO between July 2017 and June 2018 – and is the first official employment survey after demonetisation.

However, the official survey has been withheld by the government.

While India's economy has been expanding by 7 percent plus annually -- the fastest pace among major economies -- its uneven growth has meant that there are not enough new jobs to keep pace.

Do you know?

- The last report published by the statistics ministry had shown that the unemployment rate rose to 5.0 percent in 2015/16 from 4.9 percent in the previous year and 4.0 percent in 2012/13.

Surveying India's unemployment numbers

Key pointers:

- India is a signatory to IMF's Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS).
- SDDS was established in 1996 to help countries access the international capital markets by providing adequate economic and financial information publicly.
- Monthly measurement of the unemployment rate is one of the requirements of the SDDS, which India has to comply.
- However, India has taken an exception with respect to the measurement of unemployment.

Do you know?

- Government of India does not produce any measure of monthly unemployment rate, nor does it have any plans to do so.
- Its official plans to measure unemployment at an annual and quarterly frequency is in a state of total disorder.
- This does not befit India's claims to be the fastest growing economy and as the biggest beneficiary of a famed demographic dividend.

CMIE and CPHS

- The Centre for Monitoring India Economy (CMIE), a private enterprise, has demonstrated over the past three years that fast frequency measures of unemployment can be made.
- CMIE has succeeded in generating fast frequency measures of household well-being since 2014.
- In its household survey, called the Consumer Pyramids Household Survey (CPHS), the sample size was larger than the official National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO).
- The CPHS is comprehensive, surveying its entire sample every four months.

The CMIE's CPHS thus has a much larger sample and is conducted at a much higher frequency than the NSSO's.

Further, CPHS used intense validation systems and conducted face-to-face interviews necessarily using GPS-enabled smartphones or tablets. Thus, it ensures high fidelity/accuracy of data capture.

Its data capture machinery ensures delivery of high quality data in real time. Once the data is collected and validated in real-time, it is automatically deployed for estimations without any human intervention.

Difference between CPHS and NSSO surveys

1. Status of employment –

- NSSO tries to capture the status of employment for an entire year and for a week.
- CPHS captures the status of employment as on the day of the survey.
- Status of employment can be one of 4 factors - employed; unemployed willing to work and actively looking for a job; unemployed willing to work but not actively looking for a job, and unemployed but neither willing nor looking for a job.

2. Sample size –

- Sample size of CPHS is larger than the official National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO).

3. Recall period –

- Recall period in the CPHS is of the day of the survey (or the immediate preceding day in the case of daily wage labourers)
- CPHS has been able to capture the status fairly accurately with no challenges of the respondent's ability to recall or interpret the status.
- In contrast, the NSSO's system is quite complex.

4. Fast-frequency measures –

- CMIE has succeeded in generating fast frequency measures of household well-being since 2014.
- The large CPHS sample is distributed evenly across rural and urban regions for every week of the execution cycle of 16 weeks of a wave.
- It is this machinery that enables to understand the Indian labour market with fast-frequency measures.

Key findings by CMIE's CPHS

- India's labour participation rate is very low by world standards and that even this low participation rate fell very sharply after demonetisation.
- The average labour participation rate was 47% during January-October 2016. The world average is about 66%.
- Immediately after demonetisation in November 2016, India's labour participation rate fell to 45% and about 2% of the working age population, i.e. about 13 million, moved out of labour markets.
- The data showed that it was largely the unemployed who lost jobs, as they lost hope of finding jobs in the aftermath of demonetisation.
- As more and more unemployed left the labour market, the unemployment rate fell.
- India's female labour participation rate is very low and falling.
- Researchers have shown that this fall is because of rising household incomes that reduce the need for women to join the labour force; increased enrolment in higher education by women which delays their entry into the labour force, and cultural and security factors that keep women away from the labour market in India. Further, it is evident that employers are also biased against hiring women.
- However, the CPHS shows that the situation with respect to women's participation in the labour force is extremely poor — much poorer than what the official agencies tell us.
- The entire brunt of demonetisation was borne by women. Their labour participation fell sharply while that of men did not.

Impact of GST

After the demonetisation jolt came the Goods and Services Tax shock.

- It drove away small enterprises which could not compete in a tax-compliant environment out of business. This caused a substantial loss of jobs.
- Employment shrunk by 11 million in 2018.
- The brunt of this was again borne largely by women. But men too were also impacted.
- Urban female labour participation rates fell faster than rural female participation.
- Both Male labour participation rate and female labour participation dropped.
- The unemployment rate for men was 4.9% in 2018 and that for women in the same year was much higher — 14.9%. (Indicates bias against employing women.)

Conclusion:

Drawing women into the labour force by removing the impediments they face to at least bring their participation levels close to global standards is critically important for India to gain from the demographic dividend opportunity it has.

By not using a good data monitoring machinery, the Indian government is keeping both itself and the citizenry in the dark.

Connecting the dots:

- Why unemployment will be the biggest challenge for policy makers in the next decade? Analyse. Also discuss the implications of inefficient data monitoring machinery.

The shape of the jobs crisis

Key concerns:

- Job creation has slowed since 2011-12
- 2011-12 was the year of the last published National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) labour force survey.
- Labour Bureau annual survey (2015-16) data and Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) data, which has a sample size larger than the NSSO labour force surveys, has also highlighted high unemployment rate in India.

Do you know?

- Both the surveys captures better data than NSSO as they cover rural and urban, and organised and unorganised sector employment.

- They also capture both the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation/National Pension Scheme (organised) as well as such employment as might be generated by Micro Units Development & Refinance Agency Ltd (MUDRA) loans or platform economy jobs.
- The latter two job sources were not being captured by the NSSO jobs data available.
- We can conclude that the jobs situation has turned grim since 2012.

According to the leaked NSSO 2017-18 data –

- Open unemployment rate (which does not measure disguised unemployment and informal poor quality jobs) jumped to 6.1% in 2017-18 from 2.6% between 1977-78 and 2011-12.
- There was a sharp increase in the unemployment rate of the educated.
- Reasons for such high jump: More number of young people becoming educated.
- The expectation of such youth is for a urban, regular job in either industry or services, not in agriculture. Therefore, many remained unemployed and open unemployment rates increased.
- As open unemployment rates increased, more and more people got disheartened and fell out of the labour force; in other words, they stopped looking for work.
- Labour force participation rates (LFPR, i.e. those looking for work) for all ages, fell sharply from 43% in 2004-5 to 39.5% in 2011-12, to 36.9% in 2017-18.
- Therefore, number of youth who are NEETs: not in education, employment or training increased.
- They are a potential source of both our demographic dividend but also what is looking to be a mounting demographic disaster.

Do you know?

- In the last 10-12 years, more young people have become educated.
- The tertiary education enrolment rate (for those in the 18-23 age group) rose from 11% in 2006 to 26% in 2016.
- The gross secondary (classes 9-10) enrolment rate for those in the 15-16 age groupshot up from 58% in 2010 to 90% in 2016.

Also according to the leaked NSSO 2017-18 data –

- Between 2004-05 and 2011-12, as many as 7.5 million new non-agricultural jobs were being created every year. The unemployment rate was only 2.2%.
- The volume of open unemployment was almost constant (at around 10 million) until 2011-12, but it increased to 16.5 million by 2015-16.
- However, post 2011-12, non-agricultural jobs were less but the volume of open unemployment was high. This situation got worsened further by 2017-18.

Number of workers in agriculture fell sharply but increased recently

- For an economy at India's stage of development, an increase of workers in agriculture is a structural retrogression, in a direction opposite to the desired one.
- Between 2004-5 and 2011-12, the number of workers in agriculture fell sharply, which is good, for the first time in India's economic history.
- However, after 2012, as non-agricultural job growth slowed, the number of youth in agriculture actually increased to 84.8 million till 2015-16 and even more since then. (As per CMIE data)
- These youth were better educated than the earlier cohort, but were forced to be in agriculture.

Drop in manufacturing jobs

- Manufacturing jobs actually fell in absolute terms, from 58.9 million in 2011-12 to 48.3 million in 2015-16. (10.6 million over a four-year period)
- This is consistent with slowing growth in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), which consists of manufacturing, mining, and electricity.
- The IIP had sharply risen from 100 in 2004-5 to 172 by 2013-14 (in the 2004-5 series), but only rose from a base of 100 in 2011-12 in the later series to 107 in 2013-14, and to 125.3 in 2017-18.
- Exports fell after 2013 and barely recovered after that.
- Investment-to-GDP ratio also fell and still remaining well below 2013 levels. This holds for both private and public investment.

Conclusion:

- The youth ("NEET" and unemployed) together constitute the potential labour force, which can be utilised to realise the demographic dividend in India.
- The number of new entrants into the labour force (especially educated entrants) will go on increasing until 2030.
- By 2040 our demographic dividend will be over.
- China managed to reduce poverty sharply by designing an employment strategy aligned to its industrial strategy. That is why it rode the wave of its demographic dividend.
- Unfortunately, India has neither an industrial policy nor an employment strategy, let alone the two being aligned.
- Policy makers should address the same at the earliest.

India always boasts of having the youngest and largest working age population in the world. An inability to create jobs for them will prevent the country from reaping the much-touted demographic dividend. Hence it is necessary to ensure growth is job oriented, holistic and inclusive to make sustainable.

Connecting the dots:

- Why unemployment will be the biggest challenge for policy makers in the next decade? Analyse. Also discuss the implications of a large unemployed youth population.
- India's growth story has been marked by jobless growth in recent years. In this light, discuss the plausible reasons and measures of transformation from jobless to real growth.

Two crore jobs created in 16 months to December 2018: CSO

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Indian Economy and issues related to it; Economic Development

In news:

- According to the payroll data of the Employees State Insurance Corporation (ESIC), nearly two crore jobs were created in 16 months to December 2018.
- The ESIC data is one of the payroll numbers released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in its reports based on people joining various social security schemes run by Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) and Pension Fund Regulatory Development Authority (PFRDA).
- The ESIC provides health insurance and medical services to its insured person, covering all those establishment which have 20 or more workers and all those employees whose monthly wages are up to ₹21,000.
- During the period from September 2017 and December 2018, as many as 1.96 crore new subscribers joined the scheme.
- Similarly, the EPFO data showed that employment generation in the formal sector almost trebled to touch a 16-month high of 7.16 lakh in December 2018, compared to 2.37 lakh in the year-ago month.
- It indicated that nearly 72.32 lakh new subscribers were added to social security schemes of the EPFO from September 2017 to December 2018.
- The EPFO covers all those firms that have 20 or more employees. Workers, whose basic wages are up to ₹15,000 per month at the time of joining the job, are mandatorily covered under the scheme.

New NPS numbers

- The estimated number of new NPS (National Pension Scheme) subscribers during the period — September 2017 to December 2018 — is 9, 66,381.

- The NPS covers central and State government employees while others can voluntarily subscribes to it.
- The report gives different perspectives on the levels of employment in the formal sector and does not measure employment at a holistic level.

Centre may relax angel tax norms for start-ups

In news:

- Centre decides to set up a five-member working committee to look into the angel tax issue and come up with guidelines soon.
- Start-ups have come under the scrutiny of tax officials for having raised capital above the fair value of their shares.

Reforms proposed:

- Start-ups whose aggregate amount of paid-up share capital and share premium after the proposed issue of share does not exceed ₹10 crore are eligible for exemption from the tax.
- Definition of a start-up will be amended to include companies that have been in operation for up to 10 years rather than the previous limit of seven years.

What is 'Angel Tax'?

- The 'angel tax' is the tax on share premium paid to acquire new shares in a company that the tax authorities regard as excessive.
- It is a 30% tax that is levied on the funding received by startups from an external investor. However, this 30% tax is levied when startups receive angel funding at a valuation higher than its 'fair market value'. It is counted as income to the company and is taxed.
- Angel tax was introduced in 2012, with the purpose of keeping money laundering in check.

Why is Angel tax problematic?

- There is no definitive or objective way to measure the 'fair market value' of a startup. Investors pay a premium for the idea and the business potential at the angel funding stage. However, tax officials seem to be assessing the value of the startups based on their net asset value at one point. Several startups say that they find it difficult to justify the higher valuation to tax officials.

- In a May, 2018 notification, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) had exempted angel investors from the Angel Tax clause subject to fulfilment of certain terms and conditions, as specified by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP). However, despite the exemption notification, there are a host of challenges that startups are still faced with, in order to get this exemption.

Timely review: On Angel Tax

Context:

- We read that Centre has decided to set up a five-member working committee to look into the angel tax issue and come up with guidelines soon. (05 Feb 2019 DNA – Centre may relax angel tax norms for start-ups)
- Therefore, start-ups which were troubled by the so-called angel tax may soon receive some concession from the government.

About Angel Tax

- Angel tax is a term used to refer to the income tax payable on capital raised by unlisted companies via issue of shares where the share price is seen in excess of the fair market value of the shares sold.
- The excess realisation is treated as income and taxed accordingly.
- The tax was introduced in the 2012 Union Budget by then finance minister Pranab Mukherjee to arrest laundering of funds.
- It has come to be called angel tax since it largely impacts angel investments in startups.

Issue with Angel Tax

- Start-up owners have complained that income tax officials have asked many start-ups to cough up money when they try to attract capital into their entities by issuing new shares.
- However, IT department fears that start-ups may be used as convenient tools to launder illegally acquired money, so a tax on investments beyond a certain threshold is necessary to deter such shady operations.
- But while the intent of such an angel tax may be justifiable, the arbitrary nature of it means the cost of unintended consequences could be larger than the supposed benefits.
- Investors, foreign or domestic, may become wary of investing in new ideas when they are taxed while risking money on untested ventures.

Do you know?

- In trying to curb money-laundering, Section 56(2)(viib) of the Indian Income Tax Act, 1961 gives income tax officials a free hand to harass even genuine start-ups looking to raise investments for their growth.
- Under the Act, the IT department is free to arbitrarily decide the fair value of a company's share and tax start-ups if the price at which their new shares are sold to investors is higher than the fair value of these shares.

In crux, the broad-brush tax on all investments means **an unnecessary cost is imposed on the wider start-up community simply because of the lack of better means at the government's disposal to tackle black money**.

Therefore, the government has set up a committee to raise the threshold beyond which new investments into start-ups will be taxed.

The committee is expected to recommend provisions that make life easier to a certain extent for angel investors and start-ups.

It's high time to review the above provisions, make necessary changes and provide impetus to the start-ups. After all, some of today's start-ups will be billion-dollar companies tomorrow. Therefore, they deserve a soft touch in their initial years.

Connecting the dots:

- What is Angel Tax? Do you think Angel tax is an impediment to entrepreneurship and start-ups? Discuss.

Startups to be listed for angel tax exemption

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Indian Economy and issues related to it

Context:

- We earlier dealt with articles with regard to Angel Tax and how start-ups were troubled by the so-called angel tax.
- For more info, visit – (About Angel Tax, Issue with Angel Tax)
- IT department is free to arbitrarily decide the fair value of a company's share and tax start-ups if the price at which their new shares are sold to investors is higher than the fair value of these shares. IT officials have a free hand to harass even genuine start-ups looking to raise investments for their growth.

- Unnecessary cost were imposed on the wider start-up community to tackle black money.

Therefore, the government has set up a committee to recommend provisions that make life easier to a certain extent for angel investors and start-ups.

In news:

- The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) and the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) agreed to compile a list of startups eligible for angel tax exemption.
- Startups will be listed for exemption based on their audited financial statements and income tax returns of the previous year.
- The government also decided to raise the maximum time limit below which a firm would be deemed eligible for angel tax exemption to 10 years from the earlier seven.
- The paid-up share capital threshold below which startups would be eligible for an exemption has been set at ₹25 crore. (i.e., For investments below ₹25 crore, no questions would be asked.)

SDG India Index Baseline Report by NITI Aayog

Context:

- India was one among the 193 United Nations member states to adopt the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015. It has been making sincere efforts to achieve these goals.
- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), are ambitious global aspirations on development that address key aspects of universal wellbeing, across different socio-economic, cultural, geographical divisions as well as the interconnectedness among the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development.

NITI Aayog has the twin mandate:

1. To oversee the implementation of SDGs in the country
2. Promote Competitive and Cooperative Federalism among States and Union Territories (UTs)

In exercise of these roles, **NITI has developed the SDG India Index**, a comprehensive Index to measure progress of States / UTs, through a single measurable Index and the First Baseline Report for 2018, prepared with the support of Global Green Growth Institute and UN in India.

SDG India Index is a useful comparative account of how well different States and Union Territories have performed so far in their efforts to achieve these goals.

Do you know?

- The index comprises a composite score for each State and Union Territory based on their aggregate performance across 14 of the 17 SDGs.
- In other words, it has not been possible to establish suitable indicators for three of the 17 goals, including climate action (SDG-13).
- This is on account of either lack of identification of appropriate indicators or of the inability to compare different States.

Four categories

Based on a scale of 0 to 100, the States are categorised into four groups:

1. Achievers: those States which have already accomplished the set target.
2. Front runners: those States that are very close to realising them. (Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Himachal Pradesh; Chandigarh among UTs)
3. Performers: A majority of the States are categorised as performers.
4. Aspirants

The average Indian score was 57. Almost 17 States qualify as above or equal to the national score.

Concerns:

- Many States fall into the aspirant category, especially for SDG-5 (gender equality), SDG-9 (industry innovation and infrastructure) and SDG-11 (sustainable cities and communities).
- There seems to be a negatively skewed distribution of scores among the states. It hints at a purposive designation of a few States in two extremes (achievers and aspirants) and a major share of them in between (front runners and performers).
- Arbitrariness classification – The methodology used leads to the assessment falling short of reflecting the true picture. There are variations across different goals and merely averaging them compromises on robustness and the uniqueness of each state.

The way ahead:

- Setting simple averages as targets for all states for each of the goals overlooks the aspect of inter-dependence of various goals.
- To ensure minimum robustness of this measure, a geometric average would ensure that achievement of progress in one goal cannot compensate for compromise in another.
- The choice of indicators representing specific goals need not necessarily be guided by availability but also their explicit independence from one another.

- Setting a uniform set of indicators for each of the goals with proper representation without duplication.

Connecting the dots:

- Examine the role of NITI Aayog in overseeing the implementation of SDGs in the country.
- Discuss the mandate and significance of NITI Aayog in India.

'95% of registered realty firms have no PAN'

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Indian Economy and issues related to it

In news:

- Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) found that a whopping 95% of the real estate sector companies registered with the Registrar of Companies (RoC) did not have a permanent account number (PAN).
- CAG says I-T dept. has no mechanism to ensure all registered companies have PAN and file returns.

Panel moots minimum wage of ₹375 per day

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Indian Economy and wage related issues

In news:

According to **Expert Committee on Determining the Methodology for Fixation of the National Minimum Wage –**

- Minimum wage for workers across the country be set at ₹375 per day, or ₹9,750 per month.
- It also recommended **different national minimum wages for "different geographical regions** of the country to suit the local realities and as per socio-economic and labour market contexts."

Do you know?

- While the Minimum Wages Act was enacted in 1948, it stipulates different wages according to occupation and State; there is no national minimum wage.
- The Code on Wages Bill, 2017, had proposed a national minimum wage and five regional minimum wages.

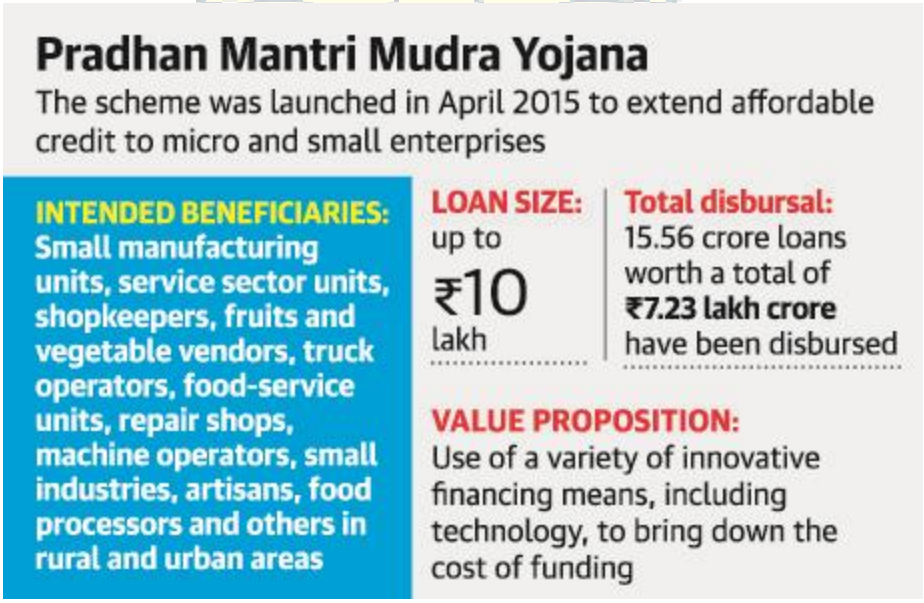
- State governments must be consulted before any national minimum wage is set by the Centre.

Labour Bureau files MUDRA job report

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Indian Economy; Economic Development

In news:

- The Labour Bureau has completed its survey on employment generated by the MUDRA loan scheme.
- The survey is expected to help the Centre as it provides a potential data tool to combat other reports showing a dismal scenario on jobs.
- The Labour Bureau's completed report on MUDRA loans has now been submitted to the Centre at a time when it is taking flak for not releasing the results of the National Sample Survey Organization's periodic labour force survey.



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About Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana

- It was introduced in April 2015 and provides affordable credit to micro and small enterprises.

- Loans up to ₹10 lakh are extended to non-corporate, non-farm enterprises by the Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency (MUDRA) through last-mile financial institutions.

GST on under-construction houses cut

In news:

- Goods and Services Tax Council decided to reduce tax rates on the sale of under-construction residential properties.
- The Council decided that the rate for normal residential properties would be 5% without the option of availing input tax credits.

Govt. detects ₹20,000 cr. GST evasion, ₹10,000 cr. Recovered

Part of: GS Paper II - Economic Development

In news:

- The government has detected ₹20,000 crore worth GST evasion so far this fiscal and will take more steps to check frauds and increase compliance.
- GST evasion worth ₹20,000 crore had been detected, of which ₹10,000 crore was recovered.

BANKING/RBI RELATED ISSUES

NBFCs and its significance

Introduction:

- India has 10,000 active NBFCs that are regulated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), of which some 275 are systemically important (SI).
- There are a lot of disruptions taking place in banking sector, but still NBFCs would have an upper hand.
- Many NBFCs have doubled their balance sheet sizes, whereas majority of the banks either did nothing or got entangled in mess.

Unlike banks, NBFCs are insulated from the vagaries of farm loan waivers and priority lending. The NBFC sector in India, which serves a genuine need, has undergone a significant transformation over the past few years.

Basic: What is NBFC?

- Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) refers to a financial institution. NBFC is a type of company engaged in the business of receiving loans and advances, acquisition of stocks or shares, leasing, hire-purchase, insurance business, chit business under Companies Act 2013.
- The main business activity of the NBFCs is to raise capital funds from public depositors and investors and then lend to borrowers as per the rules and regulations prescribed by the Reserve Bank of India.
- NBFCs are becoming alternative to the banking and financial sector.
- In NBFC there is a requirement of minimum net owned fund of Rs. 2 Crore.

What is the difference between Banks & NBFCs?

- Banks are the government authorized financial intermediary that aims at providing banking services to the general people. Whereas NBFC provides banking services to people without carrying a bank license.
- NBFC is incorporated under the Companies Act whereas a bank is registered under Banking Regulation Act, 1949.
- NBFCs are not allowed to accept deposits which are repayable on demand whereas banks which accepts demand deposits.
- In NBFC, foreign Investments up to 100% is allowed. Whereas in case of private sector banks they are eligible for foreign investment, but which would be not more than 74%.

- Banks are an integral part of payment and settlement cycle while NBFC is not a part of this system.
- It is mandatory for banks to maintain reserve ratios like CRR or SLR. Whereas in case of NBFC it is not required to maintain reserve ratios.
- Deposit insurance facility is allowed to the depositors by Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC). In case of NBFC, this type of facility shall not be available.
- Banks can create credit whereas in case of NBFC they are not involved in the creation of credit.
- Banks can provide transaction services to its customers such as providing overdraft facility, issue of traveler's cheque, transfer of funds, etc. Whereas these type of services cannot be provided by NBFC.

Significance of NBFCs

- **Credit access** in our country is vastly under-penetrated, and businesses need constant capital to grow.
- NBFCs with use of technology and innovation, wide reach, customised products, smart credit underwriting and strong risk management capabilities have been **able to control bad debts**.
- With **better understanding of clients**, they have created clusters and niches which would be impossible for the banks to replicate or cater to.
- Projects like 'Make in India' and the boom in startups are offering huge opportunities. In fact, NBFCs remain a good proxy to bet on the new, agile India.
- NBFCs serve customer segments that are un-served or under-served by banks.

Though their cost of funding is higher than that of banks, a decent spread and lower cost of operations can do the job for them.
NBFCs have, so far, achieved a tremendous feat by meeting their massive short-term /commercial paper obligations in this quarter. They have weathered many storms in the past (since the 2008 global financial crisis to demonetisation in late 2016) and seems to have almost overcome the current liquidity crisis as well.

NBFCs have evolved strongly over the recent years. The next decade could well belong to them and their shareholders.

However, NBFCs in India are going through a rough phase following defaults by infrastructure lender, Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services (IL&FS).

Banks are the major resource avenue for NBFCs. After defaults by IL&FS, both public sector and private sector banks almost stopped lending to NBFCs and housing finance companies (HFCs).

Such defaults might also keep potential investors away from the debt instruments of companies.

Need for an Unified Financial Authority

Indian non-banks are governed by a regulatory hodgepodge of RBI, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA), NHB, the ministry of corporate affairs (for NIDHI companies) and state governments (for chit funds). Cooperation is on an ad hoc basis and often post-event.

The commission chaired by former **justice B.N. Srikrishna, also called Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Commission (FSLRC),** recommended that SEBI, IRDA, the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority and the Forward Markets Commission (since merged with SEBI) be merged under one regulator to be called the **Unified Financial Authority**.

The FSLRC recommended for a strong legal framework added to Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC).

Implementing FSLRC recommendation, with a more focused scope for RBI and creating a unified regulator with teeth for macro-prudential supervision will help NBFCs avoid falling into such crisis.

It is time to focus on systemic risk and the only way to do that is to simplify and give that specific scope to one regulatory agency.

Connecting the dots:

- The idea of forming an umbrella regulator for all the financial institutions and related agencies will go a long way in overhauling the financial ecosystem of India. Do you agree? Discuss.
- Discuss the rationale behind constituting Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs). Are they successful? How are they different from the banks?

RBI cuts rates to spur growth

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains Paper III – Indian Economy, issues related to growth, mobilization of resources, etc.; Macro economy: Banking, Monetary Policy

In news:

- RBI cuts 'repo rate' by 25 basis points to 6.25% in a bid to revive economic growth.
- The move will enable banks to lower their lending rates.
- The RBI also simultaneously **changed the stance of the policy to 'neutral' from 'calibrated tightening,'** which indicates that the central bank remains ready to move in either direction based on incoming data.

What is Repo rate?

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

What happens when RBI decreases repo rate?

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

Do you know?

RBI's various policy stances with regard to policy rates

Accommodative Stance

- Accommodative stance means RBI may reduce the policy rates to increase the money supply in the economy.
- Under this stance, policy rates normally decrease.
- Usually, this policy is adopted when there is slowdown in the economy.

Neutral stance

- Neutral stance means the RBI would have the flexibility to either increase or decrease the policy rates by taking into account the macroeconomic conditions.
- Under this stance, key policy rates would move in either direction.
- Usually, this policy is adopted when the inflation rate is stable.

Calibrated Tightening stance

- Calibrated Tightening stance means the RBI would either keep the rates constant or increase the rates.

- Under this stance, key policy rates either remain unchanged or increase. Decrease in policy rates is ruled out.
- Usually, this policy is adopted when there are concerns of higher rate of inflation.

Bank recapitalisation and Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) Framework

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Government policies and interventions; Indian Economy and issues relating to it

In news:

- The Centre has approved a recapitalisation package of ₹48,239 crore for 12 public sector banks.
- Bank recapitalisation means recapitalising banks with new capital to improve their balance sheet.
- The government, using different instruments, infuses capital into banks undergoing credit crunch.
- Capital is the money invested by shareholders in the business. Since the government is the biggest shareholder in public sector banks, the responsibility of infusing capital majorly lies with the government.
- The recapitalisation plan comes into action when banks get caught in a situation where their liabilities are comparatively higher than their assets.

Objectives of Bank recapitalisation:

- To bring the better-performing banks now in the Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) category out of the restrictive framework.
- To help those banks that had come out of the PCA to stay out of it.
- To equip non-PCA banks to meet regulatory requirements.
- To help the PCA banks to meet their requirements.

Important Value Additions:

What is RBI's Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) Framework?

- RBI introduces Prompt Corrective Action when the Bank's financial conditions worsen below certain limits.
- The limits are based on three conventional financial indicators – CRAR (capital to risk weighted assets ratio), Net NPA and Return on Assets.
- Whenever the Bank is in the PCA category, the RBI will intervene with corrective action.

- PCA norms allow the regulator to place certain restrictions such as halting branch expansion and stopping dividend payment. It can even cap a bank's lending limit to one entity or sector.

The parameters that invite corrective action from the central bank are:

1. Capital to Risk weighted Asset Ratio (CRAR)
2. Net Non-Performing Assets (NPA) and
3. Return on Assets (RoA)
4. Leverage ratio

Banks may set repo rate as benchmark

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Indian Economy and issues related to it; Economic Development

In news:

- Most commercial banks in India are likely to select RBI's repo rate as the external benchmark to decide their lending rates, from April 1.
- The repo rate is the key policy rate of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- RBI had asked the banks to move to an external benchmark for loan pricing from April 1, a move expected to improve monetary transmission as lenders had, in the past, been found reluctant to reduce lending rate.

Do you know?

- Banks had four options from which to choose the external benchmark: the repo rate, the 91-day treasury bill, the 182-day T-bill or any other benchmark interest rate produced by the Financial Benchmarks India Private Ltd (FBIL).
- The marginal cost of fund based lending rate (MCLR) is currently the benchmark for all loan rates. Banks typically add a spread to the MCLR while pricing loans for homes and automobiles.
- Banks against move: Many banks have opposed the move to shift to a new external benchmark for loan pricing on grounds that their cost of funds are not linked to these benchmarks and that without a fall in the costs, it would not be possible to change the rates.

RBI takes 3 banks off prompt corrective action framework

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Indian Economy and issues related to it; Economic Development

Context:

- We recently read about Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) Framework
- RBI introduces Prompt Corrective Action when the Bank's financial conditions worsen below certain limits.
- The limits are based on three conventional financial indicators – CRAR (capital to risk weighted assets ratio), Net NPA and Return on Assets.
- Whenever the Bank is in the PCA category, the RBI will intervene with corrective action.

In news:

- Three banks – Allahabad Bank and Corporation Bank, from the public sector, and Dhanlaxmi Bank from the private sector – are now out of the RBI's PCA framework.
- Earlier, Bank of India, Oriental Bank of Commerce and Bank of Maharashtra were taken off from PCA framework.

Do you know?

- There are another six banks that are still under PCA framework.

AGRICULTURE

Tackling Farm Distress: Make farming profitable

Six steps to tackle farm distress and make farming profitable –

1. Understanding the difference between farm distress and alleviating poverty

- About **70% of farmers cultivate less than 1 hectare** and have a **farm income less than ₹9,000 per month**.
- This group is definitely poor and deserves to benefit from any basic income transfer scheme that might be introduced.
- Remaining 30% of farmers account for about 75% of agricultural production and an even larger proportion of marketed surplus.
- This category is not poor, but they are distressed because they find farming is not as profitable as it should be.

Therefore, policy makers should **focus on making farming more profitable** so that it **can attract farmers to invest** more in farming. This will generate higher levels of income.
Prosperous farms in turn will raise agricultural wage rates and also demand for non-agricultural products. It will also increase rural employment.

2. Increasing agricultural productivity

- Water is the most important input for higher productivity, especially in the 60% of area that is rain-fed.
- State governments focus far too much on large irrigation schemes, which absorb a great deal of resources, and benefit only a small portion of the land.
- It would be much more cost-effective to shift to **less capital-intensive minor irrigation** and **water conservation projects**.
- MGNREGA should focus on minor irrigation, water conservation and **water harvesting projects**.
- Steps should be taken to protect agricultural production from the effects of climate change.
- Carefully designed long-term programme and a **separate climate change adaptation programme** for each district will help.

3. Better technology

- **Improved seeds**, increased role of ICAR and state agricultural universities in this area.
- **Make research more result-oriented**.

- Allow scientific testing of new **GM technology** and farmers should be provided access to genetically modified (GM) technology.
- **Create apps** that enable farmers to get high-quality advice.
- This is an area where **innovative public-private partnerships** could also be encouraged.

4. Marketing increased production

- Getting **remunerative prices** is obviously critical for profitability.
- **Effective minimum support prices (MSPs)** and **procurement system**.
- The cost reported by the Commission on Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) should take into account world price trends.
- The states should **replace their exiting Agricultural Produce Market Committee Acts** with a new modern law that will encourage private markets in competition with mandis.
- The centre should **abolish the Essential Commodities Act**, which prevents the emergence of large private traders, as the ability to impose stock limits under the Act creates huge uncertainty, ruling out private investment.

5. Foreign trade policies

- **Export-import policies must be made pro-farmer** so that they are able to get the full benefits of higher prices abroad.
- Farmers should be protected from any sudden collapse in world prices by an appropriate adjustment in duties.
- Government should anticipate world price developments and should be extremely fast in responding.

6. Income transfers

- Income transfer scheme can get to the poor efficiently and does not disrupt fiscal prudence.
- The Rythu Bandhu scheme of Telangana and the Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation scheme of Odisha are both income transfer schemes.
- They are not linked to investment in the farm in any way.
- Rhythu Bandhu is also tilted towards rich landowners.
- Government focus should be more on increasing farm profitability.

Connecting the words:

- Agrarian distress has become a serious challenge for the economy and has grave socio-political repercussions. Discuss what steps are needed to tackle farm distress and make farming profitable.

PM- KISAN: The return of targeted cash transfers

Introduction:

Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme was announced during the interim budget 2019-20.

- The scheme aims to provide an **assured income support** to the small and marginal farmers.
- Under this programme, vulnerable landholding farmer families, **having cultivable land upto 2 hectares**, will be provided direct income support at the rate of **Rs. 6,000 per year.**
- This income support will be transferred directly into the bank accounts of beneficiary farmers, in **three equal instalments of Rs. 2,000 each**.
- This programme will be **funded by Government of India**.
- Around 12 crore small and marginal farmer families are expected to benefit from this.
- PM-KISAN is expected to pave the way for the farmers to earn and live a respectable living.

Therefore the proposals in the Indian context have mostly been for a targeted income transfer scheme and not UBI. (No Universality)

In developed countries, the UBI is supposed to supplement existing social security provisions and a top-up over and above universal provision of health, education and so on.

Concerns:

- In the Indian context, most arguments in favour of UBI are premised on the inefficiencies of existing social security interventions and seek to replace some of these with direct cash transfers.
- However, **universalisation is the key to efficient delivery of services** against targeting proposed by these cash transfer schemes.
- Also there is obsession with cash transfers as it is assumed that it will take care of all problems. A silver bullet for agrarian crisis to malnutrition to educational deficit and also a solution for the job crisis.
- The real issue with the approach of a targeted cash transfer scheme is that it envisions the role of the state to only providing cash income to the poor.

Conclusion:

This kind of 'Robin Hood approach' seeks to **absolve the state of its responsibility in providing basic services** such as health, education, nutrition and livelihood. It seeks to create demand for

services without supplying the services, leaving the poor to depend on private service providers.

Privatisation of basic services such as health and education leads to large scale exclusion of the poor and marginalised.

The best antidote to poverty is enabling citizens to earn their living by providing jobs. MGNREGA should be strengthened to enable them to earn decent incomes.

Similarly, the crisis in agriculture is unlikely to be resolved by income transfers. (As discussed in above editorial)

Analysis of PM-KISAN: Will the Rs6,000 farmer payout help?

Context:

- The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme, which was announced in the Interim Budget 2019-20.
- Under this programme, vulnerable landholding farmer families, having cultivable land upto 2 hectares, will be provided direct income support at the rate of 6,000 per year.
- This income support will be transferred directly into the bank accounts of beneficiary farmers, in three equal instalments of Rs. 2,000 each.
- This programme will be funded by Government of India.
- Around 12 crore small and marginal farmer families are expected to benefit from this.
- PM-KISAN is expected to pave the way for the farmers to earn and live a respectable living.

Need of the Scheme:

1. To address issues of fragmented land holding

- According to the 10th Agriculture Census 2015-16, the small and marginal farmers till 47.34% of agriculture land but are 86.21 % of the labour force.
- Moreover farms got more fragmented between 2010-11 and 2015-16, which is a major limitation to reap the benefits of economies of scale and led to low marketable surplus which further resulted into low farmer income.

2. To improve farmers income

- According to **Ashok Dalwai Committee**, average monthly farmer income is Rs 6,246 and their average monthly expenditure is Rs 6,223, which leads to inadequate saving and resulted in low investment in farm sectors.
- It is important to keep in mind that the average annual income of small and marginal farmers is well below the average income of all farmers.
- Hence the benefit being given to small and marginal farmers through PM-KISAN will provide them assured supplemental income and also meet their emergent expenses, especially immediately after harvest.
- The scheme is also sustainable and will increase the confidence of small and marginal farmers.

3. To check increasing indebtedness

- Due to low income, and high input cost, indebtedness in farmers, (particularly marginal and small) is increasing.
- Debt income ratio of marginal farmers is 1.42 while for small farmer stands at 0.9.
- Around 50% of small and marginal farmers debt comes from money lenders.

4. To bring farmers into the fold of institutional credit

- By direct cash transfers, the scheme will bring small and marginal farmers (who are most vulnerable to informal credit) into the fold of institutional credits so that they can reap the benefits of Kisan Credit Card (KCC) regime.

Challenges to the Scheme:

1. Meagre Fund Transfer

- The amount to be transferred to farmers is lower than the income support being given by some of the States which already implemented similar schemes: Telangana's Rythu Bandhu scheme gives farmers 10,000 per acre per year, and Odisha's KALIA scheme, gives 10,000 per household per year to small landholders as well as landless tenant farmers.
- According to agricultural economist Ashok Gulati, “This is too little. At Rs 500 per month, it will amount to less than 1/15th of an average household's income.

2. Landless labour is not included

- Scheme does not include landless, sharecropper and tenants, moreover the Budget outlay for MGNREGA has also been slashed to only Rs. 60000 crores from 61000 crores in 2018-19, where the required allocation is minimum Rs 85,000 crores.

3. Land Record Issues

- Land records are not sorted out in rural India and without land settlement it is difficult to ensure the advantage of PM-KISAN.

Way Forward:

- The smaller the land holding are in the greater the need for financial support, hence PM-Kisan is a right step.
- However, PM-KISAN should not shadow the real issues of agrarian crisis. Even though record food grain production in last three years, farmers were unable to get good prices for their produce.
- Hence government's focus on doubling farmer income, by providing remunerative prices for farmers, raising productivity, supporting agricultural land policy to solve the problem of land fragmentation and providing relief measure through agricultural insurance and credit surety should not be diluted.

Connecting the dots:

- Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi is seen as a game changer to address farmer's distress. Critically analyze the effectiveness of targeted cash transfers?

Why MGNREGA better than PM-KISAN?

Context:

Two key concerns: Rural distress and Unemployment has hit unprecedented levels.
In order to address above issues, one of the announcements in the Budget speech was cash transfer scheme - **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN)**.

Note:
We have already read many articles dealing with Agrarian/Farm Distress and PM-KISAN:

1. Tackling Farm Distress: Make farming profitable
2. PM- KISAN: The return of targeted cash transfers
3. Analysis of PM-KISAN: Will the Rs6,000 farmer payout help?

About PM-KISAN Scheme (Fast Recap)

- It aims to extend direct income support at the rate of Rs. 6,000 per year to farmer families, having cultivable land upto 2 hectares.
- This income support will be transferred directly into the bank accounts of beneficiary farmers, in three equal instalments of Rs. 2,000 each.
- Around 12 Crore small and marginal farmer families are expected to benefit.
- This programme will be funded by Government of India.
- This programme will entail an annual expenditure of Rs.75,000 crore.
- PM-KISAN would pave the way for the farmers to earn and live a respectable living.

-KISAN scheme is a reasonable solution to [illegible] strengthening the MGNREGA would be more prudent than a targeted cash transfer plan like PM-KISAN.

MGNREGA and PM-KISAN

1. A month of MGNREGA earnings for a household (if two members of a household works) is more than a year's income support through PM-KISAN anywhere in the country.
2. PM-KISAN is a targeted cash transfer programme and MGNREGA is a universal programme. Any rural household willing to do manual work is eligible under the Act.
3. The landless can earn through the MGNREGA but are not eligible for the PM-KISAN scheme. According to the 2011 Socio-Economic and Caste Census, around 40% of rural households are landless and depend on manual labour.
4. It is unclear how tenant farmers, those without titles, and women farmers would be within the ambit of the PM-KISAN scheme.
5. Land records are not sorted out in rural India and without land settlement it is difficult to ensure the advantage of PM-KISAN.
6. Universal schemes are less prone to corruption than targeted schemes.
7. In targeted programmes, it is very common to have errors of exclusion, i.e., genuine beneficiaries get left out.

Other Issues:

Under PM-KISAN, **funds will be electronically transferred** to the beneficiary's bank account by [Government of India] through State Notional Account **on a pattern similar to MGNREGS**.

1. **Delay in payments:** The Centre has frequently tinkered with the wage payments system in the MGNREGA. Centre alone has been causing a delay of more than 50 days in disbursing wages.
2. **Payments rejected due to technical reasons:** In the last four years alone, more than ₹1,300 crore of the MGNREGS wage payments have been rejected due to technical errors such as incorrect account numbers or faulty Aadhaar mapping.
3. **Payments getting diverted:** There are numerous cases of MGNREGS payments getting diverted to Airtel wallets and ICICI bank accounts.
4. **Failure of Aadhaar-based payments** – 42% of the biometric authentications failed in the first attempt, compelling them to come later. (continued harassment faced by people)

The government is building a new scheme (PM-KISAN) on similar shaky platforms.
In addition, the success of the PM-KISAN depends on there being reliable digital land records and reliable rural banking infrastructure.

While ₹75,000 crore has been earmarked for this scheme, the MGNREGA continues to be pushed to a severe crisis.

We know that, MGNREGA allocation for 2019-20 is ₹60,000 crore, lower than the revised budget of ₹61,084 crore in 2018-19. And among those allocated ₹60,000 crore, around 20% of the money goes to unpaid pending payments from previous years.

Thus, subtracting the pending liabilities, in real terms, the Budget allocation has been lower than 2010-11.

Conclusion:

- Therefore, strengthening an existing universal programme such as the MGNREGA would have been a prudent move instead of introducing a hasty targeted cash transfer programme.
- The MGNREGA is neither an income support programme nor just an asset creation programme. It is a labour programme meant to strengthen participatory democracy through community works. It is a legislative mechanism to strengthen the constitutional principle of the right to life.
- Moreover, the MGNREGA works have demonstrably strong multiplier effects. By routinely under-funding this Act, the current government continues to undermine the constitutional guarantee.

Connecting the dots:

- Strengthening the MGNREGA would be more prudent than a targeted cash transfer plan like PM-KISAN. Do you agree? Critically examine.

For effective implementation of PM-KISAN

Context:

In previous DNA editorials, we covered –

- About Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme (Click here)
- Analysis of PM-KISAN: Will the Rs6,000 farmer payout help? (Click Here)
- Need of the scheme (Click Here)
- Challenges to the scheme (Click Here)
- Why MGNREGA better than PM-KISAN? (Click Here)

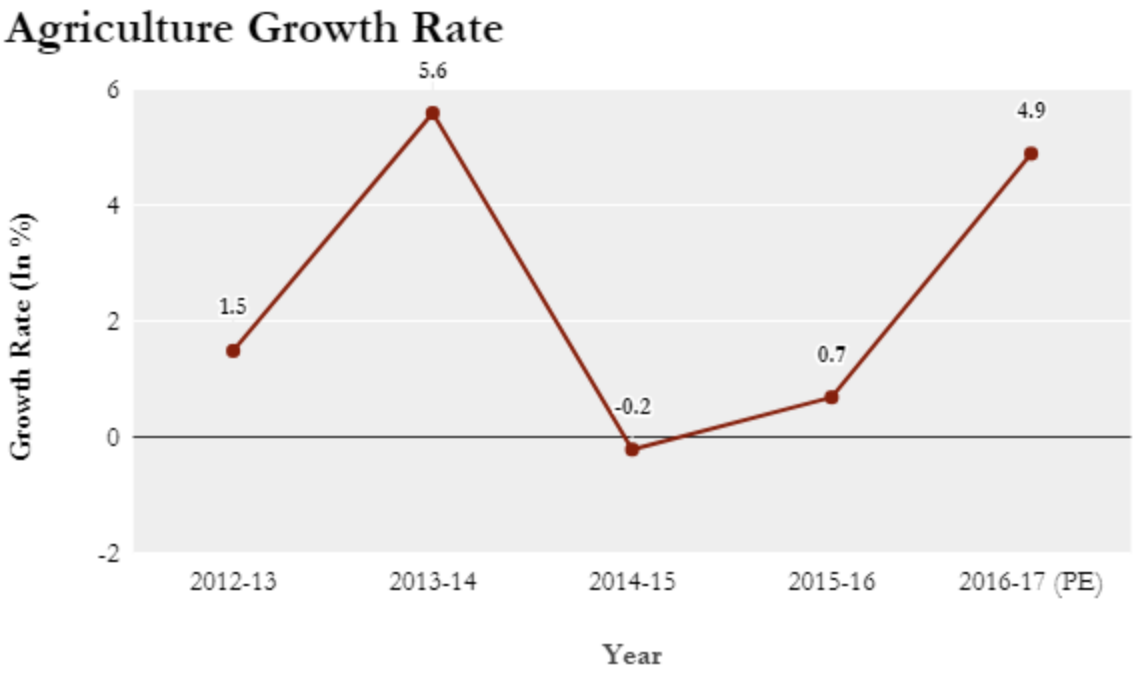
After going through above editorials, we feel even though PM-KISAN is a progressive step, is it enough to mitigate India's severe agrarian distress?

Concerns with Agriculture Sector:

- Agriculture sector **employs over 50% of the workforce** either directly or indirectly
- The sector remains the main **source of livelihood for over 70% of rural households**
- **Droughts** of 2014 and 2015, **ad-hoc export and import policies**, **lack of infrastructure**, and **uncertainty in agricultural markets** have adversely affected agricultural productivity and stability of farm incomes.

Agriculture growth rates in the last five years: It has been inconsistent

Year	Growth Rate
2013-14	5.6%
2014-15	(-) 0.2%
2015-16	0.7%
2016-17	4.9%
2017-18	2.1%



Pic: https://images.firstpost.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/agri1.png

Therefore, PM-KISAN is aimed at boosting rural consumption and helping poor farmers recover from distress.

However, without adequate focus on proper strategy and implementation, the scheme is unlikely to make any meaningful impact.

Need of the hour: For successful implementation of PM-KISAN

1. Adequate financial support

- Cash transfers are mooted for their potential **greater efficiency in enabling poor households to directly purchase the required goods and services** as well as enhance their market choices.
- PM-KISAN effectiveness can only be realised through **financial support that provides farmers with adequate purchasing power.**
- However, the **income support of ₹17 a day for a household** (as against ₹32 per person per day in rural areas, according to the Rangarajan Committee), which is the amount offered by PM-KISAN, **is largely insufficient** for even bare minimum sustenance of vulnerable farmers.
- Therefore, PM-KISAN should first ensure that there is enough cash provided to help bring an affected community out of poverty.

2. Inflation adjusted Cash Transfer

- Given the volatile market and price fluctuations in different regions, it is important to index the cash transfers to local inflation.
- Failure of DBT in kerosene in Rajasthan can be attributed to this insufficient cash transfers which was not adjusted based on market price fluctuations or inflation.

3. Well-planned Implementation Mechanism

- The scheme requires significant implementation capabilities.
- Majority of the States have incomplete tenancy records and land data are not digitized. Therefore, identification of beneficiaries is daunting.
- Many pilot schemes aimed to replace subsidised food grains with cash in three Union Territories (Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Puducherry) have failed due to data inconsistencies.
- In the absence of updated land records and complete databases, the scheme may end up benefitting only those who hold land titles and not the small, marginal or tenant farmers who are the most vulnerable.

Conclusion:

PM-KISAN is an ambitious scheme that has the potential to deliver significant welfare outcomes. However, the current top-down, rushed approach of the government ignores governance constraints and is therefore likely to result in failure.

An alternative bottom-up strategy and well-planned implementation mechanism would allow weaknesses to be identified and rectified at the local level.

The most effective modalities can then be scaled nationally and ensure success.

Connecting the dots:

- PM-KISAN is an ambitious scheme that has the potential to deliver significant welfare outcomes. Do you agree? Also discuss what measures are needed for its successful implementation?

Millet Village Scheme

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II and III – Government schemes and programmes; Agriculture

In news:

- The **Project "Millet Village"** was started in year 2017-18 in **Attapady, Kerala**.
- The project is **intended for rejuvenating the traditional tribal agriculture**.
- The project aims at protecting seeds of traditional varieties of millets and ensures food security and livelihood for tribals.
- Apart from production of Millets, Pulses, Oilseeds, Vegetables and Apiculture, it is proposed to start Procurement, Processing, Packing, Labelling and Marketing of value added finished products of millets. Similar projects will be implemented throughout the State in suitable locations.

Do you know?

- Kerala Agriculture Department has sought Central support under the national-level mission for promoting millets.
- Millets are considered as 'superfood' and 'eat smart' strategies.
- Under the Millet Village scheme, the department had harvested **ragi** (finger millet), **thina** (foxtail millet), **cholam** (**sorghum**) and kuthiravaali (**barnyard millet**) in 1,200 acres.
- Additionally, a pilot scheme for cultivating **Chia, a Central American plant**, which is gaining popularity in India as yet another superfood, was progressing at Attappady.
- High protein content, short growing season, climate change resilience and low water requirement make millets an ideal crop for the State.
- Millets can grow in poor soil conditions with less water, fertiliser and pesticides. They can withstand higher temperatures, making them the perfect choice as 'climate-smart' cereals.

'Policies biased against rainfed agriculture'

Part of: GS Mains II – Government schemes and policies, issues arising of such policies; Agriculture distress; Farmer's welfare

Key pointers:

- Three out of five farmers in India grow their crops using rainwater, instead of irrigation.
- However, per hectare government investment on their lands may be 20 times lower.
- Procurement of their crops is just a fraction of major irrigated land crops and many of the flagship agriculture schemes are not tailored to benefit them.
- In other words, there has been "negligence" toward rainfed areas, which is leading to lower incomes for farmers.
- Flagship government schemes, such as seed and fertiliser subsidies and soil health cards, are designed for irrigated areas and simply extended to rainfed farmers without taking their needs into consideration.

Do you know?

- Lands irrigated through big dams and canal networks get a per hectare investment of ₹5 lakh. Watershed management spending in rainfed lands is only ₹18,000-25,000.
- A new rainfed agriculture atlas was released recently.
- The rainfed agriculture atlas not only maps the agro biodiversity and socio-economic conditions prevailing in such areas, but also attempts to document the policy biases that are making farming unviable for many in these areas.

Need for Smart farming

Introduction:

- Agriculture sector (and especially Farmers) has been adversely impacted by climate change.
- The Nation has already witnessed less than normal rainfall during the last four years, with 2014 and 2015 declared as drought years.
- Even the recent monsoon season ended with a rainfall deficit of 9%, which was just short of drought conditions.
- Indigenous populations and local communities dependent on agricultural or coastal livelihoods are very vulnerable to the climate impacts.

Do you know?

- Impact of climate change is more adverse in unirrigated lands compared with irrigated areas.
- Around 52% (73.2 million hectares area of a total 141.4 million hectares net sown area) of India's total land under agriculture is still unirrigated and rain-fed.

Case study: Bundelkhand

- Over the last decade, many of Bundelkhand's villages have faced significant depopulation.
- It was once blessed with over 800-900 mm rainfall annually, but over the last seven years, there has been adverse impact of climate change – deficient rainfall, poor monsoon and crop failures – have become common.
- There is hardly any greenery in many villages, making it difficult for farmers to even maintain cattle.
- Adaptation is hard, with farmers varying and mixing crops across seasons, along with heavy investments in borewells, tractors and threshers.
- Farmers are increasingly abandoning their lands and heading to nearby towns to find work as labourers.

Climate Risk

- India is fortunate to have the monsoon, but it is also uniquely **vulnerable to rising temperatures**.
- India is **ranked 14th on the Global Climate Risk Index 2019**.
- The country has over 120 million hectares suffering from some form of degradation. This has consequences, especially for marginal farmers.
- Marginal farmers' may face a 24-58% decline in household income and 12-33% rise in household poverty through exacerbated droughts.
- With rain-fed agriculture practised in over 67% of our total crop area, weather variability can lead to heavy costs, especially for coarse grains (which are mostly grown in rain-fed areas).
- A predicted 70% decline in summer rains by 2050 would devastate Indian agriculture.
- Within 80 years, our kharif season could face a significant rise in average temperatures and potentially lead to a 22% decline in wheat yield in the rabi season, while rice yield could decline by 15%.

Solutions:

1. **Promotion of conservation farming and dryland agriculture**, with each village provided with **timely rainfall forecasts**, along with **weather-based forewarnings** regarding crop pests and epidemics in various seasons, is necessary.
2. Agricultural research programmes need to **refocus on dryland research**.

3. Adoption of drought-tolerant breeds.
4. Change planting dates, particularly for wheat, which could reduce climate change induced damage.
5. There needs to be an increase in insurance coverage and supply of credit.
6. **Government support** - subsidized interest rates; expanded Rural Insurance Development Fund, basic income policy etc.
7. A push for actual on-ground implementation of **compensatory afforestation** is required.
8. Effective coordination between the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and the State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs).
9. **Restructuring Indian Forest Service** by making it equivalent to the police and the army, albeit in the environmental domain.
10. **State-of-the-art training** to its personnel must be provided, and specialisation should be encouraged in wildlife, tourism and protection for new recruits.
11. Wildlife heritage towns should be given more attention.
12. Cities which are adjacent to national parks and sanctuaries, need to be converted into green smart cities with upgraded waste recycling processes.
13. Expansion of joint research and development partnerships (like the U.S.-China Clean Energy Research Center), pairing India's emerging smart cities with green cities in the West.

Conclusion:

The impact of climate change will surely affect India's food security and also reduce fodder supplies for our livestock.

Prudent investments and policy reform can help make India resilient to climate change.

Connecting the dots:

- Climate change is already having profound impact on the lives of rural poor in India. Unless a mitigation strategy is inbuilt in the farming and related activities, food and livelihood security of the rural poor can't be ensured. Analyse.
- How does climate change and global warming affect the agricultural sector in India? Also suggest some key interventions and steps to be taken in this regard.

ENVIRONMENT/POLLUTION

Green India Mission: Expanding 'good' green cover in India

Introduction:

The Green India Mission is one of eight missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change.

8 govt missions under National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)

1. National Solar Mission
2. National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency
3. National Mission on Sustainable Habitat
4. National Water Mission
5. National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem
6. National Mission for a Green India
7. National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture
8. National Mission on Strategic Knowledge for Climate Change

National Mission for a Green India

- Also termed as the Green India Mission/Scheme, it aims at protecting; restoring and enhancing India's diminishing forest cover and responding to climate change by a combination of adaptation and mitigation measures.
- Driven by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, it received the nod of approval from the Cabinet in 2014.

Mission Goals

- To increase forest/tree cover to the extent of 5 million hectares (mha) and improve quality of forest/tree cover on another 5 mha of forest/non-forest lands;
- To improve/enhance eco-system services like carbon sequestration and storage (in forests and other ecosystems), hydrological services and biodiversity; along with provisioning services like fuel, fodder, and timber and non-timber forest produces (NTFPs); and
- To increase forest based livelihood income of about 3 million households.

Study examines effectiveness of Green India Mission

According to a study which examined critically at India's National Mission for a Green India argue that –

1. Contemporary afforestation goals set under GIM are influenced by colonial policies rather than scientific basis.

- **India's target to bring 33 percent** of its total land under the forest cover is more a **result of colonial hangover rather than backed by science**.
- The study revealed that the **target was primarily developed by Europeans**, mainly France, during colonial period and it then quickly spread to British and French colonial territories in Africa and other parts of world including Asia.

2. The target may result in difficulties for forest dwellers and tribal communities.

- The Mission aims to improve forest-based livelihoods, however, the initiative has all the qualities to **disinherit or cut-off forest-rooted populations**.
- The study also said that it **remains entirely unclear whether large-scale plantations have positive effects on socioeconomic conditions** of communities and noted that a recent systematic review suggests that **such efforts have significant negative impacts** on local communities in terms of employment, livelihoods, and other intertwined' social impacts.

3. India's new Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act has flaws

- The 2016 Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act legislates that if forest is cleared an equivalent amount of land must be afforested elsewhere.
- This provision is likely to undermine local control of land and extend the reach of the forest department to the detriment of local livelihoods.

4. Afforestation alone cannot cure all-ills

- The study emphasised that for at least two centuries, tree planting has been lauded as an environmental cure-all for ills including "civilisational decline, diminished precipitation, warming temperatures, soil erosion, and decreasing biodiversity" despite the "demonstrated failings" in many environments.
- The study argues that the approach to forestry in India has been "fraught" with "countless, commonly observed problems". For instance, commitment to fixed rates of forest cover encourages tree plantations in "ecologically inappropriate sites and conditions".
- Other problem deals with the enthusiasm for fast growing species and exotic and invasive species, planted in the name of increasing land cover dedicated to 'forest'.

Planting vs greening

The Study argues that tree-planting is NOT greening. Greening would take a socio-ecological approach that treated the system as a whole, a 'Restoration Ecology' of grasslands, streams, mixed scrub, agro-forestry, and so on.

Conclusion:

India deserves a true 'greening' approach, that takes seriously the genius loci, the peculiarity of local systems, and restores these with local people.

The study says "sometimes we do things simply because we have always done them, and think things because we have always thought them". "By showing that actions and ideas have arbitrary (and sometimes pernicious) roots, it sets us free to imagine new and better things."

Connecting the dots:

- What is Green India Mission? What are its objectives? Explain.
- Discuss how India's afforestation policy has evolved over time. Also, discuss the concerns associated with the new Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act.
- A scientific national plan to expand good green cover is absolutely essential in India. Discuss.

Emission levels rising faster in Indian cities than in China

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

In news:

- Greenhouse gas emissions from urbanization (esp. from vehicles) in India rising at a faster than in China.
- There is a link between population density and emissions from transport.
- According to a study - In China a 1% increase in urbanisation was linked with a 0.12% increase in CO2 emissions whereas, in India, it translated into 0.24% increase in emissions

Do you know?

- The experience in most developed countries was that **urbanisation led to a reduction in emissions** — more urbanisation meant shorter distances between the workplace and home and thereby, a preference for public transport. However this don't effectively apply to developing countries.
- In spite of being the 4th largest emitter, India's per capita emissions are much lower than the world average of 4.2 tonnes.
- Delhi had the highest commuting emissions per capita — a factor that also contributed to its high level of pollution — and the national capital region had 2.5 times higher commuting emissions than Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore, and Hyderabad.

14th CoP-CBD and Principle of 'Commons'

Context:

- **14th CoP-CBD** Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity was held at the Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt. (Nov 2018)
- Key focus – **"How to govern biological resources (or biodiversity) at different levels for the world's sustainable future?"**
- Year 2018 marked the CBD's 25th year of implementation.

CBD reports and studies highlighted that –

- Humans have mismanaged biodiversity so badly that we have lost 60% of resources (which can never be recouped).
- Convention's objectives of conservation, sustainable use and equitable sharing of benefits were being compromised, including by the parties themselves.

Concept: Principle of 'Commons'

- For thousands of years, humans have considered natural resources and the environment as a **global public good** and communities across the world had carefully managed these resources using the **principle of 'Commons'**.
- In simple terms, principle of 'Commons' deals with mindset that **set of resources** such as air, land, water and biodiversity **do not belong to one community or individual, but to humanity.**
- All developments that we see in the establishment of civilisations across the world as well as agricultural development feeding the world today are a result of such 'Commons' being managed by communities for centuries.
- However, then came the urge of those with money and power **to privatise these resources for individual prosperity** in the form of property management principles, intellectual property rights and others.

Concept: Principle of sovereign rights over biodiversity

- Convention on Biological Diversity, a multi-lateral environmental agreement, provided legal certainty to countries through the **principle of sovereign rights over biodiversity.**
- Therefore, in one form, the CBD contributed to **states now owning the resources, including their rights on use and management.**
- Today, states control and manage biodiversity with strict oversight of who can use what and how.
- The intent of the CBD and having sovereign rights was to manage resources better.

- But the results of such management have been questionable.
- A key reason cited is that **'Commons' and common property resource management principles and approaches are ignored and compromised**.

Why 'Principle of Commons' is important?

- According to estimates, **a third of the global population depends on 'Commons'** for their survival.
- **65% of global land area is under 'Commons'**, in different forms.
- The significance of 'Commons' in supporting pollination and storing carbon cannot be overlooked.

Importance of 'Commons' for India

- In India, the extent of **'Common' land constitutes around 15-25% of its total geographical area**.
- 'Common'-pool resources **contribute $5 billion a year to the incomes of poor Indian households.**
- Around **77% of India's livestock** is kept in grazing-based or extensive systems and dependent on 'Commons' pool resources. And **53% of India's milk and 74% of its meat requirements** are met from livestock kept in extensive 'Common' systems.
- 'Commons' as resources are not only relevant for rural communities but are now a major provider of livelihood options for both urban and peri-urban populations.

Key concerns:

- Despite their significance, 'Commons' in India have suffered continued decline and degradation.
- National Sample Survey Office data show a 1.9% quinquennial rate of decline in the area of 'Common' lands.
- Micro studies show a much more rapid decline of 31-55% over 50 years, jeopardising the **health of systemic drivers such as soil, moisture, nutrient, biomass and biodiversity**, in turn aggravating food, fodder and water crises.
- As of 2013, India's annual cost of environmental degradation has been estimated to be ₹3.75 trillion per year, i.e. 5.7% of GDP according to the World Bank.

The way ahead:

- 'Commons' becoming uncommon is a major socio-political, economic and environmental problem.
- While the state can have oversight over resource management, but keeping people away from using and managing 'Commons' is against effective governance of 'Commons'.

- The **sovereign rights provided for, legally, under the CBD should not be misunderstood** by the state as a handle to do away with 'Commons'-based approaches to managing biodiversity, land, water and other resources.
- Rather State and international governing bodies should focus on how and why 'Commons' have been negatively impacted? What needs to be done to save the earth and people?
- There needs to be a review of current governance of biodiversity and natural resources.

Connecting the dots:

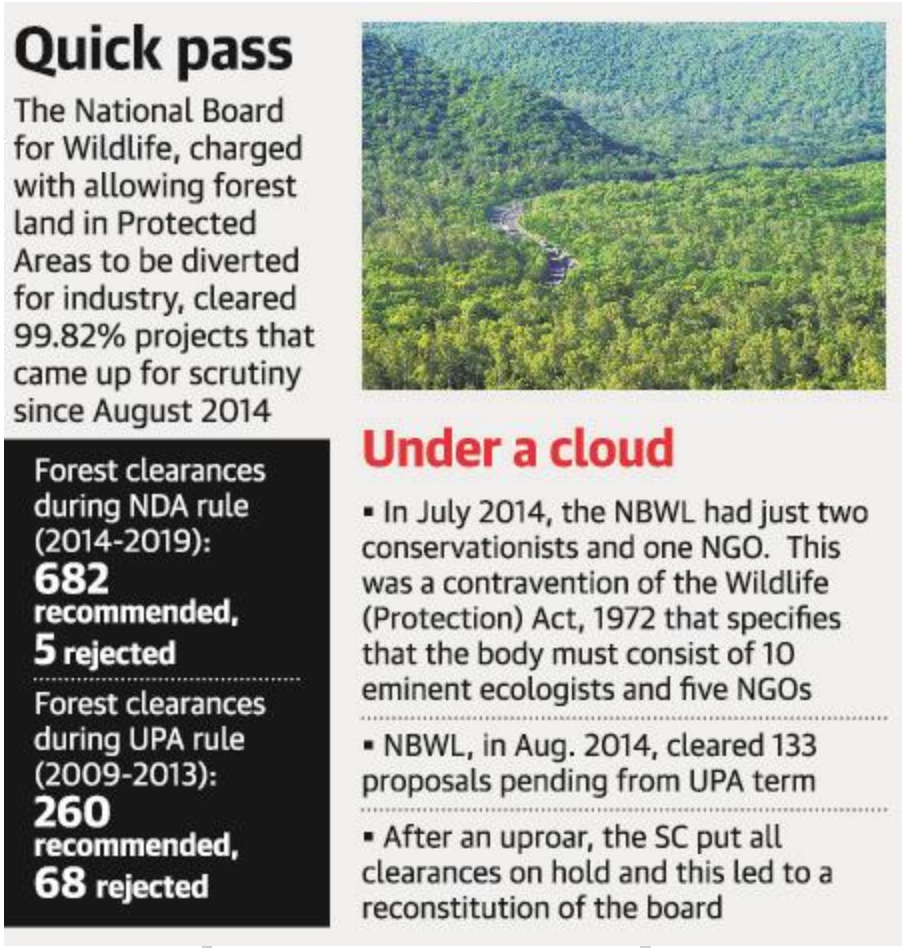
- What are various resource management strategies? Discuss.
- Discuss the mandate and significance of Convention on Biological Diversity in managing biodiversity.

99.82% projects in forests got nod

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

In news:

- National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) cleared 682 of the 687 projects (99.82%) that came up for scrutiny. Only five projects were rejected since August 2014.
- NBWL is the apex body charged with allowing forest land in Protected Areas to be diverted for industry.
- From 2009-2013, under the UPA regime, NBWL recommended 260 of the 328 that came into its purview — or about 80% of the projects.



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About National Board for Wild Life (NBWL)

- It is a "**Statutory Organization**" constituted under the **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**.
- It is a very important body because it serves as apex body to review all wildlife-related matters and approve projects in and around national parks and sanctuaries.
- The NBWL, formally headed by the Prime Minister, adjudicates on industrial projects, road diversions or the like that could encroach into Protected Areas or eco-sensitive zones of forests.
- A smaller Standing Committee of the NBWL is charged with deliberating on the merits of projects that come to it for scrutiny; the committee comprises scientists and government officials and is chaired by Union Environment Minister.

New Coastal Regulation Zone Notification and Role of Civil Societies

Context:

In previous DNA editorials, we covered –

- Salient features of the New CRZ Notification, 2018 (Click Here)
- Difference between New CRZ Notification, 2018 and the previous CRZ Notification, 2011 (Click Here)
- Loopholes in New Coastal Regulation Zone Notification (Click Here)

In news:

- Experts had opined that the recent Coastal Regulation Zone Notification 2018 ignores the vulnerabilities of coastal regions to climate change.
- The new CRZ notification is said to benefit hospitality/tourism industries and local economies, however, the lives and livelihood of thousands of citizens continue to be at risk.

Concerns:

- India's vulnerabilities to climate challenges should not be ignored.
- Government, businesses and civil society have the responsibility of constructive action to address this environmental challenge. However, governments in India do not prioritise climate change mitigation, fearing that it will impede economic growth and efforts to alleviate poverty.

The role of civil society

- Civil societies have played important role in containing policies that can contribute to climate catastrophes and precarious situations.
- It helps to establish sustainable mitigative measures and improve quality of life in multiple dimensions — physical environment, health and finance.
- It helps to bring changes in consumption-related thinking and behaviour.
- Their involvement offers tremendous opportunity for citizens' needs to be heard.
- It plays an assertive role in forcing a shift in the current stance and shaping the country's climate policy.

Vital tool: Bringing changes in consumption-related thinking and behaviour

- Important for sustainability
- Making mobility choices that result in efficient fuel use and lower carbon emissions.
- It calls for considering alternative sources of domestic electricity.
- Alter the use of cooling devices and power.

Altering our lifestyles for sustainability has a silver lining — we have a valuable chance to re-orient our lives for substantive improvement. The sooner we act, the more significant the gain.

In the emerging multi- faceted nature of governance, the civil society institutions can play a constructive role not only in harnessing the resources of the government but also in tapping the structure and resources of the market to give a fair deal to the people, and in creating an environment where sustainable development takes place.

Connecting the dots:

- In the emerging multi- faceted nature of governance, the civil society institutions can play a constructive role not only in harnessing the resources of the government but also in tapping the structure and resources of the market to give a fair deal to the people, and in creating an environment where sustainable development takes place. Comment.
- Discuss the role of Civil Society Institutions in Sustainable Development and Environmental Governance in India.

Synthetic fibres contribute to plastic pollution

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

In news:

- Polyester and other synthetic fibres such as nylon are major contributors of microplastic pollution in the environment.
- Researchers suggest switching to biosynthetic fibres may help prevent this.
- Synthetic fibres are petroleum-based products, unlike natural fibres such as wool, cotton and silk, which are recyclable and biodegradable.
- Mixed fibres that contain both natural and synthetic fibres are difficult or costly to recycle.
- In the oceans, pieces of microscopic plastic are consumed by plants and animals and enter the human food chain through harvested fish.
- Minimising the use of synthetic fibres and switching to natural fibres such as wool, cotton, silk and linen would help.

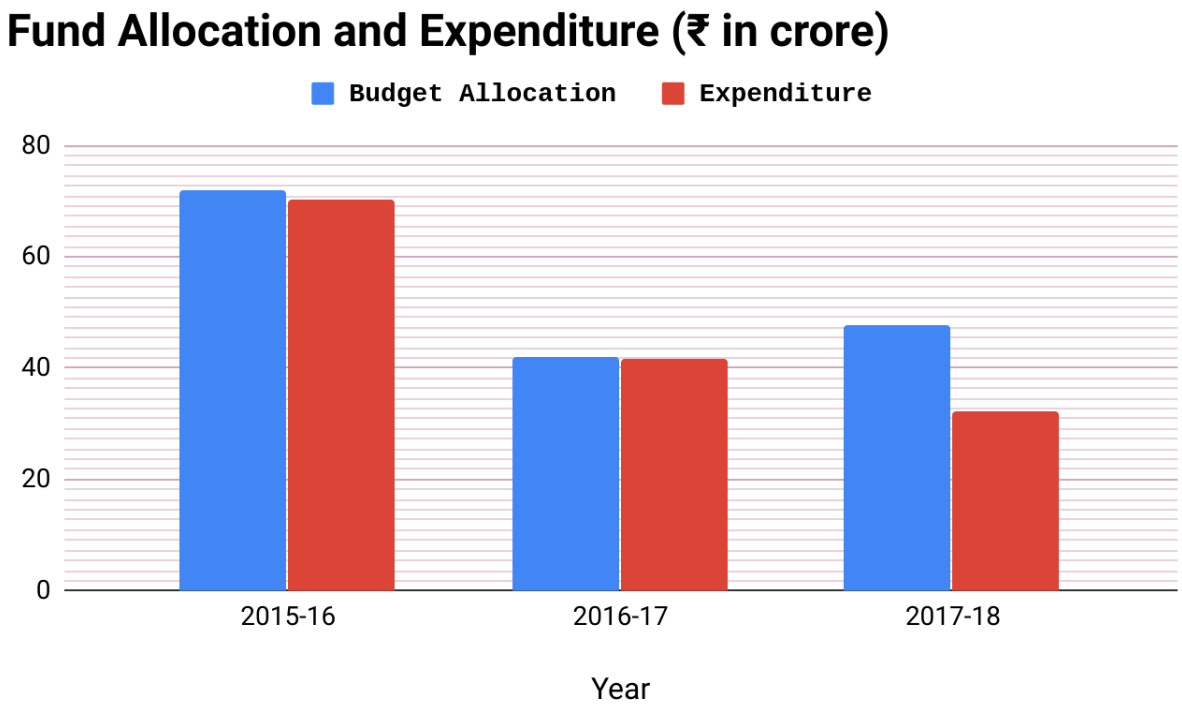
Green India Mission Grossly Underfunded

Introduction:

- Green India Mission (GIM) is a programme that is aimed at protecting, restoring, and enhancing the country's diminishing forest cover and at responding to climate change by a combination of adaptation and mitigation measures.
- National Mission for Green India (GIM) is one of the eight Missions outlined under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC).

According to a Parliamentary committee report –

- The scheme is proposed for 10 years with an outlay of Rs 60,000 crore.
- During 2017-18, GIM budget allocation of ₹47.80 Cr. is grossly insufficient.
- The committed liability of FY 2015-16 and 2016-17 is ₹89.53 Crore, is more than the budget allocation of FY 2017-18.
- In 2015-16 and 2016-17, the GIM missed its targets by 34 per cent. Instead of the targeted 67,956 hectares, only 44,749 hectares of land got green cover.



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- Afforestation done under the GIM was only aimed at increasing tree count without considering the soil and weather conditions.
- Trees like eucalyptus were planted which make environmental problems worse rather than solving it. Planting of unsuitable trees may cause drought, and prevent biodiversity in the regions.

- The report also makes a distinction between plantations and forests and how the former cannot replace the latter. (Plantations only have value in terms of timber, the other ecological services provided by a forest like prevention of soil erosion, promoting biodiversity, providing livelihood etc are not there at all.)

Other concerns:

The Parliamentary committee panel has **raised concerns about the targets set by GIM on India's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)** submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

- According to the NDC, India has a target to sequester 2.523 billion tonnes of carbon by 2020-30.
- India's current forest cover is 75 million hectare and to meet our target of carbon sequestration, 30 million hectares of additional land would be required for forests.
- The GIM document does not mention from where will this land be arranged.
- Till 2016-17, afforestation programme was targeted to cover only 51,387 hectare, which is a tiny proportion of what is needed.

(Note): We had earlier dealt with article - **Green India Mission: Expanding 'good' green cover in India**, in which the following areas were covered –

- About Green India Mission and its Goals
- Effectiveness of Green India Mission

Do you know?

- GIM was supposed to be launched with the starting of the 12th five-year plan in 2012. But, owing to financial delays the mission was finally launched in 2015.
- The objective of the mission is to increase green cover to the extent of 5 million hectares (mha) and improve quality of existing green cover on another 5 mha, improve eco-system services like carbon sequestration, hydrological services and biodiversity and provisioning services like fuel, fodder, and timber and non-timber forest produces (NTFPs).
- It also has to increase forest-based livelihood income for about 3 million households.

The committee has recommended that adequate financial allocation be made for the mission so that the activities of the mission can be carried out more efficiently and the targets set by it can be met.

Connecting the dots:

- What is Green India Mission? What are its objectives? Explain.

- India's efforts at addressing climate change and the wider issues of environmental governance, has been far from convincing. Critically examine.

ANIMALS/NATIONAL PARKS IN NEWS

Asian Elephant Alliance

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

In news:

- Asian Elephant Alliance to secure 96 out of the 101 existing corridors used by elephants across 12 States in India.
- The joint venture is aiming at **raising £20 million (₹187.16 crore)** to secure the 96 remaining elephant corridors, old and new, in the next ten years.

About Asian Elephant Alliance

- Asian Elephant Alliance, an umbrella of five NGOs, was launched to reverse crisis facing elephants.
- The initiative aims to stem the crisis facing the world's remaining Asian elephants – thought to number only 35,000 – 45,000.

Habitat loss, along with ivory poaching, has devastated the population of wild Asian elephants, a distinct species from their African cousins. Survival for these few remaining elephants requires urgent action.

Therefore, a new coalition - the Asian Elephant Alliance - has been formed to tackle the crisis. The member organisations are Elephant Family, International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), IUCN Netherlands, Wildlife Trust of India and World Land Trust.

Bullet train gets green light via flamingo haven, national park

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Environment and Biodiversity; Conservation of animals; Protected Areas

In news:

- Environment Minister Harsh Vardhan-led panel gave nod to the Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed train corridor.
- The corridor is said to encroach some of the forest land of Thane Creek Flamingo Wildlife Sanctuary and the Sanjay Gandhi National Park, home to leopards, in Mumbai.
- The first lot of bullet trains are expected to ply on six high-speed corridors by 2022-23—Delhi-Mumbai; Mumbai-Chennai; Delhi-Kolkata; Delhi-Nagpur; Mumbai-Ahmedabad; and Mumbai-Nagpur.

Pic:
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Panel defers resort project at Andamans

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

In news:

- An expert committee of the Union Environment Ministry has "deferred" clearance to a ₹100 crore proposal by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation Limited (ANIIDCL).
- The project was expected to develop an island resort, as well as put up "premium tents" and "tree houses".
- Clearance was not issued on the grounds that it doesn't take into account the biodiversity of the islands' coast.

Do you know?

- Home Ministry revived an **Island Development Agency** that would coordinate infrastructure projects to aid tourism in the A&N islands as well as Lakshadweep.
- The Centre has been working on a long-term plan to make several of the islands more conducive to tourism.

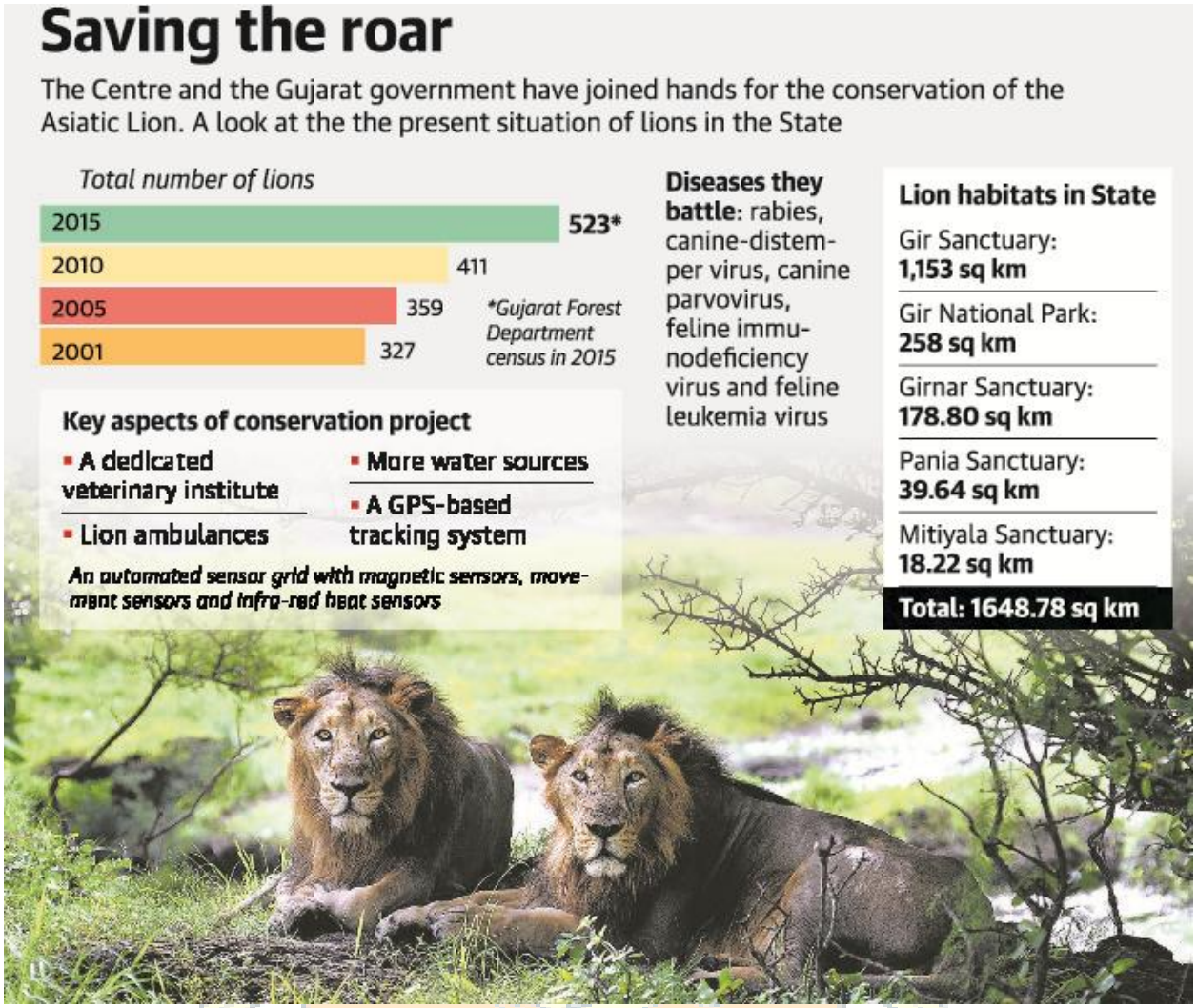
Conservation of Gir Lions:

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Animal conservation; Biodiversity

In news:

- After as many as 23 lions died in Gujarat's Gir forest since September (especially due to virus infection), the Centre and the Gujarat government have announced a **₹97.85 crore Asiatic Lion Conservation Project.**
- A key outcome of the project is to have a dedicated veterinary institute, "lion ambulances", and back-up stocks of vaccines that may be required.
- The Gujarat government has envisaged a **'Greater Gir'** that includes, other than the existing Gir National Park, sanctuaries in Girnar, Pania and Mitiyala.

- Key aspects of the conservation project include undertaking "habitat improvement" measures, making more sources of water available, creating a wildlife crime cell, and a task force for the Greater Gir region.



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Do you know?

- There are close to 600 lions in Gujarat.
- However, there has been no move yet to translocate lions to a location outside Gujarat.
- There is a committee of experts examining the suitability of Madhya Pradesh as a potential lion reserve.
- The Kuno-Palpur Wildlife Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh was identified to be the most suitable for reintroducing the species.

- The SC in April 2013 had ordered the translocation of some lions from Gujarat to Madhya Pradesh within six months, but this hasn't happened.

Key facts:

- IUCN Status: Endangered
- The lion is one of five pantherine cats inhabiting India, along with the Bengal tiger, Indian leopard, snow leopard and clouded leopard.
- It was also known as "Indian lion" and "Persian lion".

Animal in news: Blackbuck

About Blackbuck

- The blackbuck also known as the Indian antelope, is an antelope found in India, Nepal and Pakistan. The blackbuck is the sole extant member of the genus Antilope.
- In India, hunting of blackbuck is prohibited under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972.
- The blackbuck is listed as least concern on the IUCN Red List.

Do you know?

- Black buck is believed to be the second fastest animal after Cheetah.
- Punjab's State animal: Black buck
- Note: Blackbucks have religious significance in Hindu mythology and Bishnoi tribe of Rajasthan is famous for its conservation efforts for Black bucks.

Animal in news: Bramble Cay Melomys

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

In news:

- Australia officially declared a Great Barrier Reef rodent extinct.
- The rat-like Bramble Cay Melomys — whose only known habitat was a small sandy island in far northern Australia — has not been spotted in a decade.
- Bramble Cay Melomys is the first mammal believed to have been killed off by human-induced climate change.

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Ghost nets, plastics pose threat to seabirds

In news:

- The unprecedented August 2018 flood in Kerala has washed out a huge amount of plastics from the land and rivers into the ocean, threatening marine life and underwater ecosystems.
- Migratory birds are also victims of the discarded plastic.
- The sight of seabirds ingesting plastics is on the increase in Kerala, especially during November to February when migratory species visit the State.

Animal in news: Lesser black-backed gull

- It is a large gull that breeds on the Atlantic coasts of Europe.
- It is migratory, wintering from the British Isles south to West Africa. It is a regular winter visitor to the east coast of North America, probably from the breeding population in Iceland.

- It is also called as Heuglin's Gull. It breeds in the tundra of northern Russia and migrates south to southwest Asia, including India, during winter.
- IUCN Status: Least Concern

Animal in news: Lesser crested tern

- It is a winter visitor to Kerala. It breeds in subtropical coastal parts of the world mainly from the Red Sea across the Indian Ocean to the western Pacific, and Australia, with a significant population on the southern coast of the Mediterranean on two islands off the Libyan coast.
- IUCN Status: Least Concern

Animal in News: 'Flying bulldog' - world's largest bee spotted again

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Environment and Biodiversity

In news:

- IUCN status: vulnerable
- Flying bulldog is world's largest bee and is roughly the size of a human thumb
- It has been rediscovered in a remote part of Indonesia
- First sighting was nearly 40 years ago
- The bee (Megachile pluto), which lives in the Indonesian island region of North Moluccas, makes its nest in termite mounds, using its large fang-like mandibles to collect sticky resin to protect its home from the termites.

INFRASTRUCTURE/ENERGY

Half of India's waste-to-energy plants defunct

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Energy/Infrastructure; solid waste management

In news:

- Nearly half of India's waste-to-energy (WTE) plants, meant to convert non-biodegradable waste, are defunct.
- Unsegregated rubbish makes plants inefficient.
- Since 1987, 15 WTE plants have been set up across the country. However, seven of these plants have shut down.
- The key reasons for closure are the plants' inability to handle mixed solid waste and the high cost of electricity generated by them that renders it unattractive to power companies.

Do you know?

- NITI Aayog, as part of the Swachh Bharat Mission, envisages 800 megawatt from WTE plants by 2018-19, which is 10 times the capacity of all the existing WTE plants put together.

Towards an efficient transport infrastructure

Context:

Transport infrastructure in India has grown at an unprecedented rate during nearly the last five years. Following are the major achievements:

1. At the highest ever pace of construction, more than **35,000 km of national highways** have been built in four and a half years.
2. **World-class expressways** such as the **Eastern Peripheral Expressway** and **Western Peripheral Expressway** or engineering marvels such as the **Dhola Sadiya Bridge** and **Chenani Nashri Tunnel** were initiated.
3. The **Bharatmala Pariyojana** – a unique scheme and unprecedented in terms of its size and design was launched (**under Sagarmala**) **to develop ports** which are considered as engines of growth.
4. The development of 111 waterways for transport.

5. The development of FASTags, promotion of alternative fuels such as ethanol, methanol, biofuels, and electricity, as well as innovative modes of travel such as seaplanes and aeroboats.

Why do we need an efficient transport infrastructure?

- Efficient transport infrastructure: **biggest enabler for growth**
- It has been one of the foremost priorities of our government to build a transport infrastructure that is **indigenous and cost-effective**; link the remotest corners of the country; **optimally integrates across various modes** and is safe and **environment friendly**.
- A lack of good transport infrastructure has been a major hindrance for growth in the country in the past.
- **Bharatmala** and **Sagarmala programmes** are going to be game changers in this regard. They will **improve both penetration and efficiency of transport movement** on land and water, respectively.
- Efficient transport infrastructure will help **connect places of production with markets** more efficiently, help **reduce logistics costs**, **create jobs and promote regionally balanced socioeconomic growth** in the country.
- Important for providing better, seamless and more efficient access not just within the country, but also to our neighbouring countries.

Priority areas in the development of effective transport infrastructure

- Apart from building infrastructure, government priority should be to **improve the overall convenience and on-road experience** of the road users. This involves ensuring their safety, reducing congestion and pollution levels and providing roadside amenities.
- **To prevent the colossal loss of lives in road accidents**, priority should be given to rectifying accident black spots through engineering means, employing road safety features at the design stage for highways, conducting road safety audits, setting up driver training and post-trauma care centres as well as generating awareness.
- Apart from ring roads, expressways and bypasses, **innovative solutions like seaplanes, ropeways, aeroboats and double-decker buses** are being actively explored for adoption. These will bring down the traffic pressure and congestion on roads.
- **To reduce pollution, alternative fuels** like ethanol, methanol, biofuels and electricity are being promoted.

Do you know?

- Recently a MoU was signed with **Austrian ropeway company Doppelmayr** for building ropeways through congested cities and hilly areas.

- Another MoU has been signed with **Transport for London** to help us overhaul our urban transport.
- The concept of 'waste to wealth' is being employed for generating alternative fuels.
- Already, the total number of seafarers employed in Indian and foreign ships has grown by 35% this year. (Thanks to Sagarmala)

India's growth story should no longer be impeded by a lack of efficient transport infrastructure, and the fruits of this growth should reach everyone in the remotest part of the country.

Connecting the dots:

- Examine the potential of an efficient transport infrastructure in India.

Vande Bharat Express or 'Train 18' launched

In news:

- Vande Bharat Express or 'Train 18', India's first semi-high speed train, was flagged off by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the New Delhi railway station.
- It can attain a top speed of 160 km per hour. However, its top speed would be restricted to 130 km per hour.
- It is a self-propelled train set and doesn't have a locomotive.

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Seaplane operations in Andamans and Lakshadweep

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains I and III – Geography; Infrastructure

In news:

- Four islands in the Andamans and three in Lakshadweep have been identified for seaplane operations.

- Bids invited for private sector participation in tourism-based projects.

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Do you know?

- Islands Development Agency (IDA) is chaired by Union Home Minister.
- IDA was constituted in 2017 for the holistic development of islands after giving due consideration to unique maritime and territorial bio-diversity of the islands.
- The IDA had identified 10 islands for development which include 5 islands in A&N Islands (i.e. Smith, Ross, Long, Avis and Little Andaman) and 5 in Lakshadweep (i.e. Minicoy, Bangaram, Thinnakara, Cheriyam, Suheli).

Need for Clean Fuel and Sustainable Energy System

Context:

- Ministry of Environment had notified emission limits for major pollutants such as suspended particulate matter, sulphur oxide, nitrogen oxide and mercury in December 2015.
- However, despite this notification, the effort to clean up India's thermal power plants running on coal has never really taken off.

About Emission Standards for Coal Power Plants

- In December 2015, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) notified new emission standards for coal thermal power plants (TPPs).
- The new standards mandate reduction of sulphur oxide (SOx), nitrogen oxide (NOx), and mercury (Hg) emissions, along with tightening of the existing norms for particulate matter (PM10) emissions.
- Around 50% of the total SOx, 30% of total NOx, and 8% of total PM2.5 emissions are attributed to the energy sector, within which coal TPPs are the biggest contributors.
- Once MoEFCC's standards are implemented, the air quality in India could significantly improve.
- Standards have been specified differently for unit, vintage and installed capacity. The original deadline for compliance was December 2017. Due to limited progress in implementing the standards, MoEFCC recently decided to support the Ministry of Power's (MoP's) phasing plan, which extends the deadline for implementation to 2022.

Concerns:

- These pollutants have cumulative impact on the health and well-being of people.
- Government/Centre has failed to follow up the notification with a viable financial plan to help power plants acquire pollution control technologies.
- Originally, the compliance deadline was set for 2017, but that was missed and the plan now is to achieve the norms by 2022.
- India's coal use is over 54% of the present energy mix, and the dirty fuel will continue to retain a high share of the overall generation.
- Over 300 out of around 500 units of coal-based power plants are not adhering to the emission norms notified by the Union Environment Ministry in December 2015.
- To comply with the new emission standards, most coal TPPs will have to incur INR 0.5–1 crore/MW.

The way ahead:

- Power Ministry has proposed to provide the equivalent of over $12 billion (about ₹88,000 crore), mainly to remove sulphur from coal plant emissions.
- A viable financial mechanism must be evolved to remove pollutants in existing and upcoming power plants, without losing sight.

- Providing grants to existing plants would help.
- Developing detailed regulatory guidelines to enable tariff transfer to consumers.
- There is a need to stop further long-term investments in a dirty fuel such as coal that contributes to carbon emissions.
- Developing synthetic gypsum market to monetise the byproduct from FGD technologies, as additional revenue for new plants.

Connecting the dots:

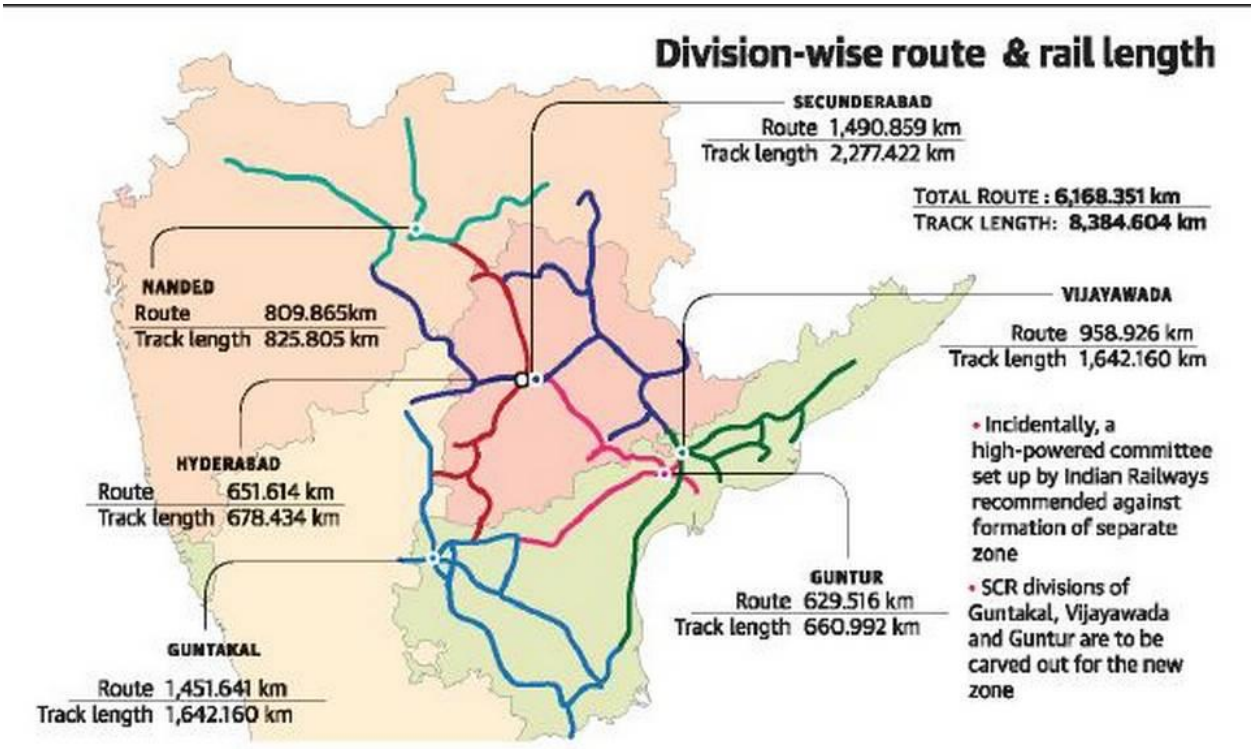
- India's energy needs have to be diverse to fulfil India's Energy Mix. Explain in detail with suitable examples.
- Studies across the world has released that coal power plants in India are most lethal in the world. Critically analyse the need for green technologies and sustainable energy system.

Andhra Pradesh gets new South Coast Railway zone

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Infrastructure; Railways

In news:

- The Centre announced the creation of a separate railway zone in Andhra Pradesh
- The new zone, South Coast Railway (SCoR), would comprise the existing Guntakal, Guntur and Vijayawada divisions. Additionally, the Waltair division would be bifurcated.



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Do you know?

- A separate railway zone was one of the key promises made to Andhra Pradesh in the bifurcation act.
- As per item 8 of Schedule 13 (Infrastructure) of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014, Indian Railways was required to examine establishing a new railway zone in the successor State of Andhra Pradesh.
- The matter has been examined in detail in consultation with stakeholders and it has been decided to go ahead with creation of a new zone with headquarters at Visakhapatnam.
- At present, South Central Railway has six divisions — Secunderabad, Hyderabad, Vijayawada, Guntakal, Guntur and Nanded. With the formation of a new zone, the SCR would comprise Hyderabad, Secunderabad and Nanded divisions.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

PCSK-9 gene mutation: a way to fight bad cholesterol

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II and III – Science and Technology and its role in health; Health issue

In news:

- Use of PCSK9 inhibitors (PCSK9) **helps in lowering cholesterol levels** and **reduce the risk of heart attacks.**
- The PCSK9 are a new class of injectable drugs that reportedly reduce 'bad' cholesterol levels by up to 60% when combined with a statin (another class of drugs prescribed to help lower cholesterol levels).
- The discovery of **cholesterol-lowering mutations in a human gene called PCSK9** led to the development of the most promising new drugs against heart disease since statins.

Do you know?

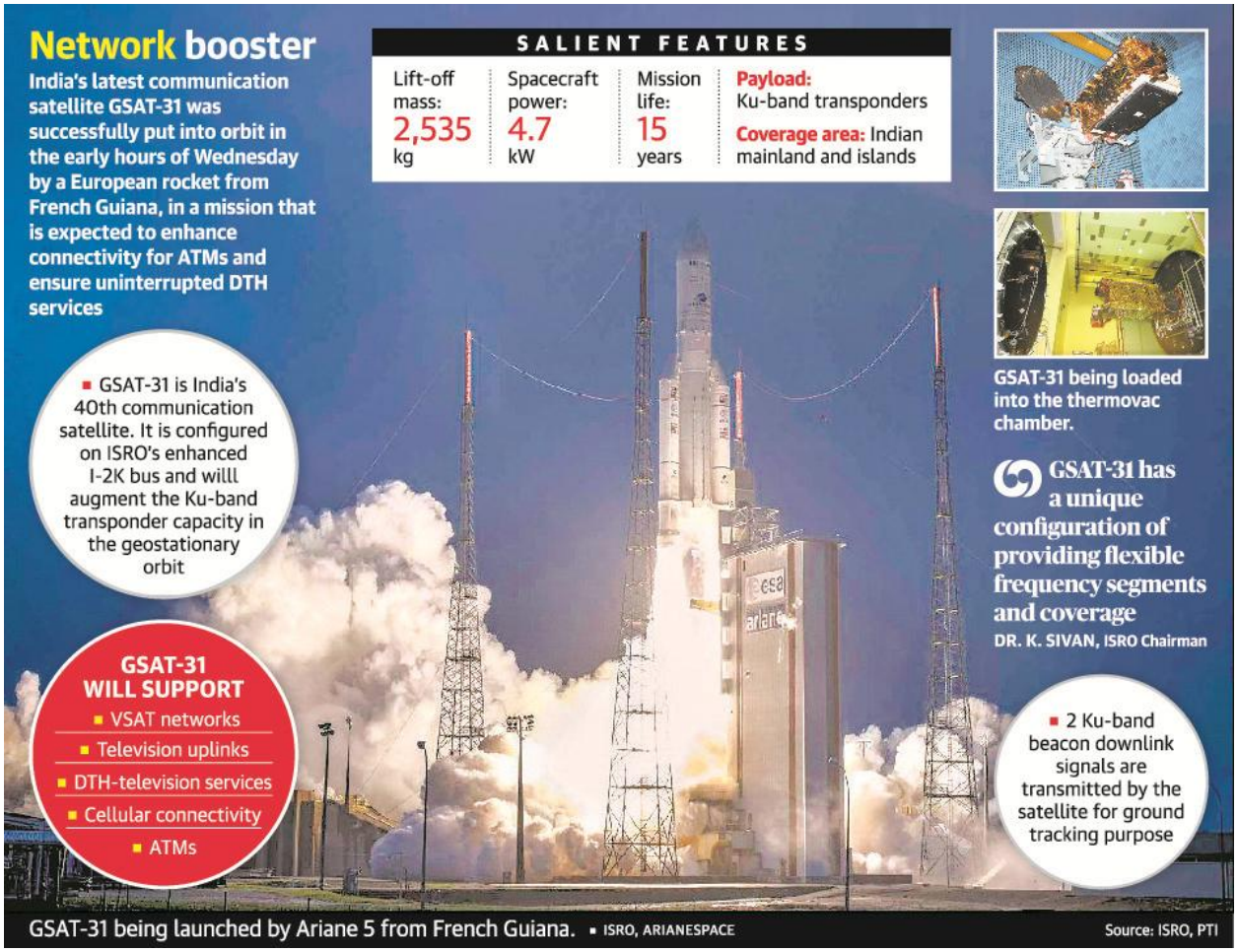
- **Geneticist Helen Hobbs** and her colleague **Geneticist Jonathan Cohen**, found that when people had a mutation in PCSK9, they ended up with lower levels of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) or bad cholesterol.
- Through this mechanism, the mutation protected people against heart disease, seemingly without side effects.
- In 2016, Ms. Hobbs was awarded the Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences for her work.
- Low-density lipoprotein cholesterol, abbreviated as LDL-c, is considered the 'bad' variant of cholesterol as it contributes to plaque deposition, leading to the hardening and narrowing of arteries or 'atherosclerosis' (thickening of artery walls owing to accumulation of white blood cells).

India's communication satellite GSAT-31 launched successfully

In news:

- India's latest communication satellite, GSAT-31 was successfully launched from the Spaceport in French Guiana.

- GSAT-31 has a unique configuration of providing flexible frequency segments and flexible coverage. The satellite will provide communication services to Indian mainland and islands.
- GSAT-31 will provide DTH Television Services, connectivity to VSATs for ATM, Stock-exchange, Digital Satellite News Gathering (DSNG) and e-governance applications. The satellite will also be used for bulk data transfer for a host of emerging telecommunication applications.



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LOFAR telescope

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Science and Technology; Space Missions

In news:

- A new map of the night sky published recently charts hundreds of thousands of previously unknown galaxies discovered using a LOFAR telescope that can detect light sources optical instruments cannot see.
- The discovery shed new light on some of the Universe's deepest secrets, including the physics of black holes and how clusters of galaxies evolve.
- More than 200 astronomers from 18 countries were involved in the study, which used radio astronomy to look at a segment of sky over the northern hemisphere, and found 3,00,000 previously unseen light sources thought to be distant galaxies.
- The discovery of the new light sources may also help scientists better understand the behaviour of one of space's most enigmatic phenomena.

About LOFAR Telescope

The Low-Frequency Array or LOFAR, is a large radio telescope network located mainly in the Netherlands, completed in 2012 by ASTRON, the Netherlands Institute for Radio Astronomy and its international partners.

Bio-ATF

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Science and Technology; Green Fuel

In news:

- We had earlier read about oil from jatropha seeds (Biofuel) was blended with aviation turbine fuel.
- Oil from jatropha seeds propelled the country's first ever bio jet fuel-powered flight.
- International standards permit a blend rate of up to 50% biofuel with ATF.
- Now recently, Dehradun-based Indian Institute of Petroleum has successfully finished a pilot test to convert used cooking oil into bio-aviation turbine fuel (Bio-ATF), which can be blended with conventional ATF and used as aircraft fuel.

Do you know?

- The test assumes importance as the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has launched the **Repurpose Cooking Oil (RUCO) initiative** to collect and convert used cooking oil into bio-fuel.
- The food safety body says that by 2020, it should be possible to recover about 220 crore litres of used cooking oil for conversion into bio-fuel.

- Reducing the re-use of cooking oil in the food industry will have positive public health outcomes and its conversion into Bio-ATF will help the aviation sector reduce its carbon footprint.
- The CSIR-Indian Institute of Petroleum is looking for partners to commercialise the technology.

China uses DNA to track its people, with U.S. help

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Science and Technology

In news:

Chinese authorities have been tracking millions of its people using a DNA database with the help of American expertise.

Chinese government is preparing a DNA database that could be used to chase down Muslim Uighur minority who resist Beijing's plans.

Do you know?

- Xinjiang is home to most of China's Uighur ethnic minority and has been under heavy police surveillance in recent years after violent inter-ethnic tensions.
- Nearly one million Uighurs and other Turkic language-speaking minorities in China have reportedly been held in re-education camps.

DEFENCE

Naval Airfield Integrated Security System

Part of: GS Mains – Security issues; Defence

In news:

- Indian Navy has finalised a ₹700 crore contract with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) for establishing an upgraded Naval Airfield Integrated Security System.
- After terrorists attacked the Pathankot Air Force Station, the system was formulated as a comprehensive project for upgrading the security of naval airfields.
- The measures forming part of the project include an anti-climbing fence, drain detection intrusion systems, a CCTV network and under-vehicle surveillance.

Rafale deal not on 'better terms' than UPA-era offer

In news:

Key findings of the 'domain experts' (senior Defence Ministry officials) on the Indian Negotiating Team (INT)

- The **new Rafale deal for 36 flyaway aircraft** (by current government) was **not on "better terms"** than the offer made by Dassault Aviation during the procurement process for 126 aircraft under the UPA government.
- **Delivery schedule** of even the first 18 of the 36 flyaway Rafale aircraft **in the new deal was slower** than the one offered for the 18 flyaway aircraft in the original procurement process.

These findings are directly contrary to the two central claims made by the Indian government of a cheaper deal and faster delivery of fighter aircraft.

Domain experts also registered **serious concern over the Indian government's acceptance of a 'Letter of Comfort'** instead of a sovereign or government guarantee or bank guarantees and also acceptance of offset issues and Dassault Aviation's restrictive trade practices.

Commenting on the final €7.87 billion cost of the new Rafale deal, the domain experts stated that the final price offered by the French Government cannot be considered as 'better terms' compared to the MMRCA [medium multi-role combat aircraft] offer.

CAG Report on Rafale deal

Context:

- In previous DNA, we read about **key findings of 'domain experts'** (senior Defence Ministry officials) on the Indian Negotiating Team (INT)
- Domain experts findings were directly contrary to the two central claims made by the Indian government of a cheaper deal and faster delivery of fighter aircraft.
- Domain experts also registered **serious concern over the Indian government's acceptance of a 'Letter of Comfort'** instead of a sovereign or government guarantee or bank guarantees and also acceptance of offset issues and Dassault Aviation's restrictive trade practices.

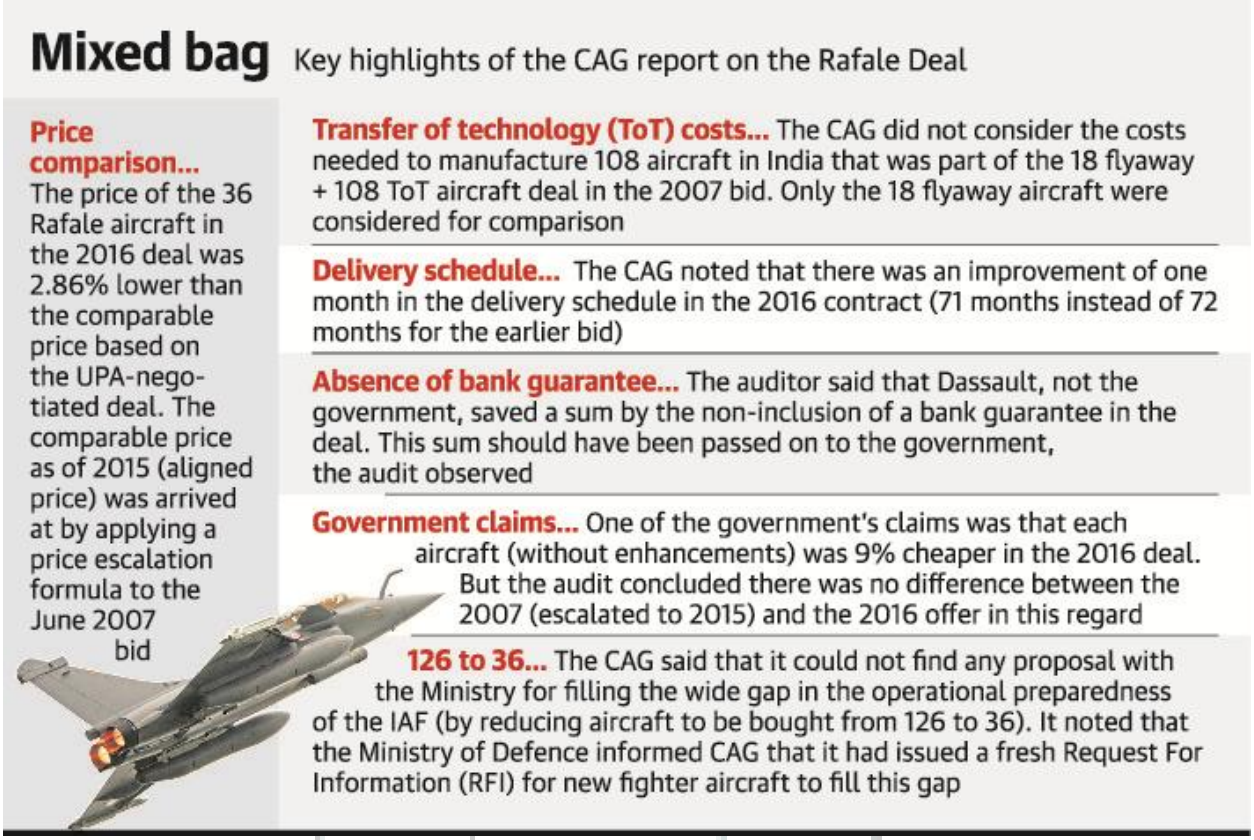
Do you know?

- There have been varying claims from government officials on how much cheaper the 2016 deal was, with estimates ranging from 9% to 20%.

In news:

However, CAG report provides the following key highlights –

- The contract signed in 2016 to acquire 36 Rafale fighter jets from France through the Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) was **2.86% lower in value** than "Audit's aligned price" of the bid received in 2007 when the then UPA government had sought to purchase 126 Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft (MMRCA).
- The CAG also observed that the price could have been reduced further had the benefits of waiving of the bank guarantees for the vendor (Dassault Aviation) been passed on to India.
- On the delivery schedule, the CAG found that the 2016 deal's terms would ensure only a month's advantage over the timeline offered in the 2007 bid.



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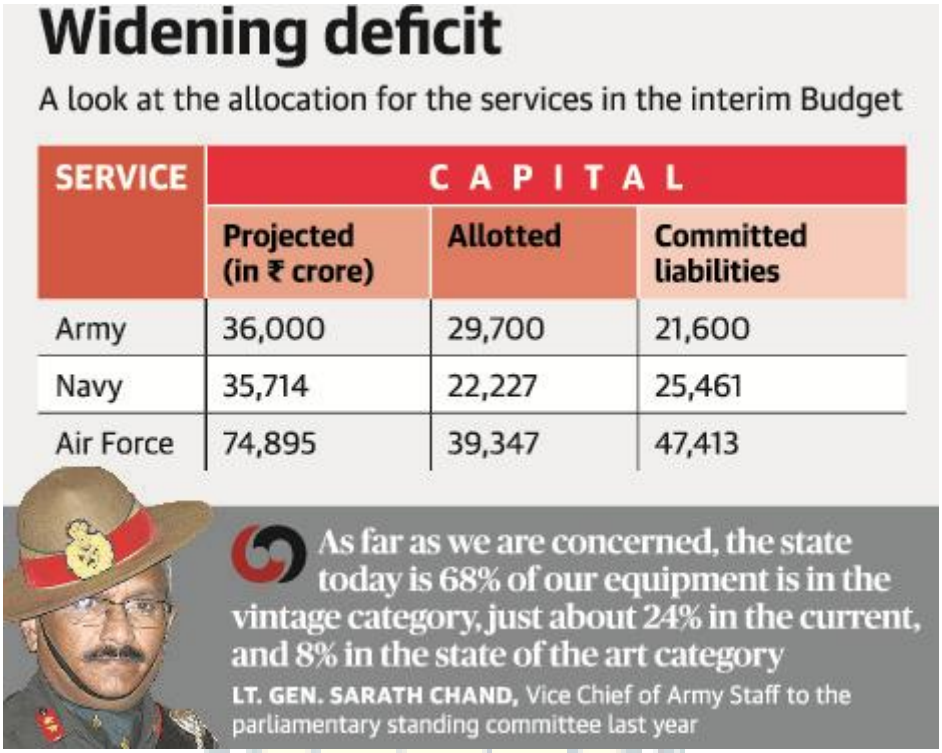
Budget shortfall worries Defence Services

Part of: GS Mains III – Indian Economy and related issues; Government budget; Defence

In news:

- The shortfall in Defence allocation in the interim Budget 2019-20 has left the Services worried as it threatens to **derail the capability enhancement and modernisation** under way.
- The shortfall is so significant that, for the Navy and the Air Force, the capital allocation does not even meet the committed liabilities (that is, payments for deals already contracted).



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Do you know?

- The share of the three Services in the overall defence budget stands as follows: Army–54%, Navy–14% and Air Force–22%.
- However, the Army, with its large size, has a huge revenue burden compared to the other two Services, and a significant part of it goes for salaries.

Quick Reach Surface-to-Air missiles (QRSAM)

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Defence/Security; Missiles; Achievements of DRDO

In news:

- Quick Reach Surface-to-Air missiles (QRSAM) - Indigenous missile developed by the DRDO was successfully test-fired from the Integrated Test Range Chandipur, off the Odisha coast
- It has a strike range of about 30 km, is capable of killing aerial targets, tanks and bunkers.

- The indigenously developed state-of-the-art QRSAM will significantly boost the defence capabilities of our armed forces.

INTERNAL SECURITY/SECURITY

Assam NRC Process: Opaque, Unreasonable and Discriminatory

Context:

- The below article provides the concerns associated with the ongoing National register of Citizens process in Assam.

Concerns highlighted in the National register of Citizens process

- Process of adding person to NRC list is too complex and confusing – **riddled with legal inconsistencies and errors**.
- **Instances of arbitrary rejection** of the gram panchayat certificates.
- **Bewildering and opaque rules** and an **uncaring bureaucracy**.
- **Absence of legal-aid** by the state
- Faults on part of the Supreme Court
    - **Lack of proper monitoring process**
    - **Failed to ensure legal clarity** over the manner in which the claims of citizenship could be decided
    - **Failed to understand the implications of the results**, and after effects as well as recourse that should be made available for people who have failed to be recognized as citizens of the State
    - Inability to comprehend the further political and policy actions in case of loss of citizenship

Absence of public compassion

- Names of several highly impoverished, mostly rural, powerless and poorly lettered residents were dropped from the draft NRC only because of minor differences in the spelling of Bengali names in English in different documents.
- A person could be excluded from citizenship even if their age differs in different documents.

Tougher on women

- Women are especially in danger of exclusion from the citizenship register. Reasons – they have no birth certificates, are not sent to school, and are married before they become adults. They live in villages after marriage, which are different from those of their parents. They have no documents to prove that they are indeed the children of the people they claim are their parents.

Opaque processes

- One more concern is that the process empowers the Assam Police to identify anyone it suspects to be a 'foreigner'. Police claim in most cases is that the person was unable to show them documents establishing his or her citizenship.
- All cases referred by the police are heard by Foreigners' Tribunals (FTs). Earlier, retired judges were appointed to these tribunals. However, the current government has appointed many lawyers who have never been judges.
- There are now FTs in which not a single person has been declared an Indian citizen over several months.
- Even if an FT confirms a person to be an Indian citizen, another FT and often the same FT can again issue notice to the same person to prove her legitimate citizenship once more.

Conclusion:

A person is never allowed to feel secure that the state has finally accepted that she is an Indian citizen. NRC process is masked by opaque, unreasonable and discriminatory practices.

It is important and essential for the union government to proactively come out with an equitable, predictable and transparent plan on the way forward, for those who will be identified as 'foreigners'.

Connecting the dots:

- Is the National Register of Citizens (NRC) update process going to settle the issue of illegal foreigners in Assam? Do you think the ongoing exercise is masked by opaque, unreasonable and discriminatory processes? Examine.

Disruptive Technologies to Upend Rules of War

Context:

We can categorize new technology as being of two sorts, either sustaining or disruptive.

- Sustaining technology is the gradual development of existing technology.
- Disruptive technology does the opposite, it revolutionises the field, but comes with risks attached because it is new, untested and initially limited in scope.

Scotsman **Alexander Graham Bell** disrupted the way we communicate when he invented the telephone; and British computer scientist **Tim Berners-Lee** disrupted it again when he invented

the World Wide Web. Now the military and defence industry are facing their own disruptive technology challenges and dilemmas.

Transition from traditional heavy-duty military hardware to high-tech innovations

- There is a **revolution in military affairs across the world**.
- The current focus in military thinking is increasingly **moving away from traditional heavy-duty military hardware to high-tech innovations**
- High-tech innovations include – artificial intelligence (AI), big data analytics, satellite jammers, hypersonic strike technology, advanced cyber capabilities and spectrum denial and high-energy lasers.
- These high-tech systems **offer unprecedented capabilities**.
- In order to accommodate and calibrate such systems, there is also an increased focus **on developing suitable command and control** as well as **doctrinal concepts.**

Disruptive nature of high-tech innovation technologies

- The arrival of such high-tech innovation technologies might **deeply frustrate strategic stability** as we know it given their **disruptive nature**.
- Currently, strategic stability in the contemporary international system (especially among the nuclear weapon states) depends on several age-old certainties.
- The most important strategic stability being the **issue of survivability of a state's nuclear arsenal** and **its ability to carry out a second strike** after a first attack.
- AI-enabled systems can easily disrupt this strategic stability by taking over the survivability of nuclear arsenal, thanks to high precision, accuracy, real time tracking and surveillance etc.
- Even the naval leg of a nuclear triad (which is assumed to be the most survivable part since it is hidden away in the depths of the ocean away from the adversary's gaze) can be detected now due to the potential ability of deep-sea drones.

In crux, traditional calculations and strategic stability are things of the past.

Need of the hour:

- It is imperative for states to **redesign their systems** in the light of these new technologies, especially the digital and cyber components.
- It is important to prepare **for such new age wars**.

Indian context:

In order to address the new age challenges to national security –

- In late 2018, Government decided to set up three new agencies — the **Defence Cyber Agency**, the **Defence Space Agency** and the **Special Operations Division**. (based on

recommendations given by the **Naresh Chandra Task Force** and the **Chiefs of Staff Committee**)

- Constitution of these agencies will indeed be a useful step in the right direction.

Connecting the dots:

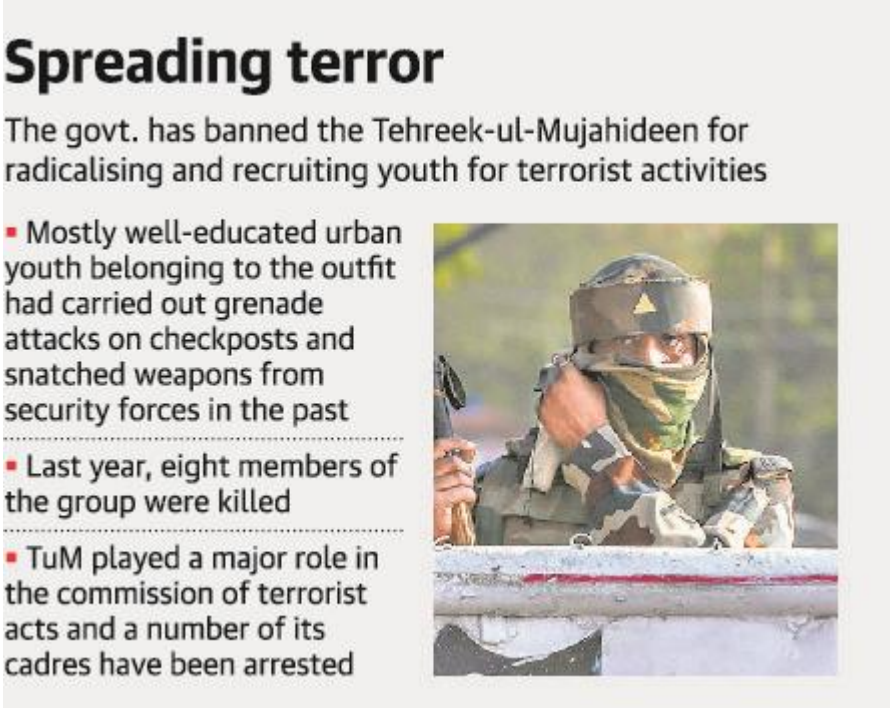
- Examine the need for disruptive thinking and modernization of Army to take on the security challenges of the future.
- The Army of the future will have to be technologically oriented, with many more specialists, as compared to generalists. Elucidate.

Centre bans Kashmir outfit

Part of: GS Mains III – Security issues

In news:

- The Union Home Ministry has banned the **Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen (TuM)** under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for promoting terrorism and radicalising and recruiting youth for terrorist activities in India.
- According to the Minsitry, TuM (which was set up in the 1990s) claims to be fighting for the "liberation of Kashmir".
- The TuM carried out a number of terrorist attacks besides subversive acts, namely grenade attacks, weapons snatching incidents, supporting other terrorist outfits such as Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HuM), Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), etc. in terms of financial and logistic support in the recent past.



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Do you know?

- Last year, eight TuM men were killed in various operations by security forces. Mostly, well-educated and belonging to urban settlements.

Radicalization of Muslim youth in India

Context:

- We often came across several news reports about global jihadi organisations such as the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) have recruited a few Indian Muslim youth primarily by exploiting the latter's local grievances to serve their own global goals.
- News reports about occasional acts of terrorism outside of Jammu and Kashmir attributed to young Indian Muslims have also appeared intermittently in the press.

Note: The below article provides whether Indian Muslims are really immune to extremist propaganda If NO, then why are Indian Muslims getting radicalized? What are the factors responsible for this radicalization?

Conventional wisdom

- Many analysts, Indian and foreign, had assumed until recently that Indian Muslims were immune to extremist propaganda because of both the **syncretic and moderate nature of Indian Islam** and the **democratic and secular character of the country** which made them feel they were equal participants in the political process.
- Both these assumptions are now problematic, as several factors have been at work in the past three decades that challenge this conventional wisdom.

Factors responsible for the radicalization of Muslim youth

1. Wahhabi/Salafi influence

- Increasing influence of **Saudi Wahhabism** and related forms of **Salafism on Islam** as practised in the Indian subcontinent.
- Many Indians of all faiths migrated to energy-rich West Asian countries (especially following the oil boom of the 1970s) which provided vast employment opportunities.
- **Religio-cultural impact on section of Indian Muslim emigrants** (they encountered with **fundamentalist form of Islam** followed in these countries, especially Saudi Arabia)
- The **impact of Wahhabi/Salafi Islam on the mindset** of a segment of returnees – Many migrants who returned to India are **fascinated by obscurantist ethos** of those oil-rich countries and are adopting ultraconservative practices.
- For instance, section of Muslim women have adopted an **ultraconservative dress code** (often under patriarchal pressure) – the niqab, or full face covering, popular in Saudi Arabia and some other West Asian countries. This dress code is very different from the traditional concept of purdah (covering up or modesty) practised by conservative Muslim families in the Indian subcontinent.
- **Wahhabi/Salafi Islam beliefs and practices are passed on** to a much larger group of relatives and acquaintances (who are already impressed by the former's newly acquired prosperity)

Do you know?

- The vast majority of Muslims in the Indian subcontinent belong to the **Hanafi sect based on the most liberal school** of Islamic jurisprudence.
- Traditionally Indian Islam has been greatly **influenced by Sufi teachings** and is, therefore, **tolerant and accepting of religious diversity**.
- Visitors to major Sufi shrines, such as those of **Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti in Ajmer** and **Nizamuddin Aulia in Delhi**, where people of all confessions come to pray and seek blessings, can **testify to the syncretic spirit of Indian Islam**.
- Therefore, Indian Islam harbours natural defences against extremism in belief and practice.

- However, the ideological infiltration of Wahhabism/Salafism has eroded some of these defences and made a section of Muslims more insular and, therefore, open to extremist ideas.
- Some Indian Muslims have began to approximate the harsh Wahhabi dogma, beliefs and practices, which stands in stark contrast to the indigenous version of Islam in India.

2. Growth of Hindutva or Hindu nationalism

Second and equally important factor – spectacular rise of Hindutva or Hindu nationalism from the 1990s

- The **rise of Hindutva or Hindu nationalism** has had a major psychological impact on a section of Muslim youth, prompting their estrangement/unfriendliness from the national mainstream.
- **Inter-religious riots** in which Muslims suffered disproportionately had been common in India since Independence.
- In some cases the **police killed Muslim youth in fake encounters**. (For example, Hashimpura massacre in Uttar Pradesh)
- The **demolition in 1992 of the Babri mosque** by a Hindu mob under the direction of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) luminaries and the riots that ensued, in which scores of Muslims lost their lives, shook the confidence of many Muslims in the secular character of the Indian state.
- **2002 Gujarat massacre** under BJP rule - massacre of about 1,000 Muslims in Gujarat to avenge the death of 59 kar sevaks who were burnt to death in a train at Godhra after an altercation with local Muslims.
- **Inaction and refusal of the state machinery to protect Muslim citizens.**
- **Lynching of several Muslims** in northern and central India on the pretext that they were **taking cows for slaughter or eating beef**. (lynching of Mohammad Akhlaq in Dadri, UP in 2015)
- Acts of mob violence carried out with relative impunity by the so-called gau rakshak (cow protector) vigilantes.

Conclusion:

- Such events began the process of alienation among a section of Muslim youth from the Indian state.
- Such incidents have led to a widespread feeling among Indian Muslims that the state, instead of providing security to them, now colludes with those determined to intimidate them into submission.

- This series of actions and reactions makes it evident that the growth of Hindu nationalism has acted as a major stimulus for the radicalisation of a section of Muslim society in India and that the two phenomena feed off each other.

The way ahead:

- Opinion leaders and religious scholars from within the Muslim community have the primary duty to confront and defeat the malign Wahhabi-Salafi influence on Indian Muslims in order to preserve the liberal and syncretic nature of Indian Islam.
- They should keep a check on spread of extremist ideology among Muslim youth.
- However, the impact of the growth of Hindu nationalism on the Muslim psyche can be countered only by the **policies and actions of the governing elites** at the Centre and in the States.
- State should effectively fulfil its responsibility of providing them physical security and ensuring that they are treated with fairness and dignity.
- This will be the best antidote to the percolation of radical ideas among Muslim youth by removing their sense of alienation from the Indian state that in the long run can threaten the country's security.

Connecting the dots:

- Do you think Indian Muslims are immune to extremist propaganda considering the syncretic and moderate nature of Indian Islam and the democratic and secular character of the country? Give arguments in favour of your answer.
- Examine the factors that are mainly responsible for the radicalisation of a small segment of Muslim youth in India.

NSCN(I-M) appoints chairman after 3 years

In news:

- The Isak-Muivah faction of National Socialist Council of Nagaland or NSCN(I-M) has appointed a chief almost three years after the death of its founder-chairman Isak Chishi Swu.
- Qhehezu Tuccu was appointed as the chairman and Tongmeth Konyak as vice-chairman.

About NSCN

- The NSCN was formed in January 1980 by extremists who did not accept the Shillong Accord of 1975 between New Delhi and the Naga National Council that had been fighting a separatist war since the 1950s.

- But the NSCN split in 1988, one led by the Myanmar-based S.S. Khaplang and the other by Isak-Muivah.

Do you know?

- The NSCN(I-M) has been pursuing a peace process with the Indian government but a final settlement has been elusive.
- The Khaplang faction of the NSCN too joined the peace process in 2001 but walked out of it in March 2015.

Pulwama Attack:

Part of: GS Mains III - Role of external state and nonstate actors in creating challenges to internal security.

In news:

- The vehicle-bomb suicide attack on a CRPF convoy near Lethpora in Pulwama is the deadliest ever terror strike against security forces in three decades of militancy in Kashmir.
- Jaish-e-Mohammed, which works out of Pakistan under the leadership of Masood Azhar, has claimed responsibility for the attack.
- The Jaish has carried out other attacks in Kashmir in recent years, including the one at Uri and at Pathankot.
- Yet **India's efforts to have Azhar designated as a global terrorist** have been repeatedly blocked by China, a staunch ally of Pakistan.

Do you know?

- Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) militant outfit, with a cadre strength of zero in 2015 and six in 2016, is regrouping in Kashmir again and has carried more attacks on the security forces than the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and the Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) outfits in the past two months.
- According to the police data, the JeM has emerged as a close third in 2019 with its ranks swelling to over 60 local recruits compared to 100-plus recruits of the LeT and the Hizb each.

India urgently needs a Nation Security Doctrine

Introduction:

The recent Pulwama incident has again highlighted the security lapses that are prevalent in the country.

- India remains deficient in intelligence-analysis, inter-agency coordination, and, above all, a national security doctrine.
- Crisis after crisis has caught our nation by surprise — unprepared and invariably in the reactive mode.
- In order to prevent recurrence of such tragedies, it is vital that an urgent review be undertaken of the quality and timeliness of intelligence inputs.
- It is also vital to review the standard operating procedures (SOP) being followed by the armed police force convoys or the army's.

This tragic incident provides India yet another opportunity for reflection and introspection about our management of crisis situations in general, and of Pakistan's role in Kashmir, in particular.

India's missteps

- India should retain a firm focus on the centrality of Pakistan's "deep state" — the unholy nexus of its army's General Headquarters and the Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) Directorate.
- Indian state has failed to evolve a strategy for resolution of the Kashmir imbroglio. It has allowed this issue to become a pressure-point for exploitation by our western and eastern neighbours, separately and in collusion.
- Amongst India's major missteps has been the coining of the euphemism "cross-border terrorism" to describe, what were clearly, "acts of war" by Pakistan.
- Acts which were committed through training and arming fighters on its territory, and then, launching them, under its army's covering fire, to wreak death and destruction on Indian soil.
- Pakistani fidayeen attacks on the Pathankot air base, followed by the Uri and Nagrota army camps — and now, Pulwama – marks just another step in the continuum of ISI's ongoing "grab-Kashmir" campaign; more such steps will, no doubt, follow.

Need of the hour:

- Apart from diplomatic and economic steps that are being initiated, the current juncture would be apt for the urgent promulgation of a security-cum-defence doctrine.
- Such a document, whose public version defines India's vital interests, aims and objectives will not only become the basis for strategy-formulation, contingency-planning and evolution of SOPs, but also send a reassuring message to our public.

- Setting in place clear "red lines" for adversary nations and non-state entities will mean that, in future, no further notice is required for instant punitive or retaliatory actions for any infringement of India's red lines.

Connecting the dots:

- There is an urgent need to envisage and formulate a National Security Policy for India. Why? Examine.
- India has become a soft target for external state and non state actors with repeated attacks, incursions and intrusions witnessed in the recent past. Moreover, on the domestic front also, left wing extremism and communal tension have posed serious security threats. In this scenario, don't you think India should have a National Security Doctrine? Critically examine

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Aftermath of the Pulwama terror attack

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II and III – India and Pakistan relations; Terrorism and Security issues

In news:

After revoking MFN status and hiking import duty on Pakistani goods to 200 per cent, the following are the other actions taken by the Government of India and Jammu and Kashmir government.

- Jammu and Kashmir government withdrew all security personnel and government facilities provided to 5 separatist leaders in Kashmir (Hurriyat chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, Abdul Gani Bhat, Bilal Lone, Hashim Qureshi and Shabir Shah)
- Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has approved a plan to charter flights to transport Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) personnel deployed in the Kashmir Valley.
- Professional counselling would be given to the personnel if they felt traumatised after the February 14 attack.
- The valour and sacrifice of military and paramilitary personnel killed in action may soon be made part of the school curriculum in some states. It will develop a sense of respect for the martyrs among students and will develop feeling of patriotism.

Bomb blasts on the rise in J&K

In news:

According to a report presented by the National Bomb Data Centre of the National Security Guard –

- Jammu and Kashmir has seen a steady increase in IED and other blasts over the past five years.
- 2018 witnessed a 57% jump in bomb blasts.
- However, in areas affected by Left-wing extremism and the northeast, the number has gone down.

Do you know?

- Thirty-five blasts took place in J&K in 2014, 46 in 2015, 69 in 2016, 70 in 2017 and 117 last year.

India to push for UN ban on JeM chief

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

In news:

- After France, India to push for UN ban on JeM chief.
- UN Security Council and the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force both issued strong press statements on the Pulwama attack and calling on Pakistan to act against the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM)
- They have begun negotiations on a new proposal to place JeM chief Masood Azhar on the ban list operated by the UNSC's 1267 committee, the fourth such request in four consecutive years.

India-Pakistan: Need for an inclusive 'coalition against terrorism'

Context:

- In the wake of the Pulwama attack, the government of India has iterated once again its **plan for the "diplomatic isolation" of Pakistan**.
- The measures taken thus far — cancelling Most Favoured Nation status, maximising use of Indus waters, denying visas to Pakistani sportspersons, etc. — have little real impact on Pakistan and certainly none on the military establishment.
- Beyond its idea of isolating Pakistan, the government should **build a more inclusive 'coalition against terrorism** emanating from Pakistan'.

What should be India's possible actions?

1. Need for collective action against terrorism emanating from Pakistan

- Apart from India, countries like Iran and Afghanistan have faced terror attacks on their security forces along the border with Pakistan.
- Therefore the government should attempt for a temporary alliance with countries which have also faced such attacks or see the presence of Pakistan-based groups on their soil and plan for collective action against terrorism.

But, in today's interconnected world, it is difficult to expect countries to join a unilateral plan for isolation. (For instance, failure of US to get most countries, including India, to sever ties with Iran and North Korea)

However, there are some advantages as an inclusive coalition is more likely to move nations at the global stage as well. The success of the efforts led by the U.S. and other countries to 'grey list' Pakistan at the Financial Action Task Force or of French efforts for a United Nations Security Council statement on Pulwama points to that.

2. Focus more on the case against Masood Azhar

- India must focus on the case against Masood Azhar, which pre-dates the case against 26/11 mastermind Hafiz Saeed.
- Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) claimed responsibility for the Pulwama attack in a suicide bomber video and the claim has not been disputed by its leader Masood Azhar.
- Azhar has been on the U.S.'s radar since 1992, when he was a leader of the banned terror group Harkat ul-Ansar, and worked with jihadi groups in Sudan and Bangladesh.
- Azhar release after years in Indian prisons in exchange for hostages on board the IC-814 flight should on its own merit his banning and prosecution — not just in Pakistan, but in all the countries whose nationals were on board that Indian Airlines flight, as well as the stops that flight made: in Nepal, the United Arab Emirates and Afghanistan.

3. Avoid internationalising the Kashmir issue

- India must prepare for a pushback from Pakistan, most likely in terms of internationalising the Kashmir issue, and linking it to progress in Afghanistan.

4. Use the diplomatic leverage to ensure action

- India should use its considerable diplomatic leverage to ensure action that would shut down the JeM and the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) permanently and bring their leaders to justice.
- Therefore, instead of mere statements and bans, the government must consider other options, especially with the countries that carry the most leverage and access in Pakistan: China, the U.S. and Saudi Arabia.

- For instance, India must press the U.S. to place travel sanctions on specific entities in the Pakistani military establishment unless visible action is taken against the JeM, whose leaders hold public rallies and issue videos threatening India.
- Saudi Arabia, which once was a donor to Pakistan's Islamist institutions, is now wary of funding extremism. India should pursue talks with Riyadh to withhold any funds that may trickle down to charitable wings run by the JeM and LeT.
- China has not supported a simple ban at the UN Security Council. India should talk with China to rectify their past decision and push to ban Azhar in the next proposal.
- More than the ban, India must ask China for action against any entities dealing with the JeM in Pakistan, given that China is the partner with the most influence in Pakistan today and one with the most to lose from terror groups in Punjab operating along the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

Do you know?

- Contrary to popular perception, the Trump administration's moves to cancel funds to Pakistan last year is not the toughest action the U.S. has contemplated.
- In May 1992, then U.S. President George H.W Bush had directed his Secretary of State James Baker to send a stern letter to then Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif threatening to designate Pakistan as a "State sponsor of Terror" for its support to Kashmiri and Sikh militant groups.

5. Need for Steady dialogue

- India must look to its own actions on the diplomatic front with Pakistan.
- Calling off a formal dialogue process for more than a decade has clearly yielded no desired outcome.
- South Asia as a region, and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) process too have suffered the consequences of this disengagement, without yielding any desired outcomes.
- A measured, steady and non-political level of dialogue is a more effective way of impressing India's determination to root out terrorism than the present on-again, off-again policy.

Conclusion:

As the nation prepares for a possible military response to the Pulwama attack, it is important that New Delhi consider its diplomatic response carefully, particularly taking into account both the historical and regional context of its moves.

Connecting the dots:

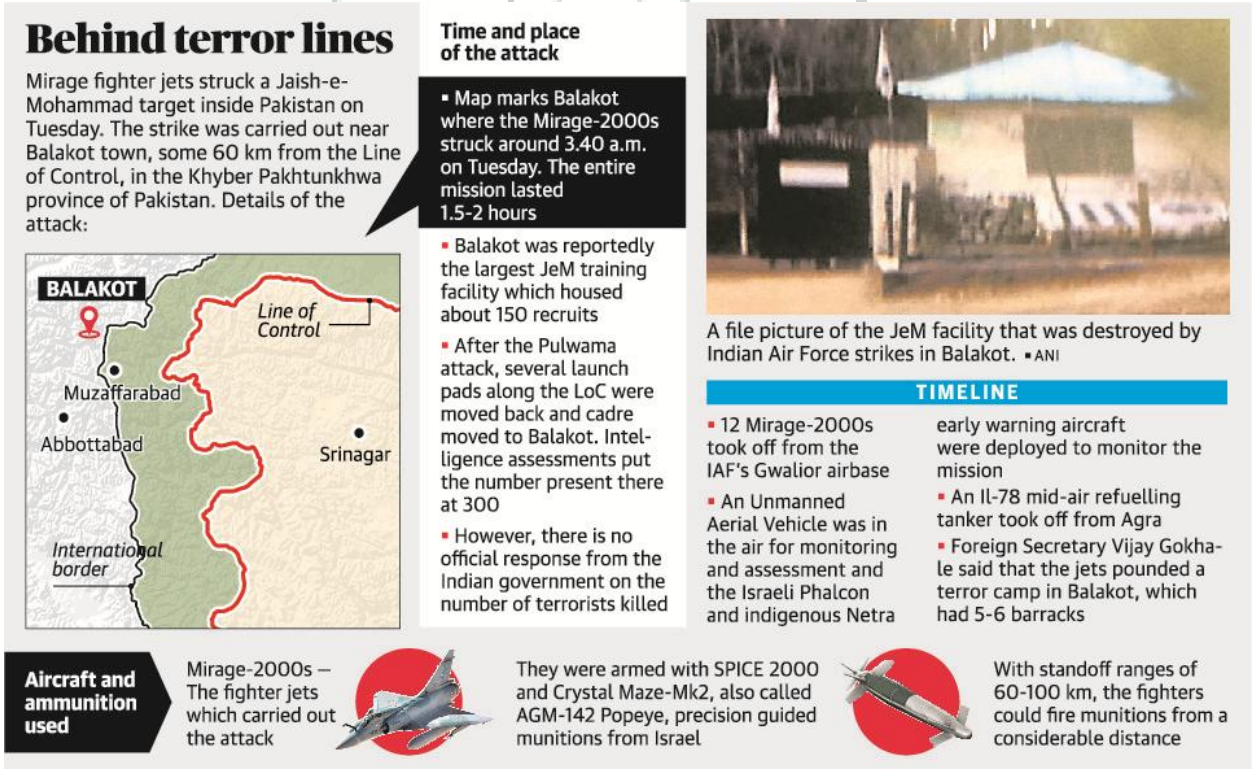
- Critically examine what should be India's response against the recent Pulwama attack. Also discuss what options does India have to deal with Pakistan to curb such constant export of terrorism?
- Beyond its idea of isolating Pakistan and withdrawing MFN status, the government should build a more inclusive 'coalition against terrorism emanating from Pakistan'. Analyze.

India bombs Jaish camp in Pakistan's Balakot

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II and III – India and its neighbour relations; Defence/Security issue

In news:

- Twelve days after the Pulwama attack, the Indian Air Force bombed the Jaish-e-Mohammad's "biggest" terror training camp in Pakistan's Balakot.
- The operation was carried out by 12 Mirage-2000 fighter jets, which unleashed five one-tonne bombs on the camp, based 70 km inside the Line of Control (LoC), in the Pakistani province of Khyber Pakthunkhwa.
- The aerial attack on a target inside Pakistani territory marks a major shift in India's counter-terror responses, which have thus far been restricted to ground operations across the LoC in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.



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India gets support from Australia, France

- India received support for its air strikes from several countries, including Australia and France.
- France recognised India's legitimacy to ensure its security against cross-border terrorism and asked Pakistan to put an end to operations of terrorist groups established on its territory.
- The British government called on India and Pakistan to pursue diplomatic solutions.
- Organisation of Islamic Cooperation condemned "the Indian incursion and aerial violation."
- China's response – Delhi should have tapped international cooperation avoided unilateral action.

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India-Pakistan conflict: Time to reset our relations

Introduction:

- India made its point loud and clear, locally and globally, by striking against terror and then rebuffing an adventurous attack.
- After the Indian Air Force's (IAF) precision strike on a Jaish-e-Mohammed terror camp at Balakot, an impetuous Pakistan retaliated the following day, but was quickly prevented or thwarted.
- Pakistan claimed an Indian MiG fighter was shot down and its pilot captured; India said a Pakistani F-16 aircraft was destroyed.

Undoubtedly, it's a war-type situation, with nobody likely to understand after much thought what's next.

Why both the countries should avoid such war-type situation?

- As Chinese military strategist **Sun Tzu** said: Battles are won before they are fought. For, they are fought in the meadows of the mind or at the desks of diplomacy. And talking wins the day.
- Reaction from most countries has centred around the customary call to the parties concerned to **engage in talks and sort out matters peacefully**. China too has **called for restraint**. So have been the Saudis.
- **Pakistan's economy in distress** – According to a UN report, Pakistan's economy is projected to slow down markedly in 2019 and 2020 to below 4%, after an estimated expansion of 5.4% in 2018. With its economy in distress, Pakistan should realize its days of conducting low-intensity terror campaigns are over. They can't afford the costs for running such proxy wars, when Pakistan is currently seeking a bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

De-escalation is the solution

- A **quick release of IAF pilot Abhinandan Varthaman** captured by Pakistan and **handing over Masood Azhar** may just be the perfect way for Pakistan to de-escalate matters.
- Clearly, the battle needs to shift to the theatre of negotiation.
- India should set the agenda by fetching Pakistan to the table, influencing Pakistan's allies, and playing the role of a regional power that seeks mutually beneficial solutions.

Conclusion:

- Terrorism is not a problem that can be solved by eliminating a few individuals in terrorist camps. Terrorism is a complex social behavioural problem.

- The decision of becoming a terrorist results from the interplay of contexts and influences of narratives sold to these sensitive social groups at the bottom of the pyramid, which gradually converts an otherwise normal person into a destructive one.
- Terrorism has different stages, much like a building having various floors. The largest number of people are on the ground floor.
- India should focus on a different type of a surgical strike; it's a strike that could push Pakistan out of its terror past and military dependency. It won't come soon, but it's worth a start.

Connecting the dots:

- Terrorism cannot be stopped by attacking terror camps; it requires a deeper understanding of vulnerable social groups. Substantiate.
- Essay: "Every battle is won before it's ever fought."

IAF's Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman held captive by Pak Army

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

In news:

- IAF plane was shot down and pilot has been held captive by Pakistan Army.
- India has demanded that the pilot be treated in accordance to **Geneva Convention of 1929.**

Do you know?

- The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols sets out how soldiers and civilians should be treated during armed conflict.
- The Geneva Conventions is a body of Public International Law, also known as the Humanitarian Law of Armed Conflicts, whose purpose is to provide minimum protections, standards of humane treatment, and fundamental guarantees of respect to individuals who become victims of armed conflicts.

Important Value Additions:

About the Geneva Conventions

- **Adopted first in 1864** for the "Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field," the Geneva Conventions, understood in the present form, evolved through centuries as an agreement that extensively defines the basic rights of the civilian and military personnel imprisoned during the time of a war.

- The first Geneva Convention came about due to the **efforts of Swiss businessman and founder of the Red Cross society Henry Dunant** after he published a book proposing the establishment of an organisation for relief work and humanitarian aid in wartime.
- Thereafter, up to 1949, the conventions were updated several times. At present, the conventions comprise four treaties that mark out the benchmark of international law for humanitarian treatment in the event of a war and a total of 196 countries have ratified it.

Prisoners of War (POWs)

- The rules protecting prisoners of war (POWs) are specific. They were first detailed in the 1929 Geneva Convention and later amended in the third 1949 Geneva Convention following the lessons of World War II.

Note: But since India and Pakistan have not declared a state of war against each other, pilot Abhinandan cannot be considered a POW.

Geneva protocols

1. Protocol 1 expands **protection for the civilian population as well as military and civilian medical workers** in international armed conflicts.
2. Protocol 2 elaborates on **protections for victims caught up** in high-intensity internal conflicts such as civil wars. It does not apply to internal disturbances such as riots, demonstrations and isolated acts of violence.
3. Protocol 3 provides for another distinctive emblem: **the red crystal**. The red crystal is an optional emblem, equal in status to the red cross and red crescent.

The four Geneva Conventions

1. Convention 1: This convention **protects wounded and infirm soldiers and ensures humane treatment without discrimination** founded on race, color, sex, religion or faith, birth or wealth, etc. The convention **prohibits torture, assaults** upon personal dignity, and execution without judgment. It also grants the right to proper medical treatment and care.
2. Convention 2: This agreement extended the **protections** described in the first convention to **shipwrecked soldiers and other naval forces**, including special protections afforded to hospital ships.
3. Convention 3: this defined **'Prisoner of War,'** and accorded such prisoners **proper and humane treatment** as specified by the first convention. Specifically, it required POWs to give only their names, ranks, and serial numbers to their captors. Nations party to the convention may not use torture to extract information from POWs.

4. Convention 4: Under this convention, **civilians** are afforded the same protections from inhumane treatment and attack afforded to sick and wounded soldiers in the first convention.

Applicability of the Geneva Conventions

- The conventions apply to all cases of declared war between signatory nations.
- The conventions apply to all cases of armed conflict between two or more signatory nations, even in the absence of a declaration of war.
- The conventions apply to a signatory nation even if the opposing nation is not a signatory, but only if the opposing nation 'accepts and applies the provisions' of the conventions.

Dealing with emerging dangerous cyberspace

Introduction:

- Cyberspace is in news again as the laws governing it are getting a lot scarier.
- There is a wide debate among experts about Trump administration's decision to repeal Presidential Policy Directive 20 (an Obama-era cyberwarfare policy) and what exactly will replace PPD-20 remains clouded in uncertainty.

About PPD20:

- During early years of his presidency, former US President Barack Obama signed the Presidential Policy Directive 20 (PPD20).
- This was a secret act that only came into public notice when National Security Agency whistleblower Edward Snowden revealed classified documents to the world in 2013.
- PPD20 deals with Offensive Cyber Effects Operations (OCEO) – which can offer unique and unconventional capabilities to advance US national objectives around the world with little or no warning to the adversary or target and with potential effects ranging from subtle to severely damaging.
- However, such an operation required rigorous levels of approval and government oversight. Therefore, PPD20 provided such approval process, which also included requirement of personal authorization of the President.

Cyberweapon called STUXNET

- Years ago, the world witnessed the creation of the first major "cyberweapon", known as Stuxnet.

- Stuxnet is a malicious computer worm which was secretly loaded onto an unknown Iranian worker's USB flash drive.
- The self-replicating computer worm entered Iranian computer networks and spread like a cancer, infecting more than 15 Iranian industrial networks and eventually infected its primary target: Iran's nuclear facility at Natanz.
- Workers watched helplessly as centrifuges spun out of control, tricked by the worm to spin faster and faster until its eventual mechanical suicide.
- Strands of the worm, which found its way into the wild, still infect computers to this day.

Stuxnet, which went through years of development between its initial creation and eventual deployment, required rigorous levels of approval and government oversight before its launch.

The weapon was treated as significantly different from conventional weapons and featured an approval process similar to those reserved for nuclear weapons. President Obama himself had to personally authorize the attack (under PPD20).

However, experts fear that such approval process might change under Trump regime.

US Cyber Command, which is the American military hacking outfit, may have full authority to launch cyberattacks wherever it feels the need to. It does not need oversight from the state department, commerce department and intelligence agencies, and certainly not from the president.

Cybernetics with no geographic constraints

The world knows that countries such as Russia and China use cyber attacks as a standard mode of foreign policy/intimidation.

- For instance, Russia has used its cyber weapons against Ukraine repeatedly and it has also interfered in the 2016 US presidential elections.
- In 2014, Chinese hackers working for the People's Liberation Army stole the entire database of the US government's office of personnel management (OPM).
- A couple of years later, "agents working for unknown government" stole the records of 143 million Americans from Equifax, a credit rating agency.

Therefore, what we are accepting is a world of perpetual endless warfare. Human beings may get killed, there will be battles, insurgencies, rebellions, perhaps even revolutions.

Conclusion:

From above, it is evident that the threat landscape is evolving continuously and the complex layers make cyber security a challenge.

Though India is taking steps towards strengthening cyber security, India needs to invest more in cyber security on such above discussed war-footing. As we are working on Digital India, we should work more on cyber safety.

The existing security gaps are ready ground for cyber-criminals to exploit.

Government, private institutions along with educational institutions must work together to strengthen cyber security of our country.

Connecting the dots:

- What is cyberspace? How does it impact India's national, economic and financial security? Critically examine.

Need for an international system of accountability

Introduction:

There have been many incidents of few states deploying asymmetric tactics (actively aiding insurgencies and terrorist organizations) to achieve their goals.

- For instance, in 2014, hundreds of mysterious (pro-Russian) gunmen appeared on the streets of Crimea and began taking over local government buildings.
- While Russia initially denied the existence of the "little green men", but later admitted that they were Russian military. (complete violation of the Geneva Conventions)
- Similar tactic has been deployed by Pakistan (usually through proxies). It has a history of supporting terrorist and insurgent groups in Jammu and Kashmir. However, it has denied any such involvement to shield itself from international backlash as Russia did.

The logic behind such tactic is to prevent retaliation from the enemy county or other countries and avoid global backlash.

In future, states like Pakistan may be tempted to turn toward new methods to achieve their goals. LAWS are one such avenue.

The below article deals with why there is a need for an international system of accountability to check machine-driven weapons like LAWS.

Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS)

- LAWS can detect, select and attack targets without human intervention.
- LAWS present several benefits for "middle powers" as they increase the reach and effectiveness of forces, reduce casualties and enable persistent presence in vast, inaccessible terrains.
- Countries like India or South Korea, which operate in a complicated geostrategic context, can therefore use LAWS to effectively police and protect their territory.

Concerns:

1. Absence of comprehensive international framework agreements on LAWS:

- **International rules around LAWS are relatively underdeveloped**, and in the **absence of clear norms** on human accountability and attribution for autonomous weapons, we could see states like Pakistan deploy LAWS for operations outside their borders.

2. LAWS can be used by state and non-state actors to engage in asymmetric tactics:

- A state could directly deploy LAWS against an adversary state
- A state could equip proxies such as insurgent or terrorist groups with autonomous weapons units
- A non-state actor steals or otherwise illegally acquires autonomous systems or units.

Do you know?

- Four of the Permanent-5 powers in the United Nations — the US, France, Russia and UK — have explicitly rejected moving toward a new international law on autonomous weapons.
- The US and Russia are actively pursuing AI-driven military systems, with UK following up.
- China has called for a ban, but its military has continued to research and develop LAWS.
- It therefore seems likely that these powers would support a regime on LAWS, if at all, only after they have developed and perfected the technology themselves.

Need of the hour:

- Strong **comprehensive international framework** agreements on LAWS.
- **Creation of export controls and rules**.
- To keep a check on private companies, developing an **internal ethical guidelines for AI technologies** is important.
- Basic stipulations on accountability in cases of theft or hacking.
- AI and weapons industry must craft specific standards for physical and non-physical safeguards to protect their LAWS technologies.
- Persistent surveillance of LAWS manufacturing facilities.

Connecting the dots:

- What is asymmetric warfare? Explore the possible tactics and challenges involved.
- Countries now face a new type of adversary who will fight electronically and psychologically, not just only physically. Discuss the measures needed to effectively address the increased threat from futuristic warfare.

Assam Rifles granted power to arrest anyone in the Northeast

Part of: GS Mains III – Challenges to Internal Security; Linkages between development and spread of extremism

In news:

- Assam Rifles has been empowered by the Centre to arrest anyone and search a place without warrant in the border districts of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland and Mizoram.
- "An officer of the rank corresponding to that of the lowest rank of members of the Assam Rifles" has been given these powers under the Code of Criminal Procedure.
- Earlier, Assam Rifles was making arrests only in areas where the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act was in effect.

Do you know?

- Section 41 of the CrPC states that any police officer may, without an order from a magistrate and without a warrant, arrest any person.
- Section 47 gives powers for search of place entered by person sought to be arrested.
- Section 48 says a police officer may, for the purpose of arresting without warrant any person, pursue such person into any place in India.
- According to Section 49, the person arrested shall not be subjected to more restraint than is necessary to prevent his escape.

Assam Rifles notification on hold

Part of: GS Mains III – Challenges to Internal Security; Linkages between development and spread of extremism

In news:

- In previous day's article we read that Assam Rifles has been empowered by the Centre to arrest anyone and search a place without warrant in the border districts of Assam,

Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland and Mizoram. (Assam Rifles granted power to arrest anyone in the Northeast)

- However, the Home Ministry has kept "in abeyance" its order that empowered the Assam Rifles.
- The notification was withheld after Opposition parties moved an adjournment motion against the order in the Assam Assembly.

PERSON IN NEWS

Person in news	Description
1. Person in news: Dr. Helen Hobbs	• Dr. Hobbs, who won the 2016 Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences, **discovered a mutation in a gene called PCSK9**, which particularly protects African-Americans against heart disease. • The PCSK9 discoveries **led to the development of PCSK9 inhibitors**, said to be the most effective drugs to lower cholesterol — or low density lipoprotein (LDL) — since statins. • Statins are a class of lipid-lowering medications. They reduce cardiovascular disease and mortality in those who are at high risk of cardiovascular disease. • Dr. Hobbs opted to look for rare genes that dramatically influenced cholesterol levels. Several years of her efforts led to the discovery of rare mutations in the PCSK9 gene.
2. Person/Award in news: Seoul Peace Prize	• Prime Minister Narendra Modi was given the Peace Prize for 2018 for his contribution to international cooperation and fostering global economic growth.
3. Award in news: Oscar	**Period. End of Sentence.** – Short film that profiled women in an Indian village who band together to manufacture affordable menstrual pad won Oscar award.

MISCELLANEOUS

In News	Description
1. 'Urban Naxals': Term used to silence those who dissent	**Context:** • On August 28, the Pune police raided the homes of five activists – academic and public intellectual **Anand Teltumbde**, lawyer **Sudha Bharadwaj**, retired professor and poet **Varavara Rao**, human rights lawyer **Arun Ferreira**, activist **Vernon Gonsalves**, and human rights activist **Gautam Navalakha**. • Describing them as "**Urban Naxals**", the police confiscated their computers and mobile phones and took many of them into custody. **In news:** • Dalit scholar and rights activist Anand Teltumbde said the "urban maoism" terminology is a "formula" to silence voices of those people who show courage to question the government policies and speak for safeguarding their democratic rights. • Abrupt arrests are part of a larger conspiracy against intellectuals and people fighting for democratic rights.
2. U.K. clears Mallya's extradition to India	**In news:** • British Home Secretary signed the order for the extradition of liquor baron Vijay Mallya to India. • Vijay Mallya is accused in India of conspiracy to defraud, making false representations and money laundering offences.
3. Kerala to get country's 2nd longest rail tunnel	**In news:** • The 9.02-km tunnel, mooted by Konkan Railway Corporation Ltd (KRCL) from near the Balaramapuram station on the Kanyakumari-Thiruvananthapuram railway line, will be the second longest railway tunnel in the country. • The rail tunnel has been proposed to connect the upcoming Vizhinjam International Multipurpose Deepwater Seaport to the railway network. • The 11.26-km Pir Panjal rail tunnel, connecting Banihal and Hillar Shahabad, is the longest.
4. Key facts for	• According to the United Nations' 2018 World Happiness Index,

Prelims:	India ranks low, lower than the Occupied Palestinian Territories. • According to the World Health Organisation, India is the most depressed country in the world. • In 2015, India ranked fourth in the world in 2015--after Syria, Nigeria and Iraq--as having the highest social hostilities involving religion. • India ranked 137 out of 163 countries in 2018 Global Peace Index.
5. Antibiotic resistance genes in High Arctic region	• We had read that a new study had found traces of antibiotic resistance genes in the High Arctic region, including the 'superbug' or the New Delhi metallo-beta-lactamase-1 protein (coded by blaNDM-1 gene), which was first detected in urban India in 2008. • Researchers who took soil samples in 2013 from the Kongsfjorden region of Svalbard – a Norwegian archipelago in the Arctic Ocean – found "comparatively localised" levels of blaNDM-1, which poses no health threat. • However, they say the "detection reinforces how rapidly AR (antibiotic resistance) can globalise", the study states. (Indication of the globalisation of antimicrobial resistance)
6. 55th Munich Security Conference	• 55th Munich Security Conference brings together global leaders and security experts from across the world. • Representatives of several countries unequivocally condemned the attack and extended their condolences to the bereaved families. • There was widespread support for India's concerns over Pakistan-sponsored terrorism on Indian soil.
7. Ex-President Yameen arrested	• Maldivian authorities arrested former President Abdulla Yameen on money laundering charges after a court order.
8. 79th Indian History Congress	• 79th session of Indian History Congress to be organised at Barkatullah University, Bhopal.
9. DRDO scouts for R&D partners	• DRDO is looking for potential partners to co-develop an engine for its planned Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) and

	five other future technologies. • It is on the lookout for collaborators to realise the military technologies such as Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAVs) and UAVs, materials, sensors, avionics, and artificial intelligence etc. • Minor innovators and startups are also being tapped for new concepts that the DRDO can try out under its 'Dare to Dream' challenge.
10. Facts about Election ink	**Key facts:** • Electoral ink, indelible ink, electoral stain or phosphoric ink is a semi-permanent ink or dye that is applied to the forefinger (usually) of voters during elections in order to prevent electoral fraud such as double voting. • **Mysore Paints and Varnish Limited** is the only company in India authorised to produce indelible ink, which is used in elections to prevent people from voting multiple times. • The company is **owned and operated by the Government of Karnataka**. **Do you know?** • The ink is also exported to countries like Thailand, Singapore, Nigeria, Malaysia and South Africa. • Election ink uses silver nitrate, and excessive exposure can cause argyria.
11. Aero India 2019	**Key pointers:** • 12th edition of the biennial international military and civil expo and air show was held in Bangalore. • Defence Minister rolled out a red carpet of opportunities in local defence and aerospace manufacturing to global investors during the launch of the Aero India. • The chiefs of the three Armed Forces — Air Chief Marshal B.S. Dhanoa, Admiral Sunil Lanba and General Bipin Rawat — were in attendance at the show.
12. Pakistan banned JuD and its charity wing FIF	**In news:** • Pakistan banned the Jamat-ud-Dawa, which is led by 2008 Mumbai attack mastermind Hafiz Saeed, and its charity wing

	Falah-e-Insaniat Foundation, amid intense global pressure to rein in the militant groups following the Pulwama terror attack. **Do you know?** • Saeed was listed under UN Security Council Resolution 1267 in December 2008. • The JuD is believed to be the front organisation for the LeT which is responsible for carrying out the Mumbai attack.
13. Inauguration of National War Memorial (NWM)	• National War Memorial (NWM) was inaugurated near the India Gate, Delhi, to honour over 25,000 soldiers who have laid down their lives for the country since Independence. • A National War Museum has been constructed at the Princes Park complex gate.
14. Himavad Gopalswamy Betta range was in news	**Why in news?** • Forest fires have been ravaging vast tracts of the Bandipur Tiger Reserve and National Park. • Himavad Gopalswamy Betta range in Bandipur - worst affected area

(TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE)

Model questions: (Answers are provided at the end)

Q.1) Consider the following statements with reference to Economic Census in India

1. The census is conducted by National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO).
2. It covers all economic activities (agricultural and non-agricultural) taking place in the country.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) Only 1
b) Only 2
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.2) Consider the following statements with reference to women workforce participation rate in India

1. India has women workforce participation of 50%
2. Women workforce participation rate is higher in urban areas than in rural areas

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.3) Match the following

1. Laffer curve a. Inflation and Unemployment
2. Philips curve b. National Income and Population
3. Lorenz curve c. Tax rates and tax revenue

Select the correct answer using code below

a) 1-a, 2-b, 3-c
b) 1-c, 2-a, 3-b
c) 1-b, 2-a, 3-c
d) 1-a, 2-c, 3-b

Q.4) Which of the following are the objectives of Green India Mission?

1. Increase forest cover to the extent of 5 million hectares.
2. Enhancing eco-system services.
3. Increase forest based livelihood income.

Select the correct answer using code below

a) 1 and 2
b) 1 and 3
c) 2 and 3
d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.5) Which of the following mission is not part of the National Action Plan for Climate Change (NAPCC)?

a) National Mission for Plastic-Free India
b) National Solar Mission
c) National Mission for a green India
d) National Water Mission

Q.6) Supreme Court banned production and distribution of 'Endosulfan'. It caused which of the following?

1. Abnormalities related to male reproductive system
2. Physical deformities
3. Neurobehavioral disorders

Select the correct code:

a) 1 and 2
b) 2 and 3
c) 1 and 3
d) All of the above

Q.7) Which of the following statements are correct about endosulfan?

1. Endosulfan is acutely neurotoxic to both insects and mammals.
2. Endosulfan has high potential to bio-accumulate and bio-magnify.
3. Endosulfan is banned across the world under Stockholm convention.
4. Endosulfan is the cause of death of Indian vultures.

Select the code from the following:

a) 1 and 2
b) 1, 2 and 3
c) 2, 3 and 4
d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Q.8) Consider the following with regard to Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) Scheme:

1. It is a scheme funded by Government of India.
2. It aims to extend direct income support at the rate of Rs. 6,000 per year to farmer families, having cultivable land upto 2 hectares.
3. It is a loan waiver scheme which transfers Rs. 2,000 into the bank accounts of beneficiary farmers in three equal installments.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q.9) Which of the following statements are true w.r.t millets?

1. They are kharif crops.
2. Major millets grown in India are Jowar, bajra and ragi.
3. Bajra is grown in moist areas whereas jowar is grown in dry areas.

Select the correct code

a) 1 and 2
b) 1 and 3
c) 2 and 3
d) 1,2 and 3

Q.10) Consider the following statements:

1. Kerala is the India's leader in the millet sector
2. Indian Institute of Millets Research (IIMR) operates under the aegis of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)

Select the correct statements

a) 1 Only
b) 2 Only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.11) Which of the following are 'Millets'?

1. Sorghum
2. Ragi

3. Bajra

Select the correct code

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

Q.12) Consider the following statements with regard to Asian Elephant Alliance:

1. The Alliance aims to secure a safe future for the wild elephants of India, which make up approximately half of the world's wild Asian elephants.
2. The Alliance calls for Corporate India and the government to commit a £20m investment in elephant corridors by 2025.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both
d) None

Q.13) Consider the below statements with regard to Angel Tax:

1. It is a term used to refer to the income tax payable on capital raised by unlisted companies via issue of shares.
2. Since it largely impacts angel investments in startups, it is called angel tax.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both
d) None

Q.14) Asian Elephants are

a) Endangered
b) Critically Endangered
c) Extinct
d) Vulnerable

Q.15) Consider the following statements

1. Satpura Range is spread over 2 States only
2. Aravalli Range is the oldest range of Fold Mountains in India
3. Eastern Ghats are not as high as the Western Ghats

Select the correct statements

a) 1 and 2
b) 2 and 3
c) 1 and 3
d) 2 Only

Q.16) Consider the following statements regarding 'Refugees'

1. India has recently signed the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention on the Status of Refugees
2. World Refugee Day is celebrated on 20th June
3. The 1951 Convention the only instrument relevant to the rights of refugees

Select the incorrect code

a) 1 and 2
b) 2 and 3
c) 1 and 3
d) Only 2

Q.17) 'Rakhine State' has been in the news for quite some time for large scale exodus of migrants and severe human right violations. In which of the following countries does it exist?

a) Palestine
b) Syria
c) Yemen
d) Myanmar

Q.18) Sanjay Gandhi National Park is located in -

a) Rajasthan
b) Jammu and Kashmir
c) Maharashtra
d) Madhya Pradesh

Q.19) Which term refers to a specialized firm that finances young, start-up companies?

a) Venture Capital Firm
b) Finance Company
c) Small-Business Finance Company
d) Capital-Creation Company

Q.20) Consider the following

1. Angel investors invest their own money into businesses, but venture capitalists invest money contributed by several investors.
2. Angel investors are found in virtually all industries, and they have diversified portfolios. Venture capitalists are involved in limited industries (mostly technology and infrastructure), and they have limited portfolios.

Select the correct statement/s

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both
d) None

Q.21) Consider the following statements with reference to angel investors in India

1. Only an individual can qualify as an angel investor in India, contrary to global experience where even a body corporate can become an angel investor.
2. For the capital invested, they must be provided preferential shares by the company.
3. They are focused on helping the business succeed, rather than reaping a huge profit from their investment.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q.22) Which of the following bird species are migratory in nature?

1. Pelican
2. Flamingo
3. Northern Duck
4. Amur Falcon

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

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

Q.23) Consider the following about centre's flagship Ayushman Bharat scheme:

1. The scheme includes National Health Protection Scheme renamed as Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojna (PMJAY) and Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs).
2. The scheme will also subsume two ongoing centrally sponsored health insurance schemes namely Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojna (RSBY) and the Senior Citizen Insurance Scheme (SCHIS)

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both
d) None

Q.24) Consider the following statements about National Health Protection Scheme

1. It covers 10 crore poor and vulnerable families
2. It is a flagship programme under Ayushman Bharat
3. It will provide coverage upto Rs 5 lakh per family per annum in secondary and tertiary care institutions

Select the correct statements

a) 1 and 2
b) 2 and 3
c) 1 and 3
d) All of the above

Q.25) 'Human Development Index' is released by

a) United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
b) International Labour Organisation (ILO)
c) World Economic Forum (WEF)
d) None of the above

Q.26) Which of the following is correct about 'Repo Rate'?

a) It is the rate charged by the central bank for lending funds to commercial banks.
b) It is the rate at which scheduled banks can borrow funds overnight from RBI against government securities.
c) It is the rate at which banks lend funds to RBI.
d) It is the rate at which RBI borrows from its clients generally against government securities.

Q.27) Consider the following statements:

1. When Repo Rate increases, borrowing from RBI becomes more expensive.
2. Increase in Reverse Repo decreases the liquidity in the market.
3. Reverse Repo is fixed .5 percent points more than Repo.

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.28) Consider the following statements with regard to Guru Padmasambhava:

1. He is also known as second Buddha, was born and brought up in Odisha.
2. He is also known as Guru Rinpoche and is considered to be the founder of Tibetan Buddhism.
3. He is considered to be the founder of Nyingma tradition, oldest of the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q.29) NIKSHAY is a –

a) Complete Supply Chain Management System of various drugs, sutures and surgical items
b) Web based solution for monitoring of TB patients
c) Centralized Blood Bank Management System
d) None of the above

Q.30) 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.31) Consider the following statements:

1. 'Asiatic Lion Conservation Project' was launched by alliance of conservation organisations – Lion Family, International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), IUCN Netherlands, Wildlife Trust of India and World Land Trust.
2. Asiatic Lions are listed as 'Endangered' under the IUCN Red List.
3. The concept of Greater Gir has been adopted through which additional suitable habitat for lion is being developed for the habitation of lion.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q.32) Kuno-Palpur Wildlife Sanctuary is located in -

a) Gujarat
b) Madhya Pradesh
c) Thailand
d) Kenya

Q.33) Consider the following with regard to Man Sagar Lake:

1. It is an artificial lake named after Man Singh

2. It is located in Jaipur, Rajasthan
3. A palace, Jal Mahal, is situated in the middle of the lake

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q.34) Consider the following statements with reference to Sufism in medieval India: Sufis followed –

1. Charity and suppression of passions
2. Self-discipline
3. Strict observance of the Sharia
4. Performance of prayers and pilgrimages

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Q.35) Consider the following statements regarding Sufism:

1. While orthodox Muslims emphasize external conduct, the Sufis lay stress on inner purity.
2. The Sufis consider love and devotion as the only means of attaining salvation.
3. The preaching of Sufi teachers shaped the thinking of Bhakti reformers like Ramananda, Kabir and Nanak.

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.36) Consider the following statements:

1. Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) is a targeted cash transfer programme whereas MGNREGA is a universal programme.
2. The landless can earn through the MGNREGA but are not eligible for the PM-KISAN scheme.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both
d) None

Q.37) Consider the following statements:

1. The number of female children placed for in-country adoptions and inter-country adoptions between 2015 and 2018 are relatively lower than male children.
2. Female child happens to be the first choice when it comes to adoption in India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both

d) None

Q.38) PCSK-9 gene mutation which was in news recently is related to?

a) Rice Intensification
b) Gene Editing
c) Space Research
d) Fighting bad cholesterol

Q.39) Consider the following statements:

1. Chief Information Commissioner is eligible for reappointment.
2. The chairman National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) can be reappointed for further employment under the Central or a state government.
3. Central Vigilance Commissioner is not eligible for further employment under the Central or a state government.

Which of the statements given above is/are incorrect?

a) 1 and 2
b) 3 only
c) 1 and 3
d) All of the above

Q.40) Consider the following statements:

1. CAG is not eligible for further office, either under the Government of India or of any state, after he ceases to hold his office.
2. The Constitution does not specifically bar judges from taking up any post-retirement assignment.
3. The chairman of the Finance Commission is not eligible for reappointment.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

a) 1 and 2
b) 2 and 3
c) 1 and 3
d) All of the above

Q.41) SDG India Index Baseline Report is released by –

a) SAARC
b) NITI Aayog
c) United Nations ESCAP
d) World Bank

Q.42) Aichi target covers a strategic plan from 2011 – 2020. They are related to which of the following:

a) Biodiversity
b) Global warming and climate change
c) Sustainable development
d) Migration

Q.43) Consider the below statements and identify the incorrect one:

a) Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is not a legally binding convention.
b) Cartagena Protocol deals with potential risks posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology.
c) Nagoya Protocol deals with fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.
d) Gran Canaria Declaration deals with global strategy for plant conservation.

Q.44) Which of the statements given below about Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is/are correct?

1. The objective of CBD are: conservation of biological diversity, sustainable use of its components, and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the use of genetic resources.
2. It was adopted during the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.
3. Under CBD, years 2001-2010 is considered as United Nations Decade on Biodiversity.

Choose correct answer:

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

Q.45) Which among the following are considered as the three Rio Conventions - derived directly from the 1992 Earth Summit?

1. Convention on Biological Diversity
2. Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution
3. United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
4. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
5. Convention on Wetlands or Ramsar Convention

Choose the correct answer:

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

Q.46) Which among the following deals with 'Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity'?

a) Nagoya Protocol
b) Cartagena Protocol
c) Aichi declaration
d) Basel Convention

Q.47) The primary goals of Convention on Biological Diversity do not include –

a) preventing anthropogenic interference
b) conservation of biological diversity
c) sustainable use of biological diversity
d) fair and equitable sharing of the benefits

Q.48) Consider the following statements with regard to Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE)

1. National Statistical Office(NSO) consists of CSO, NSSO and CMIE
2. CMIE is under Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both
d) None

Q.49) Consider the below statements:

1. Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) targets eliminating trans fat in India by the year 2022.
2. World Health Organisation (WHO) launched a new mass media campaign called "Heart Attack Rewind" which targets eliminating trans fat globally by the year 2023.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) Only 1
b) Only 2
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.50) Consider the following

1. Transfat are saturated fatty acids
2. They are formed during the process of addition of hydrogen atoms to oil
3. Trans fat are naturally found in nature

Which of the following statements is/are false with respect to "Trans fat"?

a) 1 and 2 only
b) 1 and 3 only
c) 3 only
d) None

Q.51) Consider the following statements about Article 35A

1. It is a part of original constitution.
2. The provision discriminates against a woman's right to property.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) Only 1
b) Only 2
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.52) Consider the following advantages of conserving Biodiversity

1. It ensures the sustainable utilization of life support systems on earth.
2. The genetic diversity of plants and animals are preserved.
3. It ensures that it will fulfil all the development needs of people.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 and 2
b) 2 and 3
c) 1 and 3
d) All of the above

Q.53) Consider the following about National Board for Wild Life (NBWL)

1. It is a "Statutory Organization" constituted under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
2. It is is the apex body charged with allowing forest land in Protected Areas to be diverted for industry.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) Only 1
b) Only 2
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.54) 'Saubhagya Web Portal' has been launched by government of India to track

a) Gas connections in rural and urban households

b) Electrification of rural and urban households
c) Domestic violence in urban areas
d) Swachch Bharat Abhiyan

Q.55) Consider the following statements:

1. NITI Aayog envisaged 800 megawatt from waste-to-energy (WTE) plants by 2018-19.
2. It will be part of the Swachh Bharat Mission.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both
d) None

Q.56) Which of the following statements regarding new Solid Waste Management Rules are correct?

1. It has mandated the segregation of waste at the source.
2. All hotels and restaurants will also be required to segregate biodegradable waste and set up a system of collection to ensure that such food waste is utilised for composting / biomethanation.
3. Municipal authorities will levy user fees for collection, disposal and processing from bulk generators.
4. Mandated Integration of rag pickers, waste pickers and kabadiwalas from the informal sector to the formal sector by the state government.

Select the code from following:

a) 1,2 and 3
b) 2,3 and 4
c) 1,3 and 4
d) All of the above

Q.57) The treatment method recommended for the human anatomical waste generated from hospitals is –

a) Autoclaving
b) Chemical disinfection
c) Incineration
d) All the above

Q.58) Consider the below statements:

1. The World Happiness Report is an annual publication of the United Nations.
2. As of March 2018, Norway was ranked the happiest country in the world.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both
d) None

Q.59) Svalbard was in news recently. Where is it located?

a) Balkans
b) Scandinavia
c) Carpathian Mountains
d) Baltic Region

Q.60) Kongsfjorden region of Svalbard was in news for –

a) Global Seed Vault was launched in 2018
b) 'Superbug' or the New Delhi metallo-beta-lactamase-1 protein

(coded by blaNDM-1 gene) was detected recently

c) Norway and Russia signed Svalbard Treaty to make the region visa-free zone

d) Warmer winters due to climate change

Q.61) PCSK9 inhibitors was in news recently. It is associated with -

a) Effective drugs to lower cholesterol

b) Innovative rice intensification

c) China's Chang'e 4 expedition

d) Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter

Q.62) The indigenously-manufactured Train 18 has been named as –

a) Vande Bharat Express

b) Shrestha Bharat Express

c) GatiMann Express

d) Talgo Express

Q.63) With regard to WTO and its functioning, consider the following statements:

1. Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to a country by another country ensures preferential treatment, lower tariffs and removal of other trade barriers between the two member countries.
2. Dispute settlement process in WTO is rule based and transparent and ensures 'compliance of verdict' on member countries.
3. Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM) is a tool for protecting interest of farmers and poor from volatility of international trade in agricultural commodities.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 2 only

b) 3 only

c) 1 and 2 only

d) 1 and 3 only

Q.64) Which of the following states have approved the first Blackbuck Conservation Reserve in India?

a) Rajasthan

b) Gujarat

c) Uttar Pradesh

d) Madhya Pradesh

Q.65) Match the following Wildlife Sanctuaries with its associated states:

Wildlife Sanctuary State

A. Borail Wildlife Sanctuary 1.Madhya Pradesh

B. Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary 2.Bihar

C. Abohar Wildlife Sanctuary 3.Assam

D. Bhimbandh Wildlife Sanctuary 4.Punjab

Choose the appropriate code:

A-B- C-D

a) 1-2- 3-4

b) 2-1- 3-4

c) 4-3- 1-2

d) 3-1- 4-2

Q.66) Which of the statements given below are correct?

1. Asthenosphere is associated with the upper layer of the earth's mantle (below the lithosphere) whereas Barysphere is associated with inner layer of the earth's core (below outer core)
2. The main mineral constituents of the continental mass are silica and alumina.
3. The oceanic crust mainly consists of silica and iron.

Choose appropriate answer from the codes given below:

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

Q.67) Consider the following statements with regard to Earthquake:

1. The place in the crust where the movement starts is called the epicentre.
2. The place on the surface above the Epicentre is called the focus.
3. Focus is also known as Hypocentre

Select the incorrect statements

a) 1 and 2 only
b) 1 and 3 only
c) 2 and 3 only
d) All of the above

Q.68) If Asthenosphere is associated with the upper layer of the earth's mantle (below the lithosphere), then 'Barysphere' is associated with:

a) Thin layer of the earth's crust (above lithosphere)
b) Lower layer of the earth's mantle (below Astenosphere)
c) Inner layer of the earth's core (below outer core)
d) Upper layer of the earth's mantle (below the lithosphere) only

Q.69) Consider the following statements about United Nations

1. International Court of Justice and International Criminal court are the two dispute resolution mechanisms of UN.
2. All member states of UN are also members of UNESCO.
3. Economic and Social Council along with the Trusteeship Council are among the six main organs of UN.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 and 2
b) 2 and 3
c) Only 3
d) 1 and 3

Q.70) Consider the following statements about 'International Court of Justice (ICJ)'

1. Statute of the International Court of Justice, which is an integral part of the United Nations Charter established the ICJ
2. It is composed of fifteen judges elected to nine-year terms by Permanent members of the UNSC

Select the correct statements

a) 1 Only
b) 2 Only
c) Both 1 and 2

d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.71) Consider the below statements about Union Territories in India:

1. UTs are the members of the federal system in India.
2. There is no uniformity in their administrative set-up.
3. An administrator of a UT is an agent of the centre like a governor.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q.72) In what regard the Centre have special relationship with respect to NCT of Delhi as compared to other states?

1. Centre appoints Lieutenant Governor of NCT of Delhi unilaterally while Governor of a State is appointed only after consultation with the Chief Minister of the respective State.
2. Chief Minister of NCT of Delhi is appointed by the Lieutenant Governor of NCT of Delhi while the Chief Minister of a State is appointed by the Governor of that State.

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.73) An administrator of a union territory is

a) an agent of the President
b) appointed by the President
c) head of state like a governor

Select the appropriate code:

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

Q.74) Consider the following statements about Islands Development Agency (IDA)

1. It is chaired by Union Environment Minister
2. It was constituted in 2017 for the holistic development of islands after giving due consideration to unique maritime and territorial bio-diversity of the islands.

Which of the statements above is/are correct?

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both
d) None

Q.75) Which of the following are the pillars of growth under Digital India?

1. Free internet access
2. Electronics Manufacturing
3. E-governance
4. Universal access to Mobile Connectivity

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

a) 3 and 4

b) 1 and 2
c) 1, 2 and 3
d) 2, 3 and 4

Q.76) Bangaram, Thinnakara, Cheriyam, Suheli is associated with -

a) Islands of Lakshadweep
b) Islands of Andamans
c) Indigenous cattle breeds
d) Folk songs of Odisha

Q.77) Scheme of Assistance for Prevention of Alcoholism and Substance (Drugs) Abuse was introduced by -

a) Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
b) Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
c) Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers
d) Home Ministry

Q.78) Consider the following statements with regard to Mid-day Meal Scheme:

1. Scheme covers all children studying in class I to VIII
2. MDM is covered by National Food Security Act, 2013
3. The programme supplies free lunches on working days for children in primary and upper primary classes in government, government aided, local body, Education Guarantee Scheme, and alternate innovative education centres, Madarsa and Maqtabs supported under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan only.

Which of the statements above are correct?

a) 1, 2 and 3
b) 1 and 2
c) 1 and 3
d) 2 and 3

Q.79) An integrated refinery and petrochemicals complex at Ratnagiri in Maharashtra, a $44 billion joint venture is proposed between which two countries?

a) India and UAE
b) India and Russia
c) India and Saudi Arabia
d) India and Iran

Q.80) To ensure that banks don't go bust, RBI has put in place some trigger points to assess, monitor, control and take corrective actions on banks which are weak and troubled. The process or mechanism under which such actions are taken is known as Prompt Corrective Action, or PCA. On which of the following the RBI has set the trigger points?

1. Capital-to-risk weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR)
2. Non-Performing Assets (NPA)
3. Return on Assets (ROA)
4. Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR)

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

a) 1, 2 and 3 only
b) 2, 3 and 4 only
c) 1, 3 and 4 only
d) All the above

Q.81) Consider the below statements in regard to Capital to Risk (Weighted) Assets Ratio (CRAR)

1. CRAR is a standard metric to measure balance sheet strength of banks.
2. In India, RBI has implemented BASEL III norms which prescribes the minimum capital adequacy ratio that banks must maintain is 8%.

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.82) Article 36 of the Vienna Convention, which was in news often, deals with -

a) Protection of the Stratospheric Ozone
b) Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)
c) Consular Relations
d) Prevention of Marine Pollution

Q.83) Consider the following statements with regard to indelible ink used during elections:

1. Delhi-based National Physical Laboratory (NPL) has a monopoly on the manufacture of indelible ink since 1962
2. Election ink uses silver nitrate, and excessive exposure can cause argyria.

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.84) Which among the following is/are critically endangered according to IUCN status?

1. Lesser black-backed gull
2. Great Hornbill
3. Lesser crested tern
4. Siberian Crane

Choose correct answer:

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

Q.85) With respect to Indian Missile system, which of the following missiles is/are an example of Ballistic Missiles

1. Nirbhay
2. Dhanush
3. Brahmos

Choose the suitable option

a) 1 and 2 only
b) 3 only
c) 2 only
d) 1 and 3 only

Q.86) India is progressing on acquisition and exploration of the 'Farzad-B' gas oilfields. In which country does this oil field belong to?

a) Papua New Guinea
b) Iran
c) Turkmenistan
d) UAE

Q.87) Consider the following statements about Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

1. It is a policy-making body which works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms for combating money laundering
2. It was established especially to combat terror financing

Select the correct statements

a) 1 Only
b) 2 Only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.88) List of "Non-Cooperative Countries or Territories" (NCCTs) is prepared by

a) Financial Action Task Force
b) International Monetary Fund
c) World Bank
d) None of the above

Q.89) Consider the following statements about Financial Action Task Force (FATF):

1. It is a Paris-based multi-disciplinary and inter-governmental body whose purpose is the development and promotion of national and international policies to combat money laundering and terrorist financing.
2. It was founded at the 1989 OECD Economic Summit.

Select the correct code:

a) Only 1
b) Only 2
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.90) Under Indus Water treaty which of the following rivers are governed by India?

a) Beas, Ravi and Sutlej
b) Indus, Chenab and Jhelum
c) Indus, Chenab and Sutlej
d) Beas Ravi and Chenab

Q.91) Consider the following statements

1. It is the largest tributary of Indus.
2. It is also known as Chandrabhaga.
3. It flows for more than 1000km before entering into Pakistan.

Choose the river which best suits the above statements

a) Jhelum
b) Chenab
c) Satluj
d) Beas

Q.92) The Ujh project is a step towards India's utilisation of waters of the Indus and its tributaries in keeping with its rights under the Indus Water treaty. Ujh is a tributary of which of the following rivers?

a) Ravi
b) Jhelum
c) Chenab
d) Beas

Q.93) Consider the following statements with reference to Ujh multipurpose project

1. The project will provide irrigation and hydropower from waters of river Ujh, which is a tributary of river Jhelum.
2. The project is aimed at utilizing India's rights under Indus Waters Treaty.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) Only 1
b) Only 2
c) 1 and 2
d) None

Q.94) Repurpose Cooking Oil (RUCO) initiative to collect and convert used cooking oil into bio-fuel was launched by -

a) Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)
b) CSIR-Indian Institute of Petroleum
c) Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)
d) Indian Council of Agricultural Research

Q.95) Consider the following statements:

1. Flying bulldog is world's largest bee
2. IUCN status: Extinct in the Wild
3. The smallest mammal is the Bumblebee

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) Only 1
b) Only 2
c) 1 and 2
d) None

Q.96) Consider the following statements about Hepatitis

1. Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver.
2. Hepatitis A and E are typically caused by ingestion of contaminated food or water.
3. World Hepatitis Day is celebrated on 28th July

Which of the given statements is/are correct?

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

Q.97) Viral Load Testing is available for which of the following?

1. HIV
2. Hepatitis B
3. Cytomegalovirus

Select the correct code:

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

Q.98) Hepatitis C is a liver infection caused by Hepatitis C virus. Which of the following statements regarding Hepatitis C are correct?

1. It is caused by drinking contaminated water or through saliva of infected person.
2. Once infected, a person cannot be cured.
3. It can spread through sexual intercourse.

Select the code from below:

a) 1 and 2
b) 3 only
c) 2 and 3
d) 1 and 3

Q.99) 'Women in Politics Map' is released by –

a) International Council of Women (ICW)
b) Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO)
c) Council of Women World Leaders
d) None of the above

Q.100) Global Gender Gap Report is released by –

a) World Economic Forum
b) UN Women
c) Women for Women International
d) OXFAM International

Q.101) The Chagos Archipelago is located in

a) Atlantic Ocean
b) Indian Ocean
c) Pacific Ocean
d) Arctic Ocean

Q.102) Consider the following pairs
Disputed territory : : Territorial Entities

1. Kuril Islands : : Japan and China
2. Guantanamo Bay : : USA and Mexico
3. Chagos Archipelago : : Mauritius and the United Kingdom

Which of the following is/are incorrectly matched?

a) 1 and 2
b) 2 and 3
c) 1 and 3
d) All of the above

Q.103) Himavad Gopalswamy Betta range is located in –

a) Bandipur Tiger Reserve and National Park
b) Nagarhole Tiger Reserve and National Park
c) Brahmagiri Wildlife Sanctuary
d) Mudumalai National Park

Q.104) Which of the following conditions are associated with El Nino?

a) Weakened trade winds
b) Warm water off the west coast of South America
c) Low pressure around north Australia

Select the correct answer using code below

a) 1 and 2
b) 1 and 3
c) 2 and 3
d) 1,2 and 3

Q.105) Consider the following statements

1. El Nino Modoki is characterized by strong warming in the central tropical Pacific
2. EL Nino and La Nina are the atmospheric changes associated with the warming and cooling of the Pacific Ocean
3. El Nino is associated with the droughts in India, while La Nina is associated with excess rainfall in India

Select the correct statements

a) 1 and 2
b) 2 and 3
c) 1 and 3
d) All of the above

Q.106) Which of the following factors impact the Indian monsoon?

1. Madden Julian Oscillation

2. El Nino and Southern Oscillation
3. Tibet Plateau
4. Easterly jet streams

Select the code from following:

a) 2,3 and 4
b) 1,3 and 4
c) 1,2 and 3
d) All of the above

Q.107) Consider the following statements:

1. CSO is a premier statistical institution for collecting data in India
2. It presents the national income estimates twice a year.

Which of the above statements are correct?

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.108) Consider the following statements about 'Global Climate Risk Index'

1. It is published annually by UNEP
2. It is based on an analysis of the number of deaths (due to climatic conditions) per 100,000 inhabitants, extent of financial losses and loss per unit of GDP of countries

Select the correct statements

a) 1 Only
b) 2 Only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.109) 'Agenda for Action 2020' is concerned with India and

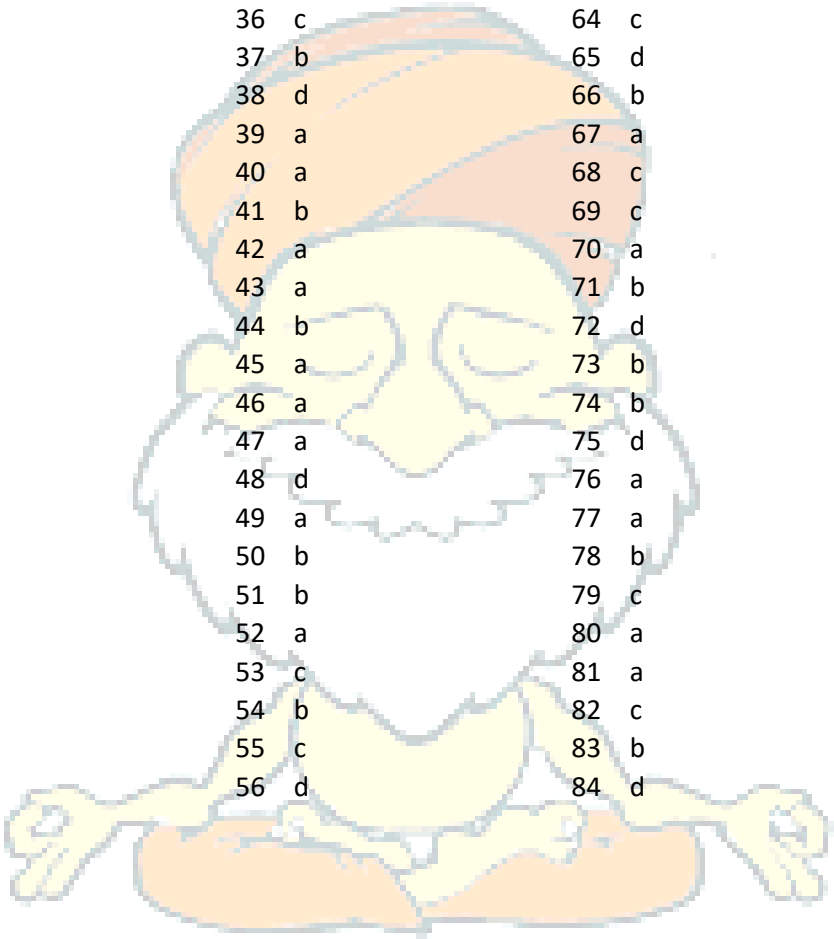
a) African Union
b) BIMSTEC
c) G-20
d) European Union

Q.110) Consider the following statements:

1. Copernicus is the world's largest single earth observation programme by NASA.
2. India has joined Europe's Copernicus, a mega global arrangement of sharing data from earth observation satellites

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) None

2018 JULY MONTH CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQs SOLUTIONS

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5	a	33	d	61	a	89	c
6	d	34	c	62	a	90	a
7	b	35	d	63	b	91	b
8	b	36	c	64	c	92	a
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23	c	51	b	79	c	107	a
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25	a	53	c	81	a	109	d
26	a	54	b	82	c	110	b
27	a	55	c	83	b		
28	d	56	d	84	d