



IASBABA

MONTHLY MAGAZINE

NOVEMBER 2019



*NATIONAL REGISTER OF CITIZENS
COLLEGIUM SYSTEM AND NJAC
LOCALS FIRST POLICY
INDIA AND RCEP
TELECOM SECTOR AND AGR ISSUE*

*NEW NATIONAL WATER POLICY
11TH BRICS SUMMIT
UNFCCC COP25
CARTOSAT-3
SABARIMALA VERDICT REVIEW*

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 **54th edition** of IASbaba's Monthly Magazine. This edition covers all important issues that were in news in the month of **NOVEMBER 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

CHAVANG KUT

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains I – Culture

In News

- Chavang Kut, the post-harvest festival of the Kuki-Chin-Mizo communities is being celebrated across North-Eastern states with traditional gaiety and enthusiasm.
- The festival marks the Anglo-Kuki war centenary year.
- Chavang stands for 'autumn' and Kut mean 'harvest'. The festival is observed **to mark the end of the harvesting season** and also to thank deities for a good harvest season.
- In Manipur, Mizoram and Assam and other parts of country, the festival is organized every year on the first day of November month. It is a state holiday in Manipur.
- Manipur is home to 29 tribes and it celebrates a number of traditional festivals. Such events not only highlight the vibrant colors of the region, but also play an important role in strengthening bonds between different tribes

Nomad film festival

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains GS-I – Society

In News

- "Challenging the stigma. Changing the narrative" is the motto of the Nomad Film Festival.
- One of India's most sharply focussed, the festival is dedicated to showcasing films dealing with the de-notified and nomadic tribes of the country.
- The idea is to harness cinema in directing focus on their struggles and problems, to change the mindset of people about them and help fight the slurs and blots associated with them; misconceptions like they are criminal tribes, thieves and law-breakers.
- The films could be about identity politics but the larger aim is to help the tribal people find a strong creative voice.
- However, the acuteness of the festival's vision and its commitment also makes it disadvantaged in another way because there are very few films made on the de-notified tribes, nomads or gypsies.

About Denotified tribes

- The term, 'De-notified and Nomadic Tribes', can be traced to the **Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) of 1871**.
- The colonial government notified nearly 200 tribal communities to be hereditary criminals and subjecting them to constant harassment by the administration.
- After India gained Independence, these tribes were 'de-notified' from the list of Criminal Tribes, and, hence, the term
- The CTA was repealed and the **Habitual Offenders Act (HOA) was enacted in various States**.

- Given their centuries-old tradition of constant movement, they often do not possess any residential proof, which **leaves them out of the majority of the government's schemes.**
- To address various issues faced by them, the **first National Commission for Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-nomadic Tribes (NCDNT)** was constituted in 2003, and reconstituted two years later under the chairpersonship of **Balkrishna Renke**, which submitted its report in 2008.
- The recommendations found an echo in the **Idate Commission**, constituted with the similar mandate in 2015.

Bru refugees

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains

In News

- Protesting Mizoram **Bru refugees in north Tripura** withdrew their indefinite road blockade after the Tripura State government announced its decision to restore ration in relief camps.

Bru Tribe:

- **Residence:** The Brus, also referred to as the Reangs, are spread across the north-eastern states of Tripura, Assam, Manipur, and Mizoram.
- **Culture:** They speak the Reang dialect of Kokborok language which is locally referred to as **Kau Bru**. Their **Hojagiri** folk dance is well known all over the world. **'Buisu'**, not 'bihu' is the most popular festival of Reang tribes.

Conflict in Mizoram:

- In 1995, Mizos, the majority tribe of the state, demanded that Brus be left out of the state's electoral rolls as they contended that they are not indigenous to Mizoram.
- In 1997, ethnic violence forced the Brus to flee the state in large numbers to neighbouring Tripura. Currently, around 35,000 (more than 5,000 families) **Bru refugees living in Tripura camps.**
- Multiple efforts have been made since then to repatriate them.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs had on September 2018 signed an agreement with the Mizoram Bru Displaced People's Forum (MBDPF) and the Mizoram and Tripura governments for repatriation of nearly 33,000 Bru refugees, currently living in camps in Tripura, to Mizoram.
- Under the agreement, each family will get ₹5,000 per month along with free ration for two years, besides financial assistance for house-building, education, security etc.

Dhrupad

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains I – Culture

In News

- Dhrupad maestro and Padma Shri awardee Ramakant Gundecha, 56, is no more.
- Dhrupad is a genre in **Hindustani classical music**. It is one of oldest forms of compositions in classical Indian music.

- Dhruvad is a Sanskrit name, derived from words dhruva (permanent) and pad (verse) and in combination it means “pillar”.
- The roots of Dhruvad are ancient and it is mentioned in Natyashastra (200 BCE – 200 CE). It is also described in other ancient and medieval Sanskrit texts, such as Bhagavata Purana (~800–1000 CE).
- The nature of **Dhruvad music is spiritual and does not seek to entertain**, but to induce feelings of peace and spirituality in the listener. It is primarily a form of worship, in which offerings are made to the divine through sound or Nada.
- Dhruvad was initially sung only in the temples, the singer facing the Lord. From this early chanting, it evolved into a sophisticated classical form of music. One significant characteristic of Dhruvad is the emphasis on **maintaining purity of the Raga**.

Gamosa

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-I- Culture

In News

- It is rectangular cloth, typically of red and white, used in a variety of ritual actions in Assamese culture.
- It is valued as a gift for visitors, used as a scarf, anti-dust mask, wrapped around the head as a turban.
- Conservationists are now banking on this cultural icon to carry forward the message of turtle conservation, with **gamosas woven with turtle images**.
- This has been done under a project initiated by the Wildlife Conservation Society/Turtle Survival Alliance and funded by the Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund.
- A part of the money from this gamosa would go to conservation of rare turtles such as the Assam Roofed Turtle (Pangshurasyllhetensis).

Do You Know?

- Assam’s ‘Gamosa’ and a semi-glutinous winter rice variety Chokuwa have earned the coveted geographical indications (GI) recognition in 2019 as proof of their unique geographical origins, thereby getting legal protection to prevent their unauthorized use.
- The Muga silk was the state’s first product to get the tag in 2007. In 2015, the pungent KarbiAnglong ginger and the juicy Tezpur litchi got the recognition.

2018 Romania referendum on Marriages

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains I – Culture

In News

- The two-day referendum held on October 2018, which cost \$40 million, aimed to change the constitution to define marriage as strictly between a man and a woman from the present gender-neutral “spouses.”

- Civil society group Coalition for the Family had secured 3 million signatures to trigger the vote aimed at **preventing gay couples winning the right to marry in the future**.
- Religiously conservative Romania, which decriminalized homosexuality in 2001 decades after neighbouring countries, **bans marriage and civil partnerships for same sex couples**.
- But just 20.4% of eligible voters cast ballots – short of the 30% needed, despite a push from the Orthodox Church.
- The constitution thus retained its neutral wording – that a family “is founded on the freely consented marriage of the spouses”.
- Had the measure been passed, it would have made same-sex marriage unconstitutional in the country.

SurangaBawadi

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains I – Ancient History

In News

- SurangaBawadi, an integral part of the ancient Karez system of **supplying water through subterranean tunnels** built during AdilShahi era in Vijayapura (Karnataka) is now set to get funding for restoration
- The monument has been selected under the “Ancient Water System of the Deccan Plateau” by the **World Monuments Fund (New York based NGO)**, which monitors restoration of ancient monuments across the globe
- With this, the SurangaBawadi is expected to get funds for restoration within the next two years. The NGO would also coordinate with the authorities concerned for restoration and create awareness on its importance.
- Though the Karez system was built in the 16th century by Ali Adil Shah–I, his successor, Ibrahim Adil Shah–II, brought in several changes by adding more structures to strengthen it.
- According to historians, the AdilShahis built the magnificent underground system to supply water to the city, which had a population of nearly 12 lakh then.

Rashtriya Ekta Diwas

Context:

- To mark the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, National Unity Day will be celebrated on 31st October
- The official statement for Rashtriya Ekta Diwas by the Home Ministry cites “will provide an opportunity to re-affirm the inherent strength and resilience of our nation to withstand the actual and potential threats to the unity, integrity and security of our country”

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel:

- Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel born on 31 October 1875
- Served as the first Deputy Prime Minister of India.
- Senior leader of the Indian National Congress
- Organised peasants from Kheda, Borsad, and Bardoli in Gujarat in non-violent civil disobedience

- Founding father of the Republic of India
- Played a leading role in the country's struggle for independence
- He was appointed as the 49th President of Indian National Congress,
- Promoted the Quit India Movement.
- He acted as Home Minister during the political integration of India and the Indo-Pakistani War of 1947
- As the first Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of India, Patel organised relief efforts for refugees fleeing to Punjab and Delhi from Pakistan and worked to restore peace.
- Patel persuaded almost every princely state to accede to India.
- His commitment to national integration in the newly independent country was total and uncompromising, earning him the sobriquet "Iron Man of India".
- He is also remembered as the "patron saint of India's civil servants" for having established the modern all-India services system.
- He is also called the "Unifier of India".
- The Statue of Unity, the world's tallest statue, was dedicated to him on 31 October 2018 which is approximately 182 metres (597 ft) in height in Gujarat

India without sardar:

- Subcontinent would be divided into two regions, one part a democratic India surrounded by the other part—close to 560 smaller states ruled by kings and their descendants.
- Half of the Indians would be living under a democratic set-up with freedoms and the rest living under some monarchy.
- The principle of Unity, Liberty, Equality enshrined in the Constitution would exist in one part and not in the other.
- There would be restrictions on travelling and transporting goods from one part to another.
- one part of India would be governed by the ideas of Justice and Liberty, whereas the other would have survived devoid of these ideas.
- Chaos and anarchy would have followed, and the idea of India would have failed at the very start of its journey.

More about Sardar:

- He was completely vested in the idea of India, and all his efforts were initially focused on the attainment of its independence.
- Once that had been achieved, he relentlessly followed the idea of uniting and integrating the nation at a time when it was suffering from partition, communalisation and the refugee crisis.
- He was determined to commit himself towards building one India by uniting 562 princely states (constituting 48% of area).

Criticisms:

- Patel's idea of unity was incomplete.
- He may have created a united India, but this India remains full of contradictions and inequalities, both social and economic.
- Politically, we may be equal and united, but socially and economically we are not.

Connecting the dots:

- The strong man of India who made Idea of India possible was Sardar Patel—‘the Bismarck and architect of modern India’. Substantiate

Ayodhya dispute**Context:**

- A five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court has allowed the construction of a temple in the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi site in Ayodhya,
- Also ordered the grant of a five-acre plot to the U.P. Central Sunni Wakf Board for the construction of a mosque.

Back ground:

- The Ayodhya dispute is a political, historical and socio-religious debate in India, centred on a plot of land in the city of Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh.
- The Babri Masjid was destroyed during a political rally in December 1992.

Crux:

- Hindus believed that the Babri Masjid, was built in Ayodhya after destroying a Ram Temple that marked the birthplace of the deity.
- The Hindu parties wanted the land to themselves, contending that Lord Ram was born at a spot on which later the central dome of the mosque was built.
- The Muslim parties, believed that the mosque was constructed in 1528 by Mir Baqi, a commander of Babur’s army, without demolishing any place of worship and the space was rightfully theirs.

First time court:

- The matter went to court as far back as 1885.
- Mahant Raghubar Dass filed a suit as “mahant of the janmasthan” for permission to build a temple on a 17 feet x 21 feet Chabutra (platform) outside the mosque.
- Dismissed the suit.

Landmark events:

- Surreptitious planting of the idols in 1949
- A local court ordered that the locks be opened for Hindu worshippers giving a big push to the temple movement

Allahabad high court judgement 2010:

- Allahabad High Court ruled that the 2.77 acres (1.12 ha) of Ayodhya land be divided into three parts, with 1/3 going to the Ram Lalla or Infant Rama represented by the Hindu Maha Sabha, 1/3 going to the Sunni Waqf Board and the remaining 1/3 going to Nirmohi Akhara.
- The judgment affirmed that the disputed land was the birthplace of Rama as per the faith and belief of Hindus, and that the Babri Masjid was built after the demolition of a Hindu temple, noting that it wasn’t built in accordance with the tenets of Islam.

SC Judgment 2019:

- Vacated the previous decision and ruled that the land belonged to the government per tax records.
- It further ordered the land to be handed over to a trust to build the Hindu temple.
- It also ordered to the government to give alternate 5 acre land to Sunni Waqf Board to build the mosque.

Status of Ayodhya:

- Lack of development, despite the town being located just 125 km from the State capital.
- Lack of jobs and investment
- Poor infrastructure
- Underdeveloped tourism economy have kept Ayodhya far behind other important Hindu religious centres like Mathura and Varanasi.
- The high-pitched events not only disrupted daily life and business, but also endangered communal harmony in the region.

Connecting the dots:

- Ayodhya became the centrestage for communal politics and a tool for polarisation before elections. Analyse

BAMBOO TECHNOLOGY PARKS

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains I – Geography

In News

- Union Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) announced that Bamboo Technology Parks would be set up in the two new Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.
- **The Cane and Bamboo Technology Centre (CBTC) under North Eastern Council (NEC)** will implement the project.
- the model for bamboo cultivation, harvesting and utilisation currently existing in the North Eastern Region shall be replicated in the two new Union Territories to give a fillip to the sector.
- The project for setting up three new Bamboo Technology Parks in Jammu, Srinagar and Leh would be in consonance with the National Bamboo Mission (NBM).
- A Bamboo Industrial Park has already been approved to be set up in the Dima Hasao district of Assam.

Cyclone Maha

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains GS-I – Geography

In News

- The Lakshadweep Islands and, to a relatively lesser extent, the coastal districts of Kerala bore the brunt of **Cyclone Maha**, which continues to cut a furious swathe across the **Arabian Sea**.
- The depression that had developed in the **Comorin Sea** intensified into a cyclonic storm and will move along India's western coast without making landfall.
- IMD has advised fishermen not to venture out to the southeast and the east-central Arabian Sea during the period
- This is one of the rare occasions when there were **two back-to-back cyclones in the Arabian Sea**.
- **Kyarr which was the strongest cyclone in the Arabian Sea in 12 years** weakened into a "severe cyclonic storm" as it continues its movement towards the Oman coast.

Do you Know?

- **Kanyakumari** was called **Cape Comorin** during British rule in India.
- Comorin is a 'rocky mainland' on the Indian Ocean in the State of Tamil Nadu and located at the Southern Most tip of the Indian Subcontinent. Many call it KOODAL meaning it is situated at the Confluence of three oceans Bay of Bengal, Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean.

Seismometer

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains I – Geography

In News

- The seismometer, which helps measure the magnitude of an earthquake, and several other key instruments installed at the Jayakwadi dam have stopped functioning properly.
- Jayakwadi dam is a multipurpose project located on **Godavari river**, where the water is mainly used to irrigate agricultural land in the drought-prone Marathwada Region of Maharashtra state.
- Also other instruments, like the piezometer (to measure liquid pressure), earth pressure cell (to monitor total pressure in earthfill dams) and slope meter, have been out order for the last two years
- The seismometer was installed at the Jayakwadi dam after the devastating earthquake in Killari in Latur district in 1993.
- This instrument is powerful as it has a range of 10,000 km. In the past, it has recorded the epicentres of earthquakes in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Russia and Nepal.

UNESCO Creative City

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains GS I – Urbanization; Smart City

In News

- Two Indian cities has now been officially designated as a Unesco Creative City– Hyderabad in Gastronomy category, Mumbai in Film category.
- It is among the 66 new cities named by the Unesco in the list of new Creative Cities, which aims at pushing the Sustainable Development Goals through innovative thinking and action.

- The designation of Hyderabad in the creative cities' list would bring new opportunities and turn the focus on the city's rich culinary heritage and tradition.
- The industry employs 12% of the Hyderabad city's population either directly or indirectly.

UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN)

- UCCN was created in 2004 to promote cooperation with and among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development.
- The 180 cities which currently make up this network work together towards a common objective: placing creativity and cultural industries at the heart of their development plans at the local level and cooperating actively at the international level.

[Kolleru lake](#)

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-I – Geography

In News

- Not less than 6,000 grey pelicans and nearly 1,200 painted storks have made the Atapaka sanctuary their winter home for breeding.
- Atapaka Bird Sanctuary, located in Kolleru Lake on the borders of Krishna and West Godavari districts of **Andhra Pradesh** has been identified as the largest spot-billed pelican home in the world.
- The sanctuary, surrounded by an artificial pond, has a good vegetation cover supporting nests for the avian guests.
- **Kolleru lake is located between Krishna and Godavari deltas.** It spans into two districts of Andhra Pradesh- Krishna and West Godavari.
- Kolleru lake was declared as wildlife sanctuary in November 1999 under Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, and designated wetland of international importance in November 2002 under **Ramsar Convention**.

[Madden–Julian Oscillation \(MJO\)](#)

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains I – Geography

In News

- According to study, Global warming has altered a key weather system and that may be whetting cyclones in the Bay of Bengal, decreasing winter rain in north India and altering global rainfall patterns
- The Madden–Julian Oscillation (MJO) can be defined as an eastward moving 'pulse' of clouds, rainfall, winds and pressure near the equator that typically recurs every 30 to 60 days.
- MJO is a moving band of rain clouds that travels around the globe spanning 12,000–20,000 km across the tropical oceans.
- In its journey, it interacts with surface waters of the Indo-Pacific Ocean, the largest pool of warm water in the globe, and due to this the lifecycle of the MJO gets affected.
- The MJO clouds on average are spending only 15 days, instead of 19, over the Indian Ocean. This is affecting the global climate and thus rainfall over India.

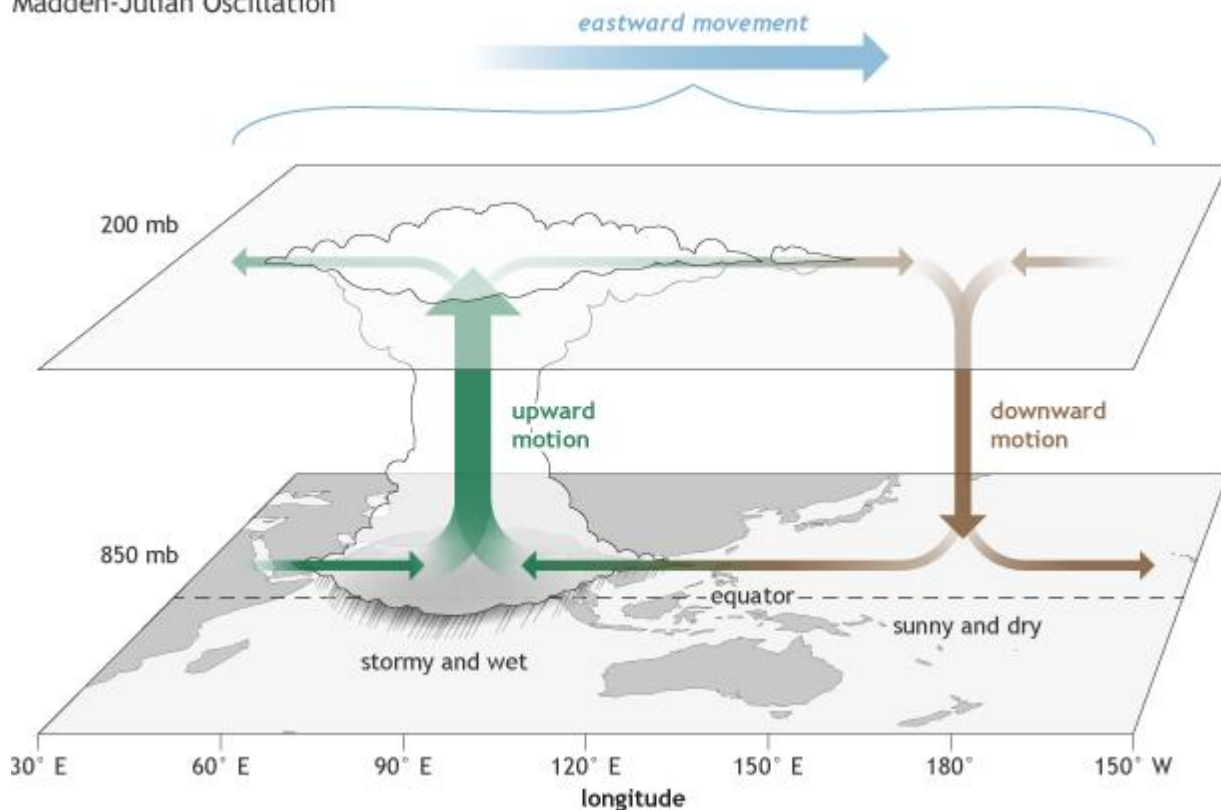
Phases of Madden-Julian Oscillation

- The MJO consists of two parts or phases.
- **Enhanced rainfall (or convective) phase:** winds at the surface converge, and the air is pushed up throughout the atmosphere. At the top of the atmosphere, the winds reverse (i.e., diverge). Such rising air motion in the atmosphere tends to increase condensation and rainfall.
- **Suppressed rainfall phase:** winds converge at the top of the atmosphere, forcing air to sink and, later, to diverge at the surface. As air sinks from high altitudes, it warms and dries, which suppresses rainfall.
- It is this entire dipole structure, that moves west to east with time in the Tropics, causing more cloudiness, rainfall, and even storminess in the enhanced convective phase, and more sunshine and dryness in the suppressed convective phase

Impact on Indian Monsoons

- When it is over the Indian Ocean during the Monsoon season, it brings good rainfall over the Indian subcontinent.
- On the other hand, when it witnesses a longer cycle and stays over the Pacific Ocean, MJO brings bad news for the Indian Monsoon.

Madden-Julian Oscillation



POLITY/GOVERNANCE

Disqualification of MLAs

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II – Polity

In News

- President Ram Nath Kovind has rejected a petition demanding disqualification of 11 AAP MLAs of Delhi Legislative assembly for allegedly holding office of profit.
- The decision of the President rejecting the plea is based on an opinion rendered by the Election Commission.
- In March 2017, a man had filed a petition seeking disqualification of 11 AAP MLAs, claiming that they were enjoying office of profit by being co-chairpersons of district disaster management authorities in 11 Delhi districts.

Mekedatu Reservoir

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II – Federalism

In News

- The Mekedatu Reservoir project envisages building a balancing reservoir in Cauvery River with storage of 67 tmcft.
- It would also supply drinking water to Bengaluru and Ramanagaram districts, besides generating power.
- The proposal received the Karnataka Cabinet's approval in February 2017 and the feasibility report was submitted to the **Central Water Commission (CWC)**.
- CWC has allowed Karnataka to go ahead with the project with the prerequisite that it should get No-Objection Certificate (NOC) from the **Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA)**.
- After obtaining NOC from CWMA, the proposal will be considered by Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Jal Shakti, whose concurrence is mandatory for a project on any inter-State river.
- Karnataka has been contending for the project to help store excess water in Monsoon surplus year.
- Tamil Nadu has been opposing the project that it would effectively prevent the flow in the Cauvery, the lifeline for agriculture in delta districts, besides being a major drinking water source for several districts.

About Cauvery Water Management Authority

- The CWMA, under the Cauvery Water Management Scheme, 2018, was established on June 1, 2018, under Section 6A of the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956.
- **Mandate of CWMA:**
 - To give effect to the decision of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal as modified by the Supreme Court vide its Order, dated 16th February, 2018
 - Storage, apportionment, regulation and control of Cauvery waters, supervision of operation of reservoirs and regulation of water release.

Telugu Ganga project

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II – Federalism (Inter-State river water sharing)

In News

- Chennai city, which grappled with severe drinking water shortage, can be assured of **its full quota of Krishna water from Andhra Pradesh** this season, as major reservoirs in Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh have comfortable storage.
- Telugu Ganga Project is an inter-state Project formulated to irrigate 5.75 lakh acres in drought prone areas of Rayalaseema and uplands of Nellore District in Andhra Pradesh by utilising 29 TMC of Krishna flood flows and 30 TMC of Pennar flood flows.
- Further with a view **to provide drinking water to the Chennai city**, the three Krishna basin states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra have agreed to spare 5 TMC each from their respective shares of Krishna waters totalling to 15 TMC to meet the requirements.
- This number was revised down to 12 TMC in 1983 after accounting seepage and evaporation losses.
- Water is drawn from the Srisailem reservoir (in AP) and diverted towards Chennai through a series of inter-linked canals, over a distance of about 406 kilometres (252 mi), before it reaches the destination at the Poondi reservoir near Chennai.

New National Water Policy (NWP)

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II – Polity & Governance

In News

- The Union Water Resources Ministry has finalised a committee to draft a new National Water Policy (NWP).
- The 10-member committee will be chaired by **Mihir Shah**, who is a former Planning Commission member and a water expert
- The committee is expected to produce a report within six months.
- The committee will recommend measures to make key changes in water governance structure and regulatory framework.
- A **National Bureau of Water Use Efficiency** was mooted during discussion stage.
- The NWP currently in force was drafted in 2012.
- Some of the key provisions of NWP 2012 are
 - The concept of an Integrated Water Resources Management approach that took the **“river basin/ sub-basin” as a unit for planning**, development and management of water resources.
 - It also proposed that **a portion of river flows** ought to be kept aside to **meet ecological needs**.

- Such an approach led to the government, in 2018, requiring minimum water levels to be maintained in the Ganga all through the year and hydropower projects to refrain from hoarding water beyond a point.
- The policy also stressed for a **minimum quantity of potable water for essential health** and hygiene to all its citizens to be made available within easy reach of households.

[Ken-Betwa interlinking](#)

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II – Federalism

In News

- Union government is pushing Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh to make progress on the Ken-Betwa river interlinking project.
- The project involves transferring surplus water from Ken river in **Madhya Pradesh** to the **Betwa in Uttar Pradesh** and irrigate 3.64 lakh hectares in the **Bundelkhand region of both States**.
- The project involves building a 77-metre-tall and a 2 km wide **Dhaudhan dam** and a 230 km canal. Originally, this phase envisaged irrigating 6,35,661 hectares annually (3,69,881 ha in M.P. and 2,65,780 ha in U.P.)
- In addition, the project was to provide 49 million cubic metres for drinking water supply en route.
- The ₹18,000 crore project has been mired in several controversies. The most recent one is a disagreement between the States on the share of water.
- While there is a 2005 agreement between the two States on how water would be shared, Madhya Pradesh says these assumptions are no longer valid and the only way to meet the increased water requirements would be to include local management projects — the Kotha barrage, Lower Orr and Bina complex that were envisaged in the second phase of the project — in the first phase.
- Other than differences between the States, there are outstanding environmental obstructions too.

[NRC exercise](#)

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II – Federalism

In News

1. Chief Justice of India said that the Assam National Register of Citizens (NRC) process, meant to identify illegal migrants was “neither a new or novel idea” but only an attempt to update the 1951 list.
2. The court’s intervention led to the publication of the final citizenship list on August 31.
3. Over 19 lakh out of the 3.29 crore applicants in Assam were excluded from the final NRC list.
4. These people face uncertain days ahead trying to prove their Indian citizenship through appeals filed in foreigners’ tribunals.

5. NRC is the register containing names of Indian Citizens. It was prepared first in 1951 after the conduct of the Census of 1951.
6. It is used to identify who is a bona fide Indian citizen and those who fail to enlist in the register will be deemed illegal migrants.

For more details on NRC issue, refer <https://iasbaba.com/2019/09/all-india-radio-air-ias-upsc-national-register-of-citizens/>

National Register of Citizens

Context:

- The process to make a National Register of Citizens (NRC) will be carried out across India, as announced by the Home Minister, Mr.Amit Shah.
- Whenever it is done, the exercise will be repeated in Assam as well.
- All Indian citizens will be included irrespective of their religion.”
- Home Minister also said that NRC and Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) is different from NRC.

National Register of Citizens

- It is the register containing names of Indian Citizens.
- It was prepared first in 1951 after the conduct of the Census of 1951.
- It is used to identify who is a bona fide Indian citizen and those who fail to enlist in the register will be deemed illegal migrants.

Benefits of NRC:

- Detection of illegal immigrants, inclusion will be a shield against harassment and a ticket to enjoying all the constitutional rights and safeguards and the benefits of government schemes.
- To safeguard the indigenous population and civilization.
- Illegal activities like terrorism, human trafficking, drug trafficking can be checked.
- To safeguard Voting rights and properties such as land and house.

Controversies related to the National Register of Citizens (NRC):

- Laborious process: Adding a person to NRC is complex procedure because of presenting many documents and layers of verification.
- Document verification: “Family tree verification” has become difficult process for left out children.
- Rejection of certificate: More than 40 lakh people are rejected for panchayat residency certificates.
- Citizenship related: Failed to ensure legal clarity over the manner in which the claims of citizenship could be decided.
- Role of Supreme Court: lack of monitoring process, inability to comprehend political and policy actions in case of loss of citizenship.
- Huge population: Given the size of India’s population, implementation of the NRC will be a mammoth task and demands a detailed analysis.

Citizen Amendment Bill (CAB):

- It envisages the grant of Indian citizenship to all refugees from minority communities in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

- The CAB allegedly discriminates against Muslims, and is loaded against the right to equality and equal protection before the law as enshrined in Article 14 of the Constitution
- The CAB proposes to differentiate among immigrants on the basis of religion.
- It proposes to amend the Citizenship Act, 1955 by relaxing the eligibility rules for immigrants belonging to six minority (non-Muslim) religions, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians, from Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan, in getting Indian citizenship.

NRC in Assam again:

- Along with the promised combination of the NRC and CAB, the Home Minister announced that the NRC process would “naturally” be conducted in Assam again with the rest of the country.
- However, the Assam proposal will be in defiance of the Supreme Court, which directed the entire NRC registration specific to Assam.
- There is still no clarity on what the end results mean for the 19 lakh plus people who find themselves outside the NRC, stateless and at risk of “deportation” to Bangladesh, which refuses to acknowledge and accept them.
- The recent NRC exercise, overseen by the Supreme Court, involved the active participation of the Central and State governments.
- For the government to repeat the exercise merely because the numbers thrown up are politically inconvenient for the central government makes no sense at all.

CAB controversy in Northeast:

- Influential socio-political groups and several political parties in the Northeast are against the CAB and are holding continuous protest demonstrations against it.
- Their argument is that CAB runs contrary to the NRC.
- In Assam, if the NRC Bill is passed, the immediate implication will be that the Hindus excluded from the NRC would be eligible for citizenship via certain criteria, The Muslims would be treated as foreigners.
- Such a situation would render the current NRC meaningless.

Why is central government unhappy with the current NRC in Assam?

- According to the central government, the current NRC could not be accepted by the state government because it has included people who should not have been included.
- On the contrary excluded ‘genuine’ Indian citizens.

Connecting the dots:

- A nationwide extension of NRC is bizarre, and a repeat of it in Assam illogical. Analyse

Illegal non-citizens

Context:

- The Home Minister Amit Shah’s had announced in the Rajya Sabha earlier this week that a **National Register of Citizens (NRC)** will be implemented across India, and repeated again in Assam.
- It has ignited interest in the existing legal framework in India for **illegal migrants**.

- The first enactment made for dealing with foreigners was the **Foreigners Act, 1864**, which provided for the expulsion of foreigners and their arrest, detention pending removal, and for a ban on their entry into India after removal.

Do you know?

NRC :The **National Register of Citizens (NRC)** is a register maintained by the [Government of India](#) containing names & certain relevant information for identification of [Indian](#) citizens First started in Assam state of India.

Who are illegal migrants?

Migration of people into a country in violation of the **immigration** laws of that country, or the continued residence of people without the legal right to live in that country.

What is the Passport Act?

- The Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920, was one of the early set of rules made against illegal migrants,
- It empowered the government to make rules requiring persons entering India to be in possession of passports.
- It also granted the government the power to remove from India any person who entered without a passport.
- The concept of “burden of proof” was introduced in Foreigners Act, 1940.
- Section 7 of the Act provided that whenever a question arose with regard to the nationality of a person, the onus of proving that he was not a foreigner lay upon the person.

When was the Foreigners Act made more stringent?

- The legislature enacted the **Foreigners Act, 1946**, by repealing the 1940 Act.
- It conferred wide powers to deal with all foreigners.
- It empowered the government to make provisions for prohibiting, regulating or restricting the entry of foreigners into India.
- It also restricted the rights enjoyed by foreigners in terms of their stay in the country if any such orders are passed by the authority.
- The 1946 Act empowered the government to take such steps as are necessary, including the use of force for securing compliance with such directions.
- The ‘burden of proof’ lies with the person, and not with the authorities is still applicable in all States and Union Territories.
- This has been upheld by a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court.

What about the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order?

- In **1964** the **Foreigners (Tribunals) Order** was brought in.
- The tribunal has the authority to decide whether a person is a foreigner within the ambit of the Foreigners Act, 1946.
- The tribunal has powers similar to those of a civil court.
- It gives reasonable opportunity to the person alleged to be a foreigner to produce evidence in support of his case, before passing its order.

- In June this year, the Home Ministry made certain amendments in the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964.
- It was to empower district magistrates in all States and Union Territories to set up tribunals to decide whether a person staying illegally in India is a foreigner or not.

Why did the IMDT Act fail?

- The **Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983**, was also referred to as the IMDT Act.
- It was introduced for the detection and deportation of illegal migrants who had entered India on or after March 25, 1971.
- It was unsuccessful.
- One factor for its failure was that it did not contain any provision on 'burden of proof' similar to the Foreigners Act, 1946.
- This put a very heavy burden upon the authorities to establish whether a person is an illegal migrant.
- The result of the IMDT Act was that a number of non-Indians who may have entered [Assam](#) after March 25, 1971 without possession of valid documents, continue to reside in Assam.
- In the Supreme Court landmark verdict on a petition by Sarbananda Sonowal (now the Chief Minister of Assam), challenging the IMDT Act in 2005 the top court quashed the IMDT Act.
- The verdict also closed all tribunals in Assam functioning under the Act.
- It transferred all pending cases at the IMDT tribunals to the Foreigners Tribunals constituted under the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964.
- Any person excluded from the National Register of Citizens (NRC) recently concluded in Assam can approach The Foreigners Tribunals, established only in Assam, within 120 days of receiving a certified copy of rejection.
- In other States, a person suspected to be a foreigner is produced before a local court under the Passport Act, 1920, or the Foreigners Act, 1946.

Connecting the dots:

- The NRC mess in Assam should serve as a cautionary tale for a nationwide exercise. Comment.

Electoral bonds

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains GS-II – Elections

In News

- Electoral bonds worth ₹232 crore were sold in October, taking the total number of bonds sold from March 2018 till October 2019 to 12,313 and the total value to ₹6,128 crore, according to data shared by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR)
- After the Lok Sabha election in May, bonds worth ₹45 crore and ₹232 crore were sold in July and October, respectively. In the run-up to the Lok Sabha election, bonds worth ₹822 crore, ₹2,256 crore and ₹1,366 crore were sold in May, April and March,

- **Mumbai had the highest amount of bonds** at ₹1,880 crore, followed by Kolkata at ₹1,440 crore, Delhi at ₹919 crore and Hyderabad at ₹838 crore, while all other cities accounted for ₹1,051 crore from March 2018 till October 2019,
- Notified in January 2018, the scheme has been offered in 12 tranches from March 2018 till October 2019.
- The bonds are **sold by the State Bank of India** and can be bought **by Indian citizens or companies**. Political parties can then redeem the bonds, which work as anonymous donations

For mindmap on Electoral bonds, refer <https://iasbaba.com/2018/01/iasbabas-mindmap-issue-electoral-bonds/>

Judicial Reforms

Context:

- On Nov 5th, 2019, President Ram Nath Kovind signed a warrant to appoint **Justice Sharad A. Bobde** as the next Chief Justice of India (CJI).
- The appointment of Justice Bobde as the CJI gives fresh hope to all the stakeholders in the administration of justice.
- It comes at a time when the Supreme Court's standing amongst the people has greatly eroded.

The Contemporary Controversies

- **Multiple controversies** in the realm of **judicial appointments and transfers** have surfaced in the past four-five years raising concerns about the faltering institutional autonomy of the members of higher judiciary in India's constitutional democracy.
- Judiciary has stopped being the **protector of the fundamental and other constitutional rights**.
- Judiciary has failed to act as the **guardian of the rule of law**.
- Its biased role and **involvement in politically sensitive cases** (involving citizens, opposition parties, activists and executive actions in day-to-day governance) is criticized.
- It has **failed to restore constitutional rights and values** in letter and spirit.
- The **absolute power of the CJI** to constitute benches and allocate cases as the master of the roster is often criticized.

B R Ambedkar was right in saying that although the CJI is a very eminent, person, *"the Chief Justice is a man with all the failings, all the sentiments and all the prejudices which we as common people have..."*

Key points:

- An independent and strong judiciary is a basic feature of the Constitution.
- The **Restatement of Values of Judicial Life** (as adopted by the Full Bench of the Supreme Court on May 7, 1997) states that *"justice must not be merely done but also must be seen to be done."*
- The behaviour and conduct of members of the higher judiciary must re-affirm people's faith in the impartiality of the judiciary.
- Every judge must at all times be conscious that he/she is under the public gaze.

- “Elected political executives are considered as the chief threat to democracy today”.

The way ahead/Conclusion

- The new CJI should function as the master of the roster in an independent and objective manner.
- It is high time that the judiciary steps up to fulfil its constitutional defence role and ensure that the Constitution is not reduced to just another legal document.
- The SC is held in the highest regard and must live up to its legacy by making necessary corrections.

Connecting the dots:

- If the judiciary is strong, the constitutional values of India can be successfully upheld. Critically examine.

National Green Tribunal(NGT)

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II – Polity

In News

- NGT has given a “last opportunity” to the Union Environment Ministry to issue notifications pertaining to prohibition on the use of RO (reverse osmosis) systems, which result in wastage of almost 80% of the water.
- Further provision must be laid down for recovery of water up to 75% and use of such RO reject water for purposes such as utensil washing, flushing, gardening, cleaning of vehicles and mopping,

About NGT

- National Green Tribunal was established in 2010 under National Green Tribunal Act, 2010 to dispose of cases having environmental ramification.
- The Act provides for a Chairperson and a minimum of 10 Expert Members and equal number of Judicial Members.

Powers of NGT:

- Recommend penalties and fine
- Recommend policies for environment protection
- Enforcement of any legal right relating to environment
- Giving relief and compensation for damages
- Has power of civil courts

Significance

- Helps reduce burden on higher courts
- Faster resolution of cases
- Specialised member brings efficiency to justice
- Less expensive than courts

Second Judges case

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II – Judiciary

In News

- A nine-judge Bench of the Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, has dismissed a bunch of petitions seeking a review of the court's judgment in the Second Judges case in 1993.
- The judgement in the case led to the **collegium system of appointment of judges**.
- **Article 124**– The judges of the Supreme Court are appointed by the President. The CJI is appointed by the President after consultation with such judges of the Supreme Court and high courts as he deems necessary.
- **Appointment of Chief Justice from 1950 to 1973:** The practice has been to appoint the senior most judge of the Supreme Court as the chief justice of India (CJI)
- This established convention was violated in 1973 when A N Ray was appointed as the CJI by superseding three senior judges. Again in 1977, M U Beg was appointed as the CJI by superseding the then senior-most judge.
- This discretion of the government was curtailed by the Supreme Court in the **Second Judges Case (1993)**, in which the Supreme Court ruled that **the senior most judge of the Supreme Court should alone be appointed to the office of the CJI**
- Also, the Court reversed its earlier ruling (of First Judges case of 1982) and changed the meaning of the word consultation to **concurrence** thus **establishing the collegium system for appointment of Judges to higher judiciary**.

Do You Know?

- In the Third Judges case (1998), the Court opined that the consultation process to be adopted by the CJI requires 'consultation of plurality judges'. He should consult a **collegium of four senior most judges of the Supreme Court** and even if two judges give an adverse opinion, he should not send the recommendation to the government.
- The 1993 judgment was the basis on which a five-judge Constitution Bench declared the National Judicial Appointments Commission Act (**NJAC**) and the Constitutional (Ninety-Nine Amendment) Act, 2014 as **unconstitutional in 2015**.
- In Dec 2018, five-judge Bench led by Chief Justice Gogoi dismissed a review petition against the judgment in the NJAC case.

Collegium system (Part -1)

Context:

- A nine-judge Bench of the Supreme Court has dismissed a petition seeking a review of its 1993 verdict in the Second Judges Case, which is widely understood to be instrumental in establishing the **"collegium system"** of appointing judges in India's higher judiciary.

Three Judges Cases:

- Article 124 and Article 217 respectively includes to the procedure of appointment of judges to the SC and HCs
- Judges of the Supreme Court shall be appointed by the President in consultation with the Chief Justice of India (CJI) and other judges of the Supreme Court and the High Courts as the President of India may deem necessary.
- Judges of the High Courts are appointed by the President in consultation with the CJI, the Governor of the concerned state, and the Chief Justice of that High Court.

The Supreme Court of India's collegium system, appoints judges to the nation's constitutional courts, has its genesis in, and continued basis resting on, three of its own judgments which are collectively known as the **Three Judges Cases**.

- **S. P. Gupta v. Union of India – 1981**
- In the First Judges Case (1981), the apex court held (4-3) that in the appointment of a judge of the Supreme Court or the High Court, *the word "consultation" in Article 124(2) and in Article 217(1) of the Constitution does not mean "concurrence"*.
- In the event of a disagreement, the "ultimate power" would rest with the Union Government and not the CJI
- **Supreme Court Advocates-on Record Association vs Union of India – 1993**
- In the Second Judges Case (1993), the court (7-2) overruled the First Judges Case, holding that in the event of conflict between the President and the CJI with regard to appointments of Judges, it was the Chief Justice of India whose opinion would not only have primacy, but would be determinative in the matter.
- the SC not only regained its powers from the government but also gave itself the upper hand over the other two branches.
- verdict also gave birth to the Collegium System.
- **In re Special Reference 1 of 1998**
- Finally, in the Third Judges Case (1998), the SC reaffirmed its 1993 judgement and expanded the Collegium to include the CJI and the *four* most-senior judges of the court after the CJI.

Criticism :

- The Collegium system, finds no mention in the Constitution
- A mechanism put in place by the SC itself, personifies the democratic deficit
- The members of the Collegium, enjoy the fierce independence of the judiciary
- Exemplify the behind-the-door dealings of the judicial branch that lacks accountability and public scrutiny.
- The lack of transparency has ignited fears of nepotism
- Elevation of judges based on personal relationships and past favours instead of merit or seniority.

Aftermath:

- Many contend that the judiciary has no choice but to fill the gap left by the other two branches of government.
- The most pronounced attempt at reforming the Collegium System was probably the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC).

Connecting the dots:

- Whether the judicial activism that collegium entails is permitted by the Constitution – or if it is healthy for a democracy . comment

[Collegium system and NJAC \(Part -2\)](#)

Context:

- A nine-judge Bench of the Supreme Court has dismissed a petition seeking a review of its 1993 verdict in the Second Judges Case, which is widely understood to be instrumental in establishing the “collegium system” of appointing judges in India’s higher judiciary.

Read Part 1 : <https://iasbaba.com/2019/11/daily-current-affairs-ias-upsc-prelims-and-mains-exam-7th-november-2019/>

National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC)

- Body responsible for the appointment and transfer of judges to the higher judiciary in India.
- 99th Constitutional Amendment Act-2014 passed on 2014
- A new article, Article 124A, has been inserted into the Constitution.
- The NJAC would have replaced the collegium system for the appointment of judges
- The National Judicial Appointments Commission Act, 2014, was also passed by the Parliament of India to regulate the functions of the National Judicial Appointments Commission.
- The NJAC Act and the Constitutional Amendment Act came into force in 2015.
- The Constitution Bench of Supreme Court by 4:1 Majority upheld the collegium system and struck down the NJAC as unconstitutional

Justice Chelameswar. argued that the proposed composition of the NJAC would not be a constitutional issue, and that it could have acted “as a check on unwholesome trade-offs within the collegium and incestuous accommodations between Judicial and Executive branches.”

Need for NJAC :

- The Appointment of Judges by the Collegium system was completely opaque and there was no procedure for checking the reasonableness of appointment.
- There was a complete lack of accountability on the part of Judiciary.
- The Second Administrative Reforms Commission, under the Chairmanship of Mr. Verappa Moily, had also noted that, “Perhaps in no other country in the world does the judiciary have a final say in its own appointments. In India, neither the executive nor the legislature has much say in who is appointed to the Supreme Court or the High Courts.”
- The major reason for the vacancy in the courts and in turn pendency of cases.
- The collegium system was widely considered to be unconstitutional as the Constitution provided for the appointment by the President in consultation with the judiciary and not vice versa.

Composition:

1. Chief Justice of India (Chairperson, ex officio)
2. Two other of senior judges of the Supreme Court next to the Chief Justice of India – ex officio
3. The Union Minister of Law and Justice, ex-officio
4. Two eminent persons

These (two) eminent persons would have been nominated by a committee consisting of the

- Chief Justice of India,
- Prime Minister of India, and
- Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha

Functions:

Recommending persons for

- Appointment as Chief Justice of India, Judges of the Supreme Court, Chief Justices of High Courts and other Judges of High Courts
- Transfer of Chief Justices and other Judges of High Courts from one High Court to any other High Court.

After math:

- In 2015 the SC told that it is open to bringing greater transparency in the collegium system
- To make collegium transparent
- The fixing of the eligibility criteria for a person to be considered suitable for appointment as a judge
- A process to receive and deal with complaints against judges without compromising on judicial independence
- Debate on whether a separate secretariat is required, and if so, its functioning, composition and powers

Connecting the dots:

- How NJAC is unconstitutional? Substantiate.

India Justice Report

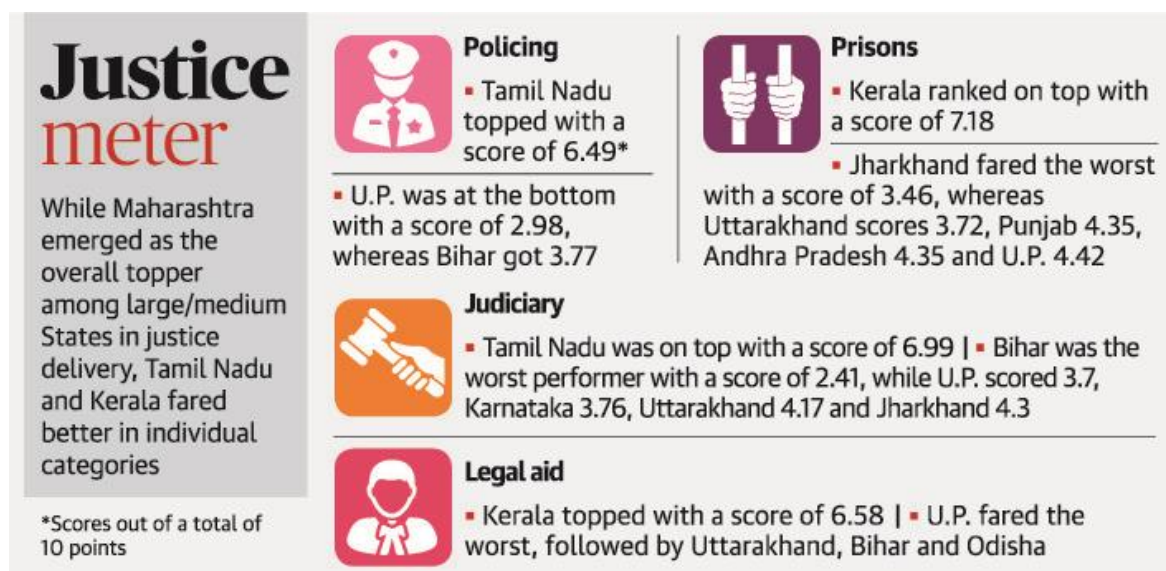
Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II – Polity

In News

- Maharashtra has topped the list of 18 large-medium States in the overall **ranking of Indian States on justice delivery**, followed by Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Haryana.
- This is according to the India Justice Report 2019 by the Tata Trusts in collaboration with Centre for Social Justice, Common Cause, and Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, among others.
- The report is based on publicly available data from different government entities on the **four pillars of justice delivery** — police, judiciary, prisons and legal aid.

Some of the findings of the report are:

- Even the best performing States scored less than 60% in their performance on capacity across the police, judiciary, prisons and legal aid.
- The country has about 18,200 judges with about 23% sanctioned posts vacant
- Women are poorly represented in these pillars, constituting just 7% of the police.
- Prisons are over-occupied at 114%, where 68% are undertrials awaiting investigation, inquiry or trial.
- India's per capita expenditure on free legal aid is 75 paise per annum
- Regarding budgets, most States are not able to fully utilise the funds given to them by the Centre, while the increase in spending on the police, prisons and judiciary does not keep pace with the overall increase in State expenditure



Office of Profit

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II – Polity

In News

- The Punjab Assembly passed a legislation excluding the six ruling Congress MLA appointed as advisers to the Chief Minister from the **office of profit category**.
- It was opposed by members of opposition that the law was against the 91st amendment to the Constitution, which stated that the total number of Ministers should not exceed 15% of the total strength of the State Assembly.

What the law says?

- Article 102(a)** says a person shall be disqualified from being a member of either House of Parliament if he holds any Office of Profit, among other grounds. Article 191(1) contain a similar provision for MLA and MLCs in the states.
- Article 103** say that if a question arises whether a member has incurred such disqualification, it will be referred to the **President's** decision. The President shall obtain the Election Commission's opinion and act accordingly.
- Office of profit' (OoP) is not clearly defined in the Constitution.
- But deriving from the past judicial pronouncements, five tests have been laid down to check if an office is an OoP or not. They are:
 - whether the government makes the appointment
 - whether the government has the right to remove or dismiss the holder
 - whether the government pays remuneration
 - what the functions of the holder are
 - does the government exercise any control over the performance of these functions
- In all, the word 'profit' has always been treated equivalent to or a substitute for the term 'pecuniary gain' (financial gain).

Embracing Digital Governance

Introduction

- Due to the rapid rise of the internet and digitization, Governments all over the world are initiating steps to involve information and communication technology (ICT) in all governmental processes.
- Various government programmes have leveraged ICT on a large scale to transform the public governance ecosystem in the country.

Examples of large-scale digital-led successes

- Transformation brought out in direct and indirect tax regime in the country
- Government procurement reforms driven through Government e-Marketplace
- Roll-out of Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojana (Ayushman Bharat)
- Participatory governance enabled through MyGov

Importance of ICT for effective governance

- It is a key step towards making the country “Fit for Future”
- administration becomes a swifter and more transparent process
- Makes the whole administrative process convenient, efficient, transparent, fully accountable and responsible
- Improved access to information and better quality of services for citizens
- It would help in bringing government machinery to the doorsteps of the citizens (expanded reach of governance)
- It would increase citizen participation in governance
- Aadhar, Unified Payments Interface (UPI), Digital Locker, BharatNet etc

India needs to prepare for the next wave of digital governance

- The next wave of digital governance needs to align itself with the perspective of digitally empowered citizens, businesses and government alike
- India to become true ‘Digital India’, a **paradigm shift in e-governance approach** is needed
- There is a need for shift in approach from the traditional ‘department-centric’ view of service provisioning to a ‘stakeholder-centric’ view driven by their personas (**persona-based approach for delivering services**)
- In other words, there is a **need to create the next generation service delivery framework**, where the governments across all levels reach out to each individual proactively for delivery of services and benefits, and in local language of his/her choice. (**creating an unbroken value chain**)
- The data collected from various e-governance initiatives should be used to reduce redundancy in information sought from the businesses and citizens across the value chain, identify trends, improve delivery mechanisms and for better policy planning.
- India needs a larger framework where the individual’s privacy is respected and data security is ensured.

Conclusion

Today, India is making rapid strides in adoption of emerging concepts such as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), Internet of Things (IoT), blockchain, cloud computing, drones, microservices etc, which have a huge potential in transforming governance.

Several initiatives are being taken by the government to enhance existing governance mechanisms by leveraging advancements in technology.

Such efforts and initiatives are bound to intensify, given the growing challenges in governance and availability of technology in the country.

The need is now to converge such efforts and align them with a futuristic governance framework, a framework that has a 'human-need centric design'.

Connecting the dots:

- India should work towards creating an unbroken value chain to prepare for the next wave of digital governance. Elucidate.

RTI Act

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II – Governance

In News

- A five-judge Constitution Bench led by CJI Ranjan Gogoi declared that the office of the Chief Justice of India (CJI) is a 'public authority' under the Right to Information (RTI) Act.
- In practical terms, this means that citizens can file RTI applications to the SC, and the CPIO (Chief Public Information Officer) of the court cannot deny information saying it is held by the CJI's office and not the registry
- The bench held that Increased transparency under RTI was no threat to judicial independence
- The Bench, however, agreed, that the right to know under **RTI was not absolute**. The right to know of a citizen ought to be balanced with the **right to privacy of individual judges**
- Personal information of judges should only be divulged under RTI if such disclosure served the larger public interest.
- The Bench also upheld the Delhi High Court judgment of 2010 that the CJI does not hold information on the personal assets of fellow judges in a fiduciary capacity
- The judgment had far-reaching implications by setting an example for other bodies which resist transparency ex: Political Parties, a number of schools, trusts and public-private partnerships including Delhi's power distribution companies and dairy major Mother Dairy,

Chief Justice of India's office under RTI

Context:

- The Supreme Court ruled that the office of the Chief Justice of India (CJI) is a public authority under the **Right to Information (RTI) Act**.
- A five-judge Constitution Bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, upheld a Delhi High Court ruling of 2010,
- Dismissed three appeals filed by the Secretary General and the Central Public Information Officer (CPIO) of the Supreme Court.

Origin of the case:

- RTI activist filed a PIL “Whether all Supreme Court judges had declared their assets and liabilities to the CJI following a resolution passed in 1997
- CPIO of the Supreme Court said the office of the CJI was not a public authority under the RTI Act,
- The matter reached the Chief Information Commissioner (CIC), directed disclosure of information.
- The Supreme Court approached the Delhi High Court against the CIC order.
- Delhi High Court on 2009 Judgment “the office of the Chief Justice of India is a public authority under the RTI Act and is covered by its provisions”.
- The Supreme Court then approached a larger Bench comprising then Chief Justice of Delhi High Court 2010 held that the previous, judgment was “both proper and valid and needs no interference”.
- The Supreme Court in 2010 petitioned itself challenging the Delhi High Court order.

SC judgement 2019:

- The outcome is that the office of the CJI will now entertain RTI applications. Under Section 2(f) of the RTI Act, information means “any material in any form, including records, documents, memos, e-mails, opinions, advices, press releases, circulars, orders, logbooks, contracts, reports, papers, samples, models, data material held in any electronic form and information relating to any private body which can be accessed by a public authority under any other law for the time being in force”.
- The Supreme Court held that RTI cannot be used as a tool of surveillance and that judicial independence has to be kept in mind while dealing with transparency.
- Right to Privacy is an important aspect and has to be balanced with transparency while deciding to give out information from the office of the Chief Justice of India.
- The judiciary cannot function in total insulation as judges enjoy a constitutional post and discharge public duty.

Earlier judgements:

- **Supreme Court itself in 2011:** “Officials need to furnish only such information which already exists and is held by the public authority and not collate or create information”; and, “the nation does not want a scenario where 75% of the staff of public authorities spends 75% of their time in collecting and furnishing information to applicants instead of discharging their regular duties”.
- **On December 16, 2015 (RBI versus Jayantilal N Mistry and Others),** the Supreme Court noted: “It had long since come to our attention that the Public Information Officers under the guise of one of the exceptions given under Section 8 of RTI Act, have evaded the general public from getting their hands on the rightful information that they are entitled to.”

CBI out of RTI

- CBI is exempt from RTI.
- In 2005, the CBI was under it. The agency later moved for exemption
- **Administrative Reforms Commission** chaired by Moily had earlier recommended exemption of the armed forces from the RTI Act, but had not made such a recommendation for the CBI.

- While the CBI demanded exemption only for units in intelligence gathering, exemption was granted in 2011 to the agency as a whole.
- Litigation challenging the decision to exempt the CBI is pending with the Supreme Court.

Conclusion:

- The verdict underlines the balance Supreme Court needs between transparency and protecting its independence.
- The step is significant as it opens the doors to RTI requests that will test the frontiers of what has been a rather opaque system.

President's Rule in Maharashtra

Context:

- Owing to the inabilities of the political parties to form a government after the results of the Assembly election were declared on October 24, Article 356 has been invoked and the President's Rule has been imposed in Maharashtra.
- This is the third time the state has come under the Central rule, since May 1, 1960 — the day when present-day Maharashtra came into existence.
- The first one was in February 1980 when the Indira Gandhi government dismissed the Progressive Democratic Front (PDF) government headed by Sharad Pawar
- the second imposition of President's rule after 34 years in 2014 when Prithviraj Chavan resigned as Chief Minister following the withdrawal of support by ally NCP to the Congress-led government.

President's Rule:

- President's Rule implies the suspension of a state government and the imposition of direct rule of the Centre.
- This is achieved through the invocation of Article 356 of the Constitution by the President on the advice of the Union Council of Ministers.
- Under Article 356, this move can be taken "(1) If the President, on receipt of the report from the Governor of the State or otherwise, is satisfied that a situation has arisen in which the government of the State cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution..."

1994 Bommai case:

Following its landmark judgment in the 1994 Bommai case, the Supreme Court of India has restricted arbitrary impositions of president's rule.

- S. R. Bommai v. Union of India 1994 was a landmark judgment of the Supreme Court of India, where the Court discussed at length provisions of Article 356 of the Constitution of India and related issues.
- This case had huge impact on Centre-State Relations.
- The judgement attempted to curb blatant misuse of Article 356 of the Constitution of India, which allowed President's rule to be imposed over state governments
- The dismissal was on grounds that the Bommai government had lost majority following large-scale defections engineered by several party leaders of the day.

- Then Governor P. Venkatasubbaiah refused to give Bommai an opportunity to test his majority in the Assembly despite the latter presenting him with a copy of the resolution passed by the Janata Dal Legislature Party.

1994 Bommai Judgment:

- The verdict concluded that the power of the President to dismiss a State government is not absolute.
- The verdict said the President should exercise the power only after his proclamation (imposing his/her rule) is approved by both Houses of Parliament. Till then, the Court said, the President can only suspend the Legislative Assembly by suspending the provisions of Constitution relating to the Legislative Assembly.
- “The dissolution of Legislative Assembly is not a matter of course. It should be resorted to only where it is found necessary for achieving the purposes of the Proclamation,” the Court said.

If Presidential proclamation is not approved by the Parliament:

- “In case both Houses of Parliament disapprove or do not approve the Proclamation, the Proclamation lapses at the end of the two-month period.
- In such a case, the government which was dismissed revives.
- Also the Court made it amply clear that a Presidential Proclamation under Article 356 is subject to judicial review.

Proclamation

- A proclamation of President’s Rule can be revoked through a subsequent proclamation in case the leader of a party produces letters of support from a majority of members of the Assembly, and stakes his claim to form a government. The revocation does not need the approval of Parliament.
- So, this is not the end of the road for any formation in Maharashtra. In fact, all players now have time to work out their alliances and head to Raj Bhavan to stake their claim to form a government.
- Any proclamation under Article 356 —which stands for six months — has to be approved by both Houses in the Parliament session following it. This six-month time-frame can be extended in phases, up to three years.

First Impact of judgment:

- The A.B. Vajpayee government in 1999 was forced reinstate a government it dismissed. The Rabri Devi government, which was sacked on February 12, 1999 was reinstated on March 8, 1999 when it became clear that the Central government would suffer a defeat in the Rajya Sabha over the issue.

President’s rule since 2014:

Jammu & Kashmir: The erstwhile state is the latest to have gone into President’s Rule under BJP-ruled NDA. Not only in the run-up to the abrogation of Article 370 from the hill state, but the Central Rule was also imposed in Jammu and Kashmir in June 2017.

It was after the resignation of the then Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti when BJP withdrew support to the PDP-led government. Before that in 2015, after failure in government formation following a fractured verdict in Assembly elections, Central Rule was imposed.

Arunachal Pradesh: The north-eastern state witnessed 26 days of President’s Rule in 2016 after 21 Congress MLAs joined hands with 11 BJP and two Independent MLAs, reducing the

government into a minority. However, the matter was challenged in the apex court and it, in a bold move, reinstated the Congress government.

Uttarakhand: The hill state saw President's Rule twice in 2016 — for 25 days and 19 days separately. First, it happened after a split in the state Congress and then again in May that year.

Connecting the dots:

- Article 356 gave wide powers to the central government to assert its authority over a state if civil unrest occurs, and the state government does not have the means to end it. Substantiate.

Anti-defection law

Context:

- Supreme Court upheld speaker's decision to disqualify 17 MLAs who defected from Congress, JDS
- The defection led to the fall of Congress-JDS coalition govt in Karnataka
- Congress called the BJP govt, which later came to power, an illegal govt
- The MLAs, however, can contest the upcoming bypolls.

SC :

Under Article 193 has been discussed, Not making any observation regarding the merits of disqualification. As such, there is no doubt that disqualification relates to date when the act takes place. The speaker in the exercise of powers does not have the power to indicate the period for which a person is barred from contesting an election

Background:

- Assembly elections in 2018 resulted with the BJP emerging as the single largest party with 104 seats.
- The INC and JD(S) formed a majority coalition government after the election, with a combined 120 of the 224 seats.
- Karnataka speaker had disqualified the 17 legislators of the ruling Congress-JD(S) coalition ahead of a trust vote in July.
- The then chief minister HD Kumaraswamy had resigned after losing the trust vote, which paved the way for the BJP-led government in the state under BS Yediyurappa.
- Bypolls to 15 out of these 17 assembly seats which fell vacant following the disqualification of MLAs are scheduled on December 5 and candidates are required to file their nomination papers between November 11 and November 18.
- These disqualified MLAs recently approached the apex court seeking a direction to the Election Commission to postpone the assembly bypolls for these 15 seats till the pronouncement of verdict in the matter.
- Some of these disqualified MLAs had argued in the apex court that they have an "indefeasible right" to resign as members of the assembly and the decision by the then Speaker to disqualify them smacks of "vengeance" and "mala fide".

Anti defection law:

- If the member voluntarily gives up membership of the party on whose ticket s/he is elected.

- If the member votes or abstains from voting in the House contrary to any direction of his/her party.
- Disqualification may be avoided if the party leadership condones the vote or abstention within 15 days.

After disqualification:

- If a member of the current House (15th legislative assembly) is disqualified, it means s/he cannot contest any election to the 15th House. However, s/he can contest the next assembly election (to the 16th House). Also, Article 164 (1B) of the Constitution states a member who has been disqualified cannot be made a minister till the expiry of his or her term, or till s/he is re-elected.
- If an MLA is disqualified on conviction for certain offences, he will be disqualified for a period of six years under Section 8 of the Representation of People's (RP) Act. But Section 8 (4) of the RP Act gives protection to MPs and MLAs as they can continue in office even after conviction if an appeal is filed within three months.

Time limit :

- The law does not specify a time-period for the presiding officer to decide on a disqualification plea.

Resignation vs disqualification

- If an MLA is disqualified, then s/he cannot be a minister in the new dispensation without being re-elected
- If an MLA resigns s/he can be inducted as a minister and get elected to either House of the legislature within six months.

Connecting the dots:

- In Karnataka's recent defection case, the legislators have sent a sworn affidavit saying that they have resigned. Should this not bring the matter to rest? Analyse

[Floor test in Maharashtra](#)

Context:

- The Supreme Court had ordered the floor test in Maharashtra on Monday.
- In its order, it referred to cases in the past where it had directed the holding of a floor test to establish whether the political party/alliance that staked a claim for government formation had the requisite majority. Here is a recap of these cases from various states and the circumstances that led to the Supreme Court court's intervention.

Floor test:

- A floor test can be explained as a motion initiated by the government in position seeking to know if it enjoys the confidence of the legislature.
- As part of this procedure, the chief minister appointed by the governor will be asked to prove majority on the Legislative Assembly's floor.

How is a floor test conducted?

- When a floor test is called for in the assembly of a state, the chief minister will move a vote of confidence and prove that he has the majority support. If the floor test fails, the chief minister will have to resign.

- The whole idea of a floor test is incorporated in the constitution of India to ensure transparency in the constitutional process.

How is the voting done?

These are the modes by which voting can be conducted:

1. **Voice vote:** In a voice vote, the legislators respond orally.
2. **Division vote:** In case of a division vote, voting is done using electronic gadgets, slips or in a ballot box.
3. **Ballot vote:** Ballot box is usually a secret vote – just like how people vote during state or parliamentary elections.

If there is a tie:

- Following the vote, the person who has the majority will be allowed to form the government. In case there is a tie, the speaker can cast his vote

Pro-tem speaker :

- The pro-tem speaker's role is crucial in conducting a floor test. Conventionally, the longest serving House member is nominated as pro tem speaker, whose role is limited to administering oath to new MLAs and conducting the election of the full-time speaker.

S R Bommai v Union of India (1994)

- The concept of floor test was first established by the Supreme Court in 1994 in the landmark case of S R Bommai.
- In this case, it was alleged that the Janata Party government led by Bommai did not enjoy a majority in the Karnataka legislature.
- The court held that, wherever a doubt arises whether the Council of Ministers has lost the confidence of the House, the only way of testing it is on the floor of the House.

Jagdambika Pal v Union of India (1999)

- The events that led to this case coming before the Supreme Court were less than pleasant. In 1996, the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections resulted in none of the contesting parties winning a clear majority.
- The Supreme Court then ordered a composite floor test to determine who enjoyed a majority in the UP Assembly. The court also gave specific instructions about how the test should be conducted.

Union of India v Harish Chandra Singh Rawat (2016)

- The case in Uttarakhand was a little different. Here the controversy regarding a majority did not occur after the elections to the state legislature. The Congress government led by Harish Rawat had been in power since 2012.
- It was towards the end of its tenure in 2016, that controversy erupted on the floor of the House. A few rebel MLAs from the Congress party alleged that an appropriation Bill was passed without the government enjoying a majority in the legislature. Thereafter, President's Rule was imposed in the State.
- In response, Rawat approached the Supreme Court, which ordered an immediate floor test, after suspending President's Rule for two hours. A
- gain the Supreme Court ordered video recordings of the floor test proceedings and also asked that the result of the floor test be brought before it.

Chandrakant Kavlekar v Union of India (2017)

- This case from Goa was a result of the Governor inviting Manohar Parrikar of the BJP to form the government in the State.
- The BJP had won 13 of the 40 seats in the Goa legislature and had claimed the support of smaller parties for forming the government.
- The Supreme Court, while ordering a floor test in this case, held, “The holding of the floor test would remove all possible ambiguities, and would result in giving the democratic process the required credibility.”

Connecting the dots:

- The vacuum is unhealthy for democracy as it inevitably leads to horse trading. The only way to end the imbroglio is to hold a floor test. Examine

Doctrine of Essentiality

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II – Polity

In News

- A five-judge Bench led by CJI Ranjan Gogoi decided to refer the Sabarimala review petitions to a larger Bench of seven judges.
- This decision reopens not only the debate on allowing women of menstruating age into the Sabarimala Ayyappa temple but also on the courts role in interfering in religious matters.
- The **doctrine of “essentiality”** was invented by a seven-judge Bench of the Supreme Court in the **‘Shirur Mutt’ case in 1954**.
- The court held that the term “religion” will cover all rituals and practices “integral” to a religion, and took upon itself the responsibility of determining the essential and non-essential practices of a religion.
- The idea of providing constitutional protection only to those elements of religion which the court considers “essential” (as determined by Court) is problematic in so far as it assumes that one element or practice of religion is independent of other elements or practices.
- Scholars of constitutional law have also argued that the essentiality/integrality doctrine has tended to lead the court into an area that is beyond its competence, and given judges the power to decide purely religious questions.
- Some of the contentious questions/issues which a larger seven- judge bench now needs to answer are:
 - Whether a court can probe if a practice is essential to a religion or should the question be left to the respective religious head;
 - Should “essential religious practices” be afforded constitutional protection under Article 26 (freedom to manage religious affairs)
 - To what extent court can recognize the PILs filed by people who do not belong to the religion of which practices are under the scanner.
 - To examine the “interplay” between the rights to religion and equality

Supreme Court’s Sabarimala verdict

Context:

- A five-judge bench of the Supreme Court referred Kerala's Sabarimala temple case to a larger bench of seven judges, with a 3:2 majority.
- The bench did not stay the judgment passed on 28 September 2018 that had lifted the ban on entry of women between age 10 and 50 to the temple.
- Women can still visit the shrine until the larger bench decides on the matter.

Issue:

- Sabarimala Temple is a Hindu temple dedicated to deity Ayyappan
- Situated at Sabarimala in Pathanamthitta District, Kerala, India.
- In the past, women devotees of menstruating age were not permitted to worship here, this ban being said to be out of respect to the celibate nature of the deity in this temple.
- A Kerala high-court judgement had legalized this interpretation, and forbade women from entering the temple since 1991.
- In September 2018, a judgement of the Supreme Court of India ruled that all pilgrims regardless of gender, including women in the menstruating age group, should be allowed entrance to Sabarimala.
- The Constitution bench of the Supreme Court held that any exception placed on women because of biological differences violates the Constitution – that the ban violates **the right to equality under Article 14, and freedom of religion under Article 25**.
- This verdict led to protests by people who oppose the verdict.
- Several women attempted to enter Sabarimala despite threats of physical assault against them but failed to reach the sanctum sanctorum.
- Two women belonging to the previously barred age group finally entered the temple defying protests on 2 January 2019 with the help of police through the back gate.
- Temple was closed for purification

Article 25(2)(b) creates a further exception to the right. It accords to the state a power to make legislation, in the interests of social welfare and reform, throwing open Hindu religious institutions of public character to all classes and sections of Hindus.

Article 26, on the other hand, which is also subject to limitations imposed on grounds of public order, morality, and health, accords to every religious denomination the right, among other things, to establish and maintain institutions for religious purposes and to manage their own affairs in matters of religion.

Judgement:

- The debate about the constitutional validity of practices entailing into restriction of entry of women generally in the place of worship is not limited to this case, but also arises in respect of entry of Muslim women in a Dargah/Mosque
- In the 2018 Sabarimala verdict, the majority opinion authored by then CJI Dipak Misra defined 'morality' in Article 25 to mean constitutional morality. Article 25 reads, "Subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion".
- Referring to Article 25(1), the 2018 judgment said: "We must remember that when there is a violation of the fundamental rights, the term 'morality' naturally implies constitutional morality and any view that is ultimately taken by the Constitutional Courts must be in

conformity with the principles and basic tenets of the concept of this constitutional morality...”

- According to the essential religious practices doctrine evolved by the court in the 1950s, practices and beliefs considered integral by a religious community are to be regarded as “essential”, and protected under Article 25.
- In the 2018 Sabarimala judgment, the majority opinion held that barring certain women from entering the temple owing to the celibate nature of Lord Ayyappa was not an essential religious practice. Justice R F Nariman, in his concurring opinion, had observed that when there is internal dissent on a practice, its essentiality to the religion becomes questionable.

For example, to determine whether the Swami Narayan Satsangis could bar non-Satsangi Harijans from entering their temples, a civil court examined evidence whether the Satsang constituted a religious denomination. In *Ismail Faruqui v Union of India* (1994), the court determined that offering prayers in a mosque was not an essential religious practice of Islam and upheld the law under which the Centre acquired the disputed land in Ayodhya.

Connecting the dots:

- The Supreme Court’s decision to refer the Sabarimala issue to a larger Bench underscores the need for a thorough review and wider consultation on the earlier verdict that allowed entry of women in the 10-50 age group into the hill shrine. Analyse

The Sabarimala review

Context:

- A five-judge bench of the Supreme Court referred Kerala’s Sabarimala temple case to a larger bench of seven judges, with a 3:2 majority.
- The bench did not stay the judgment passed on 28 September 2018 that had lifted the ban on entry of women between age 10 and 50 to the temple.
- Women can still visit the shrine until the larger bench decides on the matter.

Sabarimala case previous judgment:

“Right to pray” in the temple for women between 10 and 50 years of age won over the ‘right to wait’ campaign as the Supreme Court condemned the prohibition as “hegemonic patriarchy”. Patriarchy cannot trump freedom to practice religion

Logic behind the ban:

The restriction imposed on entry of women in Sabarimala is because of the nature of the deity worshipped there as a ‘naishtika brahmachari’ (celibate). Some argue that it is not because of any discriminatory attitude towards women based on biological factors such as menstruation. But many are of the opinion that it is due to the age-old practice and belief that the presence of women deviated men from celibacy. This places the burden of a men’s celibacy on women thus, stigmatising women and stereotyping them. Individual dignity of women could not be at the mercy of a mob. Morality was not ephemeral. It transcended biological and physiological barriers.

SC underlines the Constitution’s transformative power (*Points can be used in mains answer and essay*)

The Constitution protects religious freedom in two ways –

- It protects an individual's right to profess, practise and propagate a religion
- Assures similar protection to every religious denomination to manage its own affairs.

Observations made by the Judges:

The argument that the practice is justified because women of menstruating age would not be able to observe the 41-day period of abstinence before making a pilgrimage failed to impress the judges. To Chief Justice Dipak Misra, any rule based on segregation of women pertaining to biological characteristics is indefensible and unconstitutional. Devotion cannot be subjected to the stereotypes of gender. Justice D.Y. Chandrachud said stigma built around traditional notions of impurity has no place in the constitutional order, and exclusion based on the notion of impurity is a form of untouchability.

On freedom of religion

- The Supreme Court dismissed the argument that the prohibition was an essential part of religion.
- The Chief Justice said the inclusion of women, rather than their exclusion, is the essential part of the Hindu religion.
- By allowing women to enter Sabarimala temple for offering prayers, the nature of Hindu religion would not be fundamentally altered or changed in any manner.
- The devotees of Lord Ayyappa are exclusively Hindus and do not constitute a separate religious denomination. This temple is a public religious endowment.
- The right to practise religion, as claimed by the thanthris and worshippers, must be balanced with and yield to the fundamental right of women.
- The prohibition violated Section 3 of the Kerala Hindu Places of Public Worship (Authorisation of Entry) Act, 1965, which stated that "places of public worship" like the Sabarimala temple should be open to "all sections and classes of Hindus."
- The law recognises an idol or deity as a "juristic person which can own property and can sue and be sued in the court of law". But it "does not mean the deity necessarily has constitutional rights".
- Fundamental rights are meant for individuals, not deities or idols.
- Generally, the right to freedom of religion of both individuals and groups is recognised as an intrinsic facet of a liberal democracy. The Constitution memorialises these guarantees in **Articles 25 and 26**. The former recognises a right to freedom of conscience and a right to freely profess, practise, and propagate religion, subject to common community exceptions of public order, morality, and health, and also, crucially, to the guarantee of other fundamental rights.
- **Article 25(2)(b)** creates a further exception to the right. It accords to the state a power to make legislation, in the interests of social welfare and reform, throwing open Hindu religious institutions of public character to all classes and sections of Hindus.
- **Article 26**, on the other hand, which is also subject to limitations imposed on grounds of public order, morality, and health, accords to every religious denomination the right, among other things, to establish and maintain institutions for religious purposes and to manage their own affairs in matters of religion.

Dissenting opinion

- Justice Indu Malhotra, the lone woman judge on the Constitution Bench, dissented with the majority opinion.

- She held that the determination of what constituted an essential practice in a religion should not be based on the “personal views” of judges.
- She held that essentiality of a religious practice or custom had to be decided within the religion.
- It is a matter of personal faith. India is a land of diverse faiths. Constitutional morality in a pluralistic society gives freedom to practise even irrational or illogical customs and usages.

Connecting the dots:

- It is not the courts but the people who must restore to Indian polity its reasoned, secular character. Analyse

Voluntary model code of conduct

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II – Polity

In News

- Supreme Court is hearing case on whether Cabinet Ministers at both the Central and State levels should have a “voluntary model code of conduct” which addresses their private and public activities.
- The Court is examining if “greater restrictions” should be imposed on the right of free speech and expression of high public functionaries to protect the citizen’s **fundamental right to lead a dignified life**.
- The question was framed after family members of the Bulandshahr rape case victim complained about former Uttar Pradesh Minister Azam Khan’s public statements that the rape case was part of a political conspiracy against the then state government
- The lawyers arguing for petitioners asked the court to direct the government to frame the code of conduct for Cabinet Ministers, with the Cabinet head ensuring a collective responsibility for the activities of the individual Ministers.
- Union Ministry of Home Affairs already has a code of conduct for Ministers, which is essentially concerned with financial discipline, that is narrow and inadequate. It should be enlarged to include the private & public activities of the Ministers in general.

Gram Sabha to have power to ban liquor

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II – Panchayat Raj Institutions

In News

- The Haryana Cabinet took an in-principle decision to bring an amendment in Section 31 of the Haryana Panchayati Raj Act, 1994, allowing devolution of powers to the Gram Sabha to ban liquor within the local area of a Gram Panchayat
- The quorum of the Gram Sabha meeting for passing such a resolution shall be one-tenth of its members
- No liquor vends will be allowed in Haryana villages from the next financial year without its panchayat’s approval.

- Article 47 state that “The State shall endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health”.

Chhattisgarh panchayats to have disabled quota

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II – Polity

In News

- The Chhattisgarh Cabinet has approved the nomination of at least one differently abled member to each panchayat, if not elected, making it the only State to have such members in all panchayat
- Every panchayat will now have differently abled members, either elected or nominated.
- If differently abled members are not elected through the electoral process, then one member, either male or female, would be nominated as a panch.
- And as for janpads and zilla panchayats, the State government would nominate two such members, one male and one female, to them
- This means the State would have 11,000 people with special needs as members of panchayats
- Differently abled people constitute 6% of the population of Chhattisgarh
- The Cabinet also decided to drop the educational qualifications eligibility criterion for contesting panchayat elections.
- In the three-tier panchayati raj system, only being literate would be enough to contest elections.
- However, it is mandatory for a contestant for the position of a panch to be at least a Class V pass, and above that Class VIII pass.

Abrogation of Article 370

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II – Indian Polity

In News

- Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) said that Economic losses in Kashmir have run well over a billion dollars since India revoked its autonomy and statehood to Jammu & Kashmir in August 2019
- India turned its erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir into a federally-controlled territory, tightening control in a shock move it said would rein in militancy in the region and promote its development.
- Losses arose mainly from protracted shutdown after people closed markets and businesses as a mark of protest, and for fear of reprisals from insurgents.
- The clampdown has hit tourism as well as farming, horticulture and the arts and crafts that contribute the most to its export-oriented economy.

[Amaravati finally finds a place in political map of India](#)

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II- Polity

In news:

- The Survey of India released a new political map of India with Amaravati as the capital of Andhra Pradesh, which became the residuary State after bifurcation of combined Andhra Pradesh in 2014.
- Amaravati was missing from the new map, which was released by the Survey of India
- It kicked off a political storm with the Opposition TDP and the ruling YSR Congress Party blaming each other for the Centre refusing to recognise Amaravati as the capital of the State.
- **Amaravathi is a town located on the banks of Krishna River, in Guntur district of the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh.**
- **It is the headquarters of Amaravathi mandal, and forms part of the Andhra Pradesh Capital Region with its headquarters at new Amaravati 35 km (22 mi) east, whose name is also borrowed from the name of Amaravathi.**



Image: [Telangana Andhra](#)

[The Supreme Court has refused to stay the usage of Electoral bonds](#)

Context:

- The Supreme Court has refused to stay the usage of electoral bonds for political donation

- It said that all parties must reveal the details to the Election Commission in a sealed cover by May 30, 2020.
- The electoral bonds scheme that was introduced by the BJP has several loopholes and
- The scheme was objected to by several political parties and also the RBI and the Election Commission.
- The ruling BJP introduced the electoral bonds scheme nearly three years ago, ostensibly to rid the system of black money.
- However, electoral bonds scheme has been turned out to be even more opaque, questionable and illegally utilised than the model that preceded it.

What are electoral bonds?

- Electoral bonds function like gift vouchers.
- Anyone can buy them from the State Bank of India and hand them over to a political party of their choice,
- One doesn't have to attach a name to them.
- The parties can then encash those for money.

As per government scheme,

1. The bonds are only supposed to be available in four 10-day windows through the year
2. They can only be bought with cheque or digital transfer.
3. The government also removed the requirement that only profitable companies can donate money to political parties making it easier for foreign firms to donate as well.

Who can receive electoral bonds?

- Issued in multiple values of Rs 1,000, Rs 10,000, Rs 1 lakh, Rs 10 lakh and Rs 1 crore, these bonds can only be encashed by political parties, which had
- The parties are needed to secure at least 1 per cent of the votes polled in the most recent Lok Sabha or state election.
- Monies received from electoral bonds will be deposited in a bank account verified by the Election Commission.
- All the transactions for electoral bonds can be done only through that account.

Controversy behind electoral bonds:

- Experts point out that electoral bonds are most likely the first-of-its-kind instrument in the world used for funding political parties.
- While the United States has Political Action Committees which receive money from individual and corporate donors and manage them, they do not have any scheme that allows the citizen to directly purchase a bond and donate the same to a political party.
- Opponents to the scheme allege that since the identity of the donor of electoral bonds has been kept anonymous, it could lead to an influx of black money.
- Others allege that the scheme was designed to help big corporate houses donate money without their identity being revealed.
- Some experts, however, differ and say the idea of electoral bonds was never to entice big corporate houses into making political donations without being identified.
- Something that was meant to bring transparency to the system, electoral bonds actually make political funding more opaque – but only for the public.
- Companies don't have to say who they are donating money to and parties don't need to say from whom they're getting the cash.

- Moreover, the other changes regarding foreign firms and profitable companies means that electoral bonds could easily be used by shell firms that have no actual business or profit as a way of channeling money into politics.
- This is the critique that came from the Election Commission of India, which told the Supreme Court that it will have a “serious impact” on transparency in political funding and could allow for “unchecked foreign funding” of Indian political parties.
- The Reserve Bank of India, when asked for its opinion, had said the bonds would set a “bad precedent” since it would allow for money laundering and undermine trust in banknotes.
- Despite this criticism, the Finance Ministry said that the RBI has “not understood” the mechanism of electoral bonds and that it was going forward with them regardless.
- The Reserve Bank wanted to be the organisation issuing the bonds.
- It also wanted the bonds to be digital rather than physical. This was overruled by the Finance Ministry, which wanted the bonds to remain anonymous.
- Electoral bonds are anonymous as far as the public is concerned, the government can easily discover who is buying and donating them – giving the party in charge a huge advantage in information, and potentially deterring any individuals or companies from donating any bonds to the Opposition.
- According to the recent report, in the first sale of electoral bonds, 95% went to the BJP.

What did the Supreme Court say?

- In its order, the Supreme Court said that while it wanted to hear the matter at length at a later stage, for the interim it wanted a situation where the balance was not tilted in anyone’s favour.
- It has asked political parties to reveal details of the donations they received through electoral bonds to the Election Commission.
- The poll panel, on the other hand, has been asked to keep all the details in a sealed cover until further orders of the top court.

Way forward:

- Various commissions, including the Election Commission, have given detailed recommendations on suitable remedies.
- Complete transparency in all funding.
- Political parties need to be under the Right to Information Act. The Central Information Commission ruled that they were, but the parties refuse to follow its directions.
- There must be spending limits as well as donation limits, especially in a highly unequal society like ours, and strict penalties for flouting rules and the law.
- Public funding needs to be examined and introduced with proper checks and balances.
- Voters need to demand changes and we need voter awareness campaigns.
- The simple message from voters to political parties could be “we like you, not your big money. If you want, we will all pitch in and give small individual donations.”
- If voters reject candidates and parties that overspend or bribe them, we would have moved democracy one level higher.
- Most important, the electoral bonds scheme needs to be scrapped.
- The Supreme Court is hearing a petition on this issue.

Let us hope Indian democracy survives without going through another crisis.

Connecting the dots:

- Election Commission of India told the Supreme Court that electoral bonds will have a “serious impact” on transparency in political funding and could allow for “unchecked foreign funding” of Indian political parties. Comment.

Constitution Day

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains GS-II- Polity

In News

- The yearlong nationwide activities on Constitution Day are being launched to mark the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the Indian Constitution by the Constituent Assembly, beginning November 26, 2019.
- **On 26 November 1949, the Constituent Assembly of India adopted the Constitution of India**, and it came into effect on 26 January 1950.
- While Constitution Day is not a public holiday, various departments of the Government of India celebrate the day. Earlier, the day was commemorated as National Law Day. This was after a resolution was passed by the Supreme Court Bar Association, a lawyers’ body, in 1979
- The day was announced as the Constitution Day on November 19, 2015 by the Government of India. The announcement came while laying the foundation stone of the B. R. Ambedkar’s Statue of Equality memorial in Mumbai.
- It is aimed at reiterating and reorienting the citizens towards the values and principles expressed in the Constitution and to create awareness of Fundamental Duties as enshrined in the Constitution.
- The year 2015 also celebrated the 125th birth anniversary of Ambedkar. According to the government notification, Constitution Day was also a tribute to Ambedkar.

Govt. extends 15th finance panel term

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II – Indian Polity

In News

- The Union Cabinet approved the extension of the term of the 15th Finance Commission, which will now submit two reports. The term had been extended till October 30.
- The first report, for financial year 2020-21, will be submitted in the coming months before the Union Budget, and the second report for the period 2021-26 will be presented by October 30, 2020.
- This will effectively mean the **15th Finance Commission’s recommendations** will be **applicable for six years** and not the conventional five-year period.
- 15th Finance Commission has seen its **terms of reference expanded** and the reorganisation of J&K, and so, an extension of the term.
- The 9th Finance Commission under the chairmanship of N.K.P. Salve also saw its recommendation period extended to six years from the conventional five.

- It has happened before in the 14th Finance Commission when Andhra Pradesh and Telangana were split

Logo, motto introduced for Lokpal

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II – Governance

In News

- Lokpal Chairman Justice (retired) Pinaki Chandra Ghose launched the new logo for the apex anti-corruption ombudsman.
- A new motto, 'Ma GridhahKasyasvidhanam (**Do not be greedy for anyone's wealth**)', was also adopted.
- An open competition was conducted, inviting entries for the logo and the motto. A total of 2,236 entries for the logo and 4,705 entries for the motto were received.
- The logo symbolises how Lokpal protects and cares for the people of India by establishing justice as per law
- The logo figuratively symbolises the essence of Lokpal, with the inclusion of shapes such as the ombudsman [Judges' Bench], the people [three human figures], vigilance [an Ashoka Chakra forming an eye], the law [a shape of a book] and the judiciary [two tri-color hands placed below, forming a unique balance]
- The Lokpal has decided its motto/slogan based on their own inputs and discussions



[Ministry forms expert committee to review Sports Code](#)

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II – Governance

In News

- Olympic bronze-medallist shooter Gagan Narang, former football captain Bhaichung Bhutia and national badminton coach P. Gopi Chand have been named in a 13-member expert committee formed by the Sports Ministry to review the **Draft National Sports Code 2017**.
- The expert committee will be headed by Supreme Court judge Justice (Retd.) Mukundakam Sharma as its chairman.
- The draft code proposes drastic changes in the 2011 Code, including barring of ministers, members of Parliament and Legislative Assemblies and government servants from holding office in the IOA and NSFs, tenure restrictions and age cap of 70 years.
- The panel will also feature a representative from the Indian Olympic Association (IOA), which has rejected the code in current form as it seeks to put an age and tenure cap on sports administrators
- The committee will try to strike a balance between autonomy of National Sports Federations vis-a-vis need for transparency and autonomy

[Daman and Diu and Dadra and Nagar Haveli](#)

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II – Indian Polity

In News

- Lok Sabha passed the Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu (Merger of Union Territories) Bill, 2019.
- Dadra and Nagar Haveli has just one district while Daman and Diu has two. The combined population of the two UTs is 5 lakh 80 thousand.
- Having two separate constitutional and administrative entities in both the Union Territories leads to a lot of duplicacy, inefficiency and wasteful expenditure and causes an unnecessary financial burden on the government.
- In view of the policy of the government to have 'Minimum Government, Maximum Governance', considering small population and limited geographical area of both the Union Territories and to use the services of officers efficiently, government has decided to merge the Union Territories of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu into a single union territory,
- The Bill amends the First Schedule to merge the territories of the two UTs: (a) Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and (b) Daman and Diu. At present each UT has one seat in Lok Sabha and the Bill provides for the allocation of two Lok Sabha seats to the merged UT.
- The Bill provides that the jurisdiction of the High Court of Bombay will continue to extend to the merged UT.

Locals First Policy

Context:

- The Maharashtra government, has promised to enact a law to reserve 80 per cent of jobs in the private sector for “local/domicile” youths.
- Jagan Mohan Reddy government in Andhra Pradesh also reserved 75 per cent jobs factories for **Andhra Pradesh youths**, making it the **first state in the country** to introduce such a provision in the private sector.
- Madhya Pradesh chief minister Kamal Nath also announced that his government was considering a quota for locals in private sector jobs in the state.
- The Assam government had made similar attempts for reservation in state government jobs, legislative assembly and local bodies for indigenous Assamese people

The Locals First Policy

Why?

With the growth in industries, the demand for land for industrial use has been increasing. Since most of the requirement is met by acquiring private agricultural lands, the owners are being displaced and deprived of their livelihood. Therefore, there is a demand from land losers, apart from the local population, to provide employment.

Though there were promises by the industrial managements to meet these demands at the initial phases of setting up of their industries, more often than not, the objectives are not met. In some instances, even though the local people are employed as per the initial commitments, they are generally employed as gardeners, house-keeping personnel and other low income jobs. This is causing dissatisfaction in the local community and leading to industrial unrest

Define ‘local’

If the company doesn’t find suitable persons in the immediate vicinity, they need to try to look for candidates in the neighbouring villages. The scope will then expand to the district and finally to the entire state, where they will be able to find a suitable candidate for any job profile. There is therefore a need to collaborate on training the locals with skills required for the jobs they provide.

Criticisms

- While the legislation only generally talked about 75 per cent jobs to be filled by locals and makes no mention about the cadres within these jobs in a factory, it has, however, left the issue open for a future debate by pointing out that only low-paying jobs were being given to locals in certain instances.
- Under the law, if skilled personnel are not available for the jobs at hand, these industrial units cannot ‘import’ labourers from elsewhere; the burden of imparting the requisite skills to, and of employing, locals will fall on the units.
- It will almost certainly push up the cost of doing business in such geographical entities that embrace this policy, and make a mockery of the concept of the ‘Indian Common Market’, which rests on the foundational premise of unfettered labour mobility.
- Significantly, a reservation for local populations is also a violation of the constitutionally guaranteed right of every citizen to work, live and move freely within the country.

Interstate Movements:

- The Constitution of India guarantees freedom of movement and consequently employment within India through several provisions.
- Article 19 ensures that citizens can “move freely throughout the territory of India”.
- Article 16 guarantees no birthplace-based discrimination in public employment.
- Article 15 guards against discrimination based on place of birth and
- Article 14 provides for equality before law irrespective of place of birth.
- Some of these Articles were invoked in a landmark 2014 case—**CharuKhurana vs. Union of India**—when a trade union had declined membership to a make-up artist because she had not lived in Maharashtra for at least five years, as per the union’s rules. The trade union lost the case.

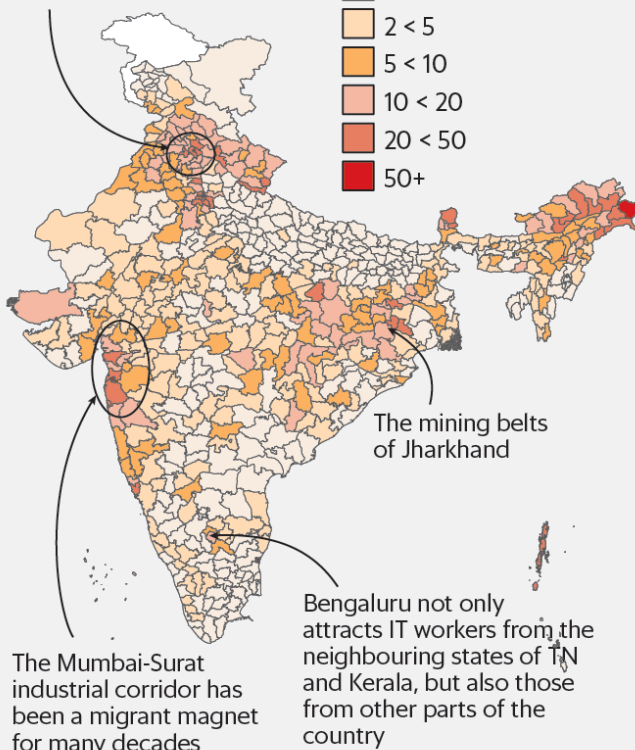
HOW INDIA MOVES ACROSS STATE LINES

Chart 1: In only 26 of India's 640 districts does the share of migrants in the urban workforce exceed 25%.

8% of India's urban workforce is made up of interstate migrants

The Ludhiana-Delhi-Jaipur industrial belt sees an influx of working-class migrants

Share of economic interstate migrants in urban workforce (in %)

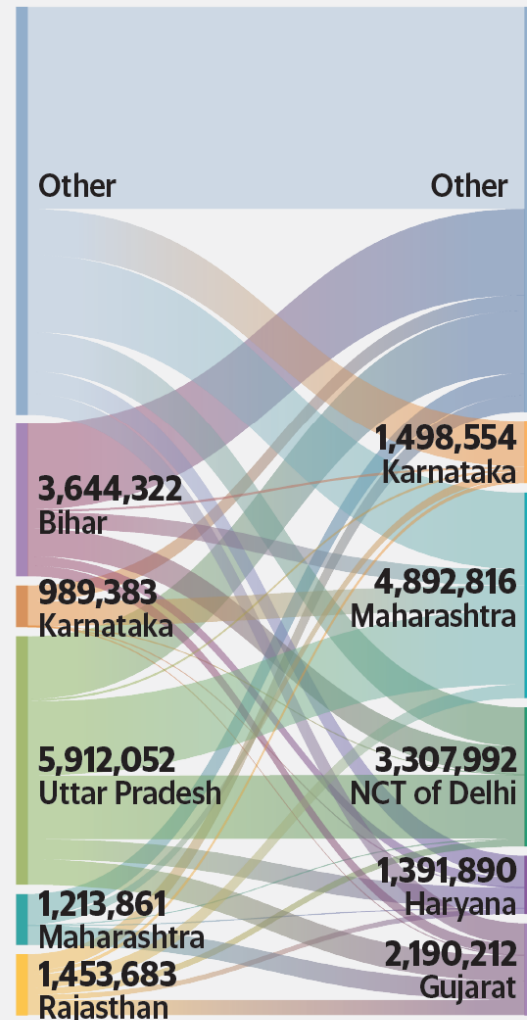


Note: Interstate migrants refer only to those who moved for economic reasons

Source: Census 2011

Chart 2: Delhi and Mumbai are still migrant magnets, but a new North-South corridor is emerging

Top 5 origin Top 5 destinations



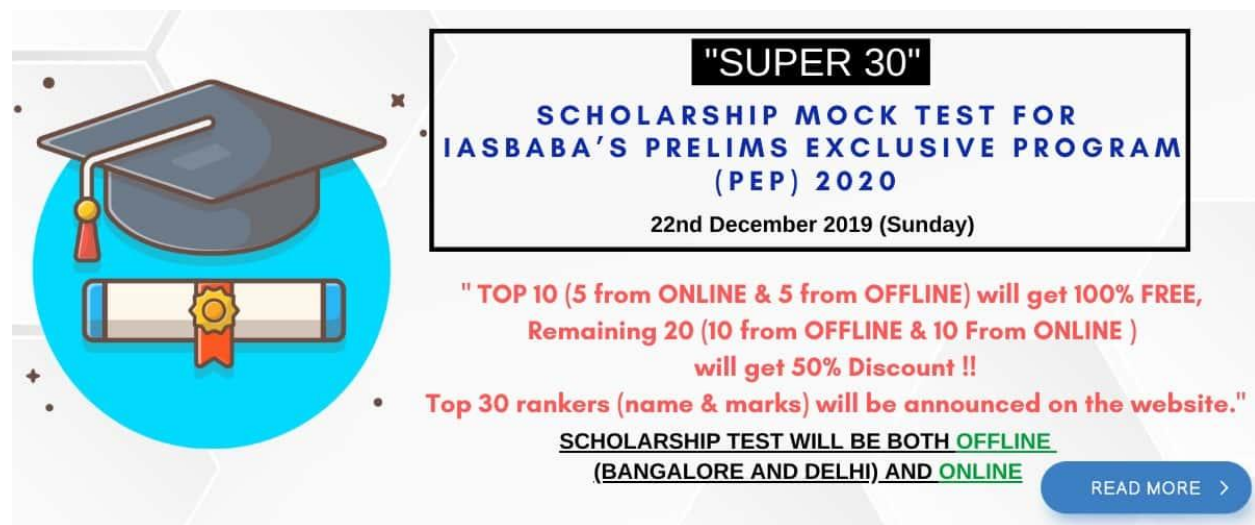
Conclusion

Providing vocational training and education — responsibilities of the State — could have been a long-term solution. But with the mandatory reservation of 75 per cent of all jobs for local people, the state government has shifted this responsibility onto the industrial sector. Further, mobility of labour is necessary to give industries the opportunity to select the best talent and remain competitive. A reservation such as the one in Andhra Pradesh will thus hamper the ease of doing business, discouraging industrial investment in the state and causing unemployment to shoot up further.

Affirmative action was once a tool to bring the most economically and educationally backward sections on a par with the rest of the population. At the hands of populist governments, it has been turned into an assurance — albeit a false one — of a shortcut to success. The reservation for Marathas — an economically and socially dominant segment — in Maharashtra is a case in point. The underlying causes for demands for reservation are, among other factors, agricultural and economic crisis, the lack of social security nets, unemployment and iniquitous access to education.

Connecting the Dots:

- Will jobs-for-locals quota set off a wave of parochial politics? Discuss.



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SOCIAL ISSUE/WELFARE

Gender Equality

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II – Society

In News

- The Punjab Assembly unanimously passed a resolution urging the Akal Takht and the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee to allow Sikh women to sing hymns in the sanctum sanctorum of the Golden Temple in Amritsar.
- Only Sikh men perform 'kirtan' at the Golden Temple as of now.
- The resolution passed states that "Guru Nanak Dev had visualised a society in which there would be no place for discrimination or distinction on the basis of caste or creed, social status or gender, a society that is to be based upon the principle of egalitarianism and committed to welfare of all"

Do You Know?

- The Supreme Court had struck down a rule that disallowed girls and women in the 10-50 age group from entering the **Sabarimala** temple in Kerala.
- The rules which mandate the ban were listed in Kerala Hindu Places of Public Worship (Authorisation of Entry) Rules of 1965.
- Chief Justice Dipak Misra-headed Constitution bench in a 4-1 verdict said the temple rule violated their right to equality and right to worship

Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019

Context:

- The Rajya Sabha passed the Transgender Persons' (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019, even though several opposition members urged the house to send the bill to a committee for further scrutiny.
- Since its introduction in 2016, the legislation has come under heavy criticism from transgender rights activists.

Objective :

- To provide for protection of rights of transgender persons, their welfare, and other related matters.

Definition of a transgender person:

- Transgender person as one whose gender does not match the gender assigned at birth.
- It includes trans-men and trans-women, persons with intersex variations, gender-queers, and persons with socio-cultural identities, such as kinnar and hijra.
- Intersex variations is defined to mean a person who at birth shows variation in his or her primary sexual characteristics, external genitalia, chromosomes, or hormones from the normative standard of male or female body.

Highlights:

- Prohibits the discrimination against a transgender person, including denial of service or unfair treatment
- Every transgender person shall have a right to reside and be included in his household.
- If the immediate family is unable to care for the transgender person, the person may be placed in a rehabilitation centre, on the orders of a competent court.
- Educational institutions funded or recognised by the relevant government shall provide inclusive education, sports and recreational facilities for transgender persons, without discrimination.
- The government must take steps to provide health facilities to transgender persons including separate HIV surveillance centres, and sex reassignment surgeries.
- A revised certificate may be obtained only if the individual undergoes surgery to change their gender either as a male or a female.
- It must also take steps for their rescue and rehabilitation, vocational training and self-employment, create schemes that are transgender sensitive, and promote their participation in cultural activities.
- Recognizes the following offences against transgender persons: (i) forced or bonded labour (excluding compulsory government service for public purposes), (ii) denial of use of public places, (iii) removal from household, and village, (iv) physical, sexual, verbal, emotional or economic abuse.

National Council for Transgender persons (NCT):

The NCT will consist of:

- (i) Union Minister for Social Justice (Chairperson);
- (ii) Minister of State for Social Justice (Vice- Chairperson);
- (iii) Secretary of the Ministry of Social Justice;
- (iv) One representative from ministries including Health, Home Affairs, and Human Resources Development.
- Other members include representatives of the NITI Aayog, and the National Human Rights Commission.
- State governments will also be represented. The Council will also consist of five members from the transgender community and five experts from non-governmental organisations.
- The Council will advise the central government as well as monitor the impact of policies, legislation and projects with respect to transgender persons. It will also redress the grievances of transgender persons.

Controversies:

- Following protests by the queer community against the 2016 and 2018 bills, the bill tabled in 2019 did away with few of the severely criticised provisions of the 2018 bill, such as criminalisation of begging and the establishment of a District Screening Committee to process applications for issuance of transgender person certificates.
- It failed to incorporate yet other principles in line with the Supreme Court judgment in **National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India (NALSA v. UOI)** in 2014, such as the right of transgender persons to self-perceived gender identity without undergoing sex reassignment surgery, and mandatory reservations in jobs and educational institutions.
- Criticism was also made of the lesser punishment for crimes against transgender persons compared with punishment for crimes against cisgender persons.

- No government or private entity can discriminate against a transgender person in employment matters, including recruitment, and promotion.

SC Judgements:

- In 2014, the Supreme Court of India delivered its judgment in National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India (also known as, NALSA v. UOI), in which it recognised the rights of the transgender persons in India and laid down a series of measures for securing transgender persons' rights by mandating prohibition of discrimination, recommending the creation of welfare policies and reservations for transgender persons in educational institutions and jobs.
- The judgment upheld the right of a transgender person to self-perceived gender identity, guaranteed by the Constitution of India, in the absence of sex reassignment surgery.

Conclusion:

- With the Bill becoming law, unaltered in any significant form, in the face of such strident opposition, the community is seething at being ignored.
- Its only hope is that the National Council for Transgender Persons, which is supposed to provide the institutional framework for implementing the Act, might allow more latitude for incorporating genuine demands. Otherwise, this Act might well be a glove that ill fits the hand it was tailored for.

Connecting the dots:

- The Transgender Persons Act should have factored in suggestions from the community. Critically analyse

National Education Policy 2019 (Part 1)

Features:

- Four chapters focussing on school education; higher education; other key areas like adult education, technology and promotion of arts and culture; and a section on making it happen by establishing an apex body and the financial aspects to make quality education affordable for all.
- The commitment to double the government expenditure on education from about 10% to 20% over a 10-year period is still insufficient, given the enormity of the challenge, it is an unprecedented commitment to the sector.

Dr. K. Kasturirangan committee:

- The Committee was constituted by the Ministry of Human Resource Development in June 2017.
- The report proposes an education policy, which seeks to address the challenges of: (i) access, (ii) equity, (iii) quality, (iv) affordability, and (v) accountability faced by the current education system.

Draft Education policy:

- The draft Policy provides for reforms at all levels of education from school to higher education.
- It seeks to increase the focus on early childhood care, reform the current exam system, strengthen teacher training, and restructure the education regulatory framework.

- It also seeks to set up a National Education Commission, increase public investment in education, strengthen the use of technology and increase focus on vocational and adult education, among others.

Key observations and recommendations

School Education

The Committee observed several quality related deficiencies in the existing early childhood learning programmes. These include: (i) curriculum that doesn't meet the developmental needs of children, (ii) lack of qualified and trained teachers, and (iii) substandard pedagogy.

This will consist of:

- (i) Guidelines for up to three-year-old children (for parents and teachers), and
- (ii) Educational framework for three to eight-year-old children. This would be implemented by improving and expanding the anganwadi system and co-locating anganwadis with primary schools

The Right to Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act):

- Currently, the RTE Act provides for free and compulsory education to all children from the age of six to 14 years.
- The draft Policy recommends extending the ambit of the RTE Act to include early childhood education and secondary school education.
- This would extend the coverage of the Act to all children between the ages of three to 18 years.
- Continuous and comprehensive evaluation and the no detention policy must be reviewed.
- It states that there should be no detention of children till class eight. Instead, schools must ensure that children are achieving age-appropriate learning levels.

Curriculum framework:

- The current structure of school education must be restructured on the basis of the development needs of students.
- (i) five years of foundational stage (three years of pre-primary school and classes one and two), (ii) three years of preparatory stage (classes three to five), (iii) three years of middle stage (classes six to eight), and (iv) four years of secondary stage (classes nine to 12).
- The Committee noted that the current education system solely focuses on rote learning of facts and procedures. Hence, it recommends that the curriculum load in each subject should be reduced to its essential core content. This would make space for holistic, discussion and analysis-based learning.

School exam reforms:

The Committee noted that the current board examinations

- (i) Force students to concentrate only on a few subjects,
- (ii) Do not test learning in a formative manner, and
- (iii) Cause stress among students.
- The draft Policy proposes State Census Examinations in classes three, five and eight. Further, it recommends restructuring the board examinations to test only core concepts, skills and higher order capacities.

- These board examinations will be on a range of subjects. The students can choose their subjects, and the semester when they want to take these board exams. The in-school final examinations may be replaced by these board examinations.

School infrastructure:

- The Committee noted that establishing primary schools in every habitation across the country has helped increase access to education. However, it has led to the development of very small schools (having low number of students).
- This will ensure that resources such as infrastructure and trained teachers can be efficiently shared across a school complex.

Teacher management:

- The Committee noted that there has been a steep rise in teacher shortage, lack of professionally qualified teachers, and deployment of teachers for non-educational purposes.
- Recommends that teachers should be deployed with a particular school complex for at least five to seven years. Further, teachers will not be allowed to participate in any non-teaching activities (such as cooking mid-day meals or participating in vaccination campaigns) during school hours that could affect their teaching capacities.

Regulation of schools:

- The draft Policy recommends separating the regulation of schools from aspects such as policymaking, school operations, and academic development.
- It suggests creating an independent State School Regulatory Authority for each state that will prescribe basic uniform standards for public and private schools.
- The Department of Education of the State will formulate policy and conduct monitoring and supervision.

Higher Education

- According to the All India Survey on Higher Education, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education in India has increased from 20.8% in 2011-12 to 25.8% in 2017-18.
- The Committee identified lack of access as a major reason behind low intake of higher education in the country.
- It aims to increase GER to 50% by 2035 from the current level of about 25.8%. Key recommendations in this regard include:
- The Committee proposes setting up the National Higher Education Regulatory Authority (NHERA).
- This independent authority would replace the existing individual regulators in higher education, including professional and vocational education.
- This implies that the role of all professional councils such as AICTE and the Bar Council of India would be limited to setting standards for professional practice.
- The role of the University Grants Commission (UGC) will be limited to providing grants to higher educational institutions.
- Currently, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) is an accreditation body under the UGC.

- The draft Policy recommends separating NAAC from the UGC into an independent and autonomous body.
- In its new role, NAAC will function as the top level accreditor, and will issue licenses to different accreditation institutions, who will assess higher educational institutions once every five to seven years. All existing higher education institutions should be accredited by 2030.

Establishment of new higher educational institutions:

- Currently, higher educational institutions can only be set up by Parliament or state legislatures.
- The draft Policy proposes that these institutions could be allowed to be set up through a Higher Education Institution Charter from NHERA.
- This Charter will be awarded on the basis of transparent assessment of certain specified criteria.
- All such newly constituted higher educational institutions must receive accreditation as mandated by NHERA within five years of being established.

Restructuring of higher education institutions:

- (i) Research universities focusing equally on research and teaching;
- (ii) Teaching universities focusing primarily on teaching; and
- (iii) Colleges focusing only on teaching at undergraduate levels. All such institutions will gradually move towards full autonomy – academic, administrative, and financial.

Establishing a National Research Foundation:

- The Committee observed that the total investment on research and innovation in India has declined from 0.84% of GDP in 2008 to 0.69% in 2014.
- India also lags behind many nations in number of researchers (per lakh population), patents and publications.

Conclusion:

- Education, for most of us, is a necessary public good central to the task of nation building and, like fresh air, is necessary to make our communities come alive;
- it should not be driven solely by market demand for certain skills, or be distracted by the admittedly disruptive impact, for instance, of Artificial Intelligence.
- This form of education should be unshackled from the chains of deprivation, and “affordable” education, for instance in JNU, is vital to ensure access to even the most marginalised sections of our country.
- Education policy, in essence, must aim to produce sensitive, creative and upright citizens who are willing to take the less-travelled path and whose professional “skills” will endure revolutions in thinking and technology.

Connecting the dots:

- New education policy misses a critical chance to address inequalities in system. Analyse

UGC-AICTE merger

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II- Education

- The Centre has not taken any final decision on the merger of the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) to create a single regulator for higher education.
- A June 2018 version of the draft HECI Bill had faced objections from States worried they would lose autonomy under the new regime as well as concerns that grant disbursal powers were being moved from autonomous bodies to the direct control of the HRD Minister.

Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)

- The Centre has decided to establish a Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) in the place of the University Grants Commission (UGC).
- The Bill repeals the University Grants Commission Act, 1956 and establishes the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI).
- The HECI will maintain academic standards in higher education by specifying learning outcomes for courses, specifying eligibility criteria for Vice Chancellors, and ordering closure of higher educational institutions which fail to adhere to minimum standards.
- Every higher educational institution empowered to award degrees or diplomas will have to apply to the HECI to commence its first academic operations.
- The HECI also has the power to revoke permission on specified grounds.
- The Bill sets up an Advisory Council chaired by the Union Minister of Human Resource Development. The Council will advise on coordination and determination of standards in higher education between the centre and states.

Saakshar Bharat Mission (SBM)

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II – Education

In News

- In Telangana, 41,000 women learn the Telugu alphabet from their own children and clear exam
- The Saakshar Bharat Mission (SBM) imparts functional literacy and numeracy, but faced a shortage of coordinators in Telangana's Sangareddy district.
- In order to overcome this obstacle, the district administration in 2017 developed 'AmmakuAkshara Mala' (alphabet garland for mother) and roped in students in Classes VII to X. They were asked to teach their mothers to read and write the Telugu alphabet at home
- Of 48,000 women who took the exam in March 2018, 41,000 passed in writing, reading and numerical skills

About SBM

- This programme was formulated by **Ministry of Human Resource Development** in 2009 with the objective of achieving 80% literacy level at national level, by focusing on **adult women literacy seeking** – to reduce the gap between male and female literacy to not more than 10 percentage points .

- It has four broader objectives, namely
 - imparting functional literacy and numeracy to non-literates;
 - acquiring equivalency to formal educational system;
 - imparting relevant skill development programme; and
 - promote a learning society by providing opportunities for continuing education.
- The principal target of the programme is to impart functional literacy to **70 million non-literate adults in the age group of 15 years and beyond.**
- The Programme goes beyond '3' R's (i.e. Reading, Writing & Arithmetic) ; for it also seeks to create awareness of social disparities and a person's deprivation on the means for its amelioration and general well being

QS Rankings: 8 India universities in Asia top 100

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II – Education

In News

- In the latest QS World University Rankings for Asia, 96 Indian institutions rank among 550 for the continent, out of which 20 are brand-new entries.
- While Mainland China has four in the top 10 this year, India does not yet have a university among the top 30.
- The best performing institution from India is IIT Bombay, which drops one place to 34th position. It is followed by IIT Delhi at 43rd place and IIT Madras at 50th.
- The QS Rankings use a methodology based on 11 metrics:
 - Academic reputation (30%); Employer reputation (20%); Faculty/student ratio (10%); International research network (10%); Citations per paper (10%) and papers per faculty (5%);
 - Staff with a PhD (5%); Proportion of international faculty (2.5%) and proportion of international students (2.5%); Proportion of inbound exchange students (2.5%) and proportion of outbound exchange students (2.5%)
- India dominates the 'Staff with PhD' indicator with seven institutions achieving the perfect 100.00 score and raking No. 1 tied in this metric. IIT Bombay is the best Indian university in the 'Academic Reputation' indicator.

Do You Know?

- The Indian higher education system has grown exponentially over the past decade. The number of universities has nearly doubled, and the number of colleges has grown by 50 per cent.
- Nevertheless, the domestic demand for tertiary education of its young population — which is estimated to become the world's largest by 2030 — is growing more rapidly than the expanded provision

National Institute of Design (Amendment) Bill

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II – Education

In News

- The Parliament has passed the National Institute of Design (Amendment) Bill, 2019.
- It declares the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad as an institution of national importance.
- It also seeks to declare 4 National Institutes of Design as institutions of national importance.
- They are located at Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh, Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh, Jorhat in Assam and Kurukshetra in Haryana.
- Currently, these institutes are registered as Societies under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 and do not have the power to grant degrees or diplomas.
- On being declared institutions of national importance, the four institutes will be granted the power to grant degrees and diplomas.

Significance of National Importance Tag

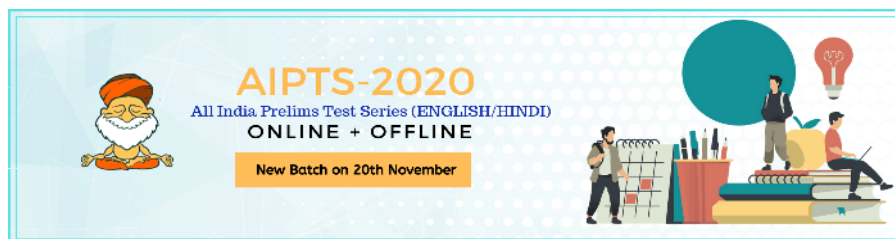
- It will help to produce highly skilled manpower in design sector which in turn, will create job opportunities, both direct and indirect.
- It will also provide sustainable design interventions for handloom, crafts, rural technology, small, medium (SMEs) and large scale enterprises (LSEs); and outreach programmes for capacity, capability and institution building.

YUWAAH

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains I – Social Issues

In News

- **UNICEF** has launched ‘YuWaah’ Generation Unlimited in India on 1.11.2019.
- It is a **multi-stakeholder alliance** which aims to facilitate youth to gain relevant skills for productive lives and the future of work.
- The target age group of YuWaah includes adolescent girls and boys.
- Its key mission is to promote access to foundational, transferable and 21st century skills for youth inside and outside formal education systems, which includes defining foundational skills, life skills and flexible learning and identifying and scaling impactful delivery models.
- YuWaah intends to create platforms to guide youth to market opportunities (career guidance, mentorship, internships, apprenticeships) and facilitate integration of career guidance in school education.



HEALTH ISSUE

National Health Profile (NHP) 2019

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains GS-II – Health

In News

- NHP is an annual publication of the Central Bureau of Health Intelligence (CBHI)
- The NHP covers demographic, socio-economic, health status and health finance indicators, human resources in the health sector and health infrastructure. It is also an important source of information on various communicable and non-communicable diseases that are not covered under any other major programmes.
- Some of the key findings of the report are:
 - Sex ratio (number of females per 1,000 males) in the country has improved from 933 in 2001 to 943 in 2011.
 - In **rural areas the sex ratio** has increased from **946 to 949**.
 - The corresponding increase in urban areas has been of 29 points from 900 to 929.
 - **Kerala has recorded the highest sex ratio** in respect of total population (1,084), rural population (1,078) and urban (1,091). The lowest sex ratio in rural areas has been recorded in Chandigarh (690)
 - The estimated **birth rate reduced** from 25.8 in 2000 to 20.4 in 2016 while the death rate declined from 8.5 to 6.4 per 1,000 populations over the same period.
 - The **total fertility rate** (average number of children that will be born to a woman during her lifetime) **in 12 States has fallen below two** children per woman and nine States have reached replacement levels of 2.1 and above.
 - The total number of **registered allopathic doctors** (up to 2018) is 11,54,686. Number of dental surgeons registered with Central/State Dental Councils of India was 2,54,283.

About Central Bureau of Health Intelligence (CBHI)

- CBHI is the National Nodal agency for Health Intelligence in the Directorate General of Health Services (Dte.GHS), Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, and Government of India.
- CBHI is committed to build an integrated health informatics platform which can provide reliable, accurate, and relevant national health information and enable evidence based policy formulation and decision making.

MPs grill officials on DNA Bill

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains GS-II – Health

In News

- A parliamentary panel headed by MP Jairam Ramesh began hearing the contentious DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2019 with members grilling officials from the Department of Biotechnology on scope for violations of privacy in the proposed DNA data bank.

- The Bill seeks to create a national data bank, and regional data banks which will have DNA samples of undertrials, suspects, missing persons and unknown deceased persons.
- It has proposed DNA sampling and profiling of citizens accused of crime or reported missing, and storing their unique genetic information for administrative purposes.

For more details on the bill, refer: <https://iasbaba.com/2019/07/rstv-ias-upsc-dna-technology-bill/>

Health emergency declared in the Capital

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

In News

- The Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority declared a public health emergency in the Capital as pollution levels entered the **‘severe plus’ category**
- According to the data provided by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), the overall AQI score of Delhi was 504 which prompted the authorities to consider it as public health emergency as it will have adverse health impacts on all, particularly our children
- The deterioration in air quality is due to a combination of accumulated toxins because of local pollution, further spiked by bursting of crackers on Deepavali, stubble burning and extremely adverse weather conditions.
- People are facing symptoms associated with pollution like irritation in the eyes and throat, dry skin, skin allergies, chronic cough and breathlessness
- EPCA is a Supreme Court-mandated body that has over a dozen members. It was notified in 1998 by the Union Environment Ministry under the Environment Protection Act.

Alzheimer Disease

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II -Health

In News

- China has approved the first home-grown drug “Oligomannate (GV-971)” for the treatment of “mild to moderate Alzheimer’s disease (AD).
- Alzheimer’s disease is a progressive brain disorder that typically affects people older than 65. When it affects younger individuals, it is considered early onset.
- The disease destroys brain cells and nerves, and **disrupts the message-carrying neurotransmitters**. Eventually, a person with Alzheimer’s loses the ability to perform day-to-day activities.
- Symptoms include memory loss, difficulty in completing familiar tasks, confusion with time or place, problems in speaking and writing, decreased or poor judgment, and changes in mood and personality.
- There is **no cure for Alzheimer’s**, because its exact causes are not known.
- Most drugs being developed **try to slow down or stop the progression of the disease**.

[Ban proposed on sale, ads of junk food in schools](#)

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II – Health

In News

- Aimed at enabling children to eat and grow healthy, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) released draft regulations titled Food Safety and Standards (Safe Food and healthy diets for School Children) Regulations, 2019.
- It has proposed to restrict the sale and the advertisement of food products, which are **high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS)**, in school premises and within 50 meters of the school campus.
- HFSS food includes deep fried foods such as french fries, fried chips, sugar-sweetened carbonated or non-carbonated beverages, ready-to-eat foods, noodles, burgers, pizzas and confectionery items among others.
- Schools should **adopt a comprehensive programme for promoting healthy diets** among children. The school campus should be converted into 'Eat Right School' focussing on local and seasonal food and no food waste as per the specified benchmarks.
- As about **8% of schoolchildren are obese**, FSSAI has also proposed that children have to be encouraged to consume balanced diet in the school as per the guidelines issued by the National Institute of Nutrition.
- The regulator has also proposed setting up a **sub-committee by the State Level Advisory Committee** to monitor the implementation of these regulations and to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food to school children in the draft regulations.

About FSSAI

- It is an autonomous **statutory body** established under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.
- **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare**, Government of India is the administrative Ministry of FSSAI.
- It lays down science based standards for articles of food and regulating manufacturing, processing, distribution, sale and import of food so as to ensure safe and wholesome food for human consumption.

[Food Standards & Safety](#)

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II – Health

In News

- The Data released by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) on enforcement of norms has noted that 3.7% of the samples collected and analysed were found unsafe, 15.8% sub-standard and 9% samples had labelling defects.
- 1,06,459 samples were analysed (7% increase compared to previous year), whereby for the first time the data had been compiled for unsafe, substandard and labelling defects separately

- There has been a 36% increase in civil cases launched and a 67% increase in the number of cases where penalties were imposed
- Ten States/UTs that have performed well include **Uttarakhand, Goa, Bihar, Sikkim, Gujarat** and Telangana.
- Ten States that have performed poorly include Nagaland, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand, Jammu & Kashmir, Rajasthan and Punjab.
- Many of the poorly performing States have not been able to put in place full-time officers and **do not have proper testing laboratories**
- The data released would help authorities take precise corrective and preventive action.

About FSSAI

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Indian lungs under extreme stress

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains GS-II – Health

In News

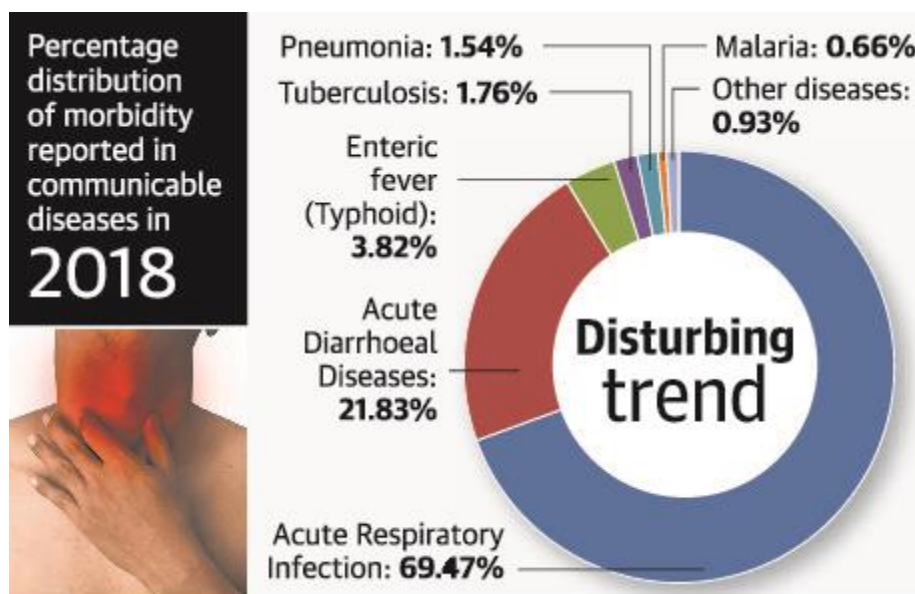
- Acute respiratory infections (ARI) accounted for 69.47% of morbidity (the condition of being diseased) last year which was the highest in the communicable disease category, leading to 27.21% mortality.
- Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal reported a large number of patients and fatalities due to ARI as per the **National Health Profile-2019**.
- ARI includes respiratory illness such as chronic bronchitis, emphysema, heart disease, asthma, wheezing, coughing and difficulty in breathing.
- According to World Health Organisation, acute respiratory infection is a serious ailment that prevents normal breathing function and kills an estimated 2.6 million children annually every year worldwide.
- The foetus receives oxygen from the mother, and if she is breathing polluted air, it can increase the health risk of unborn babies. Pregnant women in the first trimester need to be more careful as risk increases and pollution can cause a medical condition called intrauterine inflammation.
- Prenatal exposure to pollutants increases risk of pre-term delivery and low birth weight, factors that can lead to developmental disabilities later on

About National Health Profile

- NHP is an annual publication of the **Central Bureau of Health Intelligence (CBHI)**
- The NHP covers demographic, socio-economic, health status and health finance indicators, human resources in the health sector and health infrastructure. It is also an important

source of information on various communicable and non-communicable diseases that are not covered under any other major programmes.

For more details on NHP 2019, refer to [https://iasbaba.com/2019/11/daily-current-affairs-ias-upsc-prelims-and-mains-exam-1st-november-2019/#National Health Profile NHP 2019](https://iasbaba.com/2019/11/daily-current-affairs-ias-upsc-prelims-and-mains-exam-1st-november-2019/#National_Health_Profile_NHP_2019)



Maternal death rate declining

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II -Health

In News

- India's Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) has seen a decline from 130 per 1 lakh live births in 2014-2016 to 122 per 1 lakh live births in 2015-2017.
- The figure has declined from 167 in 2011-2013 to 130 in 2014-2016 and to 122 in 2015-17, registering a 6.15 per cent reduction since the last survey figures of 2014-2016.
- This is good news for India as nearly 2,000 maternal deaths have been averted per year
- While Karnataka has shown the highest percentage decline in MMR, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have shown an increase by 15 points each in MMR.
- Retaining its first position, Kerala has reduced its MMR from 46 in 2014-2016 to 42 in 2015-2017. Likewise, Maharashtra retained its second position with 55 (down from 61) and Tamil Nadu its third position with 63 (down from 66).
- The decline is important for India as 11 States have achieved the National Health Policy target of MMR 100 per lakh live births well ahead of 2020.
- This has been possible in view of the gains made in institutional deliveries and focused approach towards aspirational districts and inter-sectoral action to reach the most marginalised and vulnerable mothers

- Public health initiatives under the National Health Mission such as LaQshya, Poshan Abhiyan, Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan, Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram, Janani Suraksha Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana have contributed to this decline,

Do You Know?

- India is now committed to ensuring that not a single mother or newborn dies due to a preventable cause and move towards zero preventable maternal and newborn deaths through the recently launched **Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan Initiative (SUMAN)**.
- The WHO had last year lauded India's progress in reducing the MMR, saying the progress puts the country on track towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target of an MMR below 70 by 2030.

Maternal death rate declining

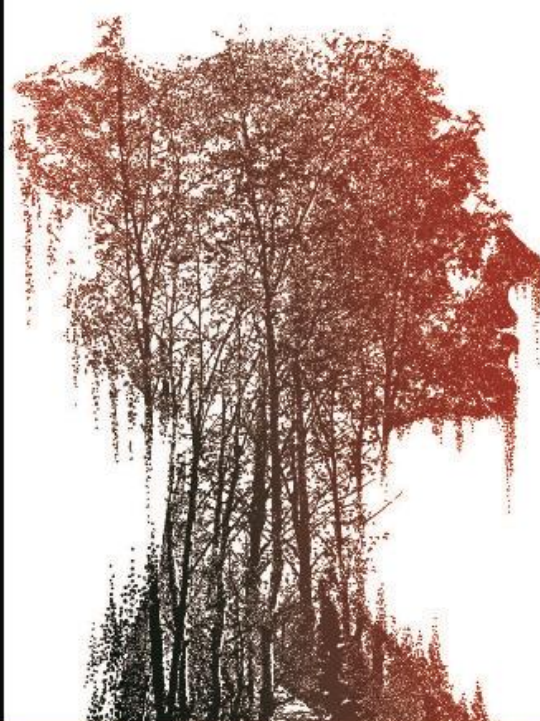
Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II -Health

In News

- India's Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) has seen a decline from 130 per 1 lakh live births in 2014-2016 to 122 per 1 lakh live births in 2015-2017.
- As per the WHO maternal death is the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management but not from accidental or incidental causes.
- The major complications that account for nearly 75% of all maternal deaths are: severe bleeding, infections (usually after child birth), high blood pressure during pregnancy, complications from delivery and unsafe abortion.
- The WHO says the **MMR dropped by 38% worldwide between 2000 and 2017**. However, an estimated 810 women died every day in 2017 from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth.
- In India, from 2015 to 2017 **shows 68% of deaths were among women in the age group of 20-29**.
- Nearly 4% of deaths were in the age group of 15 to 19 which highlights the problem of early marriages and teenage pregnancies in India.

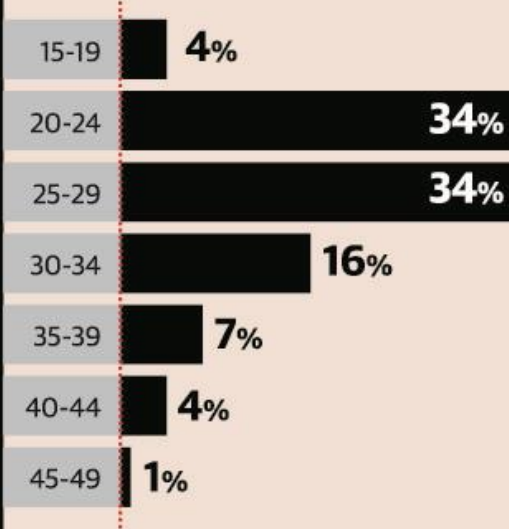
Do You Know?

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- India is now committed to ensuring that not a single mother or newborn dies due to a preventable cause and move towards zero preventable maternal and newborn deaths through the recently launched **Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan Initiative (SUMAN)**.
- The WHO had last year lauded India's progress in reducing the MMR, saying the progress puts the country on track towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target of an MMR below 70 by 2030.



Startling figures

Age-wise distribution of maternal deaths (2015-2017)



WHAT IS MATERNAL DEATH?

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

WHERE DO MATERNAL DEATHS OCCUR?

The high number of maternal deaths in some areas of the world reflects inequalities in access to quality health services and highlights the gap between rich and poor. The MMR in low income countries in 2017 is 462 per one lakh live births versus 11 per one lakh live births in high income countries.

WHY DO WOMEN DIE?

Women die as a result of complications during and following pregnancy and childbirth. Most of these complications develop during pregnancy and most are preventable or treatable.

Other complications may exist before pregnancy but are worsened during pregnancy, especially if not managed as part of the woman's care.

The major complications that account for nearly 75% of all maternal deaths are:

Severe bleeding (mostly bleeding after childbirth), infections (usually after childbirth), high blood pressure during pregnancy (pre-eclampsia and eclampsia), complications from delivery, and unsafe abortion.

Factors that prevent women from receiving or seeking care during pregnancy and childbirth



- Poverty ■ Distance to facilities
- Lack of information ■ Inadequate and poor quality services
- Cultural beliefs and practices

(SOURCE: WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION)

Anaemia

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II – Health

In News

- Anaemia among men in India is an important public health problem with State-level prevalence in men varying from 9.2% in Manipur to 32.9% in Bihar
- Anaemia a condition in which there is a deficiency of red cells or of haemoglobin in the blood. This leads to **reduced oxygen flow to the body's organs**. Symptoms may include fatigue, skin pallor, shortness of breath, light-headedness, dizziness or a fast heartbeat
- This finding were revealed in a study titled 'Anaemia among men in India: A nationally representative cross-sectional study' published in Lancet Global Health.
- The study is aimed to determine the national prevalence of anaemia among men in India; variation in prevalence of anaemia across States by socio-demographic characteristics; whether these geographical and socio-demographic variations are similar to that among women etc.
- The study will help to inform whether anaemia reduction efforts for men should be coupled with existing efforts for women.
- An estimated 21.7% of men with any degree of anaemia had moderate or severe anaemia compared with 53.2% of women with any anaemia.

Thalassemia

- It is a blood disorder in which the body makes an abnormal form or inadequate amount of hemoglobin.
- Thalassemia is caused by **mutations in the DNA of cells** that make hemoglobin — the substance in your red blood cells that carries oxygen throughout your body. The mutations associated with thalassemia are **passed from parents to children**.
- This causes anemia. With anemia, the blood doesn't have enough red blood cells to carry oxygen to your tissues — leaving the person fatigued.

Cancer Care facilities

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II – Health

In News

- India's cancer care infrastructure is "highly inadequate" and forces a majority of patients to travel "thousands of kilometres" for treatment
- The "systematic failure" to address the needs of patients contributes to a 20% higher mortality among Indian cancer patients than in countries with a "high" Human Development Index, said a report by a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science, Technology and Environment.
- Mortality to incidence ratio of 0.68 in India is higher than that in very high human development index (HDI) countries (0.38) and high HDI countries (0.57).

- The committee was constituted to examine an expanded role for the Department of Atomic Energy, through the Tata Memorial Centre (TMC), to address India's rising cancer burden.
- The committee recommended a 'Hub and Spoke Model' (already in practice in Punjab) proposed by the TMC to better reach out to cancer patients nationally.

Do You Know?

- The incidence, or the number of newly diagnosed cases of cancer annually, is about 16 lakh in India.
- The disease **kills 8 lakh people annually** in India.
- India's cancer burden is expected to increase from an estimated 13 lakh cases in 2018 to about 17 lakh in 2035, and cancer deaths are expected to rise from 8.8 lakh in 2018 to 13 lakh in 2035.
- Two-thirds of India's cancer patients were treated in the private sector and this **forced 6 crore Indians below the poverty line** because of "catastrophic healthcare related expenditure on cancer".

Pneumonia, diarrhoea still a big threat

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II – Health

In News

- The 10th Pneumonia and Diarrhoea Progress Report was released by the International Vaccine Access Center (IVAC) at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
- This report analyses how effectively countries are delivering 10 key interventions, including breastfeeding, vaccination, access to care, use of antibiotics, ORS, and zinc supplementation.
- In India, Pneumonia killed more than 1.27 lakh children under five- accounting for 14% of child deaths.
- India's has high breastfeeding rate, at 55%, however, the proportion of children receiving important treatments remains below targets. Half of the children with diarrhoea receive ORS (oral rehydration solution) and 20% receive zinc supplementation — to help protect against, prevent and treat pneumonia and diarrhoea
- Rollout of rotavirus vaccines, beginning in 2016, and the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine, beginning in 2017, helped India's improve on these parameters.
- In 2017, the highest risk factors for child pneumonia death in India were: 53% caused by child wasting, 27% by outdoor air pollution, and 22% caused by indoor air pollution from solid fuels.
- Globally, pneumonia and diarrhoea led to nearly one of every four deaths in children under five years of age in 2017.

Diabetes

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II – Health

In News

- World Diabetes Day is the primary global awareness campaign focusing on diabetes mellitus and is held on 14 November each year
- There are currently more than 420 million diabetic adults in the world, up from 180 million in 1980, WHO statistics show. This number could swell to 629 million by 2045
- Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death and a major cause of debilitating complications like heart attacks, stroke, kidney failure, blindness and lower limb amputations.
- The disease is divided into two types.
 - There is no known way to prevent type one, which occurs when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin, the hormone that regulates blood sugar levels.
 - Most people living with diabetes have type 2, which is associated with obesity and other lifestyle factors and emerges in adults and increasingly among children.
- About 65 million people with type 2 diabetes need insulin, but only half of them are able to access it, **largely due to high prices**. All people with type 1 diabetes need insulin to survive.
- WHO has launched **pre-qualification initiative for insulin** that would cut prices and dramatically increase insulin access for diabetics
- The initiative involves the evaluation of insulin developed by manufacturers to ensure their quality, safety, efficacy and affordability.
- Today, three companies control most of the global insulin market, and they have control over the price setting. Pre-qualifying products from additional companies will hopefully help to level the playing field and ensure a steadier supply of quality insulin in all countries

Diabetes Atlas

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II – Health

In News

- The ninth edition of the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) Diabetes Atlas was released on the occasion of International Diabetes Day (Nov 14th)
- The worldwide prevalence of diabetes was estimated **at 463 million** in the age group of 20-79 years, or in other words, one in 11 adults. 10% of global health expenditure is spent on diabetes (USD 760 billion)
- One in six people with diabetes in the world is from India
- **India is at number two** (& will continue till 2045) with an estimated 77 million diabetics, whereas China leads the list with over 116 million diabetics.
- The IDF has stressed the urgency to develop and implement multi-sectoral strategies to combat the growing epidemic with increased focus **on prevention**.

- In addition to people with diabetes, India also has a **huge burden of pre-diabetics**. If the authorities target them with information on the right lifestyle options to help keep blood sugar, lipids and blood pressure under control, India can prevent at least a third from developing diabetes.

About International Diabetes Federation (IDF)

- It is an umbrella organization of over 240 national diabetes associations in 168 countries and territories
- The Federation's activities aim to influence policy, increase public awareness and encourage health improvement, promote the exchange of high-quality information about diabetes, and provide education for people with diabetes and their healthcare providers.
- IDF is associated with the Department of Public Information of the United Nations and is in official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO).

TOBACCO BOARD OF INDIA

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II – Health

In News

- Tobacco Board of India has been awarded the Golden Leaf Award in the Most Impressive Public Service Initiative category for the year 2019, for its efforts to initiate various sustainability (green) initiatives in Flue-Cured Virginia (FCV) tobacco cultivation in India
- The Golden Leaf Awards were created to recognize professional excellence and dedication in the tobacco industry by **Tobacco Reporter, an international magazine** in the year 2006.
- Awards are granted on an annual basis to companies that have achieved outstanding performance in five categories – most impressive public service initiative, most promising new product introduction, most exciting newcomer to the industry, most outstanding service to the industry and the BMJ most committed to quality award.

About Tobacco Board of India

- Tobacco Board is a **statutory body** established under Tobacco Board Act of 1975 and is **headquartered in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh**.
 - The board functions under the overall guidance of Ministry of Commerce & Industry.
 - The main functions of the Board include regulating the production and curing of Virginia tobacco in India, improving the yields and quality of tobacco, facilitating sale of tobacco through e-auctions, undertaking various grower welfare measures and export promotion of tobacco.
 - India stands 3rd in production of tobacco and in exports. Brazil and USA are ahead of India.
 - Tobacco and tobacco products earn approx Rs.20,000 Cr. to the national exchequer by way of excise duty, and approx.Rs.5000 Cr. by way of foreign exchange every year.
-

Maternity scheme performance

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II – Health

In News

- Pradhan MantriMatruVandanaYojana (PMMVY)scheme benefitted just 31% eligible mothers, say researchers who extrapolated data obtained under RTI
- PMMVY is a vital programme to support lactating mothers and pregnant women by compensating them for loss of wages during their pregnancy.
- The PMMVY is targeted only at women delivering their first child. A cash amount of ₹6,000 is transferred to the bank account of the beneficiary in three instalments upon meeting certain conditions including early registration of pregnancy, having at least one ante-natal check-up and registration of child birth.
- Given the stipulated conditions, the scheme brings under its ambit 23% of all births and pays full benefits to a mere 14% of all births, which was at 270.5 lakh for 2017
- Several factors impeded proper implementation of the programme that aims to fight malnutrition among children. These include an application form of about 23 pages, a slew of documents such as mother-child protection card, Aadhaar card, husband's Aadhaar card and bank passbook aside from linking their bank accounts with Aadhaar.

Surrogacy Bill

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II- Health

- The Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2019, was referred to a select committee of the Upper House , after several MPs raised concerns over several provisions of the legislation, including making it mandatory for a surrogate to be a close relative.

Background:

- It provides for **constitution of surrogacy boards** at the national as well as state levels to ensure effective regulation.
- It **seeks to allow ethical altruistic surrogacy** to the intending infertile Indian married couple between the age of 23-50 years for female and 26-55 years for male.
- **Only Indian couples** who have been **legally married for at least 5 years** would be allowed to opt for surrogacy.
- It makes it mandatory for the couple to **obtain a certificate of essentiality** and also a **certificate of eligibility** before going ahead with surrogacy.
- It also provides that intending couples should not abandon the child born out of surrogacy under any condition.
- It also stipulates a separate eligibility criterion for the surrogate mother.
 - The surrogate must be a close relative of the intending couple and be a married woman having a child of her own.
 - She should be between the age of 25-35 years, not have been surrogate earlier and must be certifiably mentally and physically fit.

- On the legal status of a surrogate child, the Bill states that any child born out of a surrogacy procedure shall be the biological child of the intending couple.
 - The new born child shall be entitled to all rights and privileges that are available to a natural child.
- The Bill also **seeks to regulate functioning of surrogacy clinics**. All surrogacy clinics in the country need to be registered by the appropriate authority in order to undertake surrogacy or its related procedures.
- The Bill provides for various safeguards for surrogate mothers. One of them is **insurance coverage** for sometime to cover not only the period of pregnancy but after that also.
- It also specifies that no sex selection can be done when it comes to surrogacy.

[NSO survey debunks Swachh Bharat ODF claims](#)

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II – Sanitation

In News

- In the first week of October 2018, the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Grameen) said 25 States and Union Territories had been declared ODF, while toilet access across the country touched 95%. In reality, the NSO has said 28.7% of rural households had no toilet access at the time.
- The 71% access to toilets was still a significant improvement over the situation during the last survey period in 2012, when only 40% of the rural households had access to toilets.
- The NSO survey was carried out between July and December 2018, with a reference date of October 1.
- Large States which had been declared ODF — that is, 100% access to toilets and 100% usage — even before the survey began included Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan.
- According to the NSO, almost 42% of the rural households in Jharkhand had no access to a toilet at that time. In Tamil Nadu, the gap was 37%, followed by 34% in Rajasthan.
- In Gujarat, which was one of the earliest States declared ODF, back in October 2017, almost a quarter of all rural households had no toilet access, the NSO data showed.

Possible reason for divergence in survey results:

- There may be respondent bias in the reporting of access to latrine as question on benefits received by the households from government schemes was asked prior to the question on access of households to latrine.

Do You Know?

- However, 95% of people with access to toilets in rural India used them regularly, indicating that the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan's efforts to change behaviour had borne fruit.

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

Merger of BSNL and MTNL

Context:

- The government decided to merge BSNL and MTNL
- In order to revive loss-making telecom PSUs BSNL and MTNL
- Revival package includes raising sovereign bonds, monetising assets and voluntary retirement scheme (VRS) for employees, MTNL will be merged with BSNL.
- Government wants to make the two state-owned telecom companies more competitive by putting in Rs 29,937 crore.

Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL):

- State-owned telecommunications company headquartered in New Delhi.
- Incorporated on 1 October 2000
- BSNL is the fourth largest mobile telephony provider in India
- BSNL is India's oldest communication service provider and its history can be traced back to the British era.
- After the bifurcation of post and Telegraph department in 1980s, the creation of Department of Telecom by 1990s eventually led to the emergence of the State owned telegraph and telephone company BSNL.
- BSNL shut down telegraph services on 15 July 2013.

Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL):

- MTNL is a state-owned telecommunications service provider in the metro cities of Mumbai and New Delhi in India and in Mauritius in Africa.
- The company had a monopoly in Mumbai and New Delhi until 1992
- "Transparency makes us different" is the motto of the company
- The Government of India currently holds 57% stock in the company
- The company's shares are listed on Bombay Stock Exchange, London Stock Exchange and New York Stock Exchange.
- As of January 2019, it has 6.71 million subscribers

Revival reasons:

- Telecom sector is facing financial stress due to stiff competition and reduction in tariffs.
- The competition in the mobile segment, high employee costs and absence of 4G services in the data-centric telecom market has eroded the competitive strength of BSNL and MTNL.

Financial position of BSNL & MTNL:

- Losses continuously since 2009-10.
- BSNL has 1.65 lakh employees across India, and MTNL has 22,000.
- BSNL's provisional loss was Rs 4,859 crore in 2015-16, Rs 4,793 crore in 2016-17, Rs 7,993 crore in 2017-18.
- The loss is estimated to grow to Rs 14,202 crore in 2018-19.

Way forward:

- The Cabinet proposal clears the way for the administrative allotment of spectrum for 4G services to BSNL and MTNL, to enable them to provide broadband and other data services.
- The telecom companies will be able to deliver 4G services and compete in the market.

Connecting the dots:

- Will merging BSNL and MTNL pull the two companies out of their problems? Analyse.

Telecom sector and (Adjusted gross revenue) AGR

Context:

- On October 24, the Supreme Court upheld the Department of Telecom (DoT)'s interpretation of "adjusted gross revenue" (AGR), which came as a huge blow to telecom service providers.
- Following the order, the telcos are now staring at dues of an estimated Rs 1.4 lakh crore, which needs to be paid to the government within three months.
- Most industry players and analysts have argued that the payout of the huge amount could be the finishing touch for the already distressed sector.

Adjusted Gross Revenue AGR:

- Adjusted Gross Revenue refers to gross income adjusted for standard deductions.
- In India, AGR has specifically become important for telecom companies since the payment made to the government is on the basis of the AGR.

Crux:

- The definition of AGR has been under litigation for 14 years.
- The telecom companies currently argue that AGR should include income only from telecom operations and not include income from other activities such as rent, sale etc.
- As per DoT, the charges are calculated based on all revenues earned by a telco – including non-telecom related sources such as deposit interests and asset sales.
- Telcos, on their part, insist that AGR should comprise only the revenues generated from telecom services.
- Currently, telecom operators pay 8% of the AGR as licence fee, while spectrum usage charges (SUC) vary between 3-5% of AGR.

Current status:

- The total amount to the government is to be paid by about 15 operators.
- 10 of them have either closed operations or are undergoing insolvency proceedings in the last 14 years.
- So the government is unlikely to recover the entire amount of dues owed to it.

Telecom stress:

- The telecom industry is under a debt of over Rs 4 lakh crore
- Seeking a relief package from the government.

Way forward:

- The government recently announced setting up of a Committee of Secretaries to examine the financial stress in the sector, and recommend measures to mitigate it.

- The Committee of Secretaries, headed by Cabinet Secretary **Rajiv Gauba**, will have Secretaries of Ministries of Finance, Telecommunication and Law, among others as members and look at “all aspects” of the financial stress.
- It will also consider some of the long-standing demands of the industry, including granting a delay in payment of dues for spectrum for the next two financial years (2020-21 and 2021-22).
- The committee will also look at demand of a reduction in the SUC and universal service obligation fund levy.

What if no relief?

- If the government does not announce any relief measures for the sector, Vodafone Idea would be in a “precarious situation”, adding that there is a strong possibility that the Indian telecom market could eventually have only two private players.

Connecting the dots:

- Supreme Court order backing the Department of Telecom’s definition of adjusted gross revenue hit the telcos. Critically Analyse

SC’s judgment in Essar Steel insolvency case

Context:

- Essar Steel owes Rs 54,547 crore to its creditors — **financial creditors and operational creditors combined**.
- The company had been put on the block under IBC to recover the unpaid dues.
- The Ahmedabad-bench of National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) had on March 8 okayed the bid submitted by ArcelorMittal, led by steel tycoon Lakshmi Mittal, for the takeover of Essar Steel.
- The operational creditors had opposed the bid on the basis that they were getting notional payment, while 92.5 per cent of the financial creditors’ dues were being paid.
- This case being one of India’s most high-profile insolvency cases, any order on Essar Steel is likely to have ramifications for similar resolution schemes.

SC judgement:

- The committee of creditors (CoC) will have a final say in the resolution plans under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).
- The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) and National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) cannot interfere with the commercial decisions taken by the CoC.

“The law talks of “equitable” and not “equal” treatment of operational creditors. Fair and equitable dealing of operational creditors’ rights involves the resolution plan stating as to how it has dealt with the interests of operational creditors, which is not the same thing as saying that they must be paid the same amount of their debt proportionately” SC



Do you know?

Financial creditors are those who provide long-term capital in the form of loans.

Operational creditors are usually the suppliers of raw materials, etc.

NCLT order:

- The NCLAT, in its order, said financial creditors would get 60.7 per cent of their admitted claims of Rs 49,473 crore, about the same as operational creditors.
- The operational creditors with admitted claim amount of less than Rs 1 crore would get 100 per cent, while above Rs 1 crore would get 60.26 per cent and workmen and employees would get 100 per cent.
- The tribunal had said that the CoC will have no role in the distribution of Rs 42,000 crore and allowed claims of the operational creditors.

Crux:

- A consortium of banks led by the SBI had moved the Supreme Court against a National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) order in the case.
- The NCLAT had held that Essar Steel's operational creditors be treated on par with financial creditors when settling the claims.
- Essar Steel's Committee of Creditors (CoC) had sought the quashing of NCLAT's July 4 order that approved the Rs 42,000-crore bid for the debt-laden firm by ArcelorMittal.
- This was to be divided between the financial creditors who are owed Rs 30,030 crore and the operational creditors who are owed Rs 11,969 crore.

Advantages for Bank :

- Banks are expected to recover 90 per cent of their exposure to the Essar Steel account.
- Compares with only 60 per cent they would have recovered earlier as per the order of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal

Conclusion:

- The Court order and government move on financial service providers — bode well for the banks battling high NPAs.
- While banks will recover money resolution process in large accounts, likely stress from NBFC and telecom accounts will remain a drag.

Connecting the dots:

- The Supreme Court's order is being seen as bringing the rigour and momentum back into the IBC as an effective tool to deal with stressed assets in the economy. Analyse

SWACHH – NIRMAL TAT ABHIYAAN

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III –Environment

In News

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) is undertaking a mass **cleanliness-cum-awareness drive** in 50 identified beaches under the “Swachh – Nirmal Tat Abhiyaan”, from 11th -17th November, 2019.
- Objective is to make beaches clean and create awareness amongst about the importance of coastal ecosystems.
- Environment Education Division of the Ministry and Society of Integrated Coastal Management (SICOM) under the aegis of MoEF&CC will be responsible for the overall coordination for the drive in 50 beaches.
- The cleaning drives in all beaches are being undertaken, involving school/college students of Eco-clubs, district administration, institutions, volunteers, local communities and other stakeholders.
- Collected waste will be processed as per extant Waste Management Rules, 2016.
- The identified beaches are in 10 coastal States/Union Territories (UTs) namely Gujarat, Daman & Diu, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Andhra Pradesh, and Odisha.

JAL JEEVAN MISSION (JJM)

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II – Governance

In News

- The Union Jal Shakti Minister speaking at the regional review of Jal Jeevan Mission in Southern States at Hyderabad, said that the Centre would give 50 per cent of funds for Jal Jeevan Mission and it would be implemented with community participation
- The Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) aims at providing Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs) in rural areas by 2024.
- 14.60 crores rural households of the country will be provided with FHTCs.
- The provisional cost estimate for this mission is Rs 3.60 lakh Crores.
- Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation is the implementing Department for the mission.
- This Mission will also focus on integrated demand and supply side management of water at the local level, including creation of local infrastructure for source sustainability like rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge and management of household wastewater for reuse in agriculture.
- The Mission will converge with other Central and State Government Schemes to achieve its objectives of sustainable water supply management across the country.


- Besides using funds available under various Schemes, the Government will also explore possibility of using additional funds available under the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) for this purpose.

Forest Act of 1927

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II – Governance

In News

- The Union Environment Ministry withdrew a draft amendment that proposed updates to the Indian Forest Act, 1927.
- Some of the contentious issues in the proposed amendments to the act are:
 - Forest officers can issue search warrants, enter and investigate land within their jurisdiction
 - Forest officers will get indemnity for using arms to prevent forest-related offences
 - Forest officials will get powers to remove tribals from areas earmarked for conservation
 - It will allow government to open any patch of forest it deems fit for commercial operations
 - Imposition of forest development cess of up to 10% of the assessed value of mining products removed from forests, and water used for irrigation or in industries. This amount would be deposited in a special fund and used exclusively for reforestation and forest protection measures
- These proposed provision drew flak from activists, tribal welfare organisations as well as from State governments which led Central government to drop the proposal.




"SUPER 30"

**SCHOLARSHIP MOCK TEST FOR
IASBABA'S PRELIMS EXCLUSIVE PROGRAM (PEP) 2020**
22nd December 2019 (Sunday)

**TOP 10 (5 from ONLINE & 5 from OFFLINE) will get 100% FREE,
Remaining 20 (10 from OFFLINE & 10 From ONLINE) will get 50% Discount !!
Top 30 rankers (name & marks) will be announced on the website.**

- The Test will be held BOTH OFFLINE and ONLINE mode.
- The Test will be of **OBJECTIVE** type only consisting of 100 MCQs (200Marks)

<p>For OFFLINE ONLY:</p> <p>Date: 22nd December 2019 (Sunday) Timings: 11 am – 1 pm (200 Marks, 2 hours) BENGALURU CENTRE: Chandra Layout Centre DELHI CENTRE: Landmark: CROMA Store</p>	<p>For ONLINE ONLY:</p> <p>Date: 22nd December 2019 (Sunday) Timings: Test can be taken anytime between 11 am – 2 pm (200 Marks, 1 hr Test)</p>
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INTERNATIONAL

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership

Context:

- Deadline approaches for the negotiations on the final agreement under the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) as the RCEP countries are expected to finalise in November 2019
- The final ministerial meeting prior to that concluded recently, but with no final agreement in place.
- The Leaders Summit, in which Prime Minister Narendra Modi is taking part, will to be held on November 4 in Bangkok, Thailand.



Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP):

- The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a proposed free trade agreement (FTA) between the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines,

Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam) and its six FTA partners (China, Japan, India, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand).

- RCEP negotiations started in November 2012 at the ASEAN Summit in Cambodia.
- RCEP member states accounted for a population of 3.5 billion people with a total (GDP) of \$49.5 trillion, approximately 39 percent of the world's GDP
- RCEP will be the world's largest economic bloc.

Potential benefits:

- Brings stability to trade relations
- Open up markets of each of the partner countries to the others

Disadvantages:

- At a time when the U.S. and China are involved in a trade war, a trade grouping with China would mean that the other countries, including India, would be forced to take China's side against the U.S.
- US and India are currently in talks on a bilateral trade deal, which could be put at risk

India's issues with RCEP:

- RCEP would give China greater access to India markets.
- Cheap imports from China have already been impacting India's domestic industry
- India, under the agreement may reduce duties on 80% of items imported from China.
- Under this agreement, India would have to cut duties on 86% of imports from Australia and New Zealand
- India would have to cut duties on 90% for products from ASEAN, Japan and South Korea.
- There is the fear that companies might be forced to transfer huge royalty sums to foreign partners, instead of paying dividends to Indian shareholders.
- India would not be able to pursue its data localisation plans.

Way forward:

- India should make clear its stance and stick to it. If it is joining, it should say so and reassure other countries, which would possibly reduce friction during negotiations.
- If India is not going to join the group, experts say it should stick to the decision and not change its mind later.

Connecting the dots:

- RCEP will be the world's largest economic bloc, covering nearly half of the global economy. Analyse

India refuses to join RCEP

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II – International Affairs

In News

- Seven years after India joined negotiations for the 16-nation ASEAN (Association for South East Asian Nations)-led RCEP India dropped out of the agreement, citing its negative effects on "farmers, MSMEs and the dairy sector".
- RCEP is a proposed free trade agreement (FTA) between ASEAN and its six FTA partners – China, Japan, India, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

- **Ten member states of ASEAN are** Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam
- Without India, RCEP accounts for nearly 1/3rd of global GDP. But they have less than a third of the population.
- Why India opted out?
 - The deal requires the gradual elimination of tariffs which may flood Indian markets with Chinese goods and agricultural produce from Oceania, harming local producers
 - Lack of access to Indian services- allowing Indian labour mobility to other countries for services – in the RCEP countries (Services is India's strong area and has huge potential to tap into RCEP market)
- Can India join later?
 - Yes, if the issues India has with the deal are resolved

Context:

- India decided to hold the signing off of Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) until “significant outstanding issues” were resolved, when all other 15 countries involved in the negotiations stated that they were ready to sign the mega trade deal in 2020.

PM Narendra Modi's statement:

“When I measure the RCEP Agreement with respect to the interests of all Indians, I do not get a positive answer. Therefore, neither the Talisman of Gandhiji nor my own conscience permit me to join RCEP,” .

Reasons for not joining:

- Unsatisfactory negotiations pertaining to India's trade with China — India has an over \$50 billion trade deficit
- “Inadequate” protection against surges in imports.
- Industry has voiced fears that cheaper products from China would “flood” the market.
- India has not received any assurances on its demand for more market access,
- India's concerns over non-tariff barriers is not addressed
- A “possible circumvention” of rules of origin, the criteria used to determine the national source of a product were not addressed which allow countries like China to pump in more products.
- India has pushed for other countries to allow greater movement of labour and services for a long, which is not addressed
- Concerns over unsustainable trade deficits is also not addressed.
- India already has, bilateral FTAs with most RCEP nations, but it has recorded trade deficits with these countries
- Domestic industries like dairy industry was expected to face stiff competition from Australia and New Zealand.

Way forward:

- An auto-trigger mechanism that would allow India to raise tariffs on products in instances where imports cross a certain threshold.
- Lowering and eliminating tariffs on several products from the India which It has expressed
- Opening the vast Indian market must be matched by openings in some areas where our businesses can also benefit
- India to safeguard the interests of its domestic industry suggested measures like seeking a 2014 base year for tariff reductions instead of 2013, Using a base year before 2014 would mean a drastic drop in the import duties on these products. This measure must be accepted by RCEP

RCEP's Statement:

"All RCEP Participating Countries will work together to resolve these outstanding issues in a mutually satisfactory way. India's final decision will depend on satisfactory resolution of these issues," the joint statement by RCEP members said.

Connecting the dots :

- India believes that the RCEP trade deal doesn't provide adequate protection against possible surges of imported goods. Justify.

China – India & RCEP:

- At a time of escalating Sino-U.S. trade tensions, China was keen to see a successful conclusion of the RCEP summit and had been vigorously pushing for that.
- This is where the problem for India lay as well.
- India's demands at the RCEP negotiations included shifting the base year for tariff cuts from 2014 to 2019
- Avoiding a sudden surge in imports from China by including a large number of items in an auto-trigger mechanism
- Calling for stricter rules of origin to prevent dumping from China
- A better deal in services.
- The China factor, , was key to India's assessment of costs and benefits.
- China's clout has been growing in the region
- ASEAN member states have tried to keep the U.S. engaged in the region as well. But with the Trump administration giving mixed signals about US's commitment towards the region, ASEAN has been looking at India with a renewed sense of anticipation.

Concerns:

- India's decision to keep away from the RCEP will, cause concerns about its larger game plan vis-a-vis the region.
- India's entire Indo-Pacific strategy might be open to question if steps are not taken to restore India's profile in the region
- China set to dominate the Indo-Pacific, which may not be good news for the region and India.

Way forward:

- India will have to prepare itself more fully to take advantage of such pacts.

- Domestic reforms will be the need of the hour.
- China's rise has to be tackled both politically and economically.

Conclusion:

- India needs a strategy that brings together the economic and political aspects of its strategic thinking at this time where global economy is in challenge

Connecting the dots:

- Economic isolation is not an option for India and It must move towards bilateral trade pacts. Analyse.

A victory for the dairy sector

Context:

- India's withdrawal from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is considered as a major victory for the farmer's organisations, trade unions, MSME organisations and civil society groups, which had protested against the free trade agreement.
- RCEP would have proven suicidal for India's dairy sector.
- India's average bound tariff for dairy products is about 63.8% while its average applied tariff is 34.8%. Joining RCEP would have bound India to reduce that level to zero within the next 15 years

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- RCEP will be the world's largest economic bloc.

Global Milk Trade scenario

- Developed countries account for 79% of the total world export of milk. Major players are the U.S., the EU, Australia and New Zealand.
- A country like **New Zealand exports 93% of its milk production.**
- On the other hand, developing countries account for 80% of the world's total milk imports.
- Though India is self-sufficient in milk production, China imports about 30% of its milk requirement.
- About 51% of the global trade of milk, 45% of the global trade of skimmed milk powder (SMP), 38% of the global trade of butter oil, 35% of the global trade of cheese takes place in the RCEP region. Thus, some of the major players in the global milk trade are in the RCEP region.

Why Australia and New Zealand have deep interest in RCEP agreement?

- They were deprived of the lucrative markets in the U.S. after the demise of the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), have had a deep interest in the RCEP agreement.
- Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) was the proposed trade deal among the 12 Pacific Rim nations – Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States and Vietnam.
- However, US withdrew from the deal in Jan 2017.

India's dairy Sector – A self-sufficient sector

- India's dairy sector provides livelihood to about 70 million households. A key feature of India's dairy sector is the predominance of **small producers**.
- In 2017, if the average herd size in a dairy farm was 191 in the U.S., 355 in Oceania, 148 in the U.K. and 160 in Denmark, it was just 2 in India
- Yet, due to Operation Flood after the 1960s, India's contribution to world milk production rose from 5% in 1970 to 20% in 2018.
- As a result, India does not import or export milk in any significant quantity.
- In 2033, India's milk production would rise to 330 MMT while its milk demand would be 292 MMT. Thus, India is likely to be a milk-surplus country by 2033

RCEP and possible impact on India's dairy sector

- In recent years, private players particularly multi-national firms are opening shops in India. Swiss firm Nestlé was the largest private purchaser of milk in India in 2019. The French milk firm Lactalis entered India in 2014 and has taken over Tirumala Milk Products in Hyderabad, Anik Industries in Indore, and Prabhat Dairy.
- At present, these firms are forced to buy milk from Indian farmers. The reason is that the applied tariff for dairy products in India is about 35%.
- The bound tariff would have fallen to zero if the RCEP had come into effect. It would have then been far more profitable for firms to import milk from New Zealand or Australia rather than buy it from Indian farmers.
- The unit cost of milk production is relatively low in countries like New Zealand because of extensive grazing lands (which reduce feed costs), mechanised operations and the advantages of economies of large-scale production, and the high productivity of milch animals
- According to estimations made by Amul, if free imports of skimmed milk powder from New Zealand are permitted, the average price for milk received by an Indian dairy farmer would fall to ₹19/l (presently it is ₹30/l).
- Also livelihoods of people would be impacted. There are 70 million households dependent on dairy in India, the corresponding number is just 10,000 in New Zealand and 6,300 in Australia.

Way forward:

- India needs to reduce the unit cost of milk production improved feeds, mechanised operations and increasing the productivity of milch animals.
- India should ensure that its concerns are addressed if it wants to join RCEP in future, by providing adequate room for India government to protect Indian farmers.

Connecting the dots:

- Joining RCEP would have had high socio-economic costs on Indian dairy farmers. Elaborate.

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

Context:

- India decided to hold the signing off of Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) until “significant outstanding issues” were resolved, when all other 15 countries involved in the negotiations stated that they were ready to sign the mega trade deal in 2020.

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Purpose:

- The purpose of RCEP is to create an “integrated market” spanning all 16 countries, making it easier for products and services of each of these countries to be available across this region.
- ASEAN says the deal will provide “a framework aimed at lowering trade barriers and securing improved market access for goods and services for businesses in the region”.
- The negotiations are focussed on areas like trade in goods and services, investment, economic and technical cooperation, intellectual property, competition, dispute settlement, e-commerce, and small and medium enterprises.

Trade deficits :

- India runs large trade deficits with at least 11 of the 15 RCEP members
- China accounts for \$53 billion of India's \$105 billion trade deficit with these.

Reasons for not joining:

- Unsatisfactory negotiations pertaining to India's trade with China — India has an over \$50 billion trade deficit
- “Inadequate” protection against surges in imports.
- Industry has voiced fears that cheaper products from China would “flood” the market.
- India has not received any assurances on its demand for more market access,
- India's concerns over non-tariff barriers is not addressed
- A “possible circumvention” of rules of origin ,the criteria used to determine the national source of a product were not addressed which allow countries like China to pump in more products.
- India has pushed for other countries to allow greater movement of labour and services for a long , which is not addressed
- Concerns over unsustainable trade deficits is also not addressed.

- India already have , bilateral FTAs with most RCEP nations, but it has recorded trade deficits with these countries
- Domestic industries like dairy industry was expected to face stiff competition from Australia and New Zealand.

Milk issue of India:

- Milk is the India's largest "crop".
- In 2018-19, the estimated production of milk, at 187.75 million tonnes (mt).
- The value of milk output (Rs 5,63,250 crore at an average farm-gate rate of Rs 30/kg)
- Milk is a source of liquidity for farmers, as it is sold daily and generates cash to take care of routine household expenses, unlike other crops that are marketed only once or twice a year.

Concern:

- Milk matters equally to consumers in India, because it meets the animal protein/fat requirements of a significant portion of the population that is vegetarian.
- As incomes rise, the demand for milk goes up even more.
- If dairy products are covered under an RCEP deal, India may have to allow members of the bloc greater access to its market, whether through phased duty reductions or more liberal tariff rate quotas (TRQs).
- There is an already existing TRQ for milk powder, which enables import of up to 10,000 tonnes per year at 15% customs duty, and quantities beyond that at the regular rate of 60%.
- The Indian dairy industry is resisting any enhanced TRQs or other import concessions, even if extended only to RCEP countries, as opposed to the US or European Union.

Way forward:

- An auto-trigger mechanism that would allow India to raise tariffs on products in instances where imports cross a certain threshold.
- Lowering and eliminating tariffs on several products from the India which It has expressed
- Opening the vast Indian market must be matched by openings in some areas where our businesses can also benefit
- India to safeguard the interests of its domestic industry suggested measures like seeking a 2014 base year for tariff reductions instead of 2013, Using a base year before 2014 would mean a drastic drop in the import duties on these products. This measure must be accepted by RCEP

Conclusion:

- India needs a strategy that brings together the economic and political aspects of its strategic thinking at this time where global economy is in challenge
- RCEP could perhaps end up doing to dairy what the free trade agreement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) did in palm oil, fear many in the industry in India.
- At a time of global uncertainties and challenges to multilateralism and the international economic order, a negative message on RCEP would undermine India's plans for economic growth.

Connecting the dots:

- Economic isolation is not an option for India and It must move towards bilateral trade pacts. Analyse.
- RCEP will be the world's largest economic bloc, covering nearly half of the global economy. Analyse
- India believes that the RCEP trade deal doesn't provide adequate protection against possible surges of imported goods. Justify

One China Policy

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III International

In News

- Vietnam reiterated that it adheres to the one-China policy and expect China to adhere to international law

About One China Policy

- It is a principle whereby China insists Taiwan is an inalienable part of one China to be reunified one day.
- The policy can be traced back to 1949 and the end of the Chinese civil war. The defeated Nationalists, also known as the Kuomintang, retreated to Taiwan and made it their seat of government while the victorious Communists began ruling the mainland as the People's Republic of China. Both sides said they represented all of China.
- Since then China's ruling Communist Party has threatened to use force if Taiwan ever formally declares independence, but it has also pursued a softer diplomatic track with the island in recent years.

Mutual logistics agreement

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

In News

- India and Russia are expected to conclude a mutual logistics agreement and review the setting up of joint ventures for manufacturing spares for Russian defence platforms in India
- The Agreement on Reciprocal Logistics Support (ARLS) was expected to be signed on the sidelines of the Eastern Economic Forum (EEF) in Vladivostok, but was held back.
- A 50-member industry delegation is accompanying Defence Minister to Russia to explore ways to jointly manufacture spares and components with Russian original equipment manufacturers (OEM) under 'Make in India'.
- EEF was established by a decree of the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, in 2015, with the aim of supporting the economic development of Russia's Far East, and to expand international cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region

- For more details on EEF, refer: <https://iasbaba.com/2019/09/all-india-radio-air-ias-upsc-eastern-economic-forum/>

SACEP

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

In News

- The 15th meeting of the Governing Council of South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) is going to be organised in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- SACEP is an inter-governmental organization, established in 1982 by the governments of South Asia. Member countries include Afghanistan , Bangladesh , Bhutan , India , Maldives , Nepal , Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
- The objective is to promote and support protection, management and enhancement of the environment in the region
- SACEP acts as the Secretariat for the South Asian Seas Programme, which comes under the purview of UNEP's Regional Seas Programme.
- India has signed a MoU with SACEP for cooperation on the response to Oil and Chemical Pollution in the South Asian Seas Region.

Protests in Chile and Lebanon

Chile:



Img: https://www.lonelyplanet.com/maps/south-america/chile/map_of_chile.jpg

- Civil protests throughout Chile in response to a raise in the Santiago Metro's subway fare, the increased cost of living, privatisation and inequality prevalent in the country
- The situation escalated as organized bands of protesters rose in rebellion across the city, seizing many stations of the Santiago Metro network
- President of Chile Sebastián Piñera announced a state of emergency
- The protests have been considered the "worst civil unrest" having occurred in Chile since the end of Augusto Pinochet's military dictatorship
- Over a million people took to the streets throughout Chile to protest against President Piñera, demanding his resignation
- Human rights organisations have received several reports of violations conducted against protesters by security forces, including torture, sexual abuse and rape

Causes for protests:

- Rise in public transport fares
- Rising cost of living
- Income inequality
- Privatisation
- Corruption scandals

Goals of protests:

- Reversal of public transport fares
- Reforms in education, healthcare, and pension systems
- Better wages, minimum wage increase
- Resignation of President Sebastián Piñera
- Draft a new constitution

Lebanon:



Img: <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/d4/cf/37/d4cf37fc6b4b8dfae17d654946df8d04.jpg>

- The 2019 Lebanese protests are a series of country-wide protests.

- The protests are motivated by the Lebanese government's failure to find solutions to an economic crisis that has been looming for the past year.

Causes for the protest:

- A reaction against sectarian rule
- Endemic corruption in the public sector,
- Failures from the government to provide basic services such as electricity, water and sanitation.
- Taxes on gasoline, tobacco and online phone calls such as through WhatsApp.

Economic crisis:

- The Lebanese economy has a growth averaging 9.1% between 2007 and 2010
- After 2011 the economy was affected by the Syrian civil war, by a yearly average of 1.7% on the 2011-2018.
- Lebanon is the third-highest indebted country in the world in terms of the ratio of debt-to-GDP.
- Limited the government's ability to make needed investments in infrastructure and other public goods.

Connecting the dots:

- Compare the economic situation in Chile and Lebanon with the current state of economy of India. Elucidate

Capacity-building programme for Afghan diplomats

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains III – International Relations

In News

- Indian and Chinese officials began a course to train diplomats from Afghanistan at the **Foreign Service Institute (FSI)**, New Delhi run by the External Affairs Ministry.
- The two-week intensive programme is designed to give the visiting Afghan diplomats exposure to Indian diplomatic practices and traditions.
- FSI and the China Foreign Affairs University (CFAU) were parties to a BRICS-level MoU to train diplomats
- The joint training of Afghan diplomats is part of the outcome of the **Wuhan Summit** between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping.
- Accordingly, the first joint training programme was held from October 15 to 26 in 2018.
- 179 Afghan diplomats had been trained at the FSI till date, the largest number of diplomats to be trained from any country at the institute.

Bolivia Crisis

Context:

- The President of Bolivia, Evo Morales, has resigned amid turmoil following his disputed re-election last month. He has been in power for nearly 14 years. He left the post after losing the support of the army and the police.

- Bolivia has been rattled by weeks of anti-government protests following the reports of election fraud.
- The Bolivia is a landlocked country located in South America. It is bordered to the north and east by Brazil, to the southeast by Paraguay, to the south by Argentina, to the southwest by Chile, and to the northwest by Peru.
- Alongside Paraguay, it is one of the only two landlocked countries in the Americas



Rise of Evo Morales – Socialist Leader who enjoyed support from within and beyond Bolivia

- He rose to prominence as a labour union leader among coca leaf growers, promoting the rights of Bolivia's Indigenous majority.
- His passionate defence of the farmers and indigenous people led to clash with the country's conservative and overwhelmingly **white political elite**. In 2006, he became Bolivia's first Indigenous president since the country's independence from Spain two centuries ago.

- He quickly moved to empower Indigenous people, redistribute the nation's natural gas wealth and bring infrastructure to poor communities, measures that made him the most popular Bolivian politician in decades
- Unlike his high-spending left-wing allies in **Venezuela and Argentina**, however, Mr. Morales combined redistribution with maintaining a balanced budget and wooing international investors.

Impact of his redistributive Policies

- Benefiting from the **commodity boom in the 2000s**, Mr. Morales transformed Bolivia, one of South America's poorest nations, into one of its most dynamic economies,
- Under his fairly good track record, Bolivia has seen a drop in extreme poverty, from 33% of the population in 2006 to 15% last year. His government also stepped up public investments, opened more schools and health clinics.
- The economy has also seen a steady growth rate (+4%)
- He easily won two re-elections, bringing **political order to Bolivia**, which had suffered chronic instability for decades.

Beginning of authoritarianism

- In 2016, his push to end presidential term limits through a referendum failed. He then said he accepted the verdict.
- But later, a constitutional court lifted the term limits, allowing the President to seek re-election
- Cracks began to appear in his Movement for Socialism party when he sought a fourth consecutive term earlier this year (2019), which was seen as Dictatorship by Morales
- Tensions first flared on the night of the presidential election after the results count was inexplicably stopped for 24 hours. The final result gave Mr Morales slightly more than the 10-percentage-point lead he needed to win outright in the first round of the race
- There were allegations of electoral fraud, which further weakened him and enraged people to protest against the government.

Present Political Vacuum

- Presently, he is in asylum in Mexico and has vowed to fight the "coup".
- According to the Bolivian Constitution, if the President steps down, the Vice-President should take over. The heads of the Senate and chamber of deputies are the other leaders in the hierarchy who could assume acting presidency.
- But in this case, all four officials, all Socialists, have resigned. And it has left a vacuum, which the military could exploit and further plunge the country into chaos.

Way forward:

- Facing protests, Mr. Morales had offered another election. That should have been the way forward.
- A free and fair election being held under the supervision of international electoral monitors would have allowed the Bolivians to choose their legitimate leader

Connecting the dots:

- 21st century Socialist revolution is proving to be a failure in the light of political crisis in Bolivia. Elaborate.

Constitutional crisis in Sri Lanka

Context:

- A constitutional crisis began in Sri Lanka when President Maithripala Sirisena appointed former president and member of parliament Mahinda Rajapaksa as Prime Minister October 2018 before formally dismissing the incumbent Ranil Wickremesinghe, resulting in two concurrent Prime Ministers.
- Wickremesinghe and the United National Party (UNP) viewed the appointment as illegal, and he refused to resign.
- Sirisena's sudden decision instigated "political turmoil in the country", and drew international criticism
- Wickremesinghe, the majority of the parliament, and opposition parties refused to acknowledge his removal and the appointment of Rajapaksa, stating that Sirisena's move was unconstitutional.
- Wickremesinghe claimed that he still commands a majority in parliament and requested that Speaker of the Parliament **Karu Jayasuriya** convene parliament immediately.
- Sirisena ignored all calls and prorogued parliament, delaying its meeting till 16 November.
- After an attempt to form a new cabinet of ministers with Rajapaksa as Prime Minister failed, Sirisena attempted to dissolve parliament.
- The UNP declared the move unconstitutional and subsequently the Supreme Court stayed Sirisena's dissolution until December 2018, when it ruled that the move was unconstitutional and illegal.
- Rajapaksa backed down from claiming the office and Wickremesinghe was once again reinstated, ending the crisis after 7 weeks of political and economic turmoil.

Sri Lanka constitutional crisis

President's party backtracks on earlier pledge to re-open parliament, keeps legislature suspended



President Maithripala Sirisena
fired Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe on Oct 26, suspends parliament Oct 27



Sirisena installs former strongman leader **Mahinda Rajapakse** to replace Wickremesinghe



Ranil Wickremesinghe refuses to vacate the PM's official residence



Parliamentary speaker **Karu Jayasuriya** recognises Wickremesinghe as PM on Oct 28



© AFP

Can we call it a Constitutional crisis?

- Sirisena's decisions are unlikely to pass the test of the courts since the constitution explicitly bars early dissolution of the House unless two-thirds of its members vote for it. However, events are moving at a pace that may make it impossible to restore status quo even if the court overrules the president's decisions. Whatever be the judicial outcome, the ongoing chaos threatens to push Sri Lanka back to **a state of political uncertainty** that it cannot afford. Though it has been a decade since the war in the north ended, there has been limited progress on the resolution of issues that nearly split the country on ethnic lines.
- The sudden developments in Sri Lanka have thrown into uncertainty the few steps that the country finally took this year to address post-war issues of transitional justice and rehabilitation, which it had committed to at the **UN Human Rights Council in 2015**. As President, Rajapaksa had invited UN censure for not doing enough on this front. Instead, after winning the war against the LTTE in 2009, he unleashed a majoritarian triumphalism that dashed all hopes for reconciliation.

Difference between the Constitution of India and Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka, which had a Constitution like India's, changed it to one more like the French Constitution, where the President chooses the Prime Minister who has to command confidence of Parliament. But there is no way to remove the President. The consequences of Sirisena's decision go beyond a mere change of regime; it may lead to a reversal of the structural changes in the polity achieved since 2015.

Conclusion

- South Asia has been the home of religions preaching nonviolence but its politics has been very violent. There have been regional disputes, competing nationhoods as well as communal conflicts.
- India has asked that democratic values and constitutional process be respected. This is due to the fact that further chaos could derail Colombo's slow progress towards rebuilding its economy and healing the wounds of the civil war. After all, a peaceful neighbour is always beneficial for a country like India.

Connecting the dots:

- Dissolution of Sri Lanka's Parliament negates the letter and spirit of constitutional reforms.
Comment

Nationwide protests in Iran

Context

- Nationwide protests broke out recently challenging the Iranian regime.
- Thousands of people took to the streets, similar to the recent protests in Hong Kong, Chile, Lebanon and neighbouring Iraq
- The protesters chanted slogans against the Islamic regime, carried "Death to Khamenei" posters, in a direct challenge to the country's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei

Why protests?

- Government announced increase in the fuel price of up to 200%
- The protests are the first to involve middle-class Iranians since the 2009 Iranian presidential election protests

- Amnesty International reports that at least 106 protesters have been killed

Background:

- Sanctions by the United States and the European Union, coupled with economic mismanagement, have led to a severe economic crisis in Iran in the past few years.
- Inflation is at 40%
- Iran is experiencing one of its hardest years since the 1979 Islamic revolution”.
- Iranian allies in Lebanon and Iraq have also witnessed anti-government protests
- The decision to increase fuel price is seen as an attempt to manage the economic crisis.
- The increase in oil price helps to fund the subsidies of around 60 million Iranians

Oil price in Iran:

- Iran still has the lowest fuel prices in the world.
- But people are reeling under high inflation, joblessness and a collapsing economy , hence led to protests

Crux:

President Donald Trump’s decision last year to pull the U.S. out of the 2015 nuclear deal and reimpose sanctions has dealt a blow to Iran’s economy.

- A quarter of Iran’s youth are unemployed.

IMF:

- Country’s economy is expected to contract by 9.5%
- The currency, the rial, has plunged to record lows against the dollar.

Iran’s Response:

- In recent years, Iran has seen many protests and labour agitations. And the regime’s response has always been typical.
- Iran branded the protesters as counter-revolutionaries and blamed foreign hands.

Conclusion:

- The latest round of protests might die down. But Iran needs a lasting solution to address its revolting underbelly.
- The economic woes have weakened the delicate balance between the regime and its angry youth.

Connecting the dots:

- Iran can’t violently suppress the protesters forever and needs to get the nuclear deal back on track. Justify

[U.S. Senate passes Hong Kong rights Bill](#)

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

In News

- The U.S. Senate unanimously adopted legislation supporting “human rights and democracy” in Hong Kong and threatening to revoke its special economic status.
- The Senate’s Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act would require the U.S. President to annually review the favourable trade status that Washington grants to Hong Kong.
- It also mandates sanctions against Hong Kong and Chinese officials who commit human rights abuses including “extra-judicial rendition”.

- The lawmakers also approved a measure that would ban the sale of tear gas, rubber bullets and other equipment that have been used by security forces to suppress protests for nearly six months.
- China lodged a “strong protest” and demand that the U.S. prevent the Bill from becoming law.
- The pro-democracy movement was ignited in June when millions took to streets in opposition to a now-abandoned attempt to allow extraditions from Hong Kong to the mainland.
- The protests and resulting crackdowns have turned parts of Hong Kong into violent battlegrounds for weeks.

Hong Kong protests

Context:

- The Hong Kong administration led by Carrie Lam suffered a stinging setback on Sunday when voters rejected outright establishment candidates in elections to the city’s 18 district councils.
- Ms. Lam herself had indicated that the vote would be a proxy referendum on the way she handled months-long street protests, saying that a silent majority backed her administration.
- The protesters asked voters to express their support for the agitation through the vote to the district councils, the only authority in the city being selected by full universal suffrage.

Protests:

- The 2019 Hong Kong protests, also known as the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill (Anti-ELAB) movement, are an ongoing series of demonstrations in Hong Kong triggered by the introduction of the Fugitive Offenders amendment bill by the Hong Kong government
- Critics feared this could undermine judicial independence and endanger dissidents.

Background:

- The law would have allowed for criminal suspects to be extradited to mainland China under certain circumstances.
- Opponents said this risked exposing Hong Kongers to unfair trials and violent treatment.
- They also argued the bill would give China greater influence over Hong Kong and could be used to target activists and journalists.
- Until 1997, Hong Kong was ruled by Britain as a colony but then returned to China. Under the “one country, two systems” arrangement, it has more autonomy than the mainland, and its people more rights.
- The bill was withdrawn in September but demonstrations continue and now demand full democracy and an inquiry into police actions.

What protesters want?

- Amnesty for arrested protesters
- An independent inquiry into alleged police brutality
- Implementation of complete universal suffrage

Hong Kong's status:

- It was a British colony for more than 150 years – part of it, Hong Kong island, was ceded to the UK after a war in 1842. Later, China also leased the rest of Hong Kong – the New Territories – to the British for 99 years.
- It became a busy trading port, and its economy took off in the 1950s as it became a manufacturing hub.
- The territory was also popular with migrants and dissidents fleeing instability, poverty or persecution in mainland China.
- In the early 1980s, as the deadline for the 99-year-lease approached, Britain and China began talks on the future of Hong Kong – with the communist government in China arguing that all of Hong Kong should be returned to Chinese rule.
- The two sides reached a deal in 1984 that would see Hong Kong return to China in 1997, under the principle of “one country, two systems”.
- This meant that while becoming part of one country with China, Hong Kong would enjoy “a high degree of autonomy, except in foreign and defence affairs” for 50 years.
- As a result, Hong Kong has its own legal system and borders, and rights including freedom of assembly and free speech are protected.
- For example, it is one of the few places in Chinese territory where people can commemorate the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, where the military opened fire on unarmed protesters in Beijing.

Changing trend:

- Hong Kong still enjoys freedoms not seen on mainland China – but critics say they are on the decline.
- Rights groups have accused China of meddling in Hong Kong, citing examples such as legal rulings that have disqualified pro-democracy legislators.
- They've also been concerned by the disappearance of five Hong Kong booksellers, and a tycoon – all eventually re-emerged in custody in China.
- Hong Kong's leader, the chief executive, is currently elected by a 1,200-member election committee – a mostly pro-Beijing body chosen by just 6% of eligible voters.
- Not all the 70 members of the territory's lawmaking body, the Legislative Council, are directly chosen by Hong Kong's voters. Most seats not directly elected are occupied by pro-Beijing lawmakers.
- Hong Kong's mini-constitution, the Basic Law, says that ultimately both the leader, and the Legislative Council, should be elected in a more democratic way – but there's been disagreement over what this should look like.
- The Chinese government said in 2014 it would allow voters to choose their leaders from a list approved by a pro-Beijing committee, but critics called this a “sham democracy” and it was voted down in Hong Kong's legislature.

Conclusion:

- In 28 years' time in 2047, the Basic Law expires – and what happens to Hong Kong's autonomy after that is unclear.

Connecting the dots:

Demonstrators are angry at what they see as Chinese meddling in the freedoms promised to the former British colony when it returned to Chinese rule in 1997. Analyse

ICJ

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains GS-III- International Affairs

In News

- Myanmar's civilian leader and Nobel peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi will head up a delegation to the UN's top court to defend a case accusing the mainly Buddhist country – Myanmar- of genocide against Rohingya Muslims
- West African nation Gambia is due to open its case before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in December, 2019 on behalf of the 57 member states of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.
- The complaint accuses Myanmar of breaching the 1948 UN Genocide Convention through its brutal military campaign in 2017, which targeted the Rohingya in Rakhine state.

About ICJ

- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations (UN).
- **Origin:** It was established in June 1945 by the Charter of the United Nations and began work in April 1946.
- **HQ:** The seat of the Court is at the Peace Palace in The Hague (Netherlands). Of the six principal organs of the United Nations, it is the only one not located in New York (United States of America).

Tunisian rap song that triggered Arab Spring has suddenly become relevant again

Context:

- A week after the death of Tunisia's first democratically elected president, , the only stable democracy post the Arab Springs across the region of North Africa and the Middle East is set to face challenges to its hard-won democracy.

Background of the Arab Spring:

- In January 2011, after a month of protests against an oppressive and corrupt autocratic regime, President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was overthrown and eventually replaced by a developing democracy.
- Tunisians had been protesting high unemployment, corruption, lack of freedom of speech, food inflation, poor living conditions and injustice.
- The country had been witnessing widespread dissatisfaction and anger by ordinary citizens.
- The death of fruit vendor Tarek el-Tayeb Mohamed Bouazizi who self-immolated to protest harassment exacerbated the tense socio-political situation in Tunisia.
- Political observers believe Bouazizi's death acted as a trigger for the start of the Tunisian Revolution of 2011.

- The Arab Springs that spread across North Africa and the Middle East.
- A month before the Tunisian Revolution began, Tunisian rapper Hamada Ben Amor, who performs under the name of El Général, released a political rap song called 'RaisLebled' in December 2010.
- The approximately four-minute song was a powerful protest against the corruption of former autocrat Ben Ali and resonated particularly with Tunisia's youth, making it the anthem of the Tunisian Revolution.
- In the weeks that followed, Tunisia successfully managed to overthrow Ben Ali and his government.
- BéjiCaïdEssebsi was made interim Prime Minister, a post that he held for the remainder of 2011. He resigned in December of the same year.

After math:

- In December 2014, Essebsi won parliamentary elections, Tunisia's first free presidential elections and became President of the country.
- Tunisia, with its free elections, secularism and democratically elected head of state, was the only success of the Arab Springs, with Libya, Yemen & Syria having fallen into civil war and uprisings crushed in nations like Bahrain and political instability elsewhere in the region.
- Issues of unemployment still did not get resolved.
- There was prevalent criticisms that he was trying to consolidate power in the country.
- A lack of authority following Essebsi's death are some of the problems challenging Tunisia's hard-won democratic freedoms.
- In 2019, eight years after the Tunisian Revolution, El Général's raps from 'RaisLebled' are particularly relevant.

Effects:

- The effects of the Tunisian Revolution spread strongly to five other countries: Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Syria and Bahrain, where either the regime was toppled or major uprisings and social violence occurred, including riots, civil wars or insurgencies.
- Sustained street demonstrations took place in Morocco, Iraq, Algeria, Iranian Khuzestan, Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman and Sudan

At present:

- As of May 2018, only the uprising in Tunisia has resulted in a transition to constitutional democratic governance.
- Recent uprisings in Sudan and Algeria show that the conditions that started the Arab Spring are not going away and political movements against authoritarianism and exploitation are still occurring

Connecting the dots:

- The Arab world is home to 5% of the global population, but accounts for half of all terrorist attacks. Critically analyse

GENERAL SECURITY OF MILITARY INFORMATION AGREEMENT (GSOMIA)

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains GS-III- International Affairs

In News

- South Korea has decided to continue a 2016 military intelligence-sharing agreement with Japan that it previously said it would terminate amid ongoing tensions over wartime history and trade.
- Previously, South Korea had decided to discontinue the **intelligence pact GSOMIA** by November 22, unless Japan decided to review its export control measures.
- The need for GSOMIA was felt amidst a growing threat from North Korea, especially when it started conducting nuclear tests and developing ballistic missiles. The agreement was eventually signed in November 2016.
- The US' interest in this agreement stems from its need to forge alliances in the northeast to be able to analyse and respond to any threats from North Korea.
- Significantly, it may be China's perception that GSOMIA is an attempt by the **US-Japan-South Korea trilateral alliance to contain Beijing**, thereby maintaining a degree of opposition between this trilateral alliance and that of China-North Korea-Russia.
- In recent years, the relationship between South Korea and Japan has deteriorated, given the territorial dispute over the **Dokdo islands** — known as Takeshima in Japan. While South Korea controls them, the islands are claimed by Japan.

[U.S. to cut spending on NATO budget](#)

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II – International Affairs

In News

- The U.S. is to cut its contribution to NATO's operating budget with Germany increasing payments.
- Mr. Trump has repeatedly criticised European members for freeloading on the U.S., singling out Germany for lagging behind on an alliance commitment to spend at least 2% of GDP on defence.
- Washington currently pays 22.1% of the NATO budget — which totalled \$2.5 billion in 2019 — and Germany 14.8%, under a formula based on each country's gross national income.
- Under the new agreement, the U.S. will cut its contribution to 16.35% of the total, Germany's will rise to the same level and other allies will pay more.

About NATO

- NATO also called the North Atlantic Alliance is based on the North Atlantic Treaty that was signed in 1949.
- It is an intergovernmental military alliance between North American and European countries.
- It constitutes a system of collective defence whereby its independent member states agree to mutual defence in response to an attack by any external party.
- The National Defense Authorisation Act (NDAA) for the fiscal year 2020 was passed by the United States Senate recently. This legislative **provision gives India NATO ally-like status**; it brings India at par with America's NATO allies and countries like Israel and South Korea for increasing defence cooperation.

Bougainville

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains III – International Relations

In News

- Australia could soon have a new nation right on its doorstep, as the people of Bougainville start to cast their votes in a referendum on whether they should seek independence from Papua New Guinea.
- Between 1988-1998, political factions in Bougainville were involved in an armed conflict with the government of **Papua New Guinea**, in an attempt to force Papua New Guinea to divest control of the resource-rich island.
- The conflict in Bougainville and the desire of Bougainvillean people for independence is rooted in the **historic plunder of the resource-rich island** that has large deposits of **copper** and the unequal distribution of wealth that followed.
- Politically, Bougainville is currently an autonomous region within Papua New Guinea. This autonomy was a key part of the 2001 peace agreement signed after the conflict.
- People voting in the referendum will be given two options to choose from: greater autonomy from Papua New Guinea or complete independence
- However, the referendum is not binding and would still have to be passed by the Government and the Parliament of Papua New Guinea, in consultation with the Autonomous Bougainville Government.



Chagos Islands

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II – International Affairs

In News

- Mauritius called the UK an “illegal colonial occupier”, after UK ignored a UN mandated deadline to return the Chagos Islands, a small archipelago in the Indian Ocean, to Mauritius.
- Mauritius has argued that the Chagos Islands has been a part of its territory since at least the 18th century.
- UK broke the archipelago away from Mauritius in 1965 and the islands of Aldabra, Farquhar, and Desroches from the Seychelles in the region to form **the British Indian Ocean Territory**.
- After Mauritius gained independence from the UK in 1968, the United Kingdom refused to return the Chagos Islands to Mauritius
- UK claimed in petitions submitted to the Permanent Court of Arbitration(at The Hague) that Chagos island was required to “accommodate the United States’ desire to use certain islands in the Indian Ocean for defence purposes”.
- The largest island on the Chagos Islands archipelago, Diego Garcia, is where the US and the UK operate a large military base and was also used as a US military base for the US-led attacks against Afghanistan and Iraq in the 2000s.
- In June 2017, at the UN General Assembly, 94 countries voted in support of Mauritius’ resolution to seek an advisory opinion on the legal status of the Chagos Islands from the International Court of Justice in The Hague.
- In February 2019, the UN’s highest court of justice, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), ordered the UK to return the Chagos Islands to Mauritius “as rapidly as possible
- For now, the UK might possibly be searching for reassurance in the fact that the ICJ ruling is not binding and no immediate sanctions or adverse actions will be taken against it.

GLOBAL MIGRATION REPORT 2020

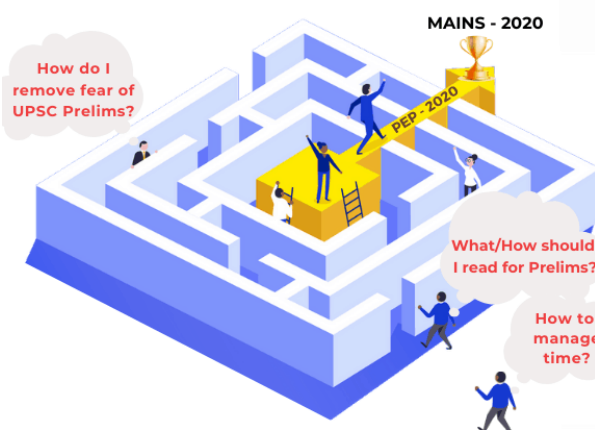
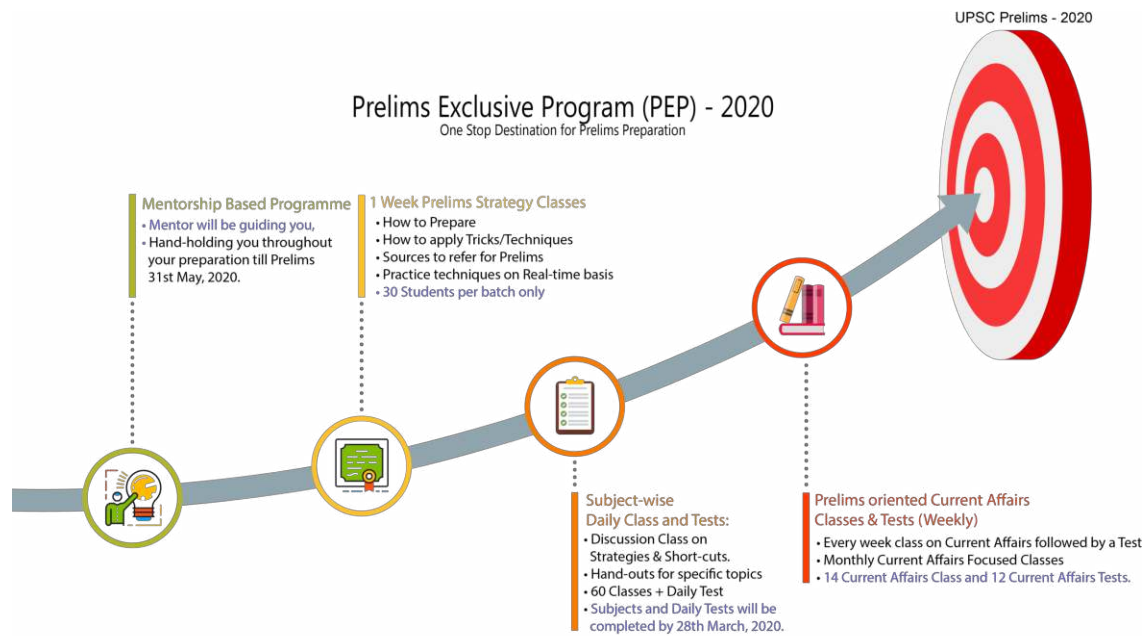
Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II – International Affairs

In News

- The Global Migration Report 2020 was recently released by the UN-affiliated International Organization for Migration (IOM)
 - Of the 272 international migrants worldwide (3.5% of the global population), India accounts for the highest share with 17.5 million Indians living outside the country. India is followed by Mexico (11.8 million) and China (10.7 million).
 - Roughly two-thirds of international migrants are labour migrants.
 - India is the leading recipient of remittances. International remittances in 2018 (2020 report) reached \$689 billion, out of which India received \$78.6 billion from the 17.5 million living abroad. India is currently followed by China (\$67.4 billion) and Mexico (\$35.7 billion).
 - The top migration corridors for Indians are the United Arab Emirates, the US and Saudi Arabia.
 - The highest number of migrants entering India come from Bangladesh.
 - The top destinations for international migrants is the USA followed by Germany, Saudi Arabia, Russian Federation and the UK
-

Prelims Exclusive Program (PEP) - 2020

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PEP-2020

PRELIMS EXCLUSIVE PROGRAMME

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INDIA AND THE WORLD

INDIA GERMANY RELATIONS

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains GS-II – International relations

In News

- German Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel visited India from 31 October – 1 November 2019 for the fifth round of Inter-Governmental Consultations (IGC).
- Chancellor Merkel and PM Modi reiterated that the **Indo-German Strategic Partnership** is based on the common values and principles of democracy, free and fair trade and rules-based international order.
- They welcomed the success of the **‘Make in India Mittelstand’ (MIIM) Programme** which has helped facilitate over 135 German Mittelstand and family-owned companies
- They acknowledged the successful work under the **German Indian Startup Exchange Program** and welcomed the introduction of a new German Accelerator (GA) programme **“Next Step India”**, which could lead to a full programme for German Startups in India.

Agreements/MOUs signed

- Joint Declaration of Intent on: Consultations for the period 2020-2024; Indo-German Partnership for Green Urban Mobility; Cooperation in R&D on Artificial Intelligence; cooperation in the field of prevention of marine litter and Cooperation within the International Smart Cities Network.
- MoU for Cooperation in Inland, Coastal and Maritime Technology
- MoU on Establishment of an Academic Collaboration in Ayurveda, Yoga and Meditation.
- MoU between National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management MANAGE and the German Agricultural Academy DEULA in the city of Nienburg on collaboration in agricultural technical and professional training.

BIMSTEC Ports’ Conclave

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III- International Affairs

In News

- The first ever BIMSTEC Conclave of Ports is being held at **Vishakhapatnam** on 7-8 November, 2019.
- The conclave aims at providing a platform to strengthen maritime interaction, port-led connectivity initiatives and sharing best practices among member countries. Providing Connectivity is one of the key priorities among BIMSTEC countries
- Three Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) have been signed between Ranong Port (Port Authority of Thailand) and the Port Trusts of Chennai, Vishakhapatnam and Kolkata

during the Conclave. These MoUs will enhance economic partnership by cutting down the sea travel time between India and Thailand from 10- 15 days to 7 days

Do You Know?

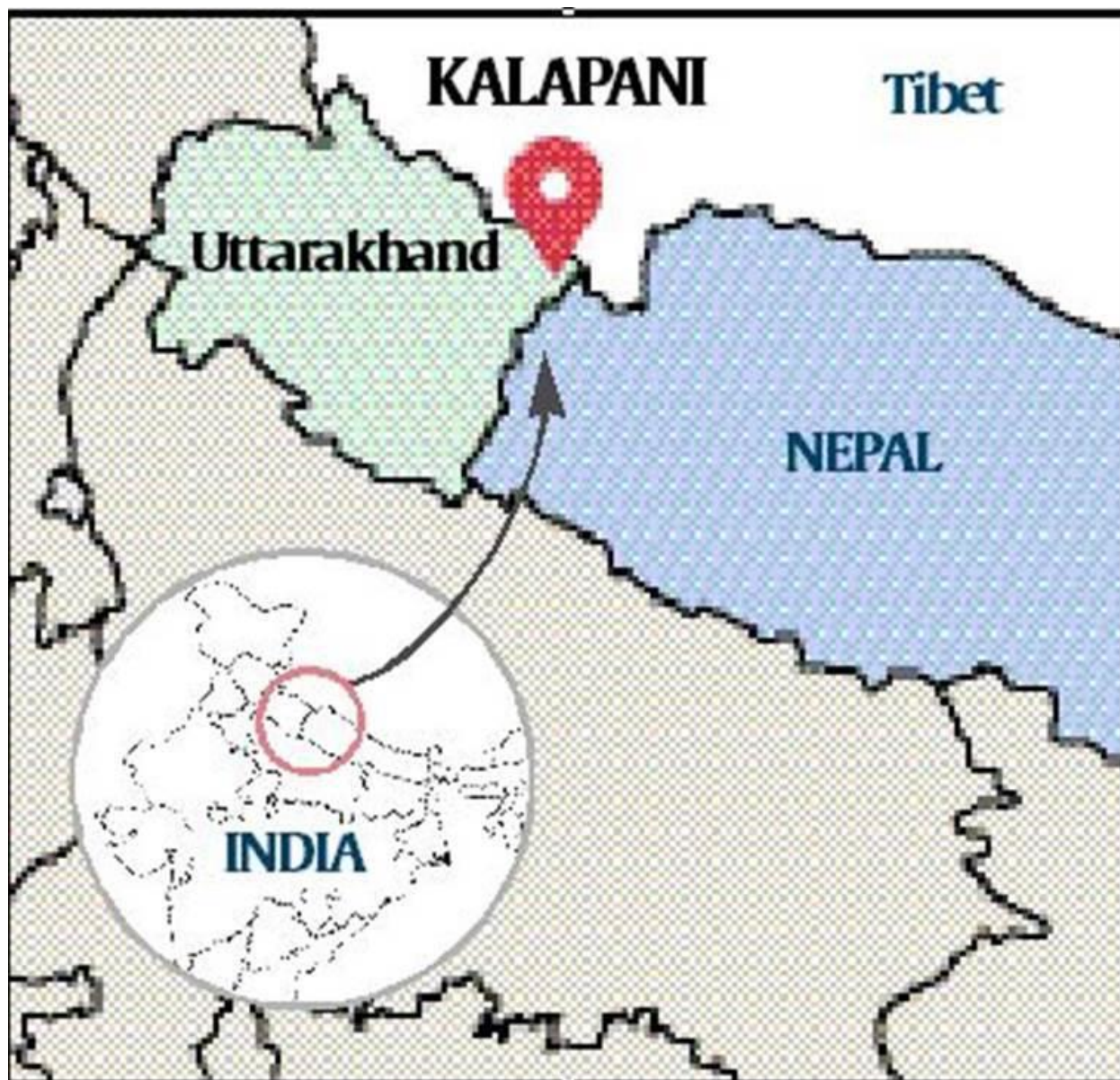
- BIMSTEC which links five countries from south Asia (Bangladesh, India, , Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Nepal) and two from South East Asia (Myanmar & Thailand) .
- The BIMSTEC region brings together 167 billion people together 22% of world population and a combined GDP of US \$3.71 Trillion.
- Four BIMSTEC Summits have been held so far, the earlier ones at Kathmandu on 30-31 August 2018 (earlier summit were 2004 (Bangkok), 2008 (New Delhi), 2014 (Nay Pyi Taw).
- A 'BIMSTEC Outreach Summit and Leader's summit' was held in Goa in 2016.
- The BIMSTEC Leaders had also participated in the swearing -in ceremony of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi at New Delhi on 30th May 2019

Kalapani

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II – International Relations

In News

- The new political map of India, recently released by the government to account for the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir, shows Kalapani as part of Indian territory.
- Kalapani is a 372-sq km area mapped within **Uttarakhand**, bordering far-west Nepal and Tibet.
- While the **Nepal government** and political parties have **protested**, India has said the new map does not revise the existing boundary with Nepal and accurately depicts the sovereign territory of India.
- The Nepal's Western boundary with India was marked out in the **Treaty of Sugauli** between the East India Company and Nepal in 1816.
- However, Nepali authorities claim that people living in the low-density area were included in the Census of Nepal until 58 years ago.
- In 2014, Foreign Minister Mahendra Bahadur Pande claimed that the late King Mahendra had "handed over the territory to India". By some accounts in Nepal, this allegedly took place in the wake of India-China War of 1962.
- A committee formed by the Nepal government to study this claim submitted a report to Prime Minister Oli during his first tenure. It claimed that India had "occupied" an additional 62 sq km land.
- **Bilateral talks:** The Prime Ministers of the two countries discussed the issue in 2000, with Atal Bihari Vajpayee assuring Nepal that India would not occupy even an inch of Nepal.
- Apart from Kalapani, another unresolved issue involves a vast area along the Nepal-Uttar Pradesh border. During his visit to Nepal in 2014, Prime Minister Modi had said that the **Susta and Kalapani issues** would be sorted out.



[Kalapani issue](#)

Context:

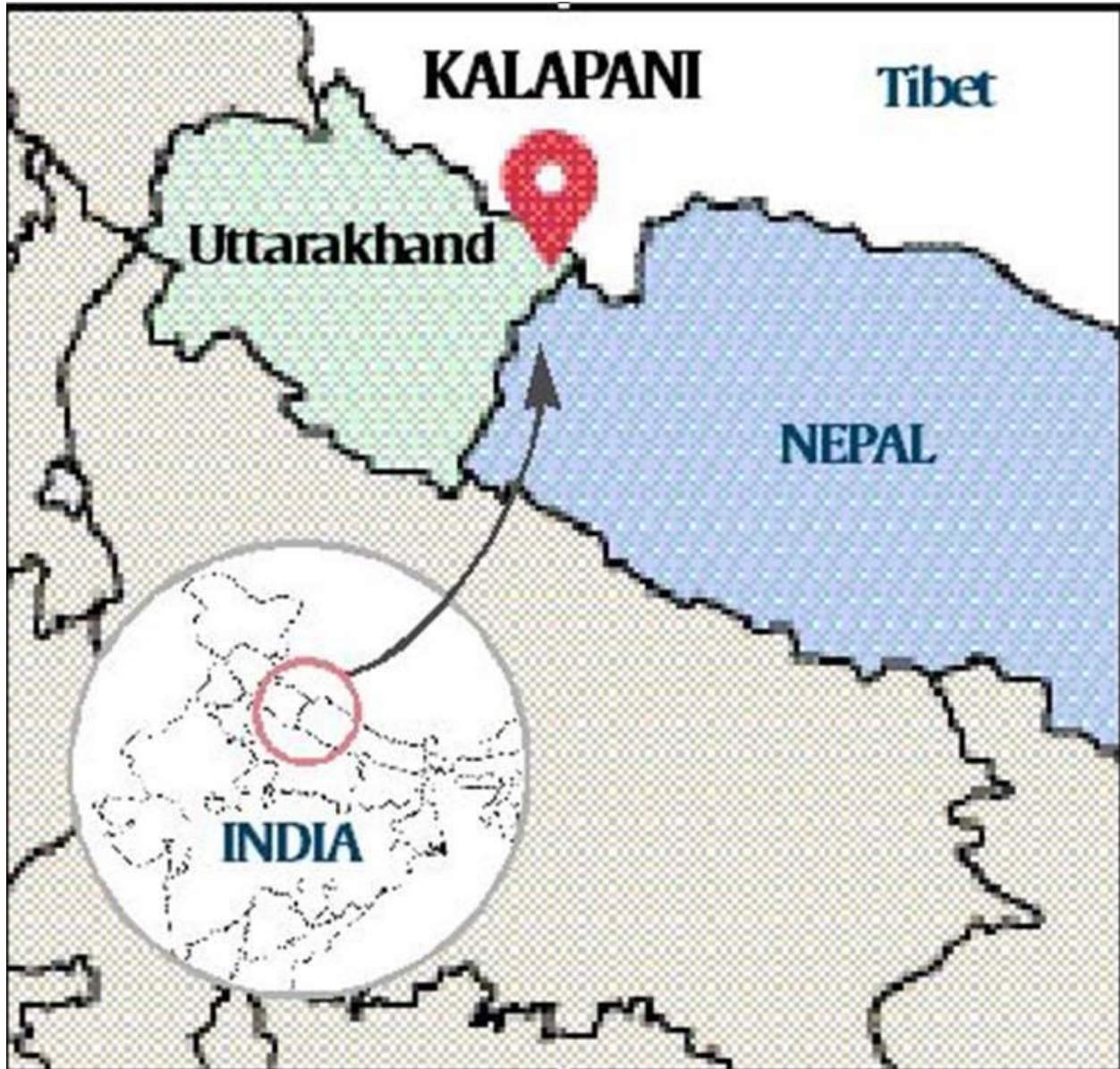
- India has upset Nepal after a new map it released last week showed the disputed Kalapani area as a part of Uttarakhand.
- Responding to Nepal's statement, India's Ministry of External Affairs, said, "Our map accurately depicts the sovereign territory of India. The new map has in no manner revised our boundary with Nepal. The boundary delineation exercise with Nepal is ongoing under the existing mechanism."

India – Nepal borders:



- India shares borders with China, Nepal, Burma (Myanmar), Pakistan, Bangladesh and Bhutan.
- **Indian states that share border with Nepal are** Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Sikkim, West Bengal and Bihar.
- Uttar Pradesh shares the longest international border with Nepal.

About Kalapani:



- Kalapani is a territory disputed between India and Nepal, but under Indian administration as part of Pithoragarh district in the Uttarakhand state.
- It is marked by the Kalapani river, one of the headwaters of the Kali River in the Himalayas at an altitude of 3600 meters.
- The Great Sage Vyasa meditated at this place
- Claimed by Nepal as part of Darchula District, Kalapani is controlled by India's Indo-Tibetan Border Police since the 1962 border war with China.

Indian claim:

- The **1816 Treaty of Segauli**, signed between British India and Nepal, defined river Mahakali as the western border of Nepal.
- **River Mahakali** has several tributaries, all of which merge at Kalapani.
- India claims that the river begins in Kalapani as this is where all its tributaries merge.

- The Indian side contends that river Mahakali begins where Lipu Gad meets the Kalapani springs
- India has presented administrative and tax records dating back to the 1830s.
- According to these records since then Kalapani was part of the Pithoragarh district.
- India has also shown surveys of the upper reaches of river Mahakali conducted by the British Indian government during the 1870s, which showed Kalapani as a part of British Indian territory.

Nepal claim:

- Nepal claims that **Mahakali** begins from Lipu Lekh Pass, the origin of most of its tributaries
- Nepal has presented similar maps from 1850 and 1856, showing that river Mahakali begins in Kalapani.
- Nepali authorities claim that people living in the low-density area were included in the Census of Nepal until 58 years ago.
- A committee formed by the Nepal government to study this claim submitted a report to Prime Minister Oli during his first tenure. It claimed that India had “occupied” an additional 62 sq km land.

Aftermath:

- Nepalese government was forced to take up the issue given the pressure from rising Nepali nationalism.
- The two countries had formed the Joint Technical Boundary Committee in 1981 to resolve the dispute.
- Though the committee managed to resolve a large part of the dispute, they failed to reach a final settlement
- It emerged as a contentious issue between India and Nepal after the two countries signed the Treaty of Mahakali in 1996.
- The Prime Ministers of the two countries discussed the issue in 2000, with Atal Bihari Vajpayee assuring Nepal that India would not occupy even an inch of Nepal.

Crux:

- Apart from Kalapani, another unresolved issue involves a vast area along the Nepal-Uttar Pradesh border.
- During his visit to Nepal in 2014, Prime Minister Modi had said that the Susta and Kalapani issues would be sorted out.

Connecting the dots:

- Sensitive issues such as border need to be handled carefully and India has to be mindful of Nepal’s concerns. Analyse

INDIA-US: H-1B, H-4 visas

Context:

- A United States court ruled that a group of American-born tech workers have faced heightened job competition from work authorisations given to the spouses of H-1B visa holders(H-4).

- The judges gave Indian workers living in the US short-term breathing room by leaving the final decision of the ongoing lawsuit up to a lower court.

Law suit:

- The “Save Jobs USA” suit was originally filed in 2015 by two IT workers and one systems analyst against the US Department of Homeland Security.
- Their affidavits stated that they worked for more than 15 years at Southern California Edison until they were fired and replaced by H-1B visa holders.
- The suit argued that the H-4 work authorisation violates immigration law and exceeds Homeland Security’s authority.
- Homeland Security maintained that the damage done to the plaintiffs was due to the H-1B programme, not the work authorisation given to the spouses.
- They argued that there was no direct competition between the tech workers and the H-4 visa holders.

Judgement:

- The judges disagreed with Homeland Security that the H-4 work authorisation is also not at fault

H-1B visa:

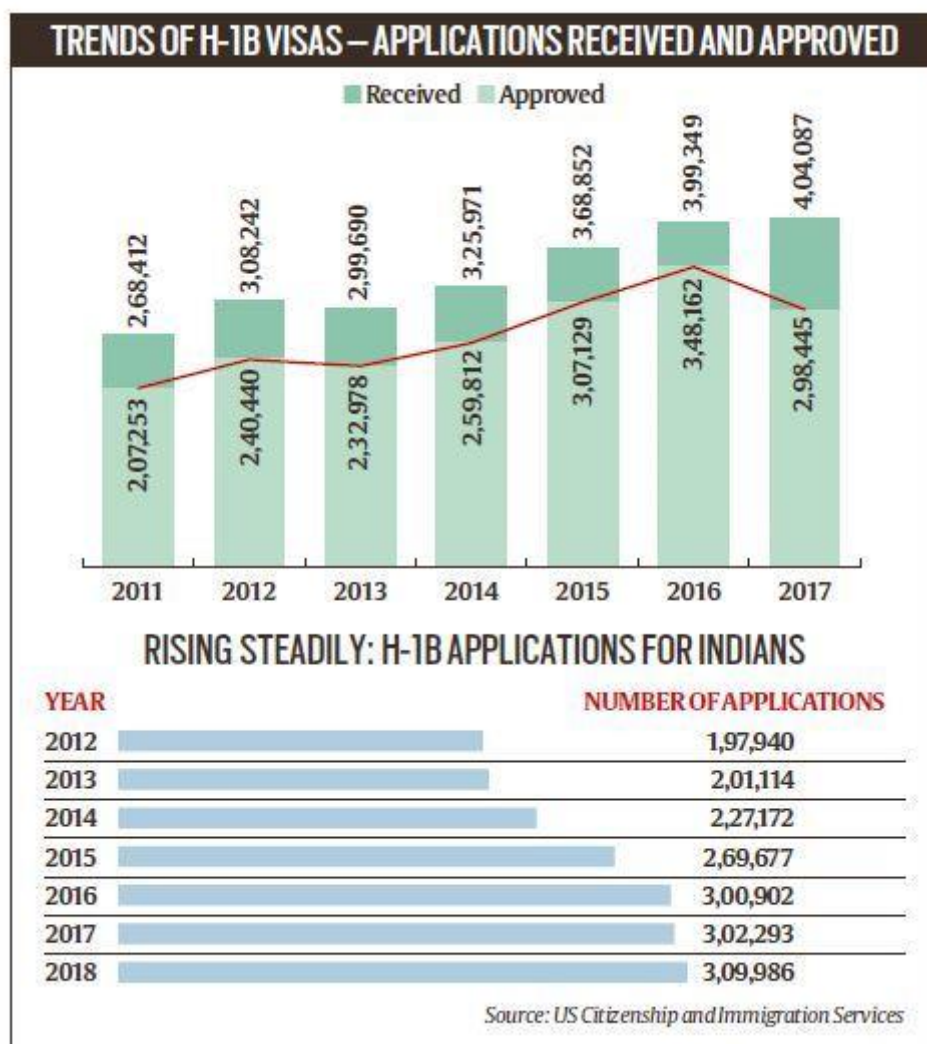
- The H-1B is a visa in the United States under the Immigration and Nationality Act
- Allows U.S. employers to temporarily employ foreign workers in specialty occupations.
- A specialty occupation requires the application of specialized knowledge and a bachelor’s degree or the equivalent of work experience.
- The duration of stay is three years, extendable to six years
- Laws limit the number of H-1B visas issued each year: 85000
- Employers must generally withhold Social Security and Medicare taxes from the wages paid to employees in H-1B status.

H-4 visa:

- An H-4 visa is a visa issued by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to immediate family members of the H-1B visa holders.
- These visas are usually issued at the local US consulate office abroad.
- Department of Homeland Security (DHS) amended the regulations to allow these H-4 dependent spouses to accept employment in the United States.
- H-4 dependent spouses are also eligible to receive social security numbers•(Barack Obama-era 2015)

India and H1- B visa:

- Since the law was instituted, a total of 1,20,514 H-4 visas have been granted, of which 1,10,649 have come from India.
- Out of the 90,946 that were initially approved, 84,935 were for women.
- Out of the 4,19,637 H-1B applications in 2018, 74% came from India. (most from IT)



H-1B visa in trump administration:

- Higher H-1B denials, under the executive order “Buy American and Hire American”.
- H-4 visas issued at a much lower rate, with initial approvals dipping from 31,017 in 2016 to 27,680 in 2019.
- Indian outsourcing corporates such as Tata, Infosys, and Wipro faced denial rates of 28%-46% from 2015-19.
- U S-based companies such as Ernst & Young, Deloitte, and Cognizant saw 18%-52% rejection rates
- Big Tech companies like Apple, Google and Facebook faced little change in H-1B visa.

Connecting the dots:

- Trump administration wants to make it more difficult for well-educated foreign nationals to work in America in science and engineering fields and it will have a negative impact on India too. Substantiate

Tiger Triumph

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

In News

- Tiger Triumph is the maiden India- US joint Tri services Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Exercise.
- The Exercise is aimed to developing interoperability for conducting HADR operations.
- Indian Naval ships Jalashwa, Airavat and Sandhayak, Indian Army troops from 19 Madras and 7 Guards, and Indian Air Force MI-17 helicopters and Rapid Action Medical Team (RAMT) would be participating in the exercise. The US would be represented by US Navy Ship Germantown with troops from US Third Marine Division.

'TIGER TRIUMPH'

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II- India's foreign relations

- The first-ever India and U.S. armed forces tri-services exercise 'Tiger Triumph' concluded off the Kakinada coast, East Godavari district
- This was the first tri-services exercise by both countries on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR)
- Apart from Indian Navy ship INS Jalashwa and U.S. Navy ship USS Germantown, over 500 US Marines and sailors and 1,200 Indian soldiers and officers participated in the exercise.
- Exercise Tiger Triumph enhanced U.S.-India military-to-military relations and honed individual and small-unit skills in the context of a HADR scenario.
- It exposed Indian and U.S. forces to different training environments, weaponry and tactics.
- Through training side-by-side and sharing best practices, both Indian and U.S. troops not only learned from one another but also established personal and professional relationships.
- India's role as a stabilizing power in the region is critical for trade and transit between the Indian and Pacific Oceans.
- India and the United States have a shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific region that provides prosperity and security for all

BRICS 2020: 11th BRICS Summit

Context:

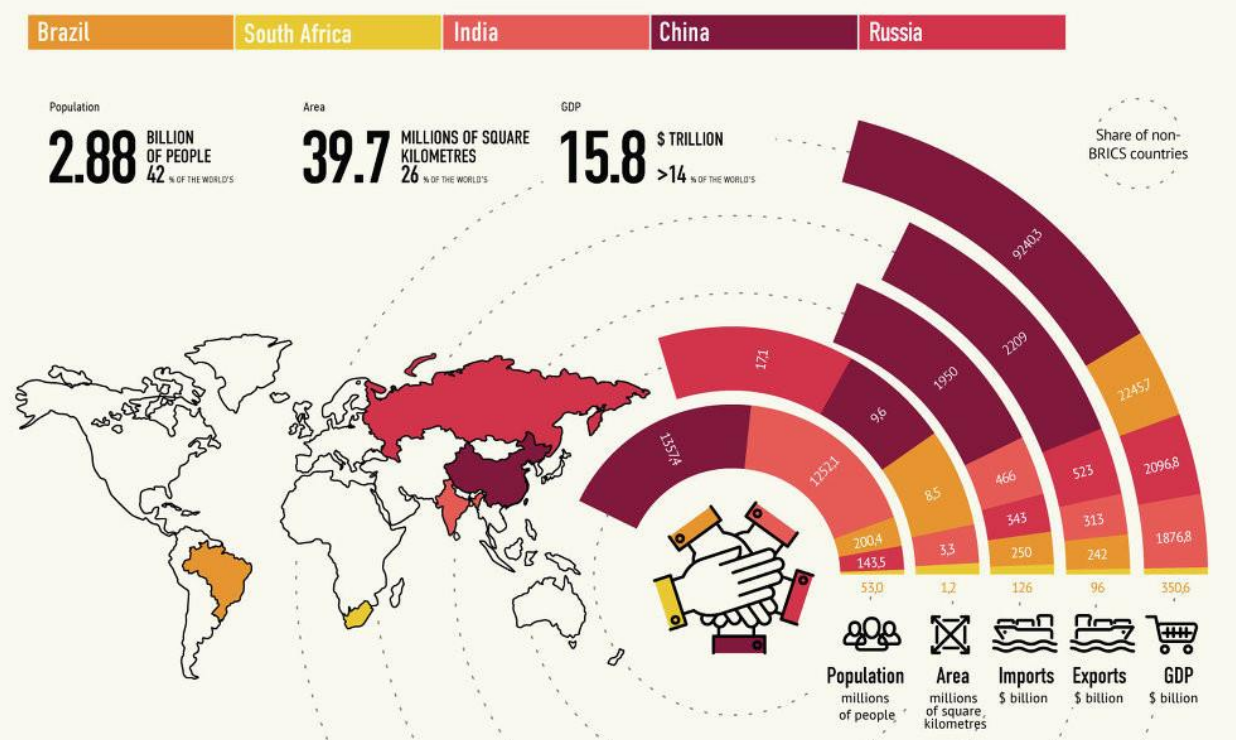
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi is in Brazil for the 11th BRICS Summit
- This year's summit is significant for India as the joint working group on counter-terrorism has decided to constitute five sub-working groups on counterterrorism in areas like terrorist financing, use of the internet for terrorist purposes, countering radicalisation, issue of foreign terrorist fighters and capacity-building.

- summit will revolve around “economic growth for an innovative future” and focus on “cooperation on digital economy” and “fight against transnational crime”
- BRICS Business Council will take place, and BRICS MoU among Trade and Investment Promotion agencies will be signed.

BRICS:

- Acronym for an association of five major emerging national economies: **Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.**
- South Africa joined in 2010
- All are members of G20
- Represent over 3.1 billion people, 41% of the world population
- As of 2018 BRICS have US\$40.55 trillion (32% of World’s GDP PPP)
- Bilateral relations among BRICS nations will be conducted on the basis of non-interference, equality, and mutual benefit.

BRICS: numbers and facts



Origin:

- The term “BRIC” was coined in 2001 by then-chairman of Goldman Sachs Asset Management, **Jim O’Neill**,
- The BRIC grouping’s first formal summit, also held in Yekaterinburg in 2009, with Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Dmitry Medvedev, Manmohan Singh, and Hu Jintao, the respective leaders of Brazil, Russia, India and China, all attending.
- The summit’s focus was on means of improving the global economic situation and reforming financial institutions

Financial system in BRICS:

- There are two components that make up the financial architecture of BRICS, namely, **the New Development Bank (NDB)** (BRICS Development Bank) and **the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA)**.
- The New Development Bank (NDB) and Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) were signed into treaty at the 2014 BRICS summit in Brazil.
- Both of these components were signed into treaty in 2014 and became active in 2015.

New Development Bank

- Based in Shanghai.
- Multilateral development bank operated by the BRICS states.
- The bank's primary focus of lending will be infrastructure projects with authorized lending of up to \$34 billion annually.
- The bank will have starting capital of \$50 billion, with capital increased to \$100 billion over time.
- Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa will initially contribute \$10 billion each to bring the total to \$50 billion.

BRICS CRA: BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement

- Framework for providing protection against global liquidity pressures.
- This includes currency issues where members' national currencies are being adversely affected by global financial pressures.
- The CRA is generally seen as a competitor to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and along with the New Development Bank is viewed as an example of increasing South-South cooperation.

India & BRICS:

- India finds itself as one of the emerging economies in the grouping and beyond, especially G20.
- BRICS now brings together five economies accounting for 42% of the world's population, 23% of the global GDP and an around 17% share of world trade.
- BRICS has emerged the voice of developing countries, or the global south.
- These countries face an aggressive club of developed countries, raising challenges on issues from WTO to climate change,
- India believes BRICS has to protect the rights of the developing countries.

Way forward:

- India has to maintain the balancing act between Russia-China on the one side and the US on the other.
- India has had a growing role in global affairs in the last and is seen to be helping drive the global agenda.

Conclusion:

- The Summit will be an opportunity for India to lay the groundwork for hosting the 2021 Summit scheduled in India.
- India will also be mindful of the fact that the G20 Summit to be hosted in India will take place in 2022, and this will be an opportunity to synergise the two agendas from New Delhi's lens as well.

Connecting the dots:

- India finds itself as one of the emerging economies in the BRICS grouping and beyond. Justify

BRICS meet

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II –International groupings

In News

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi is in Brazil for the 11th Brics Summit which has the theme 'Economic Growth for an Innovative Future'.
- This is PM Modi's second visit to Brazil and his first visit after the new administration led by the President Bolsonaro assumed office on January 1, 2019. Modi will hold talks with Bolsonaro on ways to deepen the India-Brazil strategic partnership
- Brazil may push India for opening its market for agricultural and meat products.
- Brazil's decision to allow visa-free travel to Indian tourists and businesspersons may also figure prominently in the meeting at which Mr. Modi is expected to invite Mr. Bolsonaro as the chief guest at the Republic Day parade in January 2020
- In this year's summit, discussions will primarily revolve around "economic growth for an innovative future" and focus on "cooperation on digital economy" and "fight against transnational crime".
- This year's summit is significant for India as the **joint working group on counter-terrorism** has decided to constitute five sub-working groups on counterterrorism in areas like terrorist financing, use of the internet for terrorist purposes, countering radicalisation, issue of foreign terrorist fighters and capacity-building.
- A Brics memorandum of understanding between trade and investment promotion agencies is expected to be signed

Do You Know?

- Jim O'Neill, chairman of Goldman Sachs Asset Management, coined the Bric concept in 2001. South Africa was admitted by the other Bric leaders in December 2010, adding the "S" to the original grouping.
- BRICS brings together five major emerging economies comprising 42 per cent of the world's population, having 23 per cent of the global GDP, around 17 per cent of the share in world trade, 26.6% of the world land area and 13.24 per cent of World Bank voting power

India-Bhutan

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II –India and Neighbourhood

In News

- Bhutan plans to **levy charges on tourists** from regional countries, including India, Bangladesh and the Maldives, who **at present are exempted from any charges**.
- The sharp increase in the number of tourists from the region was cited for the move to start imposing levy on tourists from India, Bangladesh & Maldives

- In contrast to other international tourists, who pay \$250 (Approx. INR. 18,000) as a minimum charge per day per person, tourists from India, Bangladesh and the Maldives had so far paid no fees, and were able to cross over without visas.
- The objective of “tourism tax” is to combat over-tourism and get visitors to pay for the upkeep and maintenance of the public spaces they are visiting
- Tourist levy will put Bhutan out of the league of budget destination but the counter argument is that without such charges Bhutan would not be able to preserve its local heritage and culture.
- In 2018, of the 2,74,000 tourists visiting Bhutan, the council estimated that about 2,00,000 were from the region, of which about 1,80,000 were from India.

[India-Chile double taxation avoidance treaty](#)

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains III – Economy

In News

- The Union Cabinet has approved the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) between India and Chile.
- The tax agreement helps tax-payers in these countries avoid being taxed twice for the same income.
- This will help in elimination of double taxation as well as prevention of fiscal evasion and avoidance with respect to taxes on income.
- A DTAA applies in cases where a tax-payer resides in one country and earns income in another.
- Clear allocation of taxing rights between contracting states through these type of agreement will provide tax certainty to investors and businesses of both countries, thus attracting foreign investment.
- The agreement will implement minimum standards and other recommendations of G-20/OECD Base Erosion Profit Shifting (BEPS) Project

About BEPS

- Base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS) refers to tax planning strategies used by multinational enterprises that exploit gaps and mismatches in tax rules to avoid paying tax.
- Developing countries’ higher reliance on corporate income tax means they suffer from BEPS disproportionately. BEPS practices cost countries USD 100-240 billion in lost revenue annually.
- Working together within **OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework on BEPS**, over 130 countries and jurisdictions are collaborating on the implementation of 15 measures to tackle tax avoidance, improve the coherence of international tax rules and ensure a more transparent tax environment.

ECONOMY

Joblessness rises to 3-year high

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains GS-III – Economy

In News

- India's unemployment rate in October rose to 8.5%, the highest level since August 2016, according to data released by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE)
- According to CMIE, the urban unemployment rate for October 2019 stood at 8.9%, slightly higher than the rural unemployment rate of 8.3%.
- Among States, Tripura and Haryana saw unemployment levels of more than 20% (the highest), while the unemployment was the lowest in Tamil Nadu at 1.1%
- The CMIE's figures are in line with the findings of the latest **Periodic Labour Force Survey**, which had estimated an unemployment rate of 6.1% between July 2017 and June 2018, the worst in 45 years.
- While employment has been declining, the number of working age people who are "Not in Labour Force, Education and Training" has continued to increase — from about 84 million in 2011-12, it has now crossed 100 million

About CMIE

- It is a leading business information company (privately owned). It was established in 1976, primarily as an independent think tank.
- CMIE has a presence over the entire information food-chain – from large scale primary data collection and information product development through analytics and forecasting.

Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)

- Earlier, the NSSO used to conduct labour surveys quinquennially (5-year). Moreover, the five-yearly surveys used to come with a lag of over one or two years, thus reducing the possibility of timely analysis
- As the domestic labour market is becoming increasingly sensitive to national and global economic factors, policymakers felt the need to construct labour statistics at more frequent intervals.
- To fulfil this objective, the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) was initiated by the **NSSO** beginning April **2017**.
- The PLFS is a continuous survey for generating estimates of labour force indicators on a **quarterly basis for urban areas** and on an annual basis for both rural and urban areas.

Auto slowdown

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains GS-III – Economy

In News

- One of the key reasons for the slowdown in the automobile sector is the **confusion over the policy on electric cars**, the government told a parliamentary panel

- NITI Aayog had proposed in August the ban sale of three-wheelers with internal combustion engines by 2023 and two-wheelers with engine capacities less than 150 cc by 2025.
- The 150-cc and below segment forms almost 90% of the two-wheeler market in the country.
- The industry termed the proposed NITI Aayog plan “unrealistic”, while knocking on the Centre’s door pitching for a EV roll-out road map over a “practical” time frame.
- Government clarified at many forums that it did not intend to ban sales of vehicles powered by fossil fuels, but the confusion added to the already low consumer sentiment.
- Some of the reasons attributed to auto slowdown are
 - Auto sales were down because of “curtailment” of automobile loans that so far were easily available.
 - The sharp increase in road tax in many States added to the problem.
 - The switch from BS IV to VI engines for improved emission standards has also led to the slump due to increased cost of production.

Economic slowdown may lighten India’s carbon burden

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III – Economy

In News

- Carbon dioxide emissions are poised to grow at their slowest — a 2% rise from last year — since 2001 due to a lower demand for coal in power and manufacturing sector
- The rise in CO₂ emissions from India saw wild swings — from 7.7% in 2014 to 3.5% the next year and then back to 7.8% in 2018. This is the first time that emissions are expected to grow below 3% from the previous year.
- The combined **total of coal sales** from state-owned mines to consumers outside the power sector and imports of coking coal and coke fell 14% in 2017 and rose 15% in 2018. But it **increased by just 3%** in the first eight months of 2019,

Do You Know?

- Wind generation rose by 17% in the first six months of 2019 compared to the same period a year earlier, with solar up 30% and hydro increasing by 22%
- According to International Energy Emissions Agency: **India’s per capita emissions were about 40% of the global average** and contributed 7% to the global carbon dioxide burden. The U.S., the largest emitter, contributed 14%.
- As per its commitments to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, India has promised to reduce the emission intensity of its economy by 33-35% of 2005 levels by 2030. It has also committed to having **40% of its energy from renewable sources by 2030.**

Alternative Investment Fund (AIF)

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III – Economy

In News

- Government would set up an alternative investment fund (AIF) worth Rs 25,000 crore to provide relief to developers with unfinished projects to ensure delivery of homes to buyers
- It provides for last-mile funding for **stalled affordable and middle-income housing** projects across the country
- The fund size will initially be Rs 25,000 crore with the government providing ₹10,000 crore and the SBI and LIC providing the balance
- The funds will be set up as **Category-II AIF registered with the SEBI** and will be managed by SBICAP Ventures Limited.
- According to the government's estimates, there are more than 1,600 housing projects in which 4.58 lakh crore units are stalled.
- Housing projects that have been classified as non-performing assets (NPA) and that are under National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) proceedings also to be eligible for financing.
- The AIF is expected to pool investments from other government-related and private investors, including public financial institutions, sovereign wealth funds, public and private banks, domestic pension and provident funds, global pension funds and other institutional investors.
- The fund is therefore expected not only to support the sector but also generate commercial return for its investors
- Besides, revival of the sector will also lead to demand of cement, iron & steel industries giving further impetus to generate more employment

[3 years since DeMo, cash is back](#)

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains III – Economy

In News

- Three years since demonetisation, the level of cash with the public has grown faster than the GDP growth of the country
 - However digital payments — especially those on the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) platform — have seen robust growth.
 - Reserve Bank of India data show that the public held ₹20.49 lakh crore in cash as of September 2019
 - The data show that the **cash held by the public made up 96% of the money in circulation**, with most of the rest deposited in banks
 - In December 2016, one month after demonetisation and the enforced deposits in banks, this percentage stood at 83%.
 - According to the RBI's annual report, the number of UPI payments in 2018-19, at 535 crore, for the first time surpassed the number of debit card transactions (441 crore).
-

[HS code](#)

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III – Economy

In News

- The Ministry of Commerce and Industry allocated a separate Harmonised System (HS) code for Khadi.
- The Harmonised System, or simply 'HS', is a six-digit identification code developed by the **World Customs Organization (WCO)**.
- Called the “universal economic language” for goods, it is a multipurpose **international product nomenclature**.
- Over 200 countries use the system as a basis for their customs tariffs, gathering international trade statistics, making trade policies, and for monitoring goods.
- The system helps in harmonising of customs and trade procedures, thus **reducing costs in international trade**
- The absence of a separate HS code hindered Khadi from achieving its full potential, as its exports were difficult to categorise and calculate. The latest move is expected to help resolve this issue.

[IIP shrinks by 4.3% to lowest in 8 years](#)

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III – Economy

In News

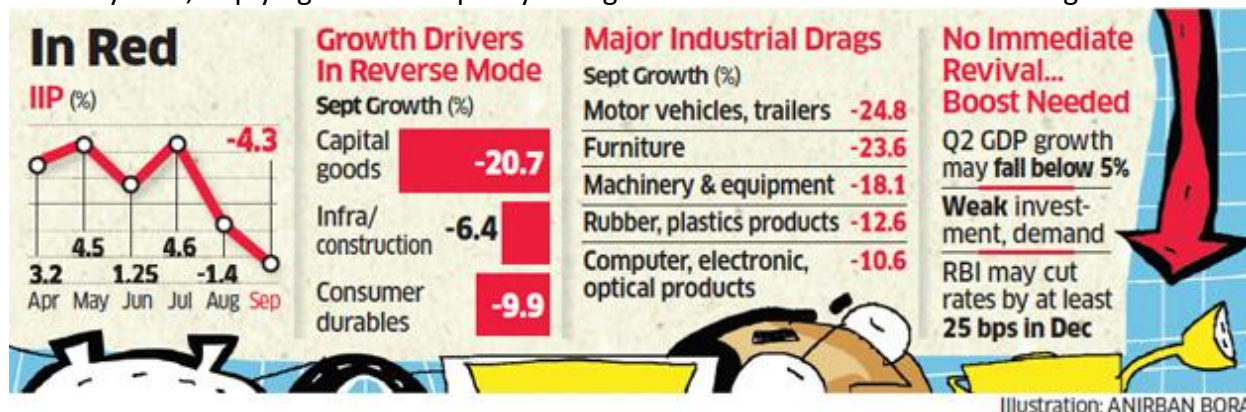
- Industrial activity in September **contracted** sharply by 4.3%, driven by major contractions in the capital goods (20.7%), mining (8.5%), and manufacturing sectors (3.8%).
- This is the first time after November 2012 that all three broad-based sectors have contracted and the lowest monthly growth in the 2011-12 base year series
- While the **slowdown is broadbased**, including FMCG consumption demand, the largest contributor was mining, the proximate reason being the excess rains this year in the coal and mineral mining belts
- India's **core sector output contracted 5.2% in September**, posting its worst performance in 14 years.
- The Indian economy may be presently facing a structural growth slowdown originating from declining household savings rate and low agricultural growth

About IIP

- IIP is a composite indicator measuring changes in the volume of production of a basket of industrial products over a period of time, with respect to a chosen base period.
- The base year used for IIP calculations is **2011-12**. It is compiled and published on a monthly basis by the **Central Statistical Office** with a time lag of six weeks from the reference month.
- Coal, Crude Oil, Natural Gas, Refinery Product, Steel, Cement and Electricity are known as Core Industries. The eight Core Industries comprise nearly **37.9 %** of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

Do You Know?

- The RBI has cut interest rates by a cumulative 135 basis points this year and will review monetary policy early next month (December 5)
- Moody's Investor Service lowered its outlook on India's sovereign rating (Baa2) to negative from stable, saying that the domestic economic downturn could be structural, as opposed to cyclical, implying that more policy changes were needed in order to revive growth.



Consumer expenditure survey 2017-18

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III – Economy

In News

- The government has decided to scrap the **National Statistical Office's (NSO's)** consumer expenditure survey conducted in 2017-18 over "data quality"
- The ministry is separately examining the feasibility of conducting the next consumer expenditure survey in 2020-21 and 2021-22 after incorporating all data quality refinements in the survey process
- The findings of the report, published by few media, showed consumer spending falling for the first time in over four decades in 2017-18. The government has, however, termed it a "draft" report.

About Consumer Expenditure Survey

- The Survey generates estimates household Monthly Per Capita Consumer Expenditure (MPCE) and the distribution of households and persons over the MPCE classes.
- It is designed to collect information regarding expenditure on consumption of goods and services (food and non-food) consumed by households
- The government uses this dataset to estimate poverty and inequality in the country, apart from using it for changing the base year for gross domestic product (GDP).
- The previous round of survey took place in 2011-12.
- Consumer expenditure surveys are normally conducted with a gap of five years. But in 2011-12, the survey was conducted after two years, as 2009-10, when the previous round of the survey took place, was a drought year

Did You know?

- In early 2019, the government merged the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) into **National Statistical Office (NSO)**.

- It was done to streamline and strengthen the present nodal function of MOSPI with respect to Indian official statistics system and bring in more synergy by integrating its administrative functions within the ministry
- The CSO headed used to bring out macro-economic data like economic (GDP) growth data, industrial production and inflation.
- The NSSO conducted large-scale surveys and brings out reports on health, education, household expenditure and other social and economic indicators.

Consumer Expenditure Survey

- CES is traditionally a quinquennial (recurring every five years) survey conducted by the government's National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) that is designed to collect information on the consumption spending patterns of households across the country, both urban and rural.

How does it helps?

- The data gathered in this exercise reveals the average expenditure on goods (food and non-food) and services and helps generate estimates of household Monthly Per Capita Consumer Expenditure (MPCE) as well as the distribution of households and persons over the MPCE classes.

Why controversy?

- The data revealed a decline in the MPCE, making it the first such drop since 1972-73. In real terms (adjusted for inflation) the MPCE slid by 3.7% from Rs 1,501 in 2011-2012 to Rs 1,446 in 2017-2018. While the inflation-adjusted consumption expenditure in rural areas declined by 8.8% over the six-year period, urban households reported a marginal 2% increase

Uses of CES:

- Vital in gauging the demand dynamics of the economy as well
- For understanding the shifting priorities in terms of baskets of goods and services
- In assessing living standards and growth trends across multiple strata.
- Helping policymakers spot and address possible structural anomalies that may cause demand to shift in a particular manner in a specific socio-economic or regional cohort of the population,
- Providing pointers to producers of goods and providers of services,
- Used by the government in rebasing the GDP and other macro-economic indicators.

2011 Survey:

- The survey showed that average urban MPCE (at Rs 2,630) was about 84% higher than average rural MPCE (Rs 1,430) for the country as a whole.
- **Food** accounted for about 53% of the value of the average rural Indian household's consumption during 2011-12, in the case of urban households it accounted for only 42.6% of the average consumption budget.
- **Average protein** intake per capita per day was seen to rise steadily with MPCE levels in rural India from 43 g for the bottom 5% of population ranked by MPCE to 91 g for the top 5%, and in urban India from 44 g for the bottom 5% to about 87 g for the top 5%.
- **Education** accounted for 3.5% of the rural household's average spending, an urban household spent almost 7% of its monthly consumption budget on it.

All about consumption

The Consumer Expenditure Surveys indicate pattern of consumption, level of living and well-being of households at the State and national levels which are used for planning and policy formulation by various government organisations

Food and non-food expenditure

The chart shows % of food, non-food items in monthly per capita consumer expenditure (MPCE) — July 2011-June 2012. Figures show how data is captured, and must not be seen as current



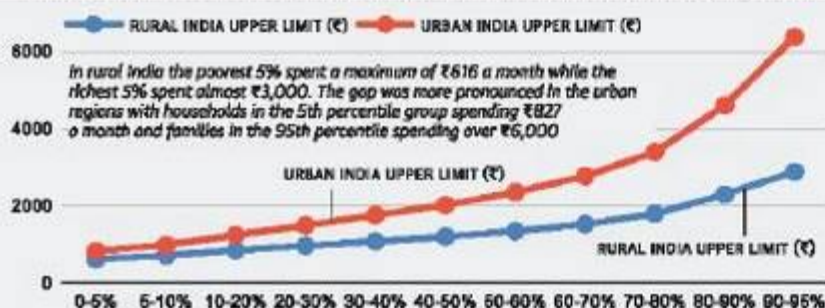
Food items include:

Cereals and cereal substitutes | Pulses and their products | Milk and milk products | Edible oil | Egg, fish and meat | Vegetables | Fruits | Sugar, salt and spices | Beverages, refreshments, processed food

Non-food items include:

Paan, tobacco and intoxicants | Fuel and light | Clothing and footwear | Education | Medical | Conveyance | Consumer services excl. conveyance | Misc. goods, entertainment | Rent | Taxes and cesses | Durable goods

ALL-INDIA RURAL AND URBAN DISTRIBUTIONS OF MPCE(2011-12)



SOURCE: MINISTRY OF STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

Way forward:

- The Central government decided to junk the survey findings.
- Govt also decided to separately examining the feasibility of conducting the next Consumer Expenditure Survey (CES) in 2020-2021 and 2021-22 after incorporating all data quality refinements in the survey process.

Conclusion:

- With the Advisory Committee on National Accounts Statistics also having separately recommended that 2017-18 would not be used as an appropriate year for rebasing of the GDP series, the very credibility of GDP data going forward could come under greater scrutiny.

Connecting the dots:

- How do consumer spending surveys help gauge demand and growth trends? Analyse



Different stories to tell

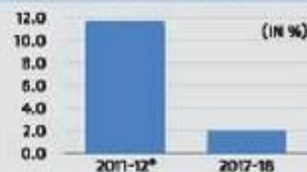
8.8% fall in rural expenditure in the 2017-18 survey (the govt. has withheld it; *The Hindu* has accessed it) from the inflation adjusted MPCE in 2011-12

2% growth in urban spending in 2017-18

CHANGE IN RURAL EXPENDITURE



CHANGE IN URBAN EXPENDITURE



*COMPARED TO INFLATION-ADJUSTED MPCE IN 2009-10

Wholesale and retail inflation

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains III – Economy

In News

- Recent data shows that the two rates are diverging – The **WPI inflation** for October has touched a 40-month low (0.16%). But **retail inflation(CPI)** in the country for the same month has touched a 16-month high.
- This essentially means that while prices are falling or growing at a marginal rate at the wholesale level, the trend reverses at the retail consumer level, where prices are growing at a faster rate every successive month.
- This deceleration in wholesale prices has happened despite a significant jump in **wholesale food prices**. WPI food inflation rose to 7.6 per cent essentially led by surge in prices of vegetables and pulses
- But what continued to **pull down overall wholesale inflation number** was the **continued “deflation”** (that is, prices falling from one month to the next) in **manufactured goods**.

Reasons for such divergence

- Some part of the difference between the wholesale and retail inflation trends is explained by the way these indices are made.
- For instance, food articles have a much higher weight — over 45 per cent — in CPI or retail inflation index. In WPI, their weight is less than 30 per cent.
- So even a similar spike in food prices will show up a much higher impact in the retail inflation index (CPI) than the wholesale inflation index.
- Then there are other items such as “**services**” which have a weight of about 30 per cent that can **only be found in retail inflation**. A spike in these prices obviously bumps up only the retail inflation while leaving the wholesale inflation unaffected

Has this happened before?

- Between 2012 to 2015 there was a growing divergence between retail and wholesale inflation indices. By October 2015, wholesale inflation was negative — that is, actual prices were declining — while retail inflation was over 7 per cent.
- While raging food inflation was a contributor, the spike in services such as education and medical facilities was the biggest reason for this divergence in 2015.

Impact on Policy making

- If the RBI looks at retail inflation, which is at 4.6 per cent and is expected to stay above the 4 per cent mark till March 2020, it would be expected to raise interest rates and bring down inflation.
- But if it were to look at WPI, the policy advice would be completely different. The RBI would then be expected to cut rates further

[Minimum operating price](#)

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains III – Economy

In News

- In an effort to create a level playing field for online and offline retailers, the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) has written to government seeking implementation of a “minimum operating price” (MOP)

- MOP is the price consisting of landing price, operational cost and reasonable profit margin and below the MOP no product should be sold in the market
- The traders' body alleged that e-commerce companies and brands in collusion with banks, by charging much lower price (through deep discounts) than the actual market value is depriving the government of GST and other revenue.
- Other measures recommended by CAIT are:
 - Cash back on credit cards given by the banks should also be made applicable to offline trade. There should not be any kind of exclusivity either for online or offline trade.
 - Upgrade or buyback offer by brands should remain the same for both offline and online trade.
 - All schemes of the brands should be made available to online and offline trade in a transparent manner
 - Government should constitute a Regulatory Authority to regulate and monitor all verticals of retail trade including small retail, big retail, e-commerce and direct selling besides MOP, and if anyone wants to offer any scheme, the same should be approved by the Regulatory Authority.

Insurance companies to merge as planned

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains III – Economy

In News

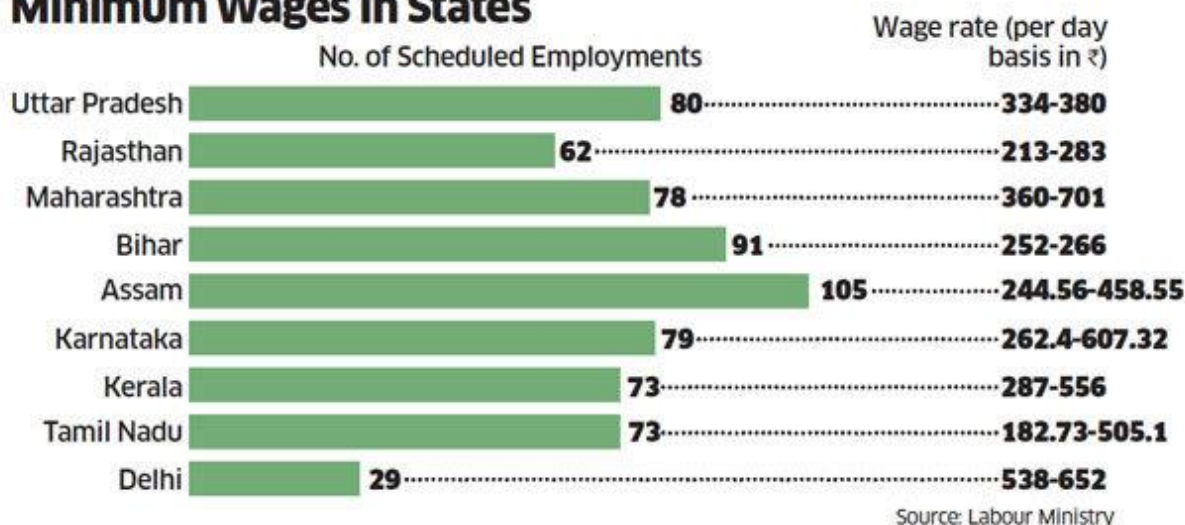
- Finance Minister reiterated that the government would move forward on the merger of the three state-run general insurance companies as announced in the previous Budget.
- In the February 2018 Budget, the government had announced a plan to merge three public sector general insurance firms—National Insurance, United India Insurance and Oriental Insurance. Subsequently, it planned to list the merged entity on the stock exchanges.
- However, there has been little progress on the merger since, even as the financial health of the firms deteriorated in terms of losses, falling market share and poor solvency ratios.
- There is a need for immediate recapitalisation as per their current balance sheet position, according to which they are either on or below the minimum required insolvency ratio of 1.5
- According to rough estimates, the need for immediate recapitalisation is at least Rs 2,000-3,000 crore in each of the companies, while the collective requirement is close to Rs 12,000-13,000 crore.
- The three sets of challenges identified are integration of work culture, rolling out common software, and rationalisation of branches. In total, the three insurers have close to 6,000 offices across the country.

Wage Code Bill

- The government introduced the labour codes on wages and on occupational safety, health and working conditions in the Lok Sabha.

- The Code Of Wages, 2019 is applicable to employees in organised sector and unorganised sector, while the central government will continue to make wage related decisions for railways, mines, oil fields, and central public sector undertakings.
- It subsumes The Payment of Wages Act, 1936; The Minimum Wages Act, 1948; The Payment of Bonus Act, 1965; and The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976.

Minimum Wages in States



Need for Wage code:

- 62% of the workforce is made up of casual workers who need the right to minimum wages
- Present minimum wages act is complicated
- 33% of the workers are underpaid than the indicative minimum wages in 2009-10

Features:

- Consolidate India's 44 labour laws into four codes in order to rationalize labour laws and improve ease of doing business.
- Benefit two fifths of its population, or 50 crore workers
- End a complicated wage system and bring down the number of wage rates from 2,000-plus to around 300
- This will ensure that process of registration and filing of returns will get standardised and streamlined. With various labour related definitions getting standardised, it is expected that there shall be less dispute
- Now 60% of workers are not covered under the Minimum Wages Act. The new law will give the right to minimum wages to the entire 50 crore workforce
- Ensures timely payment of wages.
- The floor wage will be fixed by the Centre on the basis of recommendations of a central advisory board, which would be represented by members of trade unions, employers' association, state government and independent experts
- This will lead to transparency, accountability, better enforcement of labour laws and better utilisation of available workforce

Occupation identification:

- There are four skill levels — unskilled, semiskilled, skilled and highly skilled — while geography can be plains, hilly and undulated, coastal, urban and rural, among others.
- The occupation category is done away with. The states have an 'and/or' option while considering skills and geography to decide on a minimum wage rate.
- A state may well decide to have one wage rate if it goes for one geographical parameter

Concerns:

- Applies only to people earning less than `24,000 a month in scheduled employments, leaving out a large number of workers
- There will still be no single national minimum wage rate.
- the floor wage might be worse than the market wage rate in which case the entire purpose of having minimum wages and improving standard of living collapses
- The **Equal Remuneration Act, 1976**, prohibits gender based discrimination in terms of wages, recruitment and conditions of service. The Code has omitted this act
- It will be tough for the government now to ensure implementation and redress even if there is a 10% lapse in compliance – or 5 crore complaints – for the 50 crore workers the law aims to cover.
- The removal of essential powers of labour inspectors

MNREGA

- MNREGA workers will not come under code wage bill
- MNREGA payout is not exactly a wage.
- It is a scheme, which does not have a strict employer-employee relation.
- Its wages will continue to be fixed by the Rural Development Ministry.

Connecting the dots:

- A 'national minimum wage' is a good idea, but its computation is cause for concern. Analyse
- The proxy economic exercise on gauging the gap between actual average wage of casual workers and the national floor level minimum wages (NFLMW) hides more than it reveals. Comment

Labour Code Bill

Context:

- The Union Cabinet approved The Industrial Relations Code Bill, 2019 recently
- It proposes to amalgamate The Trade Unions Act, 1926, The Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946, and The Industrial Disputes Act, 1947.
- It is the third code under labour reforms.
- There will be total four broad labour codes .
- Code on Wages has already been approved.
- Code on Occupational Safety, Healthy and Working Conditions Bill was introduced in the Budget session this year.
- Code on Social Security is in the pre-legislative stage.

Trade Unions Act, 1926

- The Act provides for the registration of the trade unions with the 'Registrars of Trade Unions' set up in different States.

The Industrial Disputes Act, 1947

- The objective of the Industrial Disputes Act is to secure industrial peace and harmony
- It provides mechanism and procedure for the investigation and settlement of industrial disputes by Conciliation, arbitration and adjudication are way which is provided under the statute.
- The main and ultimate objective of this act is “Maintenance of Peaceful work culture in the Industry in India”.

The Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946

- The Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act 1946 requires that employers have terms including working hours, leave, productivity goals, dismissal procedures or worker classifications, approved by a government body.

Features of the The Industrial Relations Code Bill, 2019

- It offers some degree of flexibility on government permissions for retrenchment,
- The most important aspect of the Bill is that it presents the legal framework for ushering in the concept of ‘fixed-term employment’ through contract workers on a pan-India basis.
- With the introduction of fixed-term employment, they will be able to hire workers directly under a fixed-term contract.
- Under fixed-term employment system, companies can hire contract workers directly instead of hiring through contractors.
- There will be flexibility to tweak the length of the contract based on the seasonality of industry.
- These workers will be treated on a par with regular workers during the tenure of the contract.
- The bill provides setting up of a two-member tribunal which will lead to speedier disposal of cases.
- The threshold required for government permission for retrenchment has been kept unchanged at 100 employees.
- There is flexibility for changing the threshold which can be done through notification.
- At present, any company having 100 workers or more has to seek government approval for retrenchment.
- The fixed-term employment will also help in the flow of social security benefits to all workers along with making it easier for companies to hire and fire.

Disadvantages/apprehensions regarding the Bill:

- Unclear provision regarding retrenchment would lead to uncertainty, and
- Discretionary behaviour during implementation by the central or state government may not be in favour of workers.
- Any discretion in law leads to uncertainty, lack of clarity, discriminatory implementation, and provides scope for unnecessary usage.
- The government should be clear whether to increase the threshold or retain the threshold and face the consequences.
- This is a kind of appeasement to both sides, which will not actually provide relief to either of them.

- Fixed-term employment needs to be introduced with adequate safeguards, otherwise it runs the risk of encouraging conversion of permanent employment into fixed-term employment.

Connecting the dots:

- The Code on Industrial Relations (IR) Bill, 2019 is considered to be the most contentious labour law amendments. Analyse.

Wages Act, 2019

Context:

Central government has proposed the rules to the **Labour Code on Wages Act 2019**

Background

- Wages had always been the central concern of workers. The provisions of the Minimum Wages Act and the Payment of Wages Act do not cover substantial number of workers, as the applicability of both these Acts is restricted to the Scheduled Employments / Establishments.
- On the other hand, the biggest issues faced by employers in India is the number of laws governing the employer-employee relationship. This issue has been on the government's radar for a very long period of time.
- The government has thus introduced four codes that would subsume 44 labour laws, which are (i) industrial relations, (ii) wages, (iii) social security, (iv) safety, welfare and working conditions. This would also allow for uniformity in the coverage of various labour laws that are in force.
- Notably, the Centre started notifying a uniform national floor level minimum wage from 1996, which is non-binding on states.
- The national floor level was last revised by 10% to Rs 176 a day in July 2017.

Features of the Labour code of Wages Act, 2019

- The Code consolidates, subsumes & transforms four central labour laws relating to wages, namely: (a) the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976; (b) the Minimum Wages Act, 1948 ("**MWA**"); (c) the Payment of Wages Act, 1936 ("**PWA**"); and (d) the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965 ("**PBA**")
- Earlier there were 12 definitions of wages in various labour laws, leading to litigation besides difficulty in its implementation. Under the Code, the **definition has been simplified**
- The labour code on wages has a provision for a minimum wage. Hence, it brings **uniform standard of living across the country**. It is expected to treat contract labour on par with regular employee to have dignified life. The wage conditions of unskilled workers will also improve.
- The Code introduces a new concept of "**floor wages**", which rates will be fixed by the Central Government taking into account the minimum living standards of a worker. Once the Code is enacted, the minimum rates of wages fixed by the State Government cannot be less than floor wages as determined by the Central Government.
- A tripartite committee comprising representatives of trade unions, employers and the state government would fix floor wages for workers throughout the country.

- It would also ensure that there is no discrimination between men and women as well as transgenders in getting wages.
- Also, the minimum wages across the country would be only linked to factors of skills and geographical regions, while the rest of the factors have been removed.
- Bill provides appointment of a **Facilitator** to carry out inspections, and information to employers and employees for better compliance.
- Inspection will be done on the basis of an inspection scheme, which will include a web-based inspection schedule. The inspection scheme will be decided by the central or state governments.

Merits of the Act

- The act is expected to benefit over 50 crores employees across the country
- Simplified definition of labour is expected to reduce litigation and also reduce compliance cost for employers.
- The Act would be a 'game-changer' to the status quo as far as the lives of workers in the informal sector are concerned. It was believed that informal workers account for 93% of the total working population and contribute to over 60% of India's GDP
- The act would revive the crisis of the current economic slowdown, as the law proposes to **increase income capacity and the purchasing power of the informal workers**.
- The act promotes **digitization** which will also lead to **formalisation of economy**.
- Multiplicity of laws are removed which thus facilitates easier **compliance by establishments**.

Criticism of the rules proposed under the Act

- The floor wages in effect would mean that "starvation wages" which currently guarantees just ₹178 per day, will continue to exist. Instead States should have been incentivized to follow uniform standards across India
- 'Need-Based Minimum Wage' (covering nutrition, health care, education, housing and provisions for old age as well) should have been treated as a fundamental constitutional right for every citizen of India, in the draft rules.
- Another huge concern with the law is in its provision of an arbitrary deduction of wages (up to 50% of monthly wages) based on performance, damage or loss, advances, etc.
- Draft rules also do not clarify the governance and institutional structure for the "labour inspection system" in the law.
- The International Labour Organisation's Labour Inspection Convention of 1947 (Convention C081) — it has been ratified by India — provides for a well-resourced and independent inspectorate with provisions to allow thorough inspections and free access to workplaces. Ignoring these provisions, the draft rules propose another ad-hoc and unclear mechanism called the "inspection scheme"
- Also, since the act impacts the lives of millions of workers, the act should have been discussed in detail in Parliament, however it was passed in haste without much discussion

Connecting the dots:

- Critically examine the provisions of the Labour code of Wages Act, 2019.

[International Financial Services Centres Authority Bill](#)

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III – Economy

In News

- The bill provides for unified authority for regulating all financial services in international financial services centres (IFSCs) in the country.
- IFSC is a jurisdiction that provides financial services to resident and non-resident Indians in foreign currencies.
- Currently, the banking, capital markets and insurance sectors in IFSC are **regulated by multiple regulators, i.e. RBI, SEBI and IRDAI**.
- The dynamic nature of business in the IFSCs necessitates a high degree of inter-regulatory coordination. It also requires clarifications and frequent amendments in the existing regulations governing financial activities in IFSCs.
- The development of financial services and products in IFSCs would **require focussed and dedicated regulatory interventions**. Hence, a need for a **unified financial regulator for IFSCs in India** to provide world class regulatory environment to financial market participants.
- Further, this would also be essential from an ease of doing business perspective. The unified authority would also provide the much needed impetus to further development of IFSC in India in-sync with the global best practices.
- The Lok Sabha Secretariat has conveyed that this is a Finance Bill under Article 117(1) of the Constitution and that it should be introduced in Lok Sabha accordingly with the recommendation of the President under Article 117(1) and 274(1) of the Constitution

Do You Know?

- London, New York and Singapore can be counted as global financial centres. Many emerging IFSCs around the world, such as Shanghai and Dubai, are aspiring to play a global role in the years to come
- An expert panel headed by former World Bank economist Percy Mistry submitted a report on making Mumbai an international financial centre in 2007.
- However, the global financial crisis that unfolded in 2008 made countries including India cautious about rapidly opening up their financial sectors.
- **GIFT (Gujarat International Finance Tech-City)**, located in Gandhinagar is India's first International Financial Services Centre.

[Govt. to sell off its stake in BPCL, 4 others PSUs](#)

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III – Economy

In News

- The cabinet committee on economic affairs (CCEA) has cleared one of the government's largest asset-sale exercises involving five companies.
- Government will sell its entire 53.29% stake in **BPCL** to a strategic buyer, ceding management control. A strategic investor will get access to BPCL's refining capacity of 37 million tonnes per annum and around 15,000 retail outlets in the world's third largest oil consuming nation

- The proposed sale will, however, exclude the strategic Numaligarh Refinery Ltd (NRL) in Assam, which will be later sold to another state-run firm, given India's need to secure fuel supplies for security forces in the north-east.
- The government will also sell its entire 63.75% stake in the **Shipping Corporation of India (SCI)** and will cede management control.
- Similarly, it will sell its 30.8% stake in the **Container Corporation of India (CONCOR)** and hand over management control.
- The government will sell its entire 74.23% stake in **THDCIL** and its 100% stake in the **North Eastern Electric Power Corporation (Neepco)** to NTPC Ltd. and also cede control.
- The resources unlocked by the strategic disinvestment of these CPSEs would be used to finance the social sector/developmental programmes of the Government benefiting the public.
- The government has set a disinvestment target of ₹1.05 lakh crore for FY-2019-20. However, it has managed to collect only ₹17,364.26 crore until November 18, 2019.

Disinvestment in India

Context:

- The government announced that it would sell stakes in several public sector undertakings (PSUs) and even give up management control in some.
- Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (BPCL), Shipping Corporation of India (SCI) and Container Corporation of India Ltd (CONCOR).
- The government will transfer its 74.2% stake in THDC India Limited (formerly Tehri Hydro Development Corporation of India).
- Its 100% stake in North Eastern Electric Power Corporation Limited (NEEPCO) to another public sector unit and power distribution major, NTPC Ltd.

Disinvestment:

- Disinvestment is the action of an organization or government selling or liquidating an asset or subsidiary.
- Also refers to capital expenditure reductions, which can facilitate the re-allocation of resources to more productive areas within an organization or government-funded project.

Objective of Disinvestment:

- To maximize the return on investment (ROI) on expenditures related to capital goods, labor and infrastructure.
- Disinvestment is carried out for a variety of reasons, from strategic to political and environmental. For example, several institutional investors have begun divesting their holdings in fossil fuels under pressure from customers and non-profit organizations.

Why do governments disinvest?

- Some believe that "the government has no business being in business".
- Government's role is to facilitate a healthy business environment but the core competence of a government does not lie in selling fuel or steel at a profit
- With governments always having to spend more than they earn through taxes and other means, additional income from the proceeds of a stake sale is always welcome.

- In the case of India now, it has fallen to the government to spend higher amounts on infrastructure to boost economic growth, along with its commitments on health and education.

Disinvestment in India:

- Under then Prime Minister **P.V. Narasimha Rao**, the country saw a steady flow of disinvestment decisions.
- Privatisation, where buyers took over management control, began later under the National Democratic Alliance governments.
- **Arun Shourie**, the country's first Disinvestment Minister, gave an impetus to the exercise.
- He is credited with the privatisation of Maruti, Bharat Aluminium Company Ltd., Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited and Hindustan Zinc through the strategic sale process.
- Major divestment steps were taken in past by BJP-led NDA government (1999-2004), made four strategic disinvestment's – in Bharat Aluminium Company (BALCO) and Hindustan Zinc (both to Sterlite Industries), Indian Petrochemicals Corporation Limited (to Reliance Industries) and VSNL(to the Tata group), While track record and future of these companies were good.
- BJP led NDA Government (1999-2004) has also been criticized for divestment of IPCL, in which Reliance industries bid very high as compared to other competitors.
- Again in starting from 2014 to 2018 BJP led NDA government divested total Rs 1,94,646 crore , which also includes minority and majority stake sale of most profitable Public sector undertaking companies, like ONGC-HPCL deal worth Rs 36,915 crore.
- In budgetary announcement of financial year 2017-18 The Finance Minister noted that the government initiated strategic disinvestment in 24 PSUs, including Air India, this fiscal.

Current situation:

- India is currently facing an economic slowdown in which indirect tax collections are below par.
- The government has cut corporate tax rates hoping that companies will use these savings for price cuts or dividend payouts, or for investments that create jobs.
- As consumption is highly muted, the Central government may look to place more disposable cash in the hands of the taxpayer through lowering personal income tax rates.
- As a result of cut and to-be-cut tax rates, the government would have less and less cash for its own expenditure in infrastructure and the social sector.
- If the fiscal deficit goes out of hand, lowering the country's investment grade — could fall on India's neck.
- This would make any future foreign currency loans costlier, both for the country and for large Indian conglomerates whose fortunes rise and fall with the local economy.

Conclusion:

- Meeting the year's disinvestment target, if not exceeding it, would give the government some respite from the string of bad fiscal news that has been flowing its way.

Connecting the dots:

- Why do governments divest stake in public sector undertakings? Examine

[Reserve Bank supersedes DHFL board](#)

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains III – Economy**In News**

- RBI has decided to supersede the board of troubled mortgage financier Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd. (DHFL) and said bankruptcy proceedings would be initiated against the company.
- RBI said the action was taken due to governance concerns and default by the entity in meeting payment obligations.
- This is the first instance of RBI superseding the board of a non-banking financial company.
- DHFL could be the first financial services company to face insolvency proceedings at the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) after the government issued a notification specifying the categories of financial service providers that can be taken up for resolution under the generic framework of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code.
- Till now, financial services firms were kept out of bankruptcy proceedings.
- DHFL, facing a cash crunch since last year after banks choked lending, has overall debt of ₹80,000 crore. Banks have exposure of ₹40,000 crore to the company.
- While efforts were made by banks for resolution, the process hit a roadblock as markets regulator SEBI did not allow mutual funds having exposure to DHFL to be a part of the resolution plan

GDP slump will hit \$5 tn target, warns NITI Aayog**Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III- Economy****In news:**

- The road to a \$5 trillion economy by 2025 is beset with many speed breakers
- A measure of growth without accounting for inflation — has to be at least 12.4% on an average if that target has to be reached.
- Domestic investment and consumption are the only dependable drivers for sustainable re-acceleration of the economy.
- According to data he provided, gross fixed capital formation in the sub-sector of 'dwellings, other buildings and structures' fell from 12.8% of GDP in 2011-12 to 6.9% in 2017-18
- The slowdown in the domestic market is also because of limited availability of capital with the banks which are tied down due to high non-performing assets in heavy industry and infrastructure.
- In the power sector, there is a high cross-subsidisation in favour of residential tariff leading to very high industrial tariffs
- The electric power transmission and distribution (T&D) losses in India stand at 19%, higher than that of Bangladesh and Vietnam.
- Urgent need to focus on export of high-value technology and manufacturing goods instead of primary goods currently exporter
- 98% of phones exported by India are in the low-value category, to the Middle East and Africa.

An uphill task

Nominal GDP slid to 8% in Q1FY20, the slowest ever since 2014, as both private consumption growth and investment rate dropped below 5%. A NITI-Aayog document warn that a \$5 trillion economy is possible only if nominal GDP grows at 12.4%. Graph shows past rates and ideal growth needed for this:

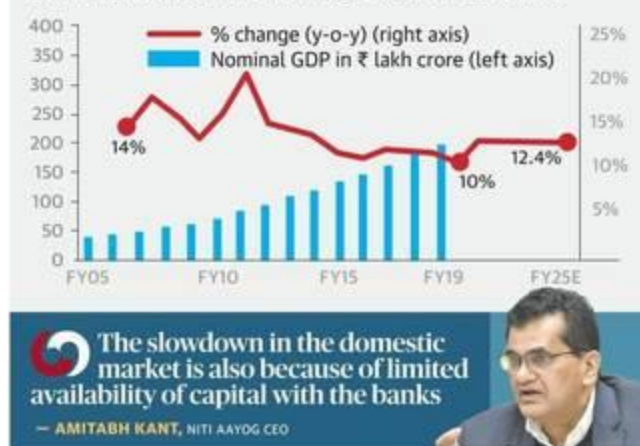


Image source: [The Hindu](https://www.thehindu.com)

Bengaluru is India's top-ranked city in new global inclusive prosperity index

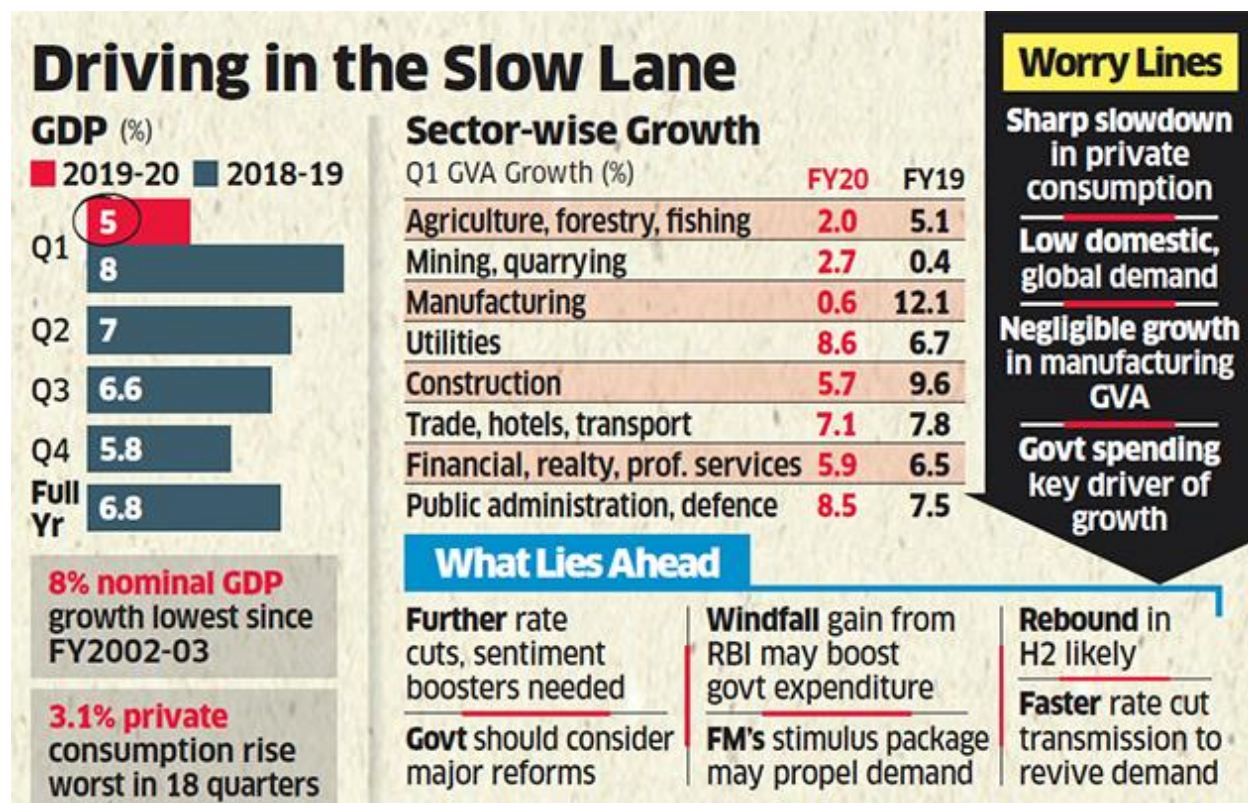
Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II- Report

- Bangalore emerged as India's highest ranked city at No. 83 in a new index of the world's 113 cities in terms of economic and social inclusivity, topped by Zurich in Switzerland.
- The first-ever Prosperity & Inclusion City Seal and Awards (PICSA) Index, released in the Basque Country capital of Bilbao in northern Spain
- Delhi at 101 and Mumbai at 107 are the other Indian cities in the index, with the top 20 awarded a PICSA Seal as the world's highest-ranked cities building inclusive prosperity.
- PICSA provides a new measure of economic productivity that goes beyond GDP to provide a holistic account of how well people are doing in the economy and which have the populations that are most empowered to contribute to its economy and share in its benefits, explained Asier Alea Castanos, Director of Strategic Programmes at the Regional Council of Biscay, in reference to the index launch
- Zurich, number one, scores strongly across all measures, particularly on quality of life, work, housing, leisure, safety, and education — with the Swiss higher education system attaining an especially high score.

India's first ever slowdown

Context:

- Since Independence, there have been at least eight episodes of significant GDP growth rate declines over two years or more — 1961-62 and 1962-63, 1965-66 and 1966-67, 1971-72 and 1972-73, 1984-85 to 1987-88, 1990-91 to 1992-93, 2000-01 to 2002-03, 2012-13 and 2013-14, and the current one from 2018-19.
- Gross domestic product (GDP) grew 5% in the first quarter of FY20, data released by the government showed, marking the slowest growth since the fourth quarter of FY13. GDP growth was 8% in the year-earlier quarter and 5.8% in the preceding one.
- China's economy grew 6.2% in the June quarter.



Recession:

- The technical term for the same is growth recession.
- A recession is defined in economics as three consecutive quarters of contraction in GDP. But since India is a large developing economy, contraction is a rarity.
- The last instance of negative growth for India was in 1979.
- A growth recession is more commonplace where the economy continues to grow but at a slower pace than usual for a sustained period, what India has been facing nowadays.

Consumption:

- The growth of the Indian economy had been predominated by consumption inclusive of both — Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE) as well as the Government Final Consumption Expenditure (GFCE).
- The recent sharp fall in PFCE in the June quarter to 3.1 per cent compared to 7.2 per cent in the March quarter has significantly contributed to the recent slowdown.

Investment:

- Major component of India's GDP is investment, induced by both — private and government sectors. It has been a key driver of growth since the liberalisation of 1991, fell by 6.2 percentage points in 2014-19 than in 2011-14.

Reasons:

- Partly driven by **domestic problems** like neglected farmers
- Weakening **global economy**
- Mr. Trump's fusillade of **trade conflicts**.
- Last weekend's attack on two Saudi Arabia's oil facilities, which sent the global price of oil soaring, underscored just how **vulnerable** India and other developing countries are to external factors beyond their control.
- The overhang of **bad bank loans**, coupled with recent defaults by nonbank financial firms, has curbed lending to consumers and businesses.
- Policy decisions by India's central and state governments have worsened the country's downturn

For example Auto manufacturers: New safety and emissions standards increased the cost of vehicles, nine states raised taxes on car sales, and the banks and finance companies that fund dealers and 80 percent of consumer car purchases were paralyzed by the credit crunch.

- The textile industry, which employs about 45 million people and is India's second-largest employer after agriculture, is emblematic of the country's distress.

Conclusion:

- The slowdown in economy is also expected to adversely affect income growth which, in turn, would further dent consumption demand. A favourable low base effect, however, would be seen third quarter onwards, which will help push the headline growth number higher.

Connecting the dots:

- Unlike all the earlier downturns whose precursors/triggers were supply-side constraints in food and forex, macroeconomic imprudence or external shocks, what we are now experiencing is more of a "western-style" slowdown exacerbated by internal policy misadventures. Analyse

AGRICULTURE

Norms eased for onion imports

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains III – Economy

In News

- To keep a lid on rising retail prices of onion which have skyrocketed up to Rs 100 per kg, the Centre decided to import “substantial” quantity of onions from Dubai and other countries to augment the domestic availability.
- The government is also trying to facilitate import of onion through private traders from Egypt, Iran, Turkey and Afghanistan, for which **phytosanitary and fumigation norms have been liberalised till November 30**
- NAFED had a 55,000-tonne buffer stock. The continued high prices have resulted in this buffer dwindling to 1,500 tonnes
- The tight supply was caused mostly by late rains destroying the early kharif harvest and disrupting storage and transport, even as last season’s rabi stocks ran out.

National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd.(NAFED),

- It was established in 1958, is registered under the **Multi State Co-operative Societies Act**.
- **Composition:** Agricultural farmers are the main members of Nafed, who have the authority to say in the form of members of the General Body in the working of Nafed.
- The objectives of the NAFED shall be to organize, promote and develop marketing, processing and storage of agricultural, horticultural and forest produce, distribution of agricultural machinery, implements and other inputs, undertake inter-state, import and export trade etc.
- It functions under Ministry of Agriculture.
- NAFED is now one of the largest procurement as well as marketing agencies for agricultural products in India.
- In 2008, it had established, National Spot Exchange, a Commodities exchange as a joint venture of Financial Technologies (India) Ltd. (FTIL).

e-NAM

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III –Economy

In News

- States were being “cajoled to reject” the agricultural produce marketing committee (APMC) system in favour of **E-NAM i.e. National Agriculture Market which is a pan-India electronic trading (e-trading) portal**.
- It seeks to network the existing physical regulated wholesale market (known as APMC market) through a virtual platform to create a unified national market for agricultural commodities.

- Only 1.6 crore farmers have registered on the portal so far, from among the almost 12 crore cultivators in the country but only about half of those registered have benefited from the platform.
- Out of almost 2,500 APMCs, **585 in 18 States have been connected to the e-NAM portal so far.**
- Interstate trade, which has the potential to give farmers wider market access and better prices, has 21 APMC mandi participants in 8 States so far.
- NABARD is now ready to operationalise a ₹2,000 crore agri-market infrastructure fund aimed at upgrading 585 APMCs and 10,000 gram in agricultural markets

About APMC

- It is a statutory market committee constituted by a State Government in respect of trade in certain notified agricultural or horticultural or livestock products, under the APMC Act issued by that state government.
- The whole geographical area in the State is divided and each one is declared as a market area which is managed by the Market Committee (APMC) constituted by the State Government.
- Once a particular area is declared as a market area and falls under the jurisdiction of a Market Committee, no person or agency is allowed to freely carry on wholesale marketing activities.
- APMC Acts provide that first sale in the notified agricultural commodities produced in the region such as cereals, pulses, edible oilseed, fruits, vegetables etc., can be conducted only under the aegis of the APMC, through its licensed commission agents.
- The producers of agricultural products are thus forced to do their first sale in these markets which in reality works as cartel deny fair price discovery of agricultural produce.

AGRIDEX

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III – Economy

In News

- National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX) has launched India's first agri index — 'NCDEX Agridex', for easy reference to price variations in agricultural commodities.
- Launched with a composition of 10 leading liquid contracts on the NCDEX platform at present which will be tradable after being approved by SEBI
- Leading commodities such as guar seed, guar gum, soybean, chana, mustard seed, and jeera, etc, will be the index's constituents.
- For indices, the NCDEX has partnered with NSE Indices, a leading index service provider, as a third party, to maintain and disseminate real-time NCDEX Agridex values.
- Futures trading on Agridex will enhance overall liquidity on the exchange platform
- The NCDEX's index launch is in continuance with Sebi's plan to broaden its horizon in commodities trading through the introduction of a new set of players and products

Bharatiya Poshan Krishi Kosh

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III – Agriculture

In News

- Ministry of Women and Child Development has launched Bharatiya PoshanKrishiKosh
- It is a **repository of diverse crops** across 128 agro-climatic zones to help **enable better nutritional outcomes**
- It aims to promote and reinforce healthy dietary practices both at the individual and community level and tackle malnutrition in a sustainable manner.
- The kosh helps in reducing malnutrition through a multi-sectoral results-based framework, including agriculture, among women and children across the country.
- Harvard Chan School of Public Health and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation will be a part of this initiative.
- They will document and evaluate promising regional dietary practices and the messaging around them and develop a food atlas on regional agro-food systems.

How do I remove fear of UPSC Prelims?

MAINS - 2020

PEP-2020

What/How should I read for Prelims?

How to manage time?

PEP-2020
PRELIMS EXCLUSIVE PROGRAMME
 EXCLUSIVE MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME FOR PRELIMS
 STARTING FROM JAN - 2020
 6 Months to UPSC PRELIMS

ENVIRONMENT/POLLUTION

Air pollution in Delhi (part 1)

Context:

- All schools in Delhi will be shut until (November 5), after the Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA) ordered a complete shutdown of construction in Delhi, Noida, Gurgaon, Ghaziabad and Greater Noida.
- The action is part of a series of incremental steps to be taken under **the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)**

Why?

- PM 2.5 concentration breached the 300 micrograms per cubic metre mark in the morning.

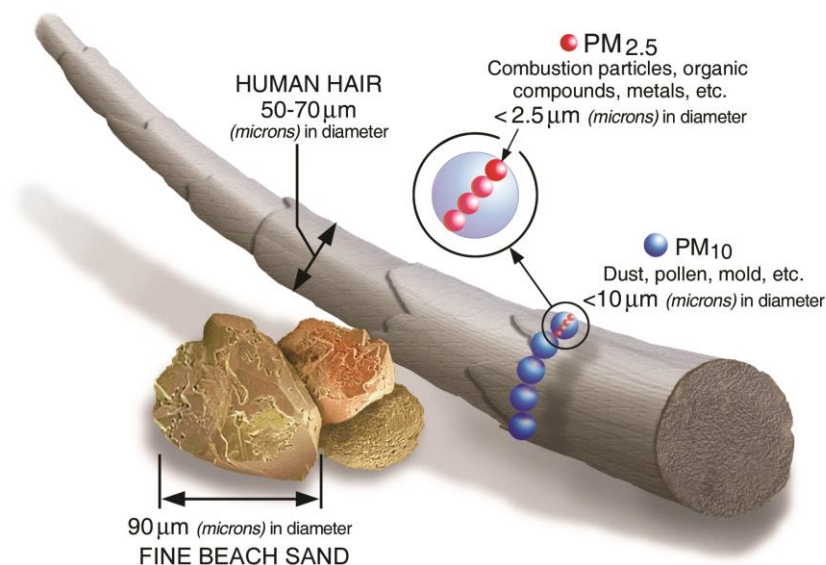
PM(particulate matter):

- Mixture of solid particles and liquid droplets found in the air.
- Some particles, such as dust, dirt, soot, or smoke, are large or dark enough to be seen with the naked eye.
- Others are so small they can only be detected using an electron microscope.

Particle Matter includes:

PM10 : inhalable particles, with diameters that are generally 10 micrometers and smaller; and

PM2.5 : fine inhalable particles, with diameters that are generally 2.5 micrometers and smaller.



Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP):

- It was approved by the Supreme Court in 2016, and notified in 2017.
- It comprises a series of measures that come into force incrementally as pollution increases.
- GRAP is an emergency measure.
- When the air quality moves from the 'Poor' to the 'Very poor' category, the measures listed under both categories ('Poor' as well as 'Very poor') have to be followed.
- If air quality reaches the 'Severe+' stage, GRAP mandates that schools must be shut down, and the odd-even road-space rationing scheme must be implemented.

Air pollution in India:

- Estimated to kill 1.5 million people every year
- India has the world's highest death rate from chronic respiratory diseases and asthma, according to the WHO.

Air pollution in Delhi:

- In Delhi, poor quality air irreversibly damages the lungs of 2.2 million or 50 percent of all children
- The air quality in Delhi, according to a WHO survey of 1600 world cities, is the worst of any major city in the world.
- Air quality index of Delhi is generally Moderate (101-200) level between January to September, and then it drastically deteriorates to Very Poor (301-400), Severe (401-500) or Hazardous (500+) levels in three months between October to December, due to various factors including **stubble burning, fire crackers burning during Diwali and cold weather**

Connecting the dots:

- Nation's capital is called as a "gas chamber". Critically analyse

[Air pollution in Delhi \(part 2\)](#)

Context:

- All schools in Delhi will be shut until (November 5) ,after the Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA) ordered a complete shutdown of construction in Delhi, Noida, Gurgaon, Ghaziabad and Greater Noida.

Causes of poor air quality

- Lack of active monitoring
- Motor vehicle emissions
- wood-burning fires, fires on agricultural land, exhaust from diesel generators, dust from construction sites, burning garbage.
- **The Badarpur Thermal Power Station**, a coal-fired power plant, is another major source of air pollution in Delhi.
- In view of the detrimental effect to the environment, the power plant has been permanently shut down since 15 October 2018
- The drift/mist emissions from the wet cooling towers is also a source of particulate matter as they are widely used in industry and other sectors for dissipating heat in cooling systems.
- 10% of Delhi population uses wood, crop residue, cow dung, and coal for cooking. (Census-India, 2011}
- Agricultural stubble burning

- Heavy metal rich fire-crackers

Effects:

- Nearly 2.2 million children in Delhi have irreversible lung damage due to the poor quality of the air.
- Pollution can lower children's immune system and increase the risks of cancer, epilepsy, diabetes and even adult-onset diseases like multiple sclerosis
- Poor air quality is a cause of reduced lung capacity, headaches, sore throats, coughs, fatigue, lung cancer, and early death.

Control measures:

- All Delhi schools will remain shut for few days
- No construction and demolition work for next few days
- All diesel generator sets banned for the next few days, except at hospitals and in emergencies.
- The coal-based Badarpur power plant shut down.
- The Environment Department will launch an app to monitor the burning of leaves
- Vacuum cleaning of roads
- Water sprinkling.

Significant incident

- In December 2017 during a test match between Sri Lanka and Indian cricket teams in New Delhi, Sri Lanka players began to feel breathing problems and several players vomited both in the rest rooms and in the field and had to use face masks until the match was stopped.

Connecting the dots:

- Urgent correctives are needed, or lethal winter pollution will become the new normal. Justify

Paris climate pact

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains III – Environment

In News

- China and France stated that the Paris climate pact was “irreversible”, showing a united front after Washington formally withdrew from the accord this week.

About Paris Climate deal

- The deal unites all the world's nations in a single agreement on tackling climate change for the first time in history.
- To keep global temperatures “well below” 2.0C (3.6F) above pre-industrial times and “endeavour to limit” them even more, to 1.5C
- To limit the amount of greenhouse gases emitted by human activity to the same levels that trees, soil and oceans can absorb naturally, beginning at some point between 2050 and 2100
- To review each country's contribution to cutting emissions every five years so they scale up to the challenge
- For rich countries to help poorer nations by providing “climate finance” to adapt to climate change and switch to renewable energy.

For impact on US withdrawal from the deal, refer

- <https://iasbaba.com/2017/09/india-radio-air-implications-us-withdrawal-paris-climate-agreement/>

Zero Carbon Law

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

In News

- New Zealand's Parliament passed The Zero-Carbon Act, which will commit New Zealand to zero carbon emissions by 2050 or sooner, as part of the country's attempts to meet its Paris climate accord commitments.
- This is the first legislation in the world to make a legally binding commitment to living within 1.5 degrees Celsius of global warming.
- The key aims of the Act include:
 - Reduce all greenhouse gases (except methane) to net zero by 2050,
 - Reduce emissions of biogenic methane (produced from biological sources) up to 24-47 percent below 2017 levels by 2050 and to 10 percent below 2017 levels by 2030
 - Establish an independent Climate Change Commission
 - Establish a system of emissions budget.

About Biogenic methane

- It is emitted by livestock, waste treatment and wetlands.
- The Act proposes separate targets for biogenic methane because methane is a **short-lived gas** and degrades into the atmosphere over the decades even though it is a more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide

Do You Know?

- New Zealand is well positioned to undertake steps to mitigate climate change. Its capacity to generate electricity from renewable resources is at 80 per cent, and it is working towards phasing out the use of offshore oil and gas.
- New Zealand government anticipates that GDP and household incomes in New Zealand will continue to rise, minimising the cost of adapting to climate change for the citizens.
- Globally, there are over 1500 laws on climate change, over 100 of which were introduced after the introduction of the Paris Agreement and over 28 of them explicitly reference the agreement.

Radio channel to guide farmers on climate change

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III –Environment Conservation

In News

- The Maharashtra State Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices is planning to start a dedicated community radio channel to inform farmers about climate change and help resolve their problems.
- The radio station will be based at Lodaga village in Latur district

- Climate change is a major problem for the agriculture sector in Maharashtra as well as in the country. Maharashtra has experienced a moody climate in past few months, where it saw heavy monsoon rains in Satara and Sangli and the post-monsoon showers damaged crops in Marathwada region.
- To address the issues of cultivators, the commission will form a committee of five to six members, comprising experts from **KrishiVigyan Kendras**, the State agriculture department and private companies working in the field of agriculture and technology.

KrishiVigyan Kendra (KVK)

- They are **agricultural extension centres created by ICAR** (Indian Council for Agricultural Research) and its affiliated institutions at district level to provide various types of farm support to the agricultural sector.
- The first KVK was established during 1974 (Pondichery) .
- The mandate of KVK is Technology Assessment and Demonstration for its Application and Capacity Development of farmers.
- KVK would produce quality technological products (seed, planting material, bio-agents, livestock) and make it available to farmers, organize frontline extension activities, identify and document selected farm innovations and converge with ongoing schemes and programmes, so as to improve agricultural productivity.

Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)

- It is an autonomous organisation under Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare , Government of India.
- Formerly known as Imperial Council of Agricultural Research, it was **established on 16 July 1929** as a registered society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 in pursuance of the report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture.
- The ICAR has its headquarters at New Delhi.
- The Council is the apex body for co-ordinating, guiding and managing research and education in agriculture including horticulture, fisheries and animal sciences in the entire country.

Climate change is harming health of children

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II – Health

In News

- According to a major new report published in The Lancet, Climate change is already damaging the health of the world's children and is set to endanger the well-being of an entire generation, unless the world meets the target to limit warming to well below 2°C
- The report notes that as temperatures rise, **infants will bear the greatest burden of malnutrition and rising food prices.**
- Average yield potential of maize and rice has declined almost 2% in India since the 1960s, with malnutrition already responsible for two-thirds of the deaths of children under five years.

- Also, children will suffer most from the rise in infectious diseases — with climatic suitability for the Vibrio bacteria that cause cholera rising 3% a year in India since the early 1980s, the study warns.
- Diarrhoeal infections, a major cause of child mortality, will spread into new areas, whilst deadly heat waves could soon become the norm
- The public health gains achieved over the past 50 years, through various government initiatives, could soon be reversed by the changing climate

India's first Geochemical Baseline Atlas released in Hyderabad

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III –Environment

In News

- In a first, CSIR- National Geophysical Research Institute, Hyderabad has brought out the 'Geochemical Baseline Atlas' of India for environment management purpose.
- The 44 maps of oxides and trace elements over the entire nation aim to document the **concentration and distribution of the chemical elements in the soils of India**.
- The map trace elements from top soil i.e. top 25 cm depth and bottom soil at 100 cm depth from the year 2006 to 2011.
- With human activities and natural processes continuously modifying the chemical composition of our surroundings, the maps will form the backbone **for environment management** particularly the land use policies by government.
- It will help in understanding how soil pollution is contributing to groundwater contamination.
- It will also help in finding out if the damages are caused by a particular industry in the region and thus helps government take appropriate action
- The baseline map of India will help to plan the land use in different parts of the country. For example, a toothpaste manufacturing industry, which use high concentration of Strontium, cannot be in a place where soil is already having high baseline concentration of Strontium
- This is the third map among the series of maps published by NDRI. Earlier, The Gravity map of India and Seismic map of India were released by the research institute.

Stubble Burning

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains III – Environment

In News

- The Punjab government has decided to pay ₹2,500 per acre as compensation to small and marginal farmers, who have not burnt paddy residue in the ongoing harvesting season
- Farmers' unions and agriculture experts feel that the move may not fetch the desired results as the compensation is only to those who own land up to five acres
- The government data shows that between October 1 and November 13, as many as 48,689 cases of farm fires were reported in Punjab. Last year, during the same period there were 44,845 such incidents

- Stubble burning, close to the autumn season every year, has been a **key contributing factor to air pollution across the northern region**, including Delhi.
- For management of paddy straw, the Centre and the State government are providing **subsidised agro-machines and equipment to farmers** and cooperative societies to achieve zero burning, yet farmers continue to burn the crop residue claiming lack of alternatives.
- The long term solution lies in alternative uses of residue for which the State government needs to infuse investment so as utilize the stubble collected Ex: bioethanol production, fodder for animals, use for bedding material for animals, mushroom cultivation and so on.

Centre, Punjab at odds over stubble burning

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III- Environment

- With paddy harvesting at its fag end in the key grain producing State of Punjab, both the Central and State governments released data on stubble burning.
- Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar told the Rajya Sabha that the events had declined 19% this year, including a 16.8% reduction in Punjab.
- **Punjab's Pollution Control Board (PCB) data show an increase of 2.3% in the number of incidents.**
- The Centre's data come from the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), monitors stubble burning in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh using satellite data.
- PCB routinely counts stubble burning incidents from September 24, given that paddy harvesting begins in early to mid-September.
- The burnt area figure, which is compiled at the end of the season, gives the actual ground reality about farm fires. Last year, the burnt area had decreased by 9.95% in comparison with 2017.
- The burning of crop residue is regulated under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.

GERMANY'S CLIMATE PROTECTION ACT

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III- Environment

In News

- The German parliament passed the Climate Protection Act in an attempt to reach its climate target by 2030
- This will be Germany's first climate action law.
- With this bill, a price on carbon emissions in the transport and heating sectors will be imposed along with some other measures to combat climate change.
- The bill consists of emissions targets for different sectors of the economy such as transport, energy and housing.
- Flying domestically and within Europe will be made more expensive, due to increase in aviation tax.

- From 2021, companies that market diesel and petrol, heating oil and natural gas in the country will need to obtain pollution rights for the amount of greenhouse gases they emit. This will be regulated through a **national emissions trading mechanism**

Do You Know?

- Germany wants to save over 55 % of its greenhouse gas emissions compared to 1990.
- Recently, New Zealand passed the Zero-Carbon Law in a bid to comply with its Paris climate accord commitments and become a carbon-neutral nation by the year 2050.
- However, unlike New Zealand, where the bill was passed with near-unanimous support, the same was not the case with Germany, where the opposition voted against it
- For more details, refer: <https://iasbaba.com/2019/11/daily-current-affairs-ias-upsc-prelims-and-mains-exam-11th-november-2019/>

PLASTIC PARKS

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III – Environment

In News

- Union government has approved setting up of six plastic parks in different parts of the country.
- These parks will have an ecosystem with infrastructure building and enabling the common facility to consolidate and synergize the capacities of the domestic downstream plastic processing industry.
- These parks are located in Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand and Tamil Nadu. Out of them, the **plastic park at Tamot in Madhya Pradesh** is functional.
- Four new plastic parks have also been given in-principle approval for establishment in West Bengal, Haryana, Uttarakhand and Chhattisgarh.
- Under the scheme, the Union government provides grant funding up to 50 per cent of the project cost. The remaining project cost is to be funded by State Government beneficiary industries and by a loan from financial institutions

Action to combat global warming inadequate: UNEP

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

In News

- Ahead of the 25th edition of the Conference of Parties (COP) in Madrid in December, the UNEP has warned that countries' action to combat global warming is inadequate.
- Unless global greenhouse **gas emissions fall by 7.6% each year between 2020 and 2030**, the world will miss the opportunity to get on track towards the 1.5°C temperature goal of the Paris Agreement
- The report finds that greenhouse **gas emissions had risen 1.5% per year over the last decade** and emissions in 2018, including from land-use changes such as deforestation, hit a new high of 55.3 gigatonnes of CO₂ equivalent.

- On the whole, countries must **cut** greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions at least **three-fold** to have a fighting chance at containing the severest effects of global warming.
- India is the third-largest emitter behind the United States and China respectively. India's per capita emissions, however, are significantly below the United States, China and many others.

Do You Know?

- The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system, and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment.
- **Global Environment Outlook (GEO)** is released by UN Environment Programme (UNEP)

2019 United Nations Climate Change Conference

Context:

- The 2019 United Nations Climate Change Conference, also known as COP25, is to be planned to be held in Madrid, Spain, from 2 to 13 December 2019
- The conference will incorporate the 25th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the 15th meeting of the parties for the Kyoto Protocol (CMP15), and the second meeting of the parties for the Paris Agreement (CMA2).
- will be the role of market-based mechanisms for reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, such as carbon offsets
- Negotiators in Madrid are set to discuss what kind of offsets, if any, should be used to meet the targets set out in the 2015 Paris agreement and how they should be monitored, following some cases where emissions cuts did not materialise.

Significance:

- Carbon offsetting allows a country to help reach its own emissions reduction targets by funding emission reductions in another country.
- Companies are also increasingly using carbon credits to offset their emissions.
- The first major offsetting scheme, the U.N.s clean development mechanism (CDM), was set up under the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, in which 190 countries agreed country-by-country emission reduction targets.
- Underlines India's leadership in the comity of nations committed to global cause of environmental protection and climate justice.
- Implementation of Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) projects under commitment period in accordance with Sustainable Development priorities will attract some investments in India as well.

Clean Development Mechanism (CDM):

- The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), defined in Article 12 of the Protocol, allows a country with an emission-reduction or emission-limitation commitment under the Kyoto Protocol to implement an emission-reduction project in developing countries.

- Such projects can earn saleable certified emission reduction (CER) credits, each equivalent to one tonne of CO₂, which can be counted towards meeting Kyoto targets.
- The mechanism is seen by many as a trailblazer. It is the first global, environmental investment and credit scheme of its kind, providing a standardized emissions offset instrument, CERs.
- A CDM project activity might involve, for example, a rural electrification project using solar panels or the installation of more energy-efficient boilers.
- The mechanism stimulates sustainable development and emission reductions, while giving industrialized countries some flexibility in how they meet their emission reduction or limitation targets.

Background

- The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) seeks to stabilise Green House Gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would minimize interference with the climate system.
- Recognizing that developed countries are principally responsible for the current high levels of Greenhouse Gas (GHGs) in the atmosphere, the Kyoto Protocol places commitments on developed nations to undertake mitigation targets and to provide financial resources and transfer of technology to the developing nations.
- **Developing countries like India have no mandatory mitigation obligations or targets under the Kyoto Protocol.**
- The Kyoto Protocol was adopted in 1997
- First commitment period was from 2008-2012.
- At Doha in 2012, the amendments to Kyoto Protocol for the 2nd commitment period (the Doha Amendment) were successfully adopted for the period 2013- 2020. Developed countries have already started implementing their commitments under the '**opt-in' provisions** of the Doha Amendment.
- India has always emphasized the importance of climate actions by developed country Parties in the pre-2020 period. Besides, it has advocated climate actions based on the principles and provisions of the Convention, such as the principle of **Equity and Common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR & RC)**

Connecting the dots:

- Critics say offsetting emissions reduces incentives for the drastic emissions cuts needed to slow global warming and does not always bring the intended benefits. Analyze

COP25

- The Climate Conference COP25, is the actual Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Climate Change, UNFCCC, which is tasked with making sure that the Convention, (and now the 2015 Paris Agreement, which strengthens the Convention), are being implemented.

Climate change:

- The world is already 1.1°C warmer than it was at the onset of the industrial revolution, and it is already having a significant impact on the world, and on people's lives.

- Global temperatures can be expected to rise by 3.4 to 3.9°C this century, which would bring wide-ranging and destructive climate impacts.

Evidence of the impacts of climate change

- According to the **2019 WMO** levels of heat-trapping greenhouse gases in the atmosphere have reached another new record high.
- This continuing long-term trend means that future generations will be confronted with increasingly severe impacts of climate change, including rising temperatures, more extreme weather, water stress, sea level rise and disruption to marine and land ecosystems.)
- The **UN Environment Programme (UNEP)** 2019 Emissions Gap Report, that greenhouse gas emissions reductions of 7.6 per cent per year from 2020 to 2030 are needed to meet the internationally agreed goal of a 1.5°C increase in temperatures over pre-industrial levels.

September climate change summit:

- Focusing global attention on the climate emergency and the urgent need to significantly scale up action.
- Leaders, from many countries and sectors, stepped up.
- More than seventy countries committed to net zero carbon emissions by 2050
- Small island states together committed to achieve carbon neutrality and to move to 100 per cent renewable energy by 2030.
- Countries from Pakistan to Guatemala, Colombia to Nigeria, New Zealand to Barbados vowed to plant more than 11 billion trees.
- More than 100 leaders in the private sector committed to accelerating the green economy.
- A group of the world's largest asset-owners, controlling \$2 trillion, pledged to move to carbon-neutral investment portfolios by 2050.

Importance of COP:

- UNFCCC had non-binding limits on greenhouse gas emissions for individual countries, and no enforcement mechanism, various extensions to this treaty were negotiated during recent COPs, including most recently the Paris Agreement, adopted in 2015, in which all countries agreed to step up efforts to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial temperatures and boost climate action financing.
- COP25 is the final COP before we enter the defining year of 2020, when many nations must submit new climate action plans. Among the many elements that need to be ironed out is the financing of climate action worldwide.
- Currently, not enough is being done to meet the three climate goals: reducing emissions 45 per cent by 2030; achieving climate neutrality by 2050 (which means a net zero carbon footprint), and stabilizing global temperature rise at 1.5°C by the end of the century.

Conclusion:

- A series of reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and other agencies have been reiterating through the year that unless countries scale up their actions significantly, there is little hope of keeping average global temperatures within 2°C higher than pre-industrial trends.
- Because the clock is ticking on climate change, the world cannot afford to waste more time, and a bold, decisive, ambitious way forward needs to be agreed.

Connecting the dots:

- The world already endures life-threatening effects of global warming through larger and more powerful storms, droughts and flooding



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ILP-2020
 Integrated Learning Programme
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ANIMALS/NATIONAL PARKS IN NEWS

NH-766

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains III – Environmental Conservation

In News

- The Kerala Assembly passed a resolution demanding the Union government to lift the travel restrictions on NH-766 linking Kerala and Karnataka and safeguard the right of the people of north Kerala to move freely.
- The 9 p.m.to 6 a.m. travel on this main artery passing through the Bandipur National Park had been banned since 2009 in the name of protecting wildlife.
- The NH 766 is a survival route for the people of Wayanad, which lacks rail and connectivity and water routes.

Bandipur Tiger Reserve:

- Spread over 990.51 sq km, Bandipur Tiger Reserve is part of interconnected forests that include Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary (Tamil Nadu), Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (Kerala) and Nagarhole National Park (Karnataka).
- A large variety of wildlife including the elephant moves from one stretch to another, cutting the states.

Do You Know?

- **Night traffic would affect behaviour biology** such as breeding and parental care of animals, disrupt their life cycle and make them stray to human habitats.

AVIAN BOTULISM

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III- Environment

- The Indian Veterinary Research Institute confirmed that avian botulism — a neuro-muscular illness caused by a toxin that is produced by a bacterial strain — was the cause of the recent mass mortality of birds, at Sambhar Salt Lake in Rajasthan.
- More than 18,000 carcasses of birds have been removed from the lake and its catchment area so far, raising concern among environmentalists.

Avian Botulism

- Avian Botulism is a strain of botulism that affects wild and captive bird populations, most notably waterfowl.
- This is a paralytic disease brought on by the Botulinum neurotoxin (BoNt) of the bacterium *Clostridium botulinum*. *C. botulinum* can fall into one of 7 different types which are strains A through G.
- Type C BoNt is most frequently associated with waterfowl mortality.
- The Type E strain is also commonly associated with avian outbreaks and is frequently found in fish species which is why most outbreaks occur in piscivorous birds.

Miscellaneous

- The land allocated to the LuLu Group in Visakhapatnam had cancelled due to a dispute it was involved in and environmental norms.
- The project was cancelled for two reasons. **One**, there was a dispute on the land and, **second**, it was against environmental norms. Moreover, standing guidelines are that a single bid should not be accepted

Vulture conservation centre in U.P.

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III – Environment Conservation

In News

- In a major step to conserve the endangered vulture population, the Uttar Pradesh government will set up state's first vulture conservation and breeding centre in Maharajganj district.
- The new centre would be set up in association with Bombay Natural History Society, a wildlife research organization
- It will be the first scientific center of vultures in the state to find out which species is most threatened and the locations where these natural scavengers are thriving
- It will be set up on the lines of **Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre at Pinjore in Haryana**, which is also the first in the country.
- The Indian vulture (*Gyps indicus*) found in India, Pakistan and Nepal has been listed as critically endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List since 2002
- The population of three species of endangered resident Gyps vultures in India – white-backed vulture, long-billed vulture and slender-billed vulture is 6,000, 12,000 and 1,000, respectively



ILP-2020
Integrated Learning Programme
ONLINE
New Batch on 20th November

INFRASTRUCTURE/ENERGY

TRAI fixes ring timings for mobiles, landlines

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains GS-III – Infrastructure (Communications)

In News

- In a new regulation, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), has fixed the ring time for calls made to mobiles at 30 seconds, and those made to landlines at 60 seconds
- While this is a matter which directly impacts the experience of a mobile phone user, the reduction in ringing time also affects the revenue of the operator.
- The operators pay each other an interconnection charge (currently 6 paise/min). The charge is paid by the operator whose customers make a call to the operator whose subscribers receive a call.
- In case of a shorter ringing time, a user may miss the call and may need to call the other user back. Hence, making the operator with a 'shorter ringing time' gain in interconnection charges.
- Last month, Bharti Airtel had cut the ringing time for calls made by its subscribers to 25 seconds from about 45 seconds, in retaliation to a similar move by rival Reliance Jio. The rules by TRAI bring to an end a face-off between two major operators

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)

- It is a statutory body set up by the Government of India under section 3 of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997.
- TRAI is an independent regulator of Telecom Business in India.
- Aims to regulate telecom services, including fixation/revision of tariffs for telecom services which were earlier vested in the Central Government.
- It also regularly issues orders and directions on various subjects such as tariffs, quality of service, interconnections, Direct To Home (DTH) services and mobile number portability.

Telecommunications Dispute Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT)

- The TRAI Act was amended by an ordinance, effective from 24 January **2000**, establishing a **TDSAT** to take over the adjudicatory and disputes functions from TRAI.
- TDSAT was set up to adjudicate any dispute between a licensor and a licensee, between two or more service providers, between a service provider and a group of consumers, and to hear and dispose of appeals against any direction, decision or order of TRAI

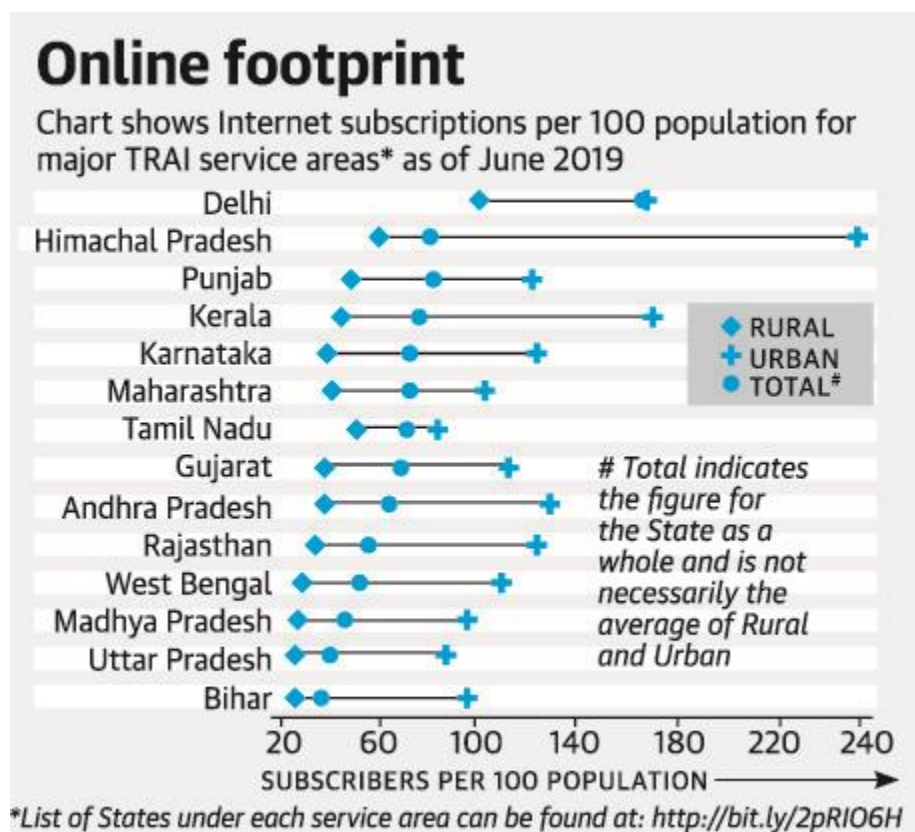
Kerala on its way to achieve 100% Internet penetration

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains III – Economy (Digital India)

In News

- Kerala Fibre Optic Network project, pegged at ₹1,548 crore, would provide Internet to every household in the State
- The project is slated for completion by December 2020, whereby for 20 lakh BPL households internet will be free

- However, going by data in a recent report by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), Kerala is already halfway to its goal of 100% coverage.
- According to the report, titled 'India Internet 2019,' the State's Internet penetration rate is the second highest in the country (54%), next only to Delhi NCR with 69% penetration.
- The Internet penetration rate is defined as number of individuals aged above 12 per 100 population who accessed the Internet in the last month.
- Internet penetration rate was the lowest in Odisha (25), Jharkhand (26) and Bihar (28).
- However, Kerala is among the States with a huge gap between the number of rural and urban Internet connections. This is also the case in Delhi and Himachal Pradesh.



World's first CNG port terminal

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains III – Energy

In News

- The Gujarat government gave approval to a Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) terminal at Bhavnagar port with a proposed investment of Rs 1,900 crore.
- **Bhavnagar Port** is being administered by Gujarat Maritime Board (GMB), which signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Foresight Group during the Vibrant Gujarat Summit held in January 2019

- The proposed CNG terminal will have a cargo capacity to handle of 1.5 million metric tonne per annum (MMTPA).
- The consortium of company will also develop facilities like Ro-Ro terminal, liquid cargo terminal and container terminal at Bhavnagar port
- The GMB manages the existing port at Bhavnagar, having a capacity to handle three MMTPA cargo, and the new terminals would take the overall capacity to nine MMTPA.

About CNG

- **CNG** is made by **compressing natural gas**, (which is mainly composed of methane, CH₄), to less than 1% of the volume it occupies at standard atmospheric pressure.
- CNG is a fossil fuel substitute for petrol, diesel, or LPG.
- **CNG is cheaper** – CNG is almost one third the price of super petrol, resulting in substantial savings in fuel costs.
- **CNG reduces maintenance cost** – CNG contains no additives and burns cleanly leaving no by-products of combustion to contaminate your spark plugs and engine oil.
- **CNG is more environment friendly** – Harmful emissions such as carbon monoxide (CO), carbon dioxide (CO₂) and nitrous oxide (N₂O) can be reduced by as much as 95% when compared to gasoline powered vehicles.

Winter-grade diesel

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III- Energy, Security

In News

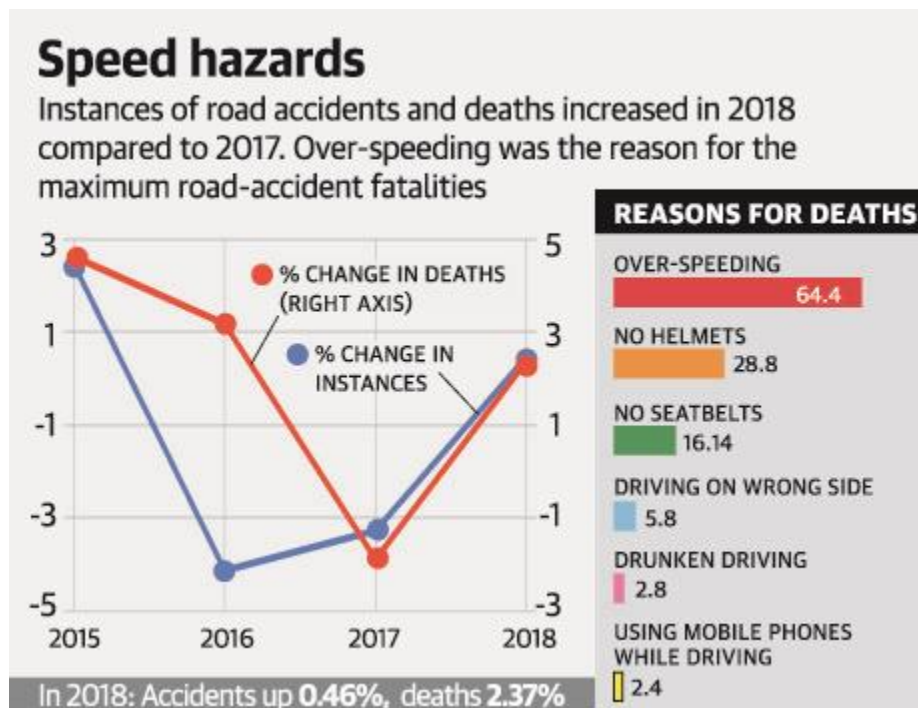
- State-run Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOC) launched a special winter-grade diesel that remains unfrozen up to minus 33 degree Celsius.
- Motorists in high-altitude sectors like Ladakh, Kargil, Kaza and Keylong face the problem of freezing of diesel in their vehicles when winter temperatures drop to as low as -30o Celsius.
- Regular diesel fuel contains paraffin wax which is added for improving viscosity and lubrication. At low temperatures, the paraffin wax thickens or “gels” and hinders the flow of the fuel in the car engine.
- Indian Oil has come up with an innovative solution to this problem by introducing a special winter-grade diesel with a low pour-point of -33o Celsius, which does not lose its **fluidity** function even in extreme winter conditions
- In general, it is achieved by treatment with additives that change the low temperature characteristics of the fuel.
- The fuel would help provide year-round access to snow-capped border regions, and is part of India’s efforts to **speed up strategic road connectivity**

ROAD ACCIDENTS IN INDIA-2018

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains III – Infrastructure

In News

- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways released the annual report on road accidents in India, which shows a **daily average of 1,280 road crashes and 415 deaths**
- Some of the findings of the report are:
 - More than 1.5 lakh people lost their lives in road crashes in the country in 2018, registering an **increase of 2.4%** as compared to the 2017 (1.47 lakh fatalities)
 - Of the total people killed in road crash deaths in 2018, 48% were between 18 years and 35 years old. Minors involved in road crash deaths were at 6.6% of the total deaths.
 - **Over-speeding is a major killer**, accounting for 64.4% of the persons killed. This category was followed by driving on the wrong side of the road, which accounted for 5.8% of the accident related deaths.
 - Use of mobile phones accounted for 2.4% of the deaths and drunken driving accounted for 2.8% of the persons killed.
 - As many as 43,614 deaths or 28.8% of total road accident deaths in the country last year were caused due to “non-wearing of helmets”
 - Among the States, Tamil Nadu (13.7%) topped the country in terms of the total number of road crashes, followed by Madhya Pradesh (11%) and Uttar Pradesh (9.1%).
- India is the most unsafe country in the world for road users across 199 countries, as reported by the Geneva-based World Road Federation’s World Road Statistics 2018. It’s followed by China (63,000 deaths) and the U.S. (37,000 deaths).



Etalin Hydroelectric Project

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II – Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

In News

- The Centre has recommended a biodiversity study of the proposed 3,097 MW **Etalin Hydroelectric Project in Arunachal Pradesh** by a credible international institute since the current environmental impact assessment was found to be “completely inadequate”.
- It involves diversion of 1,165.66 hectares of forest land for the construction of the mega project in the State’s **Dibang Valley** district
- The project, estimated to cost ₹25,296.95 crore, is proposed to be completed in seven years but would entail felling 2,80,677 trees
- The project threatens the existence of six globally-endangered mammal species. The area also has 680 species of birds, which is about 56% of the total avian species found in India.
- The project area falls under the “richest bio-geographical province of the Himalayan zone” and would be located at the junction of the Palaearctic, Indo-Chinese and Indo-Malayan bio-geographic regions.

Coal bed Methane

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III – Energy

In News

- Union Ministry of Coal has asked the state-run coal miner Coal India Limited (CIL) to produce 2 MMSCB (million metric standard cubic metres) per day of coalbed methane (CBM) gas in the next 2 to 3 years
- India has the fifth-largest coal reserves in the world, and CBM has been looked at as a clean alternative fuel.
- Coal Bed Methane (CBM) is an unconventional form of natural gas found in coal deposits or coal seams. CMB is formed during the process of coalification, the transformation of plant material into coal. The **methane** is usually held in place by water pressure.
- The methane is held underground within the coal and is extracted by drilling into the coal seam and removing the groundwater. The resulting drop in pressure causes the methane to be released from the coal.
- India’s CBM resources are estimated at around 92 trillion cubic feet (TCF), or 2,600 billion cubic metres (BCM)
- The country’s coal and CBM reserves are found in 12 states of India, with the Gondwana sediments of eastern India holding the bulk.
- CBM can be used for power generation, as compressed natural gas (CNG) auto fuel, as feedstock for fertilisers, industrial uses such as in cement production, rolling mills, steel plants, and for methanol production.

NuGen Mobility Summit-2019

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains III – Infrastructure

In News

- Union Minister of Road Transport & Highways and Shipping, NuGen Mobility Summit-2019 (to be held from 27 to 29 November 2019) at International Center of Automotive Technology (ICAT) in Manesar, Haryana.
- It is the largest automotive technology event covering relevant topics of alternate fuel systems and E-Mobility
- **Theme** of event is setup around new generation topics like: e-mobility, Hydrogen Mobility, Connected Vehicles and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS). It focuses on developing new technological solutions according to global requirements.
- Automotive technology experts from 15 countries including India will be presenting more than 120 technical research papers. Over 200 companies producing vehicles and components will display their products.
- **Significance:** The benefits of event will be found in finding suitable alternative to internal combustion engine (ICE) running for about 125 years in country and world as well as emphasizing on New Generation Mobility which shall be Green, safe and affordable
- ICAT, Manesar is a division of NATRIP (National Automotive Testing and R&D Infrastructure Project) Implementation Society (NATIS) under the Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises.



AIPTS-2020
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New Batch on 20th November



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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

GAGAN – GPS aided geo-augmented navigation

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III Science and Technology

In News

- About 500 passenger locomotives of the South Central Railway (SCR) have been fitted with the newly developed Real-time Train Information System (RTIS) to monitor precise speeds and movement throughout the journey
- It has been developed by the Centre for Railway Information Systems (CIRE) with the help of GAGAN system
- The new system has facilitated automatic transmission of details on speed and movement of trains to the central control office.

About GAGAN

- GPS Aided GEO Augmented Navigation (GAGAN), developed by ISRO and Airports Authority of India (AAI) is a regional Satellite Based Augmentation System (SBAS).
- The GAGAN's goal is to provide a navigation system to assist aircraft in accurate landing over the Indian airspace and in the adjoining area and applicable to safety-to-life civil operations.
- GAGAN is inter-operable with other international SBAS systems.
- GAGAN covers the area from Africa to Australia and has expansion capability for seamless navigation services across the region.
- GAGAN makes airline operations more efficient and effective, increase air safety, and fuel efficiency.

NavIC

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

In News

- ISRO and its commercial arm Antrix Corporation Ltd. are poised to **commercialise India's regional navigation satellite system, NavIC.**
- Antrix has recently floated two separate tenders to identify industries that can develop dedicated NavIC-based hardware and systems.
- NavIC (Navigation in Indian Constellation) is the Indian **system of eight satellites** that is aimed at telling business and individual users where they are, or how their products and services are moving.
- The indigenous positioning or location based service (LBS) works just like the established and popular U.S. Global Positioning System or GPS, but within a **1,500-km radius over the sub-continent.**
- The early set of commercial NavIC users would potentially be transporters of resources such as mined ore, coal and sand in various States, who are presently using GPS system

- In 2018, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways mandated that all national-permit vehicles must have such tracking devices. As a pilot, many fishing boats have been fitted with these devices that have a unique texting facility.

Positive developments

- ISRO announced that Qualcomm Technologies Inc., a leading producer of semiconductor chips, had developed and tested NavIC-friendly chipsets across its user bases and that it would add NavIC to them.
- Certification of the Indian NAVIC system by the 3GPP (The 3rd Generation Partnership Project), a global body for coordinating mobile telephony standards.

Starlink network

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains III – Science & Technology (Space)

In News

- **SpaceX**, the world's leading private company in space technology, fired a spray of 60 satellites into low earth orbit, the first operational batch of what is intended to eventually evolve into a constellation of nearly 12,000 satellites aimed at providing low-cost and reliable space-based Internet services to the world.
- Internet has now become a part of humanity's basic infrastructure and an important means of delivering a wide variety of public services to the world's peoples
- Currently, about 4 billion people, more than half the world's population, do not have access to reliable Internet networks.
- And that is because the traditional ways to deliver the Internet — fibre-optic cables or wireless networks — cannot take it everywhere on Earth. In many remote areas, or places with difficult terrain, it is not feasible or viable to set up cables or mobile towers.
- Signals from satellites in space can overcome this obstacle easily.
- In space-based networks, data requests travel from the user to the satellite, and are then directed to data centres on the ground
- Criticism to the project:
 - Increased space debris
 - Increased risk of collisions and
 - The concern of astronomers that these constellations of space Internet satellites will make it difficult to observe other space objects, and to detect their signals.

Do You Know?

- There are fewer than 2,000 operational satellites at present, and fewer than 9,000 satellites have been launched into space since the beginning of the Space Age in 1957. Most of the operational satellites are located in the lower orbits.
- On September 2019, the European Space Agency (ESA) had to perform, for the first time ever, a "collision avoidance manoeuvre" to protect one of its live satellites from colliding with a "mega constellation"

Cartosat-3

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains III – Science & Technology (Space)

In News

- ISRO is set for launch of Cartosat-3
- Cartosat-3, an advanced earth imaging and mapping satellite, will be flown on the PSLV-C47 vehicle
- The 1,560 kg satellite will have 13 small U.S. customer satellites riding as secondary passengers. They will be placed in a polar orbit.
- Cartosat-3, with an ISRO-best resolution of 25 cm, will be the first of a series of high resolution, third generation satellites planned for observing the Earth.
- The satellite will be able to pick up objects of that size (25 cm) from its orbital perch about 509 km away. This will make Cartosat-3 among the few sharpest, if not the best, civil earth imagers worldwide.

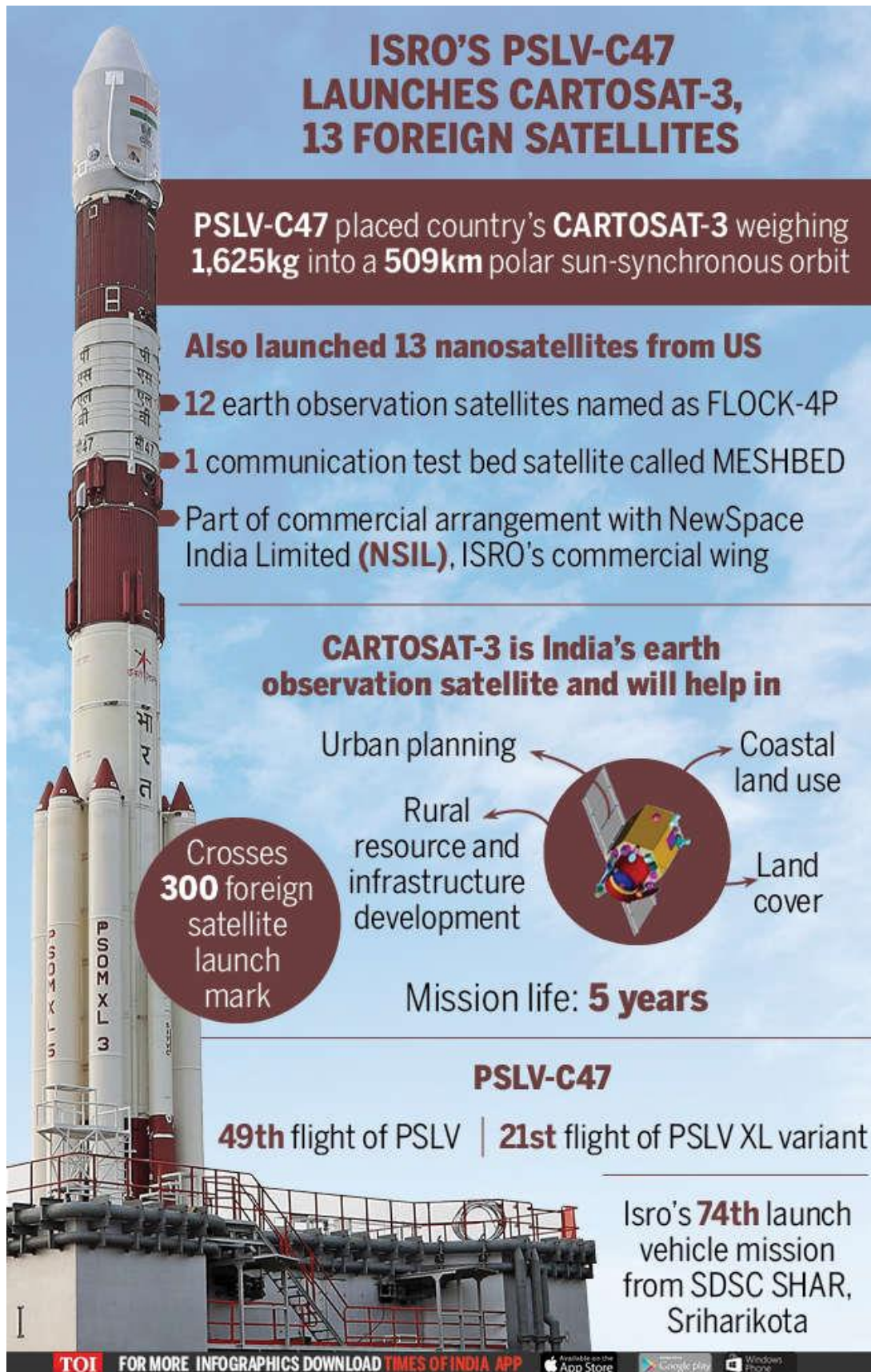
More in News:

- The PSLV-C47 will launch Cartosat-3 and 13 commercial nanosatellites **into Sun Synchronous orbit** from Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC), Sriharikota.
- CARTOSAT-3 is a third generation agile advanced satellite having high resolution imaging capability.
- CARTOSAT-3 would address the increased user's demands for the large scale urban planning, rural resource and infrastructure development, coastal land use and land cover.
- At 1,625 kg, Cartosat-3 is unusually heavy and more than double the mass of the previous eight in its class
- The mission life of CARTOSAT-3 would be for **five years**
- One of Cartosat-3's cameras offers a ground resolution of 25 cm — this means it can pick up an object of a minimum of that size from a height of around 500 km.
- An existing policy allows only government and government authorised agencies to access ISRO's high-resolution imageries below a resolution of 1 m
- Currently, WorldView-3, a satellite owned by U.S. company Maxar, has the best ground resolution of 31 cm.

[Cartosat-3: Editorial](#)

Context:

- The Indian Space Research Organisation's successful launch of Cartosat-3, along with 13 other small U.S. satellites, marks a major technological milestone for India.
- An advanced Indian Earth Observation satellite built and developed by ISRO, which will replace the IRS series.
- It has a panchromatic resolution of 0.25 metres making it the imaging satellite with highest resolution and Mx of 1 metre with a high quality resolution which is a major improvement from the previous payloads in the Cartosat series.



Cartosat, then and now

- Cartosat-3 has been developed as an improvement over the Cartosat-1 and Cartosat-2 series satellites, though ISRO has not yet revealed the full specifications of this satellite.
- Cartosat-1, launched in May 2005, was the first Indian remote sensing satellite capable of taking three-dimensional images.
- With a resolution of 2.5 metres, which meant it could identify a car on the ground from space, Cartosat-1 helped in creating new digital maps of over 150 towns and cities in the country at a scale of 1:10,000. Earlier maps were of a scale of 1:50,000 or even lower.
- Data from this satellite were also used to do an inundation vulnerability assessment of the Indian coastline in the event of a tsunami or a major cyclone, and even for estimating the status of irrigation potential created by the large number of projects under the Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme.

Cartosat-3

- Cartosat-3 is capable of unprecedented image resolution of nearly 25 cm on the ground as against the best global military-grade satellites that can provide a 10 cm resolution.
- The best satellite images commercially available are between 25-30 cm.

Applications

- Data from most of the Cartosat satellites are exclusively used by the armed forces.
- However, an existing policy allows only government and government authorised agencies to access ISRO's high-resolution imageries below a resolution of 1 metre.
- Cartosat-3's optical imaging will also help to detect precise cartographic or mapping activities.
- The imageries are also used for urban and rural infrastructure planning, coastal land use and regulation, utility management such as monitoring road networks, water grids or distribution, creation of land use maps, disaster management, etc.

Connecting the dots:

- ISRO's credentials as a poster child for India's technological abilities have been fortified, it still has a long way to go in terms of its reputation as an enabler of local business. Analyse

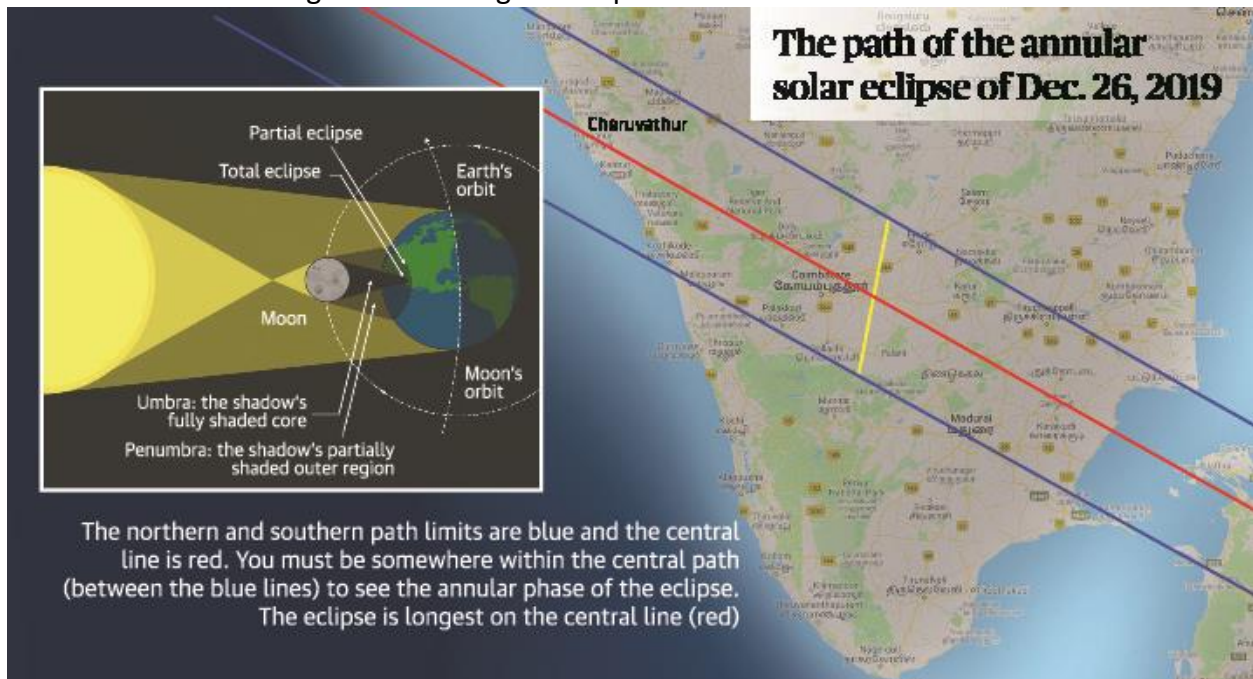
Solar Eclipse

Part of: GS Prelims

In News

- The people of Kasaragod district(Kerala) will have a rare opportunity to witness the December 26 solar eclipse first in all of India. It is one of the three places in the world where the eclipse will be most clearly seen.
- A solar eclipse occurs when the moon passes directly between the Earth and the sun.
- Observers will be able to experience the "ring of fire" that is characteristic for this kind of solar eclipse. This is a rare event that can be seen only along a relatively narrow strip on the earth's surface.
- The eclipse is also visible in other areas, but the moon will not move centrally in front of the sun there and the "ring of fire" will not be visible.

- The bright ring of sunlight around the moon at the height of the annular solar eclipse is nicknamed the “ring of fire” during the eclipse



IMD WORLD TALENT RANKING

Part of: GS Prelims

In News

- According to the latest edition of IMD World Talent Ranking, India has slipped 6 places to 59 rank on the global annual list of 63 countries.
- India is also lagging behind fellow BRICs countries – China ranked 42nd on the list, Russia (47th) and South Africa (50th).
- International Institute for Management Development (IMD) is a business education school located in Lausanne, Switzerland.
- The ranking is based on the performance in three main categories — investment and development, appeal and readiness.
- India also witnessed one of the sharpest declines among Asian economies owing to low quality of life, negative impact of brain drain, and the low priority of its economy on attracting and retaining talents.
- The list was topped by Switzerland. Denmark was placed second and Sweden, was in the third place.

ISRO uses satellite data to gauge N. Korea's 2017 nuclear test impact

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains III – Economy

In News

- Scientists at ISRO have used a novel mathematical technique and analysed satellite images to estimate the strength of North Korea's underground nuclear test of September 2017
- In the normal course, the detection and estimation of nuclear device explosions is based on the reading of earthquake monitoring sensors.
- However, North Korea's relative isolation has meant that there were no accessible seismic stations near the test site at Mount Mantap, to accurately gauge the intensity of the explosion
- Those tests are considered the most powerful thermonuclear devices to have been exploded by the country.
- The explosive yield estimated (245-271 kt) is about 17 times that of the Hiroshima explosion according to ISRO analysis.
- Such information is also important for determining the type of bomb, and consequently, the degree of know-how the detonating country possesses.
- For the analysis, researchers used images of the location after the explosion, sourced from the ALOS-2, a Japanese satellite, and Sentinel 1B, a European radar imaging satellite
- These estimates, of a yield of 250 kiloton, are in line with an assessment on June, 2019 by U.S. scientists. Their approach, however, relied on studying the signature of sound waves from an explosion when it travels through rock at the test site, and how it affected sensors around the world.

FREE FASTAGS

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III- Technology

- FASTags, or reloadable tags for payment at toll booths, will be available for free until November 30, Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari.
- The announcement comes a week before FASTags become mandatory at all the booths on national highways from December 1.

FASTags:

- FASTag is an electronic toll collection system in India, operated by the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI).
- It employs Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology for making toll payments directly from the prepaid or savings account linked to it or directly toll owner.
- It is affixed on the windscreen of the vehicle and enables to drive through toll plazas without stopping for transactions. The tag can be purchased from official Tag issuers or participating Banks and if it is linked to a prepaid account, then recharging or top-up can be as per requirement.
- As per NHAI, FASTag has unlimited validity.
- 7.5% cashback offers were also provided to promote the use of FASTag.
- Dedicated Lanes at some Toll plazas have been built for FASTag.
- In January 2019, state-run oil marketing companies IOC, BPCL and HPCL have signed MoUs enabling the use of FASTag to make purchases at petrol pumps.
- As of September 2019, FASTag lanes are available on over 500 national and state highways and over 54.6 lakh (5.46 million) cars are enabled with FASTag.

FASTags

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains III – Economy/Science & Technology

In News

- From December 1, lanes on national highway toll plazas across India will accept toll only through FASTag. The objective is to remove bottlenecks and capture all toll electronically.
- FASTag is a **radio-frequency identification (RFID)** technology sticker that can be installed on the windshield of any vehicle.
- By this, toll payments can be made directly from the pre-paid account linked to it, thus avoiding the need of vehicles to stop at toll plazas for payment of fees.
- RFID technology is similar to that used in transport access-control systems, like Metro smart card.
- Under a new “One Nation One FASTag” scheme, the NHAI is trying to get states on board so that one tag can be used seamlessly across highways, irrespective of whether it is the state or the Centre that owns/manages it

Golden Rice

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III- Science & Technology

In News

- In the late 1990s, German scientists developed a genetically modified variety of rice called Golden Rice.
- It was claimed to be able to fight Vitamin A deficiency, which is the leading cause of blindness among children and can also lead to death due to infectious diseases such as measles.
- Rice is naturally low in the pigment beta-carotene, which the body uses to make **Vitamin A**. Golden rice contains this, which is the reason for its golden colour.
- The claim has sometimes been contested over the years, with studies showing that the variety may fall short of what it is supposed to achieve.
- Now, **Bangladesh** could be on the verge of becoming the first country to approve plantation of this variety.
- In Bangladesh, over 21 per cent of the children have vitamin A deficiency.
- The Golden Rice that is being reviewed in Bangladesh is developed by the Philippines-based International Rice Research Institute.

DISASTER MANAGEMENT

National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)

NDRF

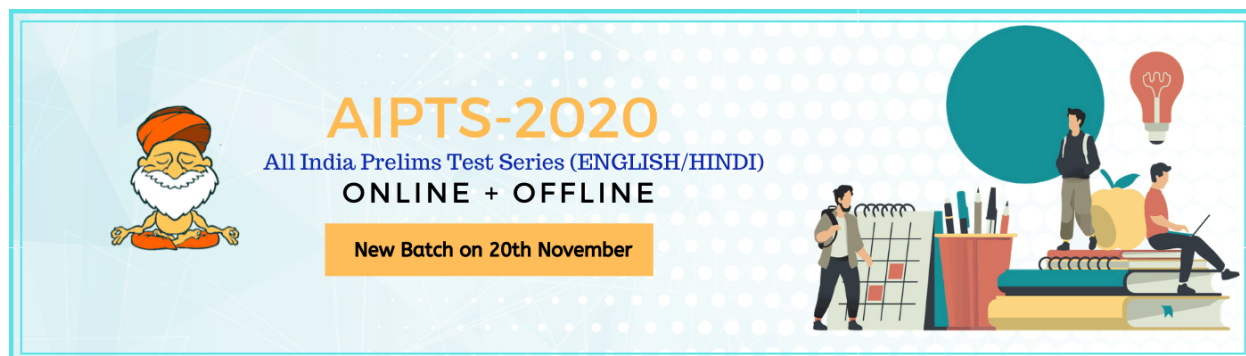
- The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) will soon come up with a specialized unit in each battalion **to help preserve monuments** and other heritage structures battered by disasters
- This is apart from its basic responsibility of rescue and restoration.
- There will be a set of personnel in each battalion of NDRF who will get the basic training on preserving monuments.
- These personnel will have some sort of insights as to how to preserve heritage structures in the pre and post disaster scenario

About NDRF

- It was formed in 2006 under the Disaster Management Act, 2005
- It is a specialized force to tackle **all types of disaster**, including nuclear, biological and chemical disasters.
- It is involved in Search and rescue operations and Supplying of relief materials to the victims.



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DEFENCE/INTERNAL SECURITY/SECURITY

PEGASUS

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III- Cyber Security

In News

- It has been reported that the popular messaging platform **WhatsApp** was used to spy on journalists and human rights activists in India earlier this year.
- The surveillance was carried out using an **Israeli spyware tool called Pegasus**.
- Most of those targeted in India were journalists, Dalit and human rights activists and lawyers.
- It has been developed by the Israeli cyberarms firm, NSO Group. The NSO Group is a Tel Aviv-based cyber-security company that specialises in “surveillance technology” and claims to help governments and law enforcement agencies across the world fight crime and terrorism.
- **How does Pegasus come to your phone?**
 - The code is transmitted via WhatsApp call. The code enters the phone even if the call is not answered.
- **What does it do?**
 - It sends the targets contacts, calls and messages to its controller. It can also turn the phone into a spy device by switching on the camera or microphone.

‘Pegasus’ spyware and Data security

Context:

- WhatsApp sued the Israel-based NSO Group for the use of its ‘**Pegasus**’ spyware on thousands of WhatsApp users in the lead-up to the general elections..
- accusing it of using their messaging platform to despatch Pegasus for surveillance to approximately 1,400 mobile phones and devices worldwide.
- The NSO claims that it only sells the software to governments but the Indian government has denied purchasing it and has asked WhatsApp to explain the security breach.
- Phones of several dozen Indian journalists, lawyers and human rights activists had been compromised using an invasive Israeli-developed malware called Pegasus.
- 121 individuals were targeted in India alone.

Pegasus

- Pegasus is a spyware developed by the Israeli cyberarms firm, NSO Group
- It can be installed on devices running certain versions of iOS, Apple’s mobile operating system,
- Pegasus is capable of reading text messages, tracking calls, collecting passwords, tracing the location of the phone, accessing the target device’s microphone(s) and video camera(s)
- Apple released version of its iOS software to fix the vulnerabilities.
- News of the spyware got significant media attention.
- It was called the “most sophisticated” smartphone attack ever.

Surveillance laws in India

- Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, deals with interception of calls,
- Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000, deals with interception of data.
- Under both laws, only the government, under certain circumstances, is permitted to conduct surveillance, and not private actors.
- Hacking is prohibited under the IT Act
- IT Act cover the civil and criminal offences of data theft and hacking respectively.
- punishment for dishonestly receiving stolen computer resource or communication, includes imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years.

Judgments:

- In 1996, the Supreme Court noted that there was a lack of procedural safeguards in the Indian Telegraph Act. It laid down some guidelines that were later codified into rules in 2007. This included a specific rule that orders on interceptions of communication should only be issued by the Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- Under the IT Act only the competent authority can issue an order for the interception, monitoring or decryption of any information generated, transmitted, received or stored in any computer resource (mobile phones would count).
- In 2018, the Central government created a furore when it authorised 10 Central agencies to conduct surveillance ,this action of the Union government has been challenged in the Supreme Court.

Privacy:

- The Supreme Court in a landmark decision in 2017 unanimously upheld right to privacy as a fundamental right **under Articles 14, 19 and 21** of the Constitution.
- Data Protection Committee under retired **Justice B.N. Srikrishna** held public hearings across India and submitted a draft data protection lawdraft law does not deal adequately with surveillance reform.

US as Example:

- Electronic surveillance is considered a search under the Fourth Amendment which protects individuals from unreasonable search and seizure. Thus the government has to obtain a warrant from a court in each case and crucially, establish probable cause to believe a search is justified.
- After the 9/11 attacks in 2001, the USA PATRIOT (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism) Act was passed.
- Under certain provisions in this Act, the U.S. government used phone companies to collect information on millions of citizens and these were part of revelations made by the whistleblower Edward Snowden in 2013

Report:

- In 2019, the U.K.-based security survey of 47 countries found that only five countries had “adequate safeguards” and most are actively conducting surveillance on citizens and sharing information about them. China and Russia featured as the top two worst offenders on the list.
- India in 3rd position because its data protection Bill is yet to take effect and there isn't a data protection authority in place.

Connecting the dots:

- After the WhatsApp breach, what should the way forward for the data protection? Analyse.

Dharma Guardian-2019

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains GS-III – Security

In News

- The second edition of the bilateral annual military exercise '**Dharma Guardian-2019**' between Indian and Japanese Army culminated on October 31 at the Counter Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School (CIJWS) at Vairengte in **Mizoram**.
- The primary focus of the exercise was to train and equip the contingents in counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations in mountainous terrain
- As part of the exercise, lectures, demonstrations and drills related to counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations were conducted
- Besides fostering mutual understanding and trust, the joint exercise marks reaffirmation of India and Japan to further bolster bilateral security and defence cooperation

Lone wolf attacks

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III – Security

In News

- A high alert has been issued to security forces across the country by central intelligence agencies, warning of possible 'lone wolf' attacks by Islamic State (IS) operatives
- A "lone wolf" is a terrorist who carry out attacks alone **without having any direct contact with any organisation**.
- Home Ministry has noted the reported nexus between home-grown terror outfits and Pakistan-based extremist organisations in terms of procurement of weapons, technology and training has added a new dimension to the threat scenario.
- The recent withdrawal of special status to Jammu and Kashmir under Articles 370 and 35A and the earlier pre-emptive air strike on non-military targets inside Pakistan by Indian Air Force had considerably enhanced the threat from terror outfits

DUSTLIK-2019

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III – Security

In News

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his **Uzbekistan** counterpart presided over the Curtain Raiser of the first-ever India-Uzbekistan **Joint Exercise** – Dustlik-2019.
- The joint military exercise focused on counter-terrorism starts on November 4 and will continue till November 13, at Chirchiq Training Area near Tashkent.
- The exercise will enable sharing of best practices and experiences between the Armed Forces of the two countries and would lead to greater operational effectiveness.

- India and Uzbekistan also concluded an MoU on cooperation in the field of Military Medicine between the Armed Forces of the two countries.

Dhanush regiment

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains III – Security

In News

- The Army, which began inducting the indigenously upgraded Dhanush artillery guns, will have the first regiment in place by March 2020 and will get all 114 guns by 2022
- Dhanush is the indigenously upgraded variant of the Swedish Bofors gun imported in the 1980s.
- Dhanush is a 155 mm, 45-calibre towed artillery gun with a range of 36km and has demonstrated a range of 38 km with specialised ammunition.
- It is fitted with an inertial navigation system having global positioning system-based gun recording and auto-laying, an enhanced tactical computer for on-board ballistic computations, an on-board muzzle velocity recording, an automated gun sighting system equipped with camera, thermal imaging, and laser range finder.

SCO joint exercise

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III – Security

In News

- Pakistan did not participate in the inaugural session of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) joint exercise on urban earthquake and rescue in Delhi.
- Earthquakes have taken more than 2 lakh lives, which account for two-thirds of disaster related mortality in SCO countries. In this background, this joint exercise will be very useful for improving the collective preparedness
- The SCO, in which China plays an influential role, is also comprised of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan. India and Pakistan were admitted into the bloc in 2017.

Do You Know?

- Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) is a permanent organ of the SCO which serves to promote cooperation of member states against the three evils of terrorism, separatism and extremism. It is headquartered in Tashkent.
- India has launched Geostationary Satellite to improve communication, weather forecasting, etc. among the South Asian countries.

Gujarat Control of Terrorism and Organised Crime (GCTOC) Bill'

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains GS-III – Security

In News

- President has given his assent to the GCTOC Bill, which was considered as controversial anti-terror legislation passed by the Gujarat State in March 2015.

- The Bill, earlier named as the Gujarat Control of Organised Crime Bill, failed to get the presidential nod thrice since 2004 when Narendra Modi was the Chief Minister of the State.
- In 2015, the Gujarat government re-introduced the Bill by renaming it the GCTOC, but retained controversial provisions such as empowering the police to tap telephonic conversations and submit them in court as evidence
- The provisions of the Bill would prove crucial in dealing with terrorism and organised crimes such as contract killing, ponzi schemes, narcotics trade and extortion rackets.
- Some of the key provisions of the act are:
 - The intercepted telephonic conversations would now be considered legitimate evidence
 - Creation of a special court as well as the appointment of special public prosecutors.
 - The bill provides for attachment of properties acquired through organised crimes. It also empowers authorities to cancel transfer of properties.
 - Other provisions of the Act is the admissibility of confession made before a police officer as evidence.

Cyber security (Part-1)

Context:

- Recently a user on **VirusTotal** identified a **DTrack** data dump linked with the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant indicating that a system (or more) in the plant had been breached by malware. The Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd (NPCIL) confirmed the breach.
- WhatsApp sued the Israel-based NSO Group for the use of its '**Pegasus**' spyware on thousands of WhatsApp users in the lead-up to the general elections..

DTrack

- DTrack, is used by hackers to attack financial and research centres in India.
- It was designed to be planted on the victim's ATMs, where it could read and store the data of cards that were inserted into the machines
- A version of it was used to attack the banking system in South Korea as well as for the infamous **WannaCry** ransom worm attacks across the globe.
- Researchers have identified that the malware which infected the computer at Kudankulam nuclear power plant was DTrack.

Pegasus

- Pegasus is a spyware developed by the Israeli cyberarms firm, NSO Group
- It can be installed on devices running certain versions of iOS, Apple's mobile operating system,
- Pegasus is capable of reading text messages, tracking calls, collecting passwords, tracing the location of the phone, accessing the target device's microphone(s) and video camera(s)
- Apple released version of its iOS software to fix the vulnerabilities.
- News of the spyware got significant media attention.
- It was called the "most sophisticated" smartphone attack ever.

Concerns:

- Doubts on the Indian claims to being a legitimate power in cyberspace.

- Vulnerability of its critical information infrastructure
- Blatant disregard for the fundamental rights of Indian citizens online'
- Indian govt Fails to secure its strategic infrastructure from sophisticated cyberattacks
- The Indian military announced that it will modernise its nuclear forces, which includes the incorporation of Artificial Intelligence and other cybercapabilities, the apparent absence of robust cybersecurity capability is a serious cause for concern.
- The surveillance of Indian citizens through WhatsApp spyware in the lead-up to the general elections depicts the government's disregard for cybersecurity.

Way forward:

- India needs to get serious about cybersecurity, both for its political interests and for its citizenry.
- "security by obscurity" for India's nuclear power plants
- Cutting-edge malware reserved for spying on citizens.

Connecting the dots:

- Recent cyber attack incidents cast serious doubts on the Indian state's claims to being a legitimate power in cyberspace. Critically analyse

Rise and Fall of ISIS (PART 1)

Context:

- President Donald Trump declared that ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was dead after a US military raid in northwest Syria over.
- The President said a US special operations forces mission went after the ISIS leader and there were no US deaths during the operation.
- The death of Baghdadi marks the culmination of a years-long hunt to find one of the most wanted terrorists in the world and the man who declared a so-called Islamic caliphate in Iraq and Syria in 2014.

ISIS origin:

- IS can trace its roots back to the late Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian. In 2004, a year after the US-led invasion of Iraq, Zarqawi pledged allegiance to Osama Bin Laden and formed al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI).
- After Zarqawi's death in 2006, AQI created an umbrella organisation, Islamic State in Iraq (ISI).
- ISI was weakened by the US troop and the creation of Sahwa (Awakening) councils by Sunni Arab tribesmen who rejected its brutality.
- Baghdadi, a former US detainee, became leader in 2010 and began rebuilding ISI's capabilities.
- IS also joined the rebellion against President Bashar al-Assad in Syria, setting up the al-Nusra Front.
- In April 2013, Baghdadi announced the merger of IS forces in Iraq and Syria and the creation of "Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant" (Isis).

- In June 2014, Isis overran the northern city of Mosul, and then advanced southwards towards Baghdad, massacring its adversaries and threatening to eradicate the country's many ethnic and religious minorities.

What does IS want?

- The establishment of a “caliphate” – a state governed in accordance with Islamic law, or Sharia, by God's deputy on Earth, or caliph.
- It has demanded that Muslims across the world swear allegiance to its leader – Ibrahim Awad Ibrahim al-Badri al-Samarrai, better known as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi – and migrate to territory under its control.
- IS has also told other jihadist groups worldwide that they must accept its supreme authority.
- The group justifies its attacks on Muslims and non-Muslims alike by drawing on extreme interpretations of Islamic texts.

Funds:

- ISIS is the world's wealthiest militant group.
- Wealthy private donors and Islamic charities in the Middle East keen to oust Syria's President Assad.
- Self-funding.
- The US Treasury estimates that in 2014 IS may have earned as much as several million dollars per week, or \$100m in total, from the sale of crude oil and refined products to local middlemen, who in turn smuggled them in Turkey and Iran, or sold them to the Syrian government.

Connecting the dots:

- What is ISIS and its mission? How can ISIS be dangerous to the internal security of our country.(UPSC 2015)

Rise and Fall of ISIS (PART 2)

Context:

- President Donald Trump declared that ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was dead after a US military raid in northwest Syria over.
- The President said a US special operations forces mission went after the ISIS leader and there were no US deaths during the operation.
- The death of Baghdadi marks the culmination of a years-long hunt to find one of the most wanted terrorists in the world and the man who declared a so-called Islamic caliphate in Iraq and Syria in 2014.

ISIS and Sharia Law

- ISIS rule spread quickly throughout Iraq and Syria. The group focused on creating an Islamic state and implementing sharia law—a strict religious code based on traditional Islamic rules and practices.

- In 2014, ISIS took control of Falluja, Mosul and Tikrit in Iraq, and declared itself a caliphate, which is a political and religious territory ruled by a leader known as a caliph.
- ISIS fighters attacked a northern town in Iraq that was home to the Yazidis, a minority religious group, in August 2014. They killed hundreds of people, sold women into slavery, forced religious conversions and caused tens of thousands of Yazidis to flee from their homes.
- The attack sparked international media coverage and brought attention to the brutal tactics employed by ISIS. Also in 2014, al Qaeda broke ties with ISIS, formally rejecting the group and disavowing their activities.

One Group, Many Names:

ISIL: This acronym stands for “Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.” The Levant is a broad geographical region that includes Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel and Jordan.

IS: The shortened “IS” simply means “Islamic State.” In 2014, the militant group announced they were officially calling themselves IS because their goals for an Islamic state reached beyond the areas identified in other titles.

Daesh: Many Middle Eastern and European governments have used this Arabic acronym for “al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham,” which translates to “Islamic State of Iraq and Syria,” to address the group. However, ISIS doesn’t approve of the name, and in 2014, threatened to cut out the tongue of anyone who called them Daesh in public.

India and ISIS:

- The Paris terror attacks by ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) in 2015 have quite naturally fueled concerns about the threat posed by this group to India.
- The concerns deepen given the backdrop that India has been the target of various terror outfits in different geographies for nearly thirty years.
- A recent report by the Global Terrorism Index 2018 (GTI) ranked India 7th out of 162 nations most affected by terrorism in 2018.
- First, in mid 2014, Daesh ISIS showed its interest in the Indian sub-continent when it issued a map depicting the western part of the India to be a part of the Islamic State of Khorasan.
- Second, Mehdi Biswas, a resident of Bengaluru was arrested in December 2014 on account of evangelising for the Islamic State through his twitter account @Shamiwitness.
- Third and most recently, an assessment by security agencies revealed that there are close to 23 Indians fighting with the terror group in Syria and Iraq.
- At the same time, we have also witnessed widespread opposition to the ISIS ideology and barbarity. For instance, the Maulana of Jama Masjid in Bengaluru and several other clerics have repeatedly issued alerts to the Muslim community to be wary of the ISIS.

India’s concerns:

- India becoming a recruiting ground for ISIS to conduct its operations in India and elsewhere in the world.
- The threat perception for this level is medium to high.
- The reason being that India has more than 350 million people who are connected to the internet and it is likely that some of them will fall prey to ISIS’ ingenious ways of luring Muslim youths through their online propaganda.

- The biggest threat that ISIS poses to India is that it will act as a totem for local Indian terror outfits. Such groups would want to claim association with ISIS regardless of whether they agree or know about the ISIS ideology.
- The biggest threat to India's national security still comes from the jihadi elements of the Pakistani military-jihadi complex.

Way forward:

- It would be appropriate to keep a close watch and monitor developments.
- Tackling the challenge of local Indian terror outfits seeking an ISIS badge would essentially require India to eradicate the discontent amongst Muslims in India
- Dismantling the military-jihadi complex in Pakistan and putting an end to majoritarianism back home will ensure that foreign terror outfits, whether Pakistani or Arabs, will find it difficult to challenge the idea of India.

Conclusion:

- The death of its "Caliph" is certainly a blow to the terrorist group. But the IS is ideologically stronger to survive the fall of its leader, and the geopolitical conditions that led to the rise of the group remain more or less intact

Connecting the dots:

- Religious indoctrination via digital media has resulted in Indian youth joining the ISIS. What is ISIS and its mission? How can ISIS be dangerous for the internal security of our country?(UPSC 2015)

SAMUDRA SHAKTI

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III- Security

In News

- Samudra Shakti is a **Bilateral Naval Exercise between Navies of India and Indonesia**.
- The second edition of this joint exercise includes manoeuvres, Surface Warfare exercises, Air Defence exercises, Weapon firing drills, Helicopter Operations and Boarding Operations.
- The aim of the exercise is to strengthen bilateral relations, expand maritime co-operation, enhance interoperability and exchange best practices.
- The strategic partnership between India and Indonesia was elevated to '**Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**' during the visit of Prime Minister of India in May 2018 and Defence co-operation has been a significant pillar in this partnership.

CBI

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains III – Security

In News

- The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has set up an Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (OCSAE) Prevention/Investigation Unit.
- The unit, which will function under the agency's Special Crime Zone in Delhi, will collect and disseminate information on online child sexual abuse and exploitation.

- It will also probe such offences covered under the IPC, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act and the Information Technology Act, apart from other relevant laws.

About CBI

- It is the premier investigating agency of India. It investigates several economic crimes and special crimes.
- It operates under the jurisdiction of the **Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions**
- The CBI traces its origin to the Special Police Establishment (SPE) which was set up in 1941 by the Government of India.
- The Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946 transferred the superintendence of the SPE to the Home Department and its functions were enlarged to cover all departments of the Govt. of India.
- The DSPE acquired its popular current name, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), through a Home Ministry resolution dated 1.4.1963.
- Since 1987, there are two investigation divisions in the CBI, namely, Anti-Corruption Division and Special Crimes Division, the latter dealing with cases of conventional crime, besides economic offences.

NATGRID

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III – Security

In News

- The ambitious National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID) project will be operational by December 31, 2020
- NATGRID is an online database for collating scattered pieces of information from more than 20 organisations in the field of telecom, tax records, bank, immigration, etc. to enable the generation of intelligence inputs.
- At least 10 central agencies like IB, R&AW and others will have access to the data on a secured platform for counter-terror investigations.
- The project was started in 2009 in the aftermath of 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks with a budget of Rs. 2800 crore
- While NATGRID's data recovery centre in Bengaluru has been constructed, its office complex in South Delhi is nearing completion
- NATGRID is exempted from the Right to Information Act, 2005 under sub-section (2) of Section 24

SPECIAL PROTECTION GROUP (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III – Security.

In News

- Based on the recommendations of the **BirbalNath committee report**, SPG came into existence in 1985.
- From 1985 to 1988, SPG was governed by an Executive Order and only in **1988 the SPG Act** came into existence to provide security to the Prime Minister and his/her family.
- Under the Act, the Special Protection Group (SPG) provides security to the Prime Minister and his immediate family members.
- SPG doesn't only provide physical security, but it takes care about protection of Prime Minister's office, his/her communication systems, foreign tours and issues pertaining to his/her health and well being.
- It also provides security to former Prime Ministers and their immediate family members for a period of one year from the date on which they cease to hold the office. Beyond this period, the SPG security is provided based on the level of threat as decided by the central government.
- The threat must: (i) emanate from a military or terrorist organisation, and (ii) be of a grave and continuing nature.

Provisions of new bill

- SPG will now protect only the Prime Minister and members of his immediate family residing with him at **his official residence**.
- It will also provide security to former Prime Ministers and their immediate family members staying with them at the residence allotted for a period of five years from the date on which they cease to hold office.
- If the SPG security is withdrawn from a former Prime Minister, it will also be withdrawn from his immediate family members

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)

Context:

- Consequent to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement from the Red Fort, the proposed structure for the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) has been deliberated upon.
- We should soon be seeing the first CDS take charge.
- The proposed charter of the CDS, his powers and status, etc, has been debated intensely.

Background:

- Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) is a proposed position for the combined chief of the Indian Army, Air Force and Navy.
- The idea of creation of such a post goes back to as early Lord Mountbatten. General K. V. Krishna Rao advanced creation of the post of Chief of Defence Staff in June 1982
- Suggested in 1999 following the Kargil War through from Kargil Review Committee.
- The official call was made public by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his Independence Day speech on 15 August 2019 at Red Fort, New Delhi.

Need for CDS:

- It is necessary to have a professional body of the highest standing to facilitate 'jointmanship' and render single-point military advice to the government on matters of national security

Importance:

- Chief of Defence Staff is a critical position in today's era of hybrid warfare, and will help increase jointmanship, tri-service effectiveness and overall combat capabilities of India.
- It is speculated that whereas the Defense Secretary will be the main "defence" advisor, the CDS will assume the role of being the main "military" advisory, acting as the single-point military adviser to the government and Prime Minister.
- Reconcile possible differences in service-specific opinions to enable the government to arrive at considered military decisions.
- India is the only large democracy which does not have a single point military advisor (all P5 countries having one)
- Fostering inter-services jointness in terms of budgeting, equipment purchases, training, joint doctrines and planning of military operations-an imperative of modern warfare

Concerns:

- The Chief of Defence Staff should not become another interposed level between the Raksha Mantri and the service chiefs, whose access to the minister should remain as prevalent.
- There were also fears that such a post would be too powerful.

Conclusion:

- The CDS cannot be a panacea for all problems faced by the defence establishment. However, an effective implementation of the blueprint of the plan by the panel will help Indian defence system to undergo much needed and long-awaited reform.

Connecting the dots:

- The recent decision to appoint a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) satisfies a long-standing demand of the strategic community in India. Critically analyze.

[US to sell \\$1 billion worth defence equipment to India](#)

Context:

The US State Department has approved the sale of naval guns and other equipment worth \$1 billion to India for use against warships, anti-aircraft and shore bombardment.

Details:

- The Indian government has requested to buy up to 13 MK 45 5 inch/62 caliber (MOD 4) naval guns and 3,500 D349 Projectile 5 inch/54 calibre (MOD 1) ammunition.
- Other equipment included ammunition, spare parts, personnel and equipment training, publications and technical data, transportation and US government and contractor technical assistance and other related logistics support.
- The total estimated cost of all of this equipment is over \$1 billion.

What is the MK 45 gun system?

- The MK 45 is a fully automatic naval gun system that is installed on ships and provides a Naval Surface Fire Support (NSFS) range of more than 20 nautical miles (36 km) along with improved propelling charge.
- This system of guns is currently in use by the US Navy.
- The MOD 4 configuration gun mount is believed to boost the firing range by over 50 per cent, increasing the speed and range of munitions.
- Other countries that have been sold the MOD 4 naval guns are Japan, Australia and South Korea.

- The US may also sell these guns to other allies including Britain and Canada.
- The MK 45 Gun System will provide the capability to conduct anti-surface warfare and anti-air defence missions.
- It will enhance interoperability with US and other allied forces.
- India will use the enhanced capability as a deterrent to regional threats and to strengthen its homeland defence.

India-US Relations

- Since the 1990s, Indian foreign policy adapted to the unipolar world and developed closer ties with the United States.
- Indian foreign policy has sought to leverage India's strategic autonomy in order to safeguard sovereign rights and promote national interests within a multi-polar world.
- Under the administrations of Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, the United States has demonstrated accommodation to India's core national interests and acknowledged outstanding concerns.
- In 2016, India and United States signed the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement and India was declared a Major Defense Partner of the United States
- The U.S. has four "foundational" agreements that it signs with its defence partners.
- In recent years, India has conducted large joint military exercises with the US in the Indian Ocean.
- USA as part of its foreign policy to counter China wants to make India as one of the major defence partners for which it is in talks with Indian representatives to sell highly technologically advanced predator drones
- US policy had been opposed to nuclear cooperation with India in prior years because India had developed nuclear weapons against international conventions, and had never signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NNPT).
- The legislation Henry J. Hyde US-India Peaceful Atomic Cooperation Act clears the way for India to buy US nuclear reactors and fuel for civilian use.
- The India-United States Civil Nuclear Agreement also referred to as the "123 Agreement" is a bilateral agreement for peaceful nuclear cooperation which governs civil nuclear trade between American and Indian firms to participate in each other's civil nuclear energy sector.
- For the agreement to be operational, nuclear vendors and operators must comply with India's 2010 Nuclear Liability Act which stipulates that nuclear suppliers, contractors and operators must bear financial responsibility in case of an accident.
- Prominent industrial accidents (1984 Bhopal chemical-gas disaster and the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster) has led to greater scrutiny by civil society into corporate responsibility and financial liability obligations of vendors and operators of critical infrastructure.
- In 2010, the Indian Parliament voted the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act to address concerns and provide civil liability for nuclear damage and prompt compensation to the victims of a nuclear incident.
- On 27 March 2019, India and the US signed an agreement to "strengthen bilateral security and civil nuclear cooperation" including the construction of six American nuclear reactors in India

Key milestones in India – US relations

- Increase in bilateral trade & investment,
- Co-operation on global security matters,
- Inclusion of India in decision-making on matters of global governance (United Nations Security Council),
- Upgraded representation in trade & investment forums (World Bank, IMF, APEC)
- Admission into multilateral export control regimes (MTCR, Wassenaar Arrangement, Australia Group).
- Support for admission in the Nuclear Suppliers Group and joint-manufacturing through technology sharing arrangements have become key milestones and a measure of speed and advancement on the path to closer US–India relations.

Connecting the dots:

- U.S.-India Defense Ties Grow Closer as Shared Concerns in Asia Loom . Analyse

Bodoland

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains III – Internal Security

In News

- The central government extended the ban on the Assam-based insurgent group National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 by five more years for its involvement in violent activities and for joining hands with anti-India forces.
- Bodos are the single largest tribal community in Assam, making up over 5-6 per cent of the state's population. They have controlled large parts of Assam in the past.
- The Bodos have had a long history of separatist demands, marked by armed struggle
- In 1987, the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) renewed the demand. "Divide Assam fifty-fifty", was a call given by the ABSU
- The unrest was a fallout of the Assam Movement (1979-85), whose culmination — the Assam Accord — addressed the demands of protection and safeguards for the "Assamese people", leading the Bodos to launch a movement to protect their own identity
- The Bodo Accord was signed in 2003 which resulted in the establishment of a **Bodoland Territorial Council under Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India**.

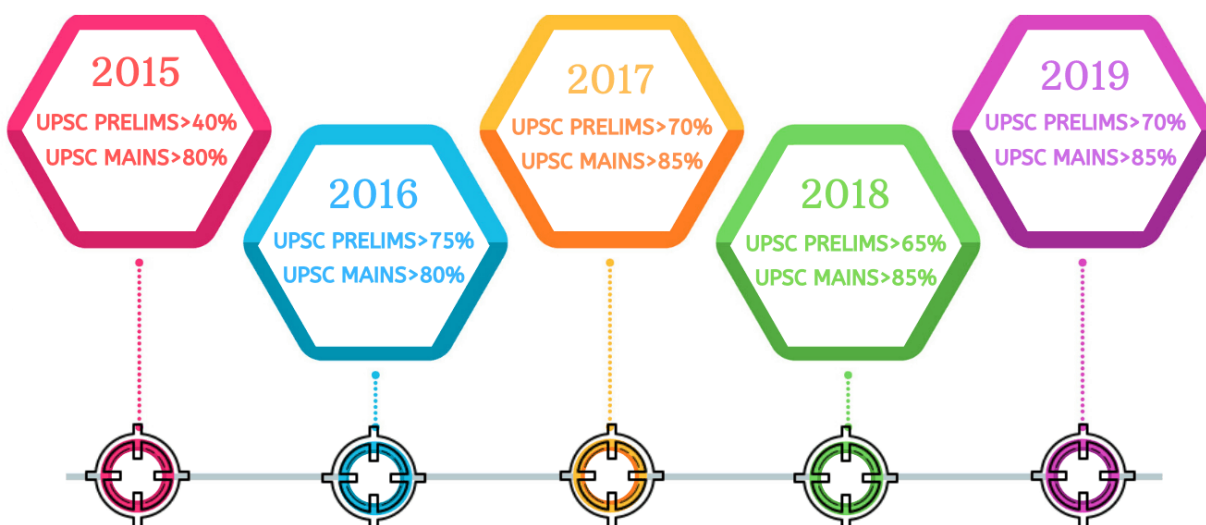
EXERCISE MITRA SHAKTI-VII: 2019

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

In News

- The seventh edition of India-Sri Lanka joint training exercise, Exercise MITRA SHAKTI– 2019 is scheduled to be conducted at Foreign Training Node (FTN), Pune from 01 – 14 December 2019.
- Exercise MITRA SHAKTI is conducted annually as part of military diplomacy and interaction between armies of India & Sri Lanka.

- The aim of this joint training exercise is to build close relations between armies of India and Sri Lanka with focus on sub unit level training for counter insurgency & counter terrorism operations.



PERSON IN NEWS

Person in news	Description
1. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Education Day was celebrated on November 11 to commemorate the Birth Anniversary of Maulana Abu Kalam Azad. He was the first Education Minister of independent India, who served from 15 August 1947 until 2 February 1958. Under his leadership, the Ministry of Education established the first Indian Institute of Technology in 1951 and the University Grants Commission in 1953. He also laid emphasis on the development of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore and the Faculty of Technology of the Delhi University. As Chairman of the Central Advisory Board of Education, he gave thrust to adult literacy, universal primary education, free and compulsory for all children up to the age of 14, girls education, and diversification of secondary education and vocational training.
2. VASHISHTHA NARAYAN SINGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has condoled the passing away of renowned Mathematician Dr. Vashishtha Narayan Singh. Born in 1942, Vashishtha Narayan Singh had been suffering from schizophrenia for long time. In 1963, he completed his PhD on “on cycle vector space theory” from the University of California and worked at NASA. The 74-year-old is said to have challenged Einstein’s theory of relativity. After returning to India he worked as an Associate Professor in IIT-Kanpur and Kharagpur and at Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata <p>About Schizophrenia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schizophrenia is a chronic and severe mental disorder that affects how a person thinks, feels, and behaves. People with schizophrenia may seem like they have lost touch with reality. Because the causes of schizophrenia are still unknown, treatments focus on eliminating the symptoms of the disease.
3. UDHAM SINGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Udham Singh, born in Sunam in Punjab’s Sangrur district in 1899, was a political activist who got associated with the Ghadar Party while in the US. In 1934, Singh made his way to London with the purpose of assassinating Michael O’Dwyer, who in 1919 had been the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab and unsurprisingly, Singh considered O’Dwyer to be responsible for the massacre. Instead of Dyer, who instructed his men to open fire at the crowd

	<p>gathered in JallianwalaBagh, O'Dwyer is considered to be the actual perpetrator, since Dyer could not have executed it without his permission.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On March 13, 1940 Singh shot O'Dwyer at a meeting of the East India Association and the Royal Central Asian Society at Caxton Hill. Singh was immediately arrested. • At the court he referred to himself as Mohamed Singh Azad, to symbolise Hindu-Sikh-Muslim unity in the fight for India's freedom. He was hanged on July 31, 1940 at Pentonville Prison. • For avenging the JallianwalaBagh massacre, Singh is seen by some as a hero. • Gandhi had famously decried Singh's revenge as an "act of insanity". • In 2018 his statue was installed at JallianwalaBagh during Baisakhi. • Udham Singh Nagar district in Uttarakhand is named after the freedom fighter.
4. T.N.Seshan	<p>In News</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Seshan belonged to the 1955 batch of Tamil Nadu cadre officers of the IAS. • At the Centre, Mr. Seshan held several positions, including Environment and Forests Secretary, Defence Secretary and later, Cabinet Secretary • When Chandra Shekhar became Prime Minister with the support of the Congress, Mr. Seshan was made CEC in December 1990 • T.N. Seshan, as CEC during 1990-96, initiated the process of cleaning up the electoral system. The introduction of electors' photo identity cards was a measure towards this direction. • He also saw to it that the model code of conduct, till then considered a document of academic interest, was taken seriously by the parties and candidates • In the mid-1990s, Mr. Seshan was seen as a crusader against corruption and electoral malpractices. • His work was recognised internationally when he was given the Ramon Magsaysay award for 1996. • In July 1997, Mr. Seshan unsuccessfully contested the presidential election against K.R. Narayanan.

MISCELLANEOUS

In News	Description
1. New species of tree frog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new frog species named Polypedates bengalensis has been found in a residential area of West Bengal. The new species also named Brown Blotched Bengal Tree was found in two places in West Bengal – Badu, North 24 Parganas District and Khordanahala, South 24 Parganas District. It is named Brown Blotched Bengal Tree Frog from the series of six to nine dark brown blotches that extend laterally from behind the frog's eye to the vent. The frog's body colour is yellowish-brown to greenish-brown.
2. Ratnam Pen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prime Minister Narendra Modi has gifted German Chancellor Angela Merkel an exquisite handloom woollen khadi stole from Ladakh and a Ratnam pen. The Ratnam Pen, named after K.V. Ratnam (originally from a family of goldsmiths in Rajahmundry), was made iconic by Mahatma Gandhi. The pen was made in 1934 by Ratnam, by using indigenous materials upon Mahatma Gandhi's request to create a 'swadeshi' (locally made) pen. Mahatma Gandhi had written over 31,000 letters in his quest to take India to its freedom. Many of these letters were written using Ratnam Pen. It is produced even today in its original form by K.V. Ratnam and Sons — Ratnam Ballpen Works, owned by Ratnam's descendants. Even today, it has a barrel for filling ink using a dropper and the Genius Iridium Nib from Germany.
3. ICEDASH and ATITHI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These two initiatives were launched by the Ministry of Finance. ICEDASH is an Ease of Doing Business monitoring dashboard of the Indian Customs helping the public see the daily Customs clearance times of import cargo at various ports and airports. ICEDASH dashboard has been developed by Central Board of Indirect taxes and Customs in collaboration with National Informatics Centre (NIC). The ATITHI app will facilitate hassle-free and faster clearance by Customs at the airports and enhance the experience of international tourists and other visitors at the airports. Passengers can use this app to file declaration of dutiable items and currency with the Indian Customs even before boarding the flight to India.
4. China launches Sudan's first satellite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sudan's first satellite for conducting research in military, economic and space technology has been launched by China In 2013, the then-Sudanese government led by President Omar al-

	<p>Bashir established the Institute of Space Research and Aerospace (ISRA) as part of an overall plan to develop space technologies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Al-Bashir was removed by the army in April following a nationwide protest movement against his 30-year rule. • The protests were triggered by the economic crisis led by an acute shortage of foreign currency and high inflation.
5. "Swachhta Tax" On Tourists Taking Photos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Parra panchayat in North Goa had started levying tax on clicking pictures or shooting videos in its jurisdiction. • Parra is best known for its scenic road lined with coconut trees, often serves as a backdrop in several Bollywood films, including the Shahrukh Khan-starrer 'Dear Zindagi'. • The idea behind the tax was not to earn revenue for the village panchayat, but to deter tourists and photographers from holding up traffic along the narrow road during their shoots and throwing garbage around the place • The tax had also irked travel and tourism industry stakeholders in Goa, who had expressed concern that such a tax may be emulated in other coastal villages, which would deter tourists from visiting the areas • As a result, the Panchayat announced withdrawal of a tax
6. 2022 Commonwealth Games	<p>In News</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) wants to skip the 2022 Commonwealth Games. • The IOA's unprecedented step came after the organisers of the 2022 CWG, which will be held in Birmingham, dropped shooting from the programme in June. Instead, they have included women's cricket, para table tennis and beach volleyball. • The decision to drop shooting was taken primarily because the organisers were keen to include those sports for which Birmingham and the wider West Midlands region had the facilities. • Britain's tough gun laws, which makes it very tough for athletes to enter the country with weapons, were a deterrent as well • But India did not accept this logic. Shooting has been the source of one-fourth of India's medals at the Commonwealth Games. It has been argued that removal of shooting will see a steep fall in India's position on the overall medal's tally. • If India actually withdraws from the Games, athletes will be the ones most affected. Not only will they be robbed of competing in a major international event, they will miss out on other incentives as well • Athletes winning medals at the CWG receive hefty prize money, with centre earmarking Rs 30 lakh for gold medallists, Rs 20 lakh for silver winners and Rs 10 lakh for bronze medallists

	<p>Do You Know?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a standard practice for the hosts to choose sports in which they are strong. For example, in 2010, India excluded basketball and triathlon from the programme and added tennis, archery and wrestling. Four years before that, Australia had dropped wrestling
7. Rajya Sabha: The Journey since 1952	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a publication brought out by the Rajya Sabha secretariat to mark the 250th session of the Upper House that begins from 18th Nov 2019. <p>Some of the interesting facts about the house are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rajya Sabha's first sitting was on May 13, 1952. The longest debate on any given subject till date was on the government's failure to provide adequate security to former PM Rajiv Gandhi in wake of his assassination at Sriperumbudur by LTTE cadres. The debate went on for 12 hours and four minutes on June 4, 1991. The Upper House which on March 9, 2010, cleared the Women's Reservation Bill that proposes to reserve 33% of all seats in Lok Sabha for women, has a dismissal record itself in terms of women members. In 2014 it had the highest number of women members at 31 and in 1970 the lowest at 14. Under Congress governments from 1952-1969 and again between 1972-1977, there was no leader of opposition in Rajya Sabha since no opposition parties had enough members to stake claim to the position. In 67 years of its existence, the Upper House has expelled only three members Rajya Sabha has sat beyond midnight on nine occasions and so far its longest sitting was on December 17, 1981 when the House sat till 4.43 a.m. to debate and clear Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA) to ensure that normal life of people is not obstructed by strikes and shutdowns.
8. Rohtang Tunnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Rohtang Tunnel, when complete (by sep 2020), will cut through the mighty PirPanjal range and become the world's longest highway tunnel above 10,000 feet It would have been completed at least four years earlier, but for a massive torrent of water encountered inside the tunnel. For now, the tunnel provides a temporary winter link to the outside world not only to residents of Lahaul and Spiti but also to those living in Zaskar Valley of Ladakh. The project also has significant strategic implications for the

	<p>military as it will allow access beyond Rohtang Pass even in peak winters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All-winter connectivity to Ladakh, however, is still some time away as more tunnels will have to be built to tackle the high passes which fall beyond Rohtang.
9. Mannequins with cameras to scan Bengaluru traffic	<p>In News</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bengaluru Traffic Police department has installed as many as 200 life-size mannequins at trouble-prone junctions in Bengaluru. • The mannequins have been outfitted with standard police uniforms, reflector jackets, hats, boots, masks and even sunglasses, in an attempt to trick motorists into believing that it is a real cop. • Nudge theory: Studies show that there are fewer violations at manned junctions compared to unmanned ones. The behaviour of motorists changes automatically when they see a traffic policeman. • The mannequins, dressed as traffic police, will thus deter repeat offenders. The idea is apparently inspired by farmers using scarecrows.

(TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE)

Model questions: (Answers are provided at the end)

Q.1) Dharma Guardian is military exercise conducted between India and which other country?

- a) USA
- b) Srilanka
- c) Japan
- d) None of the above

Q.2) National Health Profile is released which body/organisation?

- a) NITI Aayog
- b) WHO in collaboration with Ministry of Statistics & Programme implementation
- c) Central Bureau of Health Intelligence
- d) None of the above

Q.3) Consider the following statements about the proposed DNA Technology

1. The Bill seeks to create a national data bank, and regional data banks which will have DNA samples of undertrials, suspects, missing persons and unknown deceased persons.
2. It has proposed DNA sampling and profiling of citizens accused of crime or reported missing, and storing their unique genetic information for administrative purposes

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.4) Consider the following statements about UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN)

1. UCCN was created in 2004 to promote cooperation with and among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development
2. Hyderabad and Bengaluru has now been officially designated as a UNESCO Creative City

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.5) Consider the following statements about Kanyakumari

1. It was called Cape Comorin during British rule in India.
2. Many also call it as Koodal as it is situated at the confluence of three oceans Bay of Bengal, Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.6) Consider the following statements about 'Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA)'

1. It was constituted with the objective of 'protecting and improving' the quality of the environment and 'controlling environmental pollution' in the National Capital Region.
2. It was constituted at the behest of the Supreme Court.
3. It is mandated to enforce Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) as per the pollution levels.

Select the correct statements

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 1 and 3
- d) All of the above

Q.7) CHAVANG KUT is a festival celebrated predominantly in which regions/state of India?

- a) Jammu & Kashmir
- b) Manipur
- c) Rajasthan
- d) None of the above

Q.8) Mekedatu project often seen in news is being planned across which river?

- a) Godavari
- b) Narmada
- c) Barak
- d) Cauvery

Q.9) Consider the following statements about Electoral Bonds

1. It can be purchased from any of the Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs)
2. Interest will be given by the banks on these bonds.
3. Electoral bonds will be valid till next Lok Sabha elections from the date of purchase.

Which of the following statements is/are **not correct**?

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

Q.10) Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) is conducted by which body/organisation?

- a) NITI Aayog
- b) CMIE (Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy)
- c) NSSO (National Sample Survey Office)
- d) None of the above

Q.11) Consider the following statements about GAGAN – GPS Aided geo-augmented navigation.

1. It was developed by ISRO and Airports Authority of India(AAI)
2. It covers the area from Africa to Australia and has expansion capability for seamless navigation services across the region.
3. It makes airline operations more efficient and effective, increase air safety, and fuel efficiency.

Select the correct statements

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 1 and 3
- d) All of the above

Q.12) Consider the following statements about NaVIC

1. It is India's own Regional Navigation Satellite System
2. It is designed to provide accurate position information service to users in India as well as the region extending up to 1500 km from its boundary

Select the *correct* statements

- a) Only 1
- b) Only 2
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.13) Consider the following statements about Dhanush artillery gun

1. It is the indigenously upgraded variant of the Swedish Bofors gun imported in the 1980s.
2. It has a range of nearly 150 kms

Which of the following statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.14) DUSTLIK is joint military exercise conducted between India and _____

- a) Kazakhstan
- b) Turkmenistan
- c) Uzbekistan
- d) Mongolia

Q.15) Consider the following statements about National Register of Citizens (NRC)

1. NRC is the register containing names of Indian Citizens. It was prepared first in 1963 after the conduct of the Census of 1961.
2. Over 19 lakh out of the 3.29 crore applicants were excluded from the updated NRC list (in Assam) published in August 2019.

Which of the following statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.16) Consider the following statements with respect to 'Eastern Economic Forum'

1. It is an initiative of the 'ASEAN + 6' countries.
2. It is an initiative for the purpose of encouraging foreign investment

Select the correct statements

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.17) Consider the following statements about Eastern Economic Forum

1. EEF is an international forum established by Russia in 1991 to support the economic development of Russia's Far East
2. The Russian Far East comprises the eastern Russian territory between Lake Baikal in eastern Siberia and the Pacific Ocean

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.18) Consider the following statements about Ratnam Pen

1. The pen was made in 1934 by Ratnam, by using indigenous materials upon Mahatma Gandhi's request to create a 'swadeshi' (locally made) pen
2. It is produced even today in its original form which has a barrel for filling ink using a dropper and the Genius Iridium Nib from Germany.

Which of the following statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only

- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.19) Which of the following countries are members of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

- 1. India
- 2. China
- 3. Pakistan
- 4. Turkmenistan
- 5. Uzbekistan

Select the correct answer from the codes given below

- a) 1,2 and 3 only
- b) 1,2,3 and 4 only
- c) 1,2,3 and 5 only
- d) All of the above

Q.20) Which of the following are considered as the reasons for automobile slowdown observed in early 2019

- 1. The sharp increase in road tax in many States
- 2. The switch from BS IV to VI engines for improved emission standards
- 3. Falling rural demand due to stagnation in agricultural growth

Select the correct answer from the codes given below

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) All of the above

Q.21) Consider the following statements about Alzheimer Disease

- 1. It is a progressive brain disorder whereby a person loses the ability to perform day-to-day activities.
- 2. India has approved the first home-grown drug "Oligomannate (GV-971)" for the treatment of "mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease (AD).

Select the correct statements

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.22) Consider the following statements

- 1. The decision on a petition under the anti-defection law is taken by the Chairman/Speaker of the House, while a decision on disqualification petition on office of profit under government allegedly being held by a member is taken by the Election Commission
- 2. Decisions by Chairman/Speaker regarding disqualification of members under anti-defection law is outside the purview of Judicial review.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.23) Consider the following statements

- 1. India's per capita emissions were about 40% of the global average and contributed 7% to the global carbon dioxide burden.
- 2. India has promised to reduce the emission intensity of its economy by 33-35% by 2030, compared to 1991 levels

Which of the following statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.24) Idate Commission and Renke Commission dealt with which of the following areas?

- a) Reorganisation of States on linguistic basis
- b) Repealing of AFSPA in North-eastern India and Kashmir.
- c) Identification & welfare of De-Notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities
- d) Women and Child empowerment

Q.25) Consider the following statements about Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)

- 1. It is established under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.
- 2. Recently it has proposed that foods high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) cannot be sold to children in school canteens/mess premises/hostel kitchens or within 50 m of the school campus.
- 3. Ministry of Food processing is the administrative Ministry of FSSAI.

Select the correct answer from the codes given below

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) All of the above

Q.26) Consider the following statements about ICEDASH initiative

- 1. It was launched by the Ministry of Finance.
- 2. It is for improved monitoring and pace of Customs clearance of imported goods.
- 3. It has been developed by NITI Aayog in collaboration with World's Customs Union

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

- a) 1 and 2 Only
- b) 2 and 3 Only
- c) 1 and 3 Only

- d) 1,2 and 3

Q.27) Consider the following statements about South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)

- 1. It is an inter-governmental organization established in 1982 by South Asian Countries.
- 2. SACEP also acts as the Secretariat for the South Asian Seas Programme, which comes under the purview of UNEP's Regional Seas Programme.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.28) Which of the following objectives are a part of Paris Climate Deal 2015

- 1. To keep global temperatures "well below" 2.0C (3.6F) above pre-industrial times and "endeavour to limit" them even more, to 1.5C
- 2. To review each country's contribution to cutting emissions every five years so they scale up to the challenge
- 3. For rich countries to help poorer nations by providing "climate finance" to adapt to climate change and switch to renewable energy.

Select the correct answer from codes given below

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

Q.29) The judgement in Second Judges case led to which of the following outcome?

- a) Gave birth to Doctrine of basic structure of Constitution

- b) Declaring NJAC Act (National Judicial Appointments Commission) as unconstitutional
- c) Establishment of Collegium system of appointment of judges.
- d) None of the above

Q.30) Consider the following statements about National Green Tribunal

- 1. It is established under Environment Protection Act, 1986
- 2. It has the power of enforcement of any legal right relating to environment

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.31) Consider the following statements about Office of Profit

- 1. It is clearly defined in the Constitution in Article 102(a)
- 2. If a question arises whether a member (of Parliament) has incurred disqualification on Office of Profit grounds, it will be referred to the Speaker/Chairman of the House decision.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.32) Consider the following statements about India Justice Report

- 1. It is released by NITI Aayog
- 2. The report is based on publicly available data from different government entities on the four

pillars of justice delivery — police, judiciary, prisons and legal aid.

- 3. Maharashtra has topped the list of 18 large-medium States in the overall ranking of Indian States on justice delivery

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

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

Q.33) Which of the following countries are member countries of BIMSTEC

- 1. Srilanka
- 2. Malaysia
- 3. Nepal
- 4. Bangladesh
- 5. China

Select the correct answer from codes given below

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

Q.34) Consider the following statements

- 1. As of Nov 2019, cash held by the public made up 36% of the money in circulation, with most of the rest deposited in banks indicating success of demonetisation
- 2. The number of UPI payments in 2018-19 for the first time surpassed the number of debit card transactions.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.35) Consider the following statements about Bru Tribes

1. They also referred to as the Reangs, are spread across the north-eastern states of Tripura, Assam, Manipur, and Mizoram.
2. Hojagiri folk dance is performed by Bru people which entails women and young girls, about 4 to 6 members in a team, singing, balancing on an earthen pitcher and managing other props such as a bottle on the head, while only the lower half of the body is moved

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.36) NH 766 often seen in news passes through which of the following States of India?

- a) Assam and Arunachal Pradesh
- b) Gujarat and Maharashtra
- c) Karnataka and Kerala
- d) None of the above

Q.37) Consider the following statements about National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd.(NAFED),

1. It was established during the 1991 economic reform period so as to give impetus to agriculture production and marketing.
2. It functions under Ministry of Agriculture.
3. It is now one of the largest procurement as well as marketing agencies for agricultural products in India.

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

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

Q.38) SAMUDRA SHAKTI is a bilateral naval exercise between India and _____

- a) Malaysia
- b) Indonesia
- c) Mauritius
- d) Sri Lanka

Q.39) Consider the following statements

1. India's Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) has seen a decline from 130 per 1 lakh live births in 2014-2016 to 122 per 1 lakh live births in 2015-2017.
2. The progress puts the country on track towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target of an MMR below 70 by 2030.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.40) Consider the following statements about Dhrupad

1. It is a genre in Carnatic classical music.
2. The nature of Dhrupad music is spiritual and does not seek to entertain, but to induce feelings of peace and spirituality in the listener

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only

- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.41) World's first CNG(Compressed Natural Gas) port terminal is being developed at which place?

- a) Mundra Port
- b) Bhavnagar Port
- c) Kolkata Port
- d) Mangalore Port

Q.42) Consider the following statements about HS (Harmonised system) code.

1. It is a six-digit identification code developed by the World Economic Forum.
2. It helps in harmonising of customs and trade procedures between nearly 200 countries, thus reducing costs in international trade
3. Ministry of Commerce and Industry has recently allocated a separate Harmonised System (HS) code for Khadi.

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

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

Q.43) Susta and Kalapani often seen in news are contentious issues between which two countries?

- a) Nepal and China
- b) India and Bhutan
- c) India and Myanmar
- d) India and Nepal

Q.44) Consider the following statements

1. Methane is a long-lived gas and degrades into the atmosphere over the thousands of centuries and thus

it is a more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide

2. Biogenic methane is the methane emitted by livestock, waste treatment and wetlands.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.45) Consider the following statements about Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan Initiative (SUMAN)

It is being implemented by Ministry of Women and Child Development.

Its objective is to provide quality healthcare at zero cost, to pregnant women, new mothers and newborns.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.46) SurangaBawadi system of water management found in Northern Karnataka was built during which ruler's period?

- a) Rashtrakutas
- b) Kakatiyas
- c) AdilShahis
- d) Chalukyas

Q.47) Which of the following are the focus areas of research of ICAR?

1. Genetic potential enhancement of agricultural commodities.
2. Agricultural productivity, efficiency and profitability improvement.
3. Improve Nutritional food, and health security.

4. Bio-security emerging from gene piracy and cross-border vector borne diseases.

Select the correct answer from codes given below

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

Q.48) Index of Industrial Production is released by which body/ministry?

- a) Central Statistical Organisation
- b) Ministry of Commerce and Industry
- c) NITI Aayog
- d) None of the above

Q.49) Consider the following statements about Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK)

1. They are agricultural extension centres created by erstwhile Planning Commission
2. The mandate of KVK is Technology Assessment and Demonstration for its Application and Capacity Development of farmers.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.50) Consider the following statements about National Water Policy 2012

1. Major innovation of this policy was the concept of an Integrated Water Resources Management approach that took the "river basin/ sub-basin" as a unit for planning, development and management of water resources.

2. It proposed that a portion of river flows ought to be kept aside to meet ecological needs.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.51) National Education Day on November 11 is celebrated to commemorate the birth anniversary of which leader?

- a) Sarvapalli Radhakrishna
- b) Jawaharlal Nehru
- c) Maulana Abul Kalam Azad
- d) M Visvesvaraya

Q.52) Tiger Triumph often seen in news is related to which of the following?

- a) Government of India scheme to double Tiger population by 2024
- b) Initiative by West Bengal government to improve relations with neighbouring Bhutan
- c) Indo-US joint Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Exercise.
- d) None of the above

Q.53) Consider the following statements about Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC)

1. It is a statutory market committee constituted by a Central Government in respect of trade in certain notified agricultural or horticultural or livestock products
2. APMC Acts provide that first sale in the notified agricultural commodities produced in the region can be conducted only under the aegis of the APMC

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.54) Consider the following statements

1. E-NAM is pan-India electronic trading portal that creates a unified national market for agricultural commodities
2. E-NAM reduces transaction costs and information asymmetry thus enhancing the income for farmers

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.55) Which of the following are the possible impacts of Climate Change?

1. Decline in average yield potential of maize and rice
2. Rise in infectious diseases
3. High frequency of deadly heat waves

Select the correct answer from the codes given below.

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

Q.56) Arrange the following international institutions/groupings in the chronological order of their founding year

1. SAARC
2. BRICS
3. BIMSTEC
4. ASEAN
5. IBSA

Select the correct answer from the codes given below

- a) 4-1-3-2-5
- b) 4-1-3-5-2
- c) 1-4-2-5-3
- d) 4-3-1-5-2

Q.57) Consider the following statements about Diabetes

1. It is the seventh leading cause of death and a major cause of debilitating complications like heart attacks, stroke, kidney failure, blindness and lower limb amputations.
2. Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has launched pre-qualification initiative for insulin that would cut prices and dramatically increase insulin access for diabetics

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.58) Consider the following statements about Jal Jeevan Mission

1. It aims at providing Functional Household Tap Connections in rural areas by 2024.
2. It also includes creation of local infrastructure for source sustainability like rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge and management of household wastewater for reuse in agriculture

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.59) Consider the following statements about Swachh – Nirmal Tat Abhiyaan

1. Its objective is to make beaches clean and create awareness amongst about the importance of coastal ecosystems
2. It is being implemented by NITI-Aayog in collaboration with Ministry of Jal Shakti

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.60) Consider the following statements about Doctrine of Essentiality

1. It was invented by a seven-judge Bench of the Supreme Court in the 'Shirur Mutt' case in 1954.
2. Under this doctrine, the Court took upon itself the responsibility of determining the essential & non-essential practices of a religion and offered Constitutional protection to only those religious practices which was considered as essential to religion.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.61) Consider the following statements about ninth edition of International Diabetic Federation's Diabetes Atlas

1. 10% of global health expenditure is spent on diabetes
2. One in six people with diabetes in the world is from India

3. The atlas offers projections that continue to put India at the second slot right up to 2045

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

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

Q.62) Consider the following statements

1. India stands third in the production of tobacco after Brazil and USA
2. Tobacco Board is a statutory body which works under the overall guidance of Ministry of Agriculture and farmer's welfare.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.63) Consider the following statements about Geochemical Baseline Atlas

1. It is released by NITI Aayog in collaboration with Ministry of Earth Sciences
2. It will help in finding out future contaminations due to industries across the country, thereby enabling the Government and policymakers to leverage it in planning the land use.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.64) Household Consumer Expenditure Survey is brought out by which Organisation/Union Ministry?

- a) NITI Aayog
- b) Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation
- c) Reserve Bank of India
- d) Ministry of Labour

Q.65) Consider the following statements about divergence between WPI and CPI

- 1. India is witnessing for the first time the divergence in rates between WPI and CPI, where WPI inflation is at only 0.16% while retail inflation(CPI) is at 4.6%
- 2. One of the reason for such divergence is price surge in services which have a weight of about 30 per cent that can only be found in retail inflation

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.66) Consider the following statements about Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)

- 1. It operates under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions.
- 2. Recently, it has set up an Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (OCSAE) Prevention/Investigation Unit which will collect and disseminate information on online child sexual abuse and exploitation

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only

- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.67) Consider the following statements about National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)

- 1. It was formed under the Disaster Management Act, 2005
- 2. It is trained to tackle all types of disasters except nuclear, biological and chemical disasters which is handled by National Security guards

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.68) Consider the following statements Common Wealth Games (CWG)

- 1. The 2022 CWG will be held in Melbourne, Australia
- 2. India wants to skip the CWG-2022 because shooting has been removed from the games which has been the source of one-fourth of India's medals at the Commonwealth Games

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.69) What is Piezometer used for?

- a) To measure liquid pressure
- b) To measure magnitude of earthquake
- c) To measure atmospheric pressure
- d) None of the above

Q.70) Consider the following statements about AGRIDEX

1. It is released by NITI Aayog in collaboration with Bombay Stock Exchange
2. It will help in easy referencing the price variations in agricultural commodities.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.71) Consider the following statements

1. In the February 2018 Budget, the government had announced a plan to merge three public sector general insurance firms
2. The challenges identified for the merger are integration of work culture, rolling out common software, and rationalisation of branches

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.72) Consider the following statements about Minimum Operating Price (MOP)

1. It is the price consisting of landing price, operational cost and reasonable profit margin and below which no product should be sold in the market
2. MOP is currently being regulated by Competition Commission of India in

collaboration with State governments

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.73) Consider the following statements

1. The fourth schedule of the constitution deals with the allocation of seats in the Rajya Sabha to the states and Union territories.
2. Under article 75(3) of the Constitution, the Council of Ministers is collectively responsible to both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.74) Article 47 deals with which of the following provisions?

- a) Education for all children below 6 years
- b) Uniform Civil Code
- c) Duty of the State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living and to improve public health
- d) None of the above

Q.75) Consider the following statements about Starlink network

1. It is launched by Coalition of Space agencies and Private organisation led by NASA and International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

2. It is aimed at providing low-cost and reliable space-based Internet services to the world.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.76) Consider the following statements about Cartosat-3

1. Cartosat-3, with an ISRO-best resolution of 25 cm, will be the first of a series of high resolution, third generation satellites planned for observing the Earth
2. It will be launched by GSLV MK-III

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.77) Consider the following statements about Pradhan Mantri Matru VandanaYojana (PMMVY)

1. The aim of the scheme is to support lactating mothers and pregnant women by compensating them for loss of wages during their pregnancy.
2. The PMMVY is targeted only at women delivering their first child where a cash amount of ₹6,000 is transferred to the bank account of the beneficiary

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.78) Consider the following statements about Bharatiya Poshan Krishi Kosh

1. It is a repository of diverse crops across 128 agro-climatic zones to help enable better nutritional outcomes
2. United Nations Food & Agricultural organisation (FAO) will be a part of this initiative, who will document and evaluate promising regional dietary practices

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.79) Consider the following statements with respect to 'Solar eclipse'

1. A solar eclipse occurs when the moon passes in a direct line between the Earth and the sun.
2. Solar Eclipse takes place twice a year in the month of May and November.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.80) Consider the following statements about World Talent Ranking

1. It is released by World Economic Forum
2. India has slipped 6 places to 59 rank on the global annual list of 63 countries, in the recently released ranking.

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

- a) 1 only

- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.81) Consider the following statements

1. More than 1.5 lakh people lost their lives in road crashes in the country in 2018, registering an increase of 2.4% as compared to the 2017
2. India is the third most unsafe country in the world for road users across 199 countries, as reported by the Geneva-based World Road Federation's World Road Statistics 2018.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.82) Consider the following statements about NATGRID

1. It is an online database for collating scattered pieces of information from more than 20 organisations to enable the generation of intelligence inputs.
2. NATGRID also comes under the ambit of Right to Information Act, 2005

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.83) Consider the following statements about International Court of Justice (ICJ)

1. It was established in June 1945 by the Charter of the United Nations and began work in April 1946.

2. The seat of the Court is at the Peace Palace in The Hague (Netherlands)

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.84) Consider the following statements about National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)

1. It is a statutory body established under section 408 of the Companies Act, 2013.
2. The NCLT shall have powers and jurisdiction of the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR), the Appellate Authority for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (AAIFR), Company Law Board, High Courts relating to compromises, arrangements, mergers, amalgamations and reconstruction of companies etc.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.85) Consider the following statements

1. The U.S. Senate unanimously adopted legislation supporting "human rights and democracy" in Hong Kong and threatening to revoke its special economic status
2. The pro-democracy movement was ignited in June 2019 when millions took to streets in opposition to a now-abandoned attempt to pass a law which criminalises dissent media

opinions against Chinese Communist Party.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.86) Consider the following statements about International Financial Services Centre (IFSC)

- 1. IFSC is a jurisdiction that provides financial services to only resident Indians in foreign currencies.
- 2. GIFT (Gujarat International Finance Tech-City), located in Gandhinagar is India's first International Financial Services Centre.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.87) Consider the following statements

- 1. Recently, Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has cleared one of the government's largest asset-sale exercises involving five Public Sector Enterprises.
- 2. The resources unlocked by the strategic disinvestment of these CPSEs would be used to exclusively to fund ISRO's Human Flight Programme.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.88) Consider the following statements about FASTags :

- 1. FASTags is an electronic toll collection system in India,
- 2. It is operated by the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI).

Which of the above statements are correct:

- a) Only 1
- b) Only 2
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.89) Consider the following statements about Tiger triumph:

- 1. The exercise represents the growing strategic partnership between Japan and India.
- 2. It was the first ever Tri-Services.

Which of the above statements are correct:

- a) Only 1
- b) Only 2
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.90) Consider the following statements about Surrogacy bill :

- 1. The surrogacy bill proposes a complete ban on commercial surrogacy
- 2. Altruistic surrogacy involves no monetary compensation to the surrogate mother other than medical expenses and insurance coverage during the pregnancy.

Which of the above statements are not correct:

- a) Only 1
- b) Only 2
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.91) Dharma Guardian is military exercise conducted between India and which other country?

- a) USA
- b) Srilanka
- c) Japan
- d) None of the above

Q.92) Consider the following statements about NavIC

- 1. It is India's own Regional Navigation Satellite System
- 2. It is designed to provide accurate position information service to users in India as well as the region extending up to 1500 km from its boundary

Select the *correct* statements

- a) Only 1
- b) Only 2
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.93) Consider the following statements about Cartosat-3

- 1. Cartosat-3, with an ISRO-best resolution of 25 cm, will be the first of a series of high resolution, third generation satellites planned for observing the Earth
- 2. It will be launched by GSLV MK-III

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.94) Consider the following statements about Swachh Bharat Abhiyan

- 1. It is being implemented directly by Prime Minister's Office so as to

enable better monitoring and quick implementation of the scheme.

- 2. Only 40% of people with access to toilets in rural India used them regularly, indicating that the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan's efforts to change behaviour was a failure.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.95) Bougainville island often seen in the news is located in which ocean?

- a) Pacific Ocean
- b) Atlantic Ocean
- c) Indian Ocean
- d) Antarctic Ocean

Q.96) Consider the following statements about Ken-Betwa river linking project

- 1. The project involves transferring surplus water from Ken river in Madhya Pradesh (MP) to the Betwa in Uttar Pradesh (UP)
- 2. The aim of the project is to provide irrigation and drinking water facilities to Malwa region in both these (MP & UP) states

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.97) Consider the following statements about Plastic Parks

- 1. These parks will have an ecosystem with infrastructure building and enabling the common facility to consolidate and synergize the

capacities of the domestic downstream plastic processing industry.

2. Union government would provide grant funding up to 90 per cent of the project cost. The remaining project cost is to be funded by State Government & beneficiary industries

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.98) Which state has approved the nomination of at least one differently abled member to each panchayat (if not elected), making it the first state to have such a policy?

- a) Jharkhand
- b) Bihar
- c) Chhattisgarh
- d) Uttar Pradesh

Q.99) Consider the following statements about Etalin Hydroelectric Project

1. It is being planned in State of Mizoram
2. The project area falls under the richest bio-geographical province of the Himalayan zone and would be located at the junction of the Palaearctic, Indo-Chinese and Indo-Malayan bio-geographic regions

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.100) Gamosa is predominantly the cultural item of which State in India?

- a) Rajasthan
- b) Karnataka
- c) Assam
- d) Himachal Pradesh

Q.101) Consider the following statements about Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)

1. It is a statutory body established under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.
2. Ministry of Food processing is the administrative Ministry of FSSAI.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.102) Consider the following statements about Coal Bed Methane (CBM)

1. It is an unconventional form of natural gas found in coal deposits or coal seams
2. CBM can be used for only power generation but not as compressed natural gas (CNG) auto fuel.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.103) Consider the following statements about Constitution Day

1. It is celebrated on 26th November as it was on this day in 1949 the Constituent Assembly adopted the Constitution
2. Earlier 26th November was celebrated as National Law Day, but it was declared as Constitution day

through government notification in 1999 to mark the 50th anniversary of adoption of Constitution.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.104) Consider the following statements about Saakshar Bharat Programme

1. The principal target of the programme is to impart functional literacy to 70 million non-literate adults in the age group of 45 years and beyond.
2. It is being implemented by Ministry of Human Resource Development

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.105) Consider the following statements about Golden Rice

1. It is claimed to be able to fight Vitamin A deficiency, which is the leading cause of blindness among children
2. India is on the verge of becoming the first country to approve plantation of this variety.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.106) Atapaka Bird Sanctuary is located in which State of India?

- a) Tamil Nadu
- b) Karnataka
- c) Odisha
- d) Andhra Pradesh

Q.107) Global Environmental outlook is released by which Organisation/body?

- a) UNESCO
- b) World Economic Forum
- c) Greenpeace International (NGO)
- d) United Nations Environment Programme

Q.108) Consider the following statements about Cartosat-3

1. It is a third generation agile advanced satellite having high resolution imaging capability.
2. It will be launched by GSLV MK-III from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.109) Consider the following statements about Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO)

1. Indian Ocean Dipole and El-Nino remain over their respective positions, while MJO is a traversing phenomenon
2. When MJO is over the Indian Ocean during the Monsoon season, it brings good rainfall over the Indian subcontinent.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.110) Consider the following statements about Finance Commission

1. It is a statutory body established under Finance Commission Act, 1951.
2. The term of 15th Finance Commission has been extended whose recommendations will be now applicable for six years, which has happened for first time in India's history.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.111) Mitra Shakti is a military exercise conducted between India and which other country/countries?

- a) USA, Japan and Australia
- b) Nepal
- c) Sri Lanka
- d) None of the above

Q.112) Consider the following Statements about Special Protection Group (SPG)

1. SPG came into existence in 1985 based on the recommendations of BirbalNath committee report
2. From 1985 to 1988, SPG was governed by an Executive Order and only in 1988 the SPG Act came into existence to provide security to the Prime Minister and his/her family.
3. SPG provides only physical security to Prime Minister but protection of Prime Minister's office, his/her communication systems, foreign tours and issues pertaining to his/her health and well being are taken care by Indian Army

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

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

Q.113) Consider the following statements

1. UNESCO, in its latest report, has said that India has become one of the largest gold smuggling hubs in the world with one-third of the world's gold passing through India
2. Three primary factors for smuggling gold through India are: tax breaks, falsified origin documents and complicit allies

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.114) Consider the following statements about NuGen mobility Summit 2019

1. It is held in Pune which is the largest automotive technology event in country so far.
2. Automotive technology experts only from SAARC countries except Pakistan are participating in this summit.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.115) Consider the following statements about Double Taxation Avoidance agreement (DTAA)

1. A DTAA applies in cases where a taxpayer resides in one country and earns income in another.
2. It will help in elimination of double taxation as well as prevention of fiscal evasion and avoidance with respect to taxes on income.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.116) Consider the following statements about Fastags

1. It employs Radio Frequency Identification technology which is similar to that used in transport access-control systems, like Metro smart card
2. It will help to remove bottlenecks at tolls and capture all toll payments electronically.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.117) Consider the following Statements about North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)

1. It constitutes a system of collective defence whereby its independent member states agree to mutual defence in response to an attack by any external party.
2. Its headquarters is in Brussels, Belgium
3. India which was earlier not a part of NATO has now become a member of NATO after signing foundational

agreements like COMCASA, LEMOA and BECA with USA

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

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

Q.118) Consider the following statements about The Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu (merger of union territories) bill, 2019

1. The two Union Territories are being merged for better administration and to prevent duplication of work in line with government's policy of Minimum Government, Maximum Governance
2. The Bill provides that the jurisdiction of the High Court of Delhi will continue to extend to the merged UT.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.119) Consider the following statements about Yuwaah Initiative

1. The aim of the initiative to facilitate youth to gain relevant skills for productive lives and the future of work
2. It is launched by World Bank in collaboration with NITI Aayog

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.120) Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre is located in which State/Union Territory of India?

- a) Uttar Pradesh
- b) Bihar
- c) Haryana
- d) Andaman & Nicobar Islands

Q.122) Chagos island often seen in news is located in which water body?

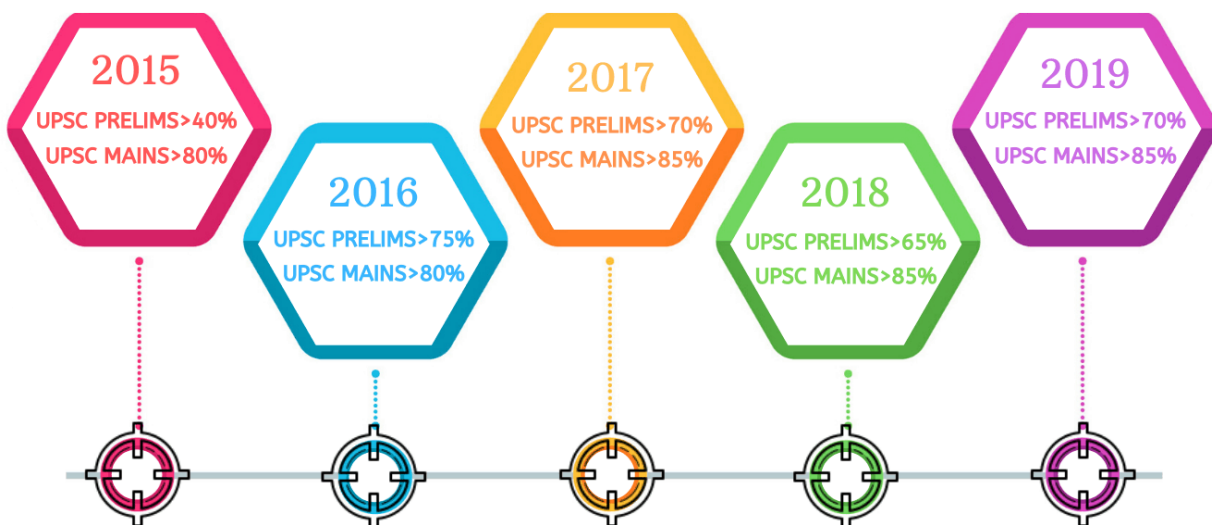
- a) Mediterranean Sea
- b) Pacific Ocean
- c) Indian Ocean
- d) Atlantic Ocean

Q.121) Global Migration Report is released by which organisation/body?

- a) World Economic Forum
- b) World Bank
- c) International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- d) None of the above



AIPTS-2020
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New Batch on 20th November



2019 NOVEMBER MONTH CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQs SOLUTIONS

1 C	42 B	83 C
2 C	43 D	84 C
3 C	44 B	85 A
4 A	45 B	86 B
5 C	46 C	87 A
6 D	47 D	88 C
7 B	48 A	89 B
8 D	49 B	90 B
9 D	50 C	91 C
10 C	51 C	92 C
11 D	52 C	93 A
12 C	53 B	94 B
13 A	54 C	95 A
14 C	55 D	96 A
15 B	56 B	97 A
16 B	57 A	98 C
17 C	58 C	99 B
18 C	59 A	100 C
19 C	60 C	101 A
20 D	61 D	102 A
21 A	62 A	103 A
22 D	63 B	104 C
23 A	64 B	105 A
24 C	65 B	106 D
25 A	66 C	107 D
26 A	67 A	108 A
27 C	68 B	109 C
28 D	69 A	110 D
29 C	70 B	111 C
30 B	71 C	112 A
31 D	72 A	113 B
32 B	73 A	114 D
33 B	74 C	115 C
34 B	75 B	116 C
35 C	76 A	117 A
36 C	77 C	118 A
37 B	78 A	119 A
38 B	79 A	120 C
39 C	80 B	121 C
40 B	81 A	122 C
41 B	82 A	