

JANUARY 2020



# IASBABA'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE

**INTERNET SHUTDOWN AND SECTION 144  
MODEL (AGRICULTURE) LAND LEASING ACT  
BRU/REANG REFUGEE CRISIS  
CORONAVIRUS  
MIDDLE INCOME TRAP  
BLOCK CHAIN TECHNOLOGY  
UAPA ACT**

## 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](http://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 56<sup>th</sup> edition of IASbaba's Monthly Magazine. This edition covers all important issues that were in news in the month of **JANUARY 2020** 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

### Bhima-Koregaon battle of 1818: 202nd Anniversary

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS Mains I- Modern History

**In News**

- The battle was fought on 1 January 1818 between the British East India Company and the Peshwa faction of the Maratha Confederacy, at Koregaon Bhima, a small village in Pune district of Maharashtra,
- A few hundred Mahar soldiers of the East India Company, led by the British, defeated the massive Peshwa army, led by Peshwa Bajirao II
- The Vijay Sthamb (victory pillar) was erected by the East India Company in memory of those who fought the battle. The names of the Mahar soldiers who unknowingly brought an end to the Peshwa rule in 1818 are inscribed on the pillar.
- The Dalits who follow BR Ambedkar view this battle as a victory of Mahars over the injustice and torture meted out to them by the Brahminical Peshwas.

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### Lord Curzon

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-I- Modern history

**In News**

- Lord Curzon, India's Viceroy between 1899 and 1905, was one of the most controversial and consequential holders of that post.
- The partition of the undivided Bengal Presidency in 1905 was one of Curzon's most criticised moves, which gave impetus to the freedom movement (Swadeshi movement)
- Partition was finally reversed in 1911 by Lord Hardinge in the face of unrelenting opposition.
- He became the youngest Viceroy of India in 1899 at age 39, and remained in office until his resignation in 1905.

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### Martyr's Day

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-I- Society, Modern History

**In News**

- It is observed on **30th January** every year in the memory of Mahatma Gandhi and his contributions to the nation.
- He was assassinated by **Nathuram Godse** in the Birla House during his evening prayers on 31<sup>st</sup> Jan 1948

- **23rd March** is also observed as Martyr's Day to pay tribute to three revolutionaries of India namely **Bhagat Singh, Shivaram Rajguru and Sukhdev Thapar**.

### Savitribai Phule

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS Mains –I- Modern history, Society

#### **In News**

- Savitribai Phule, the social reformer who is considered to be one of India's first modern feminists, was born on January 3, 1831
- Both Savitribai Phule & her husband Jyotirao Phule went on to found India's first school for girls called Bhide Wada in Pune in 1848.
- The Phules started the Satyashodhak Samaj (Society for Truth-Seeking), through which they wanted to initiate the practice of Satyashodhak marriage, in which no dowry was taken.
- The Phules also started the Literacy Mission in India between 1854-55
- Savitribai Phule is especially remembered for being India's first female teacher who worked for the upliftment of women and untouchables in the field of education and literacy.

### Gurudwara Nankana Sahib in Pakistan

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-I- History

#### **In News**

- Gurdwara Janam Asthan (also called **Nankana Sahib Gurdwara**) is built over the site where Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was believed to be born in 1469
- The Janam Asthan shrine was constructed by **Maharaja Ranjit Singh**, after he visited Nankana Sahib in 1818-19 while returning from the Battle of Multan.
- During British rule, the Gurdwara Janam Asthan was the site of a violent episode when in 1921, over 130 Akali Sikhs were killed after they were attacked by the Mahant of the shrine.
- The incident is regarded as one of the key milestones in the Gurdwara Reform Movement, which led to the passing of the Sikh Gurdwara Act in 1925 that ended the Mahant control of Gurdwaras.

### Nagardhan excavations : Insights into Vakataka dynasty

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-I – Art & Culture; Ancient History

#### **In News**

- Vakatakas ruled parts of **Central and South India** between the **third and fifth centuries**.
- Nagardhan (near Pune) served as the capital of the Vakataka kingdom.
- Some of the findings of Archaeological excavations are

- First time **clay sealings** have been excavated from Nagardhan.
- Belonged to period when **Prabhavatigupta was the queen of the Vakataka dynasty.**
- The sealing is 1500 years old and bears the queens name in Brahmi script, along with **depiction of conch**
- The presence of the conch is regarded as a sign of the Vaishnava affiliation that the Guptas held.
- An **intact idol of Lord Ganesha**, which had no ornaments adorned, too was found from the site. This confirmed that the elephant god was a commonly worshipped deity in those times

### Queen Prabhavatigupta

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-I- Ancient History

#### **In News**

- She is the daughter of Chandragupta-II and granddaughter of Samudragupta.
- Vakataka rulers of Central India forged several matrimonial alliances with Guptas of North India so as to maintain harmonious relations.
- Prabhavatigupta was **married to Vakataka king Rudrasena II** and enjoyed the position of Chief Queen.
- After sudden death of the King, Queen Prabhavatigupta ruled for about 10 years until her son Pravarasena II succeeded
- Vakataka rulers followed the Shaivism while the Guptas were staunch Vaishnavites.
- She had a pivotal role in propagation of **Vaishnava practices in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra.**

### AUSCHWITZ – 75th Anniversary of its liberation

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-I- World History

#### **In News**

- During the II World War, the government of **Nazi Germany** killed approximately 17 million people across Europe in camps specifically designated for killings.
- The camp at Auschwitz (in German-occupied Poland), was the largest in size which became centre of **Holocaust History**
- Allied forces liberated Auschwitz on January 27, 1945, finding hundreds of sick, starving and exhausted prisoners, who had somehow survived.
- In 2005, the UN-designated **January 27 as the International Holocaust Remembrance Day.**

### Vanga nari (Fox- Jallikattu)

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-I- Society, Culture

#### **In News**

- The jallikattu-like event using foxes, or vanga nari in Tamil, is organised on Kaanum Pongal in Tamil Nadu villages as people believe it will bring bountiful rain and good fortune.
- The animals are muzzled and their hind legs tied with rope. After special rituals are conducted, the hapless animals are chased through the streets, much like bulls in the more conventional jallikattu. After the event, the animals are released into the forest
- **Foxes are a protected species under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**, and hunting or capturing them is prohibited.

### Bojjannakonda: Buddhist site in Andhra Pradesh

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS Mains –I – History, Art & Culture

#### **In News**

- Bojjannakonda and Lingalmetta are twin Buddhist monasteries dating back to the 3rd century BC.
- These sites have seen three forms of Buddhism —
  - The **Theravada** period when Lord Buddha was considered a teacher;
  - The **Mahayana**, where Buddhism was more devotional; and
  - **Vajrayana**, where Buddhist tradition was more practised as Tantra and in esoteric form
- The site is famous for many votive **stupas**, **rock-cut caves**, brick-built edifices, early historic pottery, and Satavahana coins that date back to the 1st century AD.

### Madhavpur Mela

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS Mains I – Culture

#### **In News**

- The eight States of the Northern Eastern Region will participate in a big way during the **Madhavpur Mela of Gujarat** due to be held in the first week of April 2020.
- Madhavpur lies on the seashore, close to Porbandar. A 15th century Madhavrai temple marks the site.
- The Madhavpur Ghed, a small but culturally significant village, is the place where, according to folklore, **Lord Krishna married Rukmini**, the daughter of King Bhishmaka.
- This event is commemorated by a cultural fair held every year, commencing on Ram Navam
- The Madhavpur Mela of Gujarat shares its connect to the **Mishmi Tribe of Arunachal Pradesh**. The Mishmi Tribe traces its ancestry to the legendary King Bhishmak and through him to his daughter Rukmini and Lord Krishna.

### Basant Panchami

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-I- Society

#### **In News**

- Basant Panchami or Vasant Panchami celebrated **on 30<sup>th</sup> Jan marks the beginning of the spring season** – Basant means spring and Panchami means “the fifth day”
- The day is also celebrated **as Saraswati Puja**

- It is more popular in Bengal, Odisha and North Indian states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh.

### Beating Retreat Ceremony

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-I- Culture

#### **In News**

- **It officially denotes the** end of Republic Day festivities.
- **It is conducted on the** evening of 29 January, the third day after the Republic Day.
- It is performed by the bands of the three wings of the military, the Indian Army, Indian Navy and Indian Air Force, and pipe bands from the Army, and from 2016 a massed formation of bands of the Central Armed Police Forces and the Delhi Police
- **The chief guest of** the function is the President of India.

### Nagoba jatara: Month long fair comes to an end

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-I- Culture

#### **In News**

- It is a tribal festival held in Keslapur village Adilabad district, **Telangana**,
- It is the second biggest tribal carnival and celebrated **by Mesaram clan of Gond tribes** for 10 days.
- Tribal people from Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh belonging to the Mesram clan offer prayers at the festival.
- The **Gusadi Dance** performance by dancers from the Gond tribe is a major special attraction of the event.

### Belum Caves

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-I- Geography

#### **In News**

- **Belum Caves in Andhra Pradesh** is the second longest cave in the Indian subcontinent open to public. The cave is second natural cave only after Krem Liat Prah caves in Meghalaya.
- Belum caves are renowned for their speleothem structures, such as stalactite and stalagmite formations.
- With long passages, narrow galleries, and spacious tanks filled with fresh water, this cave was formed over the course of tens of thousands of years by the constant flow of underground water from the now-**disappeared river Chitravathi**.
- The caves hold immense historical significance as there are several indications that these were **occupied by Jain and Buddhist monks** many centuries ago

### Northeast ( winter) monsoon

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

### In News

- The northeast, or winter, monsoon has ended on a high, with an overall surplus rainfall being recorded for the season.
- North-East monsoon— permanent a feature of the Indian subcontinent’s climate system – from October to December – rainfall is experienced over Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh, along with some parts of Telangana and Karnataka
- Winter monsoon season contributes only 11 per cent to India’s annual rainfall of 1,187 mm. South-west Summer monsoon season between June-September bring about 75 per cent of India’s annual rainfall (the remaining rain comes in other non-monsoon months).
- Many other parts of the country, like the Gangetic plains and northern states, also receive some rain in November and December but this is not due to the northeast monsoon. It is caused mainly by the Western Disturbances.
- Western Disturbance: It is an eastward-moving rain-bearing wind system that originates beyond Afghanistan and Iran, picking up moisture from as far as the Mediterranean Sea, evens the Atlantic Ocean.

### Rann Utsav

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS I- Geography

#### In News

- It is the annual white desert carnival held by Gujarat Tourism Department in the **country’s largest salt desert ‘Great Rann of Kutch’**.
- It celebrates cultural and artistic heritage of Kutch.
- The activities include folk dance performances, handicraft shopping, star gazing and sightseeing.

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## POLITY/GOVERNANCE

### National Population Register (NPR): Trial form gets governments approval

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS II- Governance

#### **In News**

- NPR form used at the trial stage in September 2019 is likely to be finalised as the authorities did not receive any adverse feedback from a sample set of respondents.
- Around 30 lakh people responded to the “pretest” form that was used to collect data in 74 districts.
- It sought details on 21 parameters, especially the “place of birth of father and mother, the last place of residence”, along with Aadhaar (optional), voter ID card, mobile phone and driving licence numbers.

#### **Value Addition for Prelims**

- NPR is a register of usual residents of the country. It includes both Indian citizens as well as a foreign citizen.
- According to the Citizenship Rules, 2003, a usual resident is a person who has resided in a local area for the past 6 months or more or a person who intends to reside in that area for the next 6 months or more.
- The entire NPR exercise will be conducted by the Office of the Registrar General of India (RGI) under the Union Home Ministry.
- The first NPR was prepared in 2010 and updation of this data was done during 2015 by conducting door to door survey.
- In the last NPR done in 2010, the data was collected on the 15 points and it did not include ‘date and place of birth of parents’ and last place of residence. The present NPR has a database of 119 crore residents.

### Satcom technology: Rajasthan to utilize it in big way

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS Mains II- Governance

#### **In News**

- Rajasthan Government has started using satellite communication technology to **enhance the learning outcome in educational institutions** – for getting the services of subject experts in the government schools and colleges
- The institutions with the shortage of teachers will especially benefit from the geostationary satellite up linking facilities.
- Government is also using the technology to **generate awareness about social welfare** schemes, while giving priority to the five aspirational districts selected by NITI Aayog in the State.



### About Aspirational Districts.

- The **Aspirational District** Programme was launched by the Prime Minister on January 5, 2018. It aims to quickly and effectively transform some of India's most underdeveloped districts.
- It will identify areas of immediate improvement, measure progress, and **rank districts (done by NITI Aayog)**
- The broad ideas of the programme include –
  - **convergence** of central and state schemes
  - **collaboration** of central, state level 'Prabhari' (in-charge) officers and district collectors
  - **competition** among districts

### [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDG\) India : NITI Aayog recently released the Baseline Report of the Sustainable Development Goals \(SDG\) India Index](#)

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS Mains II- Governance

#### **Context:**

- The NITI Aayog recently released the Baseline Report of the *Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) India Index*, which comprehensively documents the progress made by India's States and Union Territories towards implementing the 2030 SDG targets.
- **The SDG India Index** was developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI), Global Green Growth Institute and United Nations in India.

#### **Background:**

- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted in September 2015 as a part of the resolution, 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'. India is committed to achieve the 17 SDGs and the 169 associated targets, which comprehensively cover social, economic and environmental dimensions of development and focus on ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions.
- At the Central Government level, NITI Aayog has been assigned the role of overseeing the implementation of SDGs in the country.

#### **Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas**

- NITI Aayog has the twin mandate to oversee the implementation of SDGs in the country, and also promote Competitive and Cooperative Federalism among States and UTs.
- The SDG India Index acts as a bridge between these mandates, aligning the SDGs with the Prime Minister's clarion call of *Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas*, which embodies the five Ps of the global SDG movement – people, planet, prosperity, partnership and peace.

#### **SDG:**

- The SDGs are ambitious global development goals that address key aspects of universal wellbeing across different socio-economic, cultural, geographical divisions and integrate the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development.

#### **SDG & India:**

- India's National Development Agenda is mirrored in the SDGs.

- India's progress in SDGs is crucial for the world as the country is home to about 17% of the world population.
- The SDG India Index tracks progress of all States and UTs on 62 Priority Indicators selected by NITI Aayog, which in turn is guided by MoSPI's National Indicator Framework comprising 306 indicators and based on multiple-round consultations with **Union Ministries/Departments and States/UTs**.



Src:

### Quora

#### Working:

- A composite score was computed between the range of 0-100 for each State and UT based on their aggregate performance across 13 SDGs, which indicates average performance of State/UT towards achieving 13 SDGs & their respective targets.
- If a State/UT achieves a score of 100, it signifies that it has achieved the 2030 national targets. The higher the score of a State/UT, the greater the distance to target achieved.

Classification Criteria based on *SDG India Index* Score is as follows:

- Aspirant: 0-49
- Performer: 50-64
- Front Runner: 65-99
- Achiever: 100

OVERALL	Aspirant	Assam, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh
Performer		Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Telangana, Tripura, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu, Delhi and Lakshadweep

Front Runner	Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Chandigarh and Puducherry
Achiever	NA

**Significance:**

- The *SDG India Index* will also help highlight crucial gaps related to tracking SDGs and the need for India to develop its statistical systems at National & State/UT levels. This shall lead to the index evolving and becoming more comprehensive over the coming years.
- The indicators shall be further refined and additional indicators will be added with improvement in data collection, reporting processes & methodology.
- NITI Aayog is also exploring potential for disaggregating data and developing capacity for real time monitoring and measuring incremental progress.

**Overall Findings:**

Particular	State	UT
SDG India Index Score Range	42-69	57-68
Top Performer/s	Himachal Pradesh & Kerala	Chandigarh
Aspirant	Uttar Pradesh	Dadra & Nagar Haveli

- Himachal Pradesh ranks high on providing clean water & sanitation, in reducing inequalities & preserving mountain ecosystem
- Kerala's top rank is attributed to its superior performance in providing good health, reducing hunger, achieving gender equality & providing quality education
- Chandigarh leads because of its exemplary performance in providing clean water & sanitation, affordable & clean energy, generating decent work & economic growth, & providing quality education

**Connecting the dots:**

- Do you think SDG brings governance change in India?
- How do you think it Impacts Indian Economy?

**Civic technology: An Indian Case**

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS Mains II- Governance

**Context:**

- Civic technology, or civic tech, enhances the relationship between the people and government with software for communications, decision-making, service delivery, and political process.
- It includes information and communications technology supporting government with software built by community-led teams of volunteers, non-profits, consultants, and private companies.

**India's Case: IChangeMyCity**

- In the Indian context, civic technology can broadly be divided into two themes—tools aimed at improving civic engagement, and those directed at streamlining government services.

- In 2012, **IChangeMyCity** enabled citizens to share complaints about civic issues through its platform.
- It also provided municipalities with real-time grievance data to resolve.
- Organizations such as **Reap Benefit**, through their online platform, work with young people to create solutions for civic problems such as low-cost sanitation systems from discarded plastic.

#### Foreign Example:

- Since 2014, the **vTaiwan project**, which started out as a citizen movement, has been working to build consensus among Taiwanese citizens about contentious issues.
- Consensus derived through **vTaiwan** is utilized to draft new laws and regulations for citizens.
- In the US, Vote.org uses technology to register voters and increase voter turnout.

#### Case study:

- A field worker for his local corporator in Mumbai, notices that in his slum dengue claims several lives every monsoon. Authorities turn a blind eye because the deaths are often not documented.
- Field worker uses an online tool, designed to conduct surveys in low literacy areas, to gather feedback from his community.
- He presents his corporator with data that states that 94% of residents in his slum are aware of the causes of dengue, yet, the disease remains widespread because of uncovered sewage lines.
- The corporator presents this data to the municipality and the sewage lines are promptly covered, preventing further dengue deaths.

#### Conclusion:

- In India, a growing number of internet users is coupled with a young population, accustomed to demanding participation in all facets of their lives, including greater participation in governance. This combination is pushing governments to be more participatory and efficient.

#### Connecting the dots:

- How do you think Civic Technology leads to good governance?
- Do you think it brings in transparency into the system?

### [Aadhaar: Must for Welfare Pension in Odisha](#)

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS Mains II- Governance

#### In News

- The Odisha government has announced that only beneficiaries with Aadhaar card will be given pension under the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) and the Madhubabu Pension Yojana (MBPY).
- NSAP is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** of the Government of India that provides financial assistance to the elderly, widows and persons with disabilities in the form of social pensions.
- NSAP at present comprises of Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS), Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS), Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS), National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS) and Annapurna.

- NSAP represents a significant step towards the fulfillment of the Directive Principles in **Article 41 of the Constitution**
- The MBPY beneficiaries, who include elderly, widows, persons with disabilities and HIV/AIDS-affected patients, get ₹500 to ₹700 per month. But they must not be part of any Central schemes

### 10% reservation Quota for Economically Weaker Sections

**Part of:** GS Prelims – Articles of Constitution and GS II- Governance

#### **In News**

- Centre has held that it is **States' prerogative to provide 10% economic reservation** in government jobs and admission to education institutions.

#### **Do You Know?**

- It was **103<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act** that introduced provide 10 per cent reservation in government jobs and education (except in minority educational institutions) to economically backward section in the general category
- The act inserted **Articles 15(6) and 16(6)** of the Constitution that provided for these reservations.
- **Article 46 of the Constitution (DPSP)** enjoins that the State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people.

### Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN): Calls for objective assessment & transparency of scheme

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS II- Governance

#### **In News**

- The Air Passengers Association of India wants UDAN scheme to be fine-tuned and recalibrated with details of the scheme to be made public -money spent by the government in airline subsidies, the number of routes suspended
- 35 lakh passengers have availed benefit under the scheme since its inception

#### **Value Addition for Prelims**

- **Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN)** was launched in **2016** to make **air travel affordable for people through subsidised ticket rates** and to provide air connectivity to smaller towns
- In order to expand UDAN to international circuits, Centre has also unveiled the **International Air Connectivity (IAC) scheme**.

### UJALA: Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-II- Governance

#### **In News**

- UJALA and Street Lighting National Programme (SLNP) of the central government has completed five successful years on January 5, 2020.

- Through the UJALA initiative, over **36.13 crore LED bulbs have been distributed** across India. This has resulted in estimated energy savings of 46.92 billion kWh per year and an estimated GHG emission reduction of 38 million t CO<sub>2</sub> annually.
- Street Lighting National Programme (SLNP) is the world's largest streetlight replacement programme. Nearly 1.03 crore smart LED streetlights have been installed till date, enabling an estimated **energy savings of 6.97 billion kWh per year**
- Both have been spearheaded and implemented by **Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL)**, a joint venture of PSUs under the Ministry of Power, Government of India.

## JUS COGENS

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS Mains II- Indian Polity, International affairs

### **In News**

- JUS COGENS meaning "compelling law" in Latin, are rules in international law that are peremptory or authoritative, and from **which states cannot deviate**
- These norms cannot be offset by a separate treaty between parties intending to do so, since they hold fundamental values. Today, most states and international organisations accept the principle of jus cogens, which dates back to Roman times.
- So far, an **exhaustive list of jus cogens rules does not exist**. However, the prohibition of slavery, genocide, racial discrimination, torture, and the right to self-determination are recognised norms.

## Indian Railway Management Service (IRMS): Trimming of the Railway Board, the powerful body that governs the Indian Railways

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS Mains II- Role of civil services in a democracy

### **Context:**

- The Cabinet recently approved trimming of the Railway Board, the powerful body that governs the Indian Railways. From nine, the Board will now have only five Members.
- The Cabinet also decided to merge all central service cadres of Railways officers into a single Indian Railways Management Service (IRMS).

### **What does it mean?**

- Any eligible officer could occupy any post, including Board Member posts, irrespective of training and specialisation, since they will all belong to IRMS.
- The five members of the Board, other than a Chairman-cum-CEO, will now be the Members Infrastructure, Finance, Rolling Stock, Track, and Operations and Business Development.

### **Present system:**

- The Indian Railways is governed by a pool of officers, among whom engineers are recruited after the Indian Engineering Service Examination, and civil servants through the Civil Services Examination.
- The civil servants are in the Indian Railway Traffic Service (IRTS), Indian Railway Accounts Service (IRAS) and Indian Railway Personnel Service (IRPS). The engineers are in five

technical service cadres — Indian Railway Service of Engineers (IRSE), Indian Railway Service of Mechanical Engineers (IRSME), Indian Railway Service of Electrical Engineers (IRSEE), Indian Railway Service of Signal Engineers (IRSSE) and the Indian Railway Stores Service (IRSS).

- Until the 1950s, the Railways system was run by officers from just three main streams: Traffic, Civil Engineering, and Mechanical. The other streams emerged as separate services over time.

**Government Approves**

## ORGANISATIONAL RESTRUCTURING OF RAILWAYS

1. Unification of Existing 8 Group A services into **Indian Railway Management Service**
2. Railway board to be organised on **leaner structure** functional lines
3. Railway Board to be headed by Chairman Railway Board who will be the **Chief Executive Officer**
4. Railway Board will now have 4 functional Members & some Independent Members having deep knowledge and **30 years of experience** at top levels in industry, finance, economics and management fields

SRC: Twitter

### Why reforms?

- End inter-departmental rivalries, which it says have been hindering growth for decades
- Bibek Debroy committee in 2015 have noted that “departmentalism” is a major problem in the system and recommended merging of railways
- A separate exam under the Union Public Service Commission is proposed to be instituted in 2021 to induct IRMS officers.

### Why opposition?

- The merger is unscientific and against established norms, because it proposes to merge two fundamentally dissimilar entities, with multiple disparities.
- Various studies have noted that engineers join the Railways around the age of 22-23, while the civil servants join when they are around 26, barring exceptions. The age difference

starts to pinch at the later stages of their careers, when higher-grade posts are fewer. There are more engineers than civil servants.

- Protesters are also saying that the merger is against the service conditions which civil servants sign up for while choosing an alternative if they cannot make it to IAS.

**Conclusion:**

- This methodology involves interpolation of officers of various services in a combined list, arranged in proportion to total strength of each service. The service with the largest number of officers will form the base. At the top of the combined list, toppers of all services will be placed in order of their date of birth—those born earlier being assigned higher seniority. Thereafter, officers of various services will be interpolated in between the officers of the base service in the ratio of the number of officers in that service vis-à-vis the number of officers in the base service

**Connecting the dots:**

- Do you think restructuring of Indian railways impact Indian civil services?
- How do you think it impacts Employment?

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[Chief of Defence Staff \(CDS\): The dual-hatted role](#)

- **Part of:** Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary - Ministries and Departments of the Government

**Context:**

- General Bipin Rawat taking over as the first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) on New Year's Day, a new structure is being created in the Defence Ministry.

**The dual-hatted role:**

- The dual-hatted role refers to the two hats the CDS wears: **one of the permanent Chairman** of the Chiefs of Staff Committee which has the three service chiefs as members, and the other of the head of the newly created **Department of Military Affairs (DMA)** in the ministry.
- The former is a military role while the latter is a role in the government.

**The Army, the Navy and the Air Force — not departments of the ministry:**

- The Army, the Navy and the Air Force used to come under the Department of Defence so far, but will now fall under the ambit of DMA, and will have an appropriate mix of civilian and military officers at every level.
- Attached offices are generally responsible for providing executive direction required in implementation of policies laid down by the department to which they are attached, in this case now the DMA.

**Working:**

- CDS acts the Principal Military Adviser to the Defence Minister only on tri-services matters. In fact, the three service chiefs will continue to advise the Defence Minister, as done so far, on matters exclusively concerning their respective services.
- CDS will not exercise any military command, including over the three service chiefs.



- The service chiefs will be members of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, which will be headed by the CDS.

## **MINISTRY OF DEFENCE: WHO, WHAT**

**Department of Defence**  
Headed by Defence Secretary

**Department of Military Affairs**  
Headed by the CDS

**Department of Defence  
Production**  
Headed by Secretary Defence  
Production

**Department of Defence Research  
and Development**  
Headed by DRDO chief

**Department of Ex-servicemen  
Welfare**  
Headed by Secretary ESW

### **DUAL-HATTED ROLE OF CDS**

- Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee
- Head of Department of Military Affairs in Defence Ministry



**SRC: IE**

### **Conclusion:**

- The Department of Defence — headed by the Defence Secretary — will be responsible for the “defence of India and every part thereof, including defence policy and preparation for defence and all such acts as may be conducive in times of war to its prosecution and after its termination to effective demobilisation”.

### **Connecting the dots:**

- Do you think CDS brings structural changes in army?
- What is the relationship between the new four-star general and the ministry?

## National Human Rights Commission

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

### **In News**

- NHRC issued a notice to the Rajasthan government in connection with the deaths of over 100 children at the government-run hospital in Kota, Rajasthan in December 2019.

### **Value Addition for Prelims**

- NHRC of India is an independent **statutory body** established in **1993** as per provisions of Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993, later amended in 2006.
- It was established in conformity with the **Paris Principles**, adopted for the promotion and protection of human rights in Paris (October, 1991) and endorsed by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 December, 1993.
- NHRC is a **multi-member body** which consists of a Chairman and seven other members **appointed by the President**, on recommendation of high-powered committee headed by Prime Minister. Out of the seven members, three are ex-officio member.
- NHRC can only make recommendations, **without the power to enforce decisions**.
- NHRC does **not have any mechanism of investigation**. In majority cases, it asks the concerned Central and State Governments to investigate the cases of the violation of Human Rights

## Zonal Councils

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

### **In News**

- The 25th meeting of the Western Zonal Council, to be chaired by Union Home Minister, will be co-chaired by Maharashtra Chief Minister

### **Value Addition for Prelims**

- The Zonal Councils are the **statutory (and not the constitutional) bodies**. They are established by an Act of the Parliament, that is, States Reorganisation Act of 1956.
- The act divided the country into five zones (Northern, Central, Eastern, Western and Southern) and provided a zonal council for each zone. The **Union Home Minister is the common chairman of the five Zonal Councils**
- While forming these zones, several factors have been taken into account which include: the natural divisions of the country, the river systems and means of communication, the cultural and linguistic affinity and the requirements of economic development, security and law and order.
- In addition to the above Zonal Councils, a **North-Eastern Council** was created by a **separate Act of Parliament—the North-Eastern Council Act of 1971**.
- These are **advisory bodies** that will discuss and make recommendations with regard to any matter of common interest in the field of economic and social planning between the Centre and States.

## Inter- state border dispute: Maharashtra-Karnataka Belgaum tension (Part-2)

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

### **In news:**

- Recently Bus services between Kolhapur and Belgaum were suspended after the decades-old border dispute between Maharashtra and Karnataka flared up again.

- Various Kannada organisations had staged a protest in Belgaum and burnt the effigy of Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray.

### **Controversy**

- In 1957, slighted by the implementation of the States Reorganisation Act, 1956, Maharashtra demanded readjustment of its border with Karnataka.
- It invoked **Section 21 (2) (b)** of the Act, and submitted a memorandum to the Ministry of Home Affairs stating its objection to Marathi-speaking areas being added to Karnataka.
- It claimed an area of 2,806 square miles that involved 814 villages, and three urban settlements of Belagavi, Karwar and Nippani with a total population of about 6.7 lakh, all part of the Mumbai Presidency before independence.
- The villages are spread across Belagavi and Uttar Kannada in north-western Karnataka, and Bidar and Gulbarga districts in north-eastern Karnataka — all bordering Maharashtra.
- when a four-member committee was formed by both States, Maharashtra expressed willingness to transfer predominantly Kannada-speaking 260 villages with a population of about 3.25 lakh and total area of 1,160 square miles in lieu of accepting its demand for 814 villages and three urban settlements, which was turned down by Karnataka.

### **Remember:**

- Karnataka declared Belagavi its second capital, holds its winter session at the newly constructed Vidhan Soudha, changed the name of Belgaum to Belagavi and also held the World Kannada Summit there — all in the last 15 years.
- In 2004, Maharashtra approached the Supreme Court for a settlement under Article 131(b) of the Constitution.
- Karnataka has questioned the suit. With one of the judges recusing, the court has to set up a new bench.

### **Maharashtra's claim:**

- Maharashtra's claim to seek the readjustment of its border was on the basis of contiguity, relative linguistic majority and wishes of the people.
- If the claim over Belagavi and surrounding areas was based on Marathi-speaking people and linguistic homogeneity, it laid its claim over Karwar and Supa where Konkani is spoken by citing Konkani as a dialect of Marathi.
- Its argument was based on the theory of village being the unit for calculation and enumerated linguistic population in each village.
- Maharashtra also points out the historical fact that the revenue records in these Marathi-speaking areas are also kept in Marathi.

### **Karnataka's position:**

- Karnataka has argued that the settlement of boundaries as per the States Reorganisation Act is final.
- The boundary of the State was neither tentative nor flexible.
- The State argues that the issue would reopen border issues that have not been contemplated under the Act, and that such a demand should not be permitted. Initially, Karnataka was open to adjusting the border in the 10 mile belt from the drawn boundary.
- Karnataka also points out that when Congress, which redrew its circles on linguistic basis in 1920, included Belagavi in the Karnataka Provincial Congress Committee. Besides, the States Reorganisation Commission vested Belagavi with Karnataka.

**Way forward:**

- In 1960, both States agreed to set up a four-man committee with two representatives from each State.
- Except on the issue of contiguity, the committee could not arrive at a unanimous decision, and respective representatives submitted reports to their government. Between the 1960s and 1980s, chief ministers of Karnataka and Maharashtra have met several times to find a solution to the vexed issue but with no avail

**SRC:Newsminute****Central govt's stand:**

- In 1966, the Centre announced setting up a one-man commission under former **Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India Meher Chand Mahajan** to look into border issues between Karnataka (then Mysore state) and Maharashtra.
- The commission was also asked to look into Karnataka's demand for integration of Kannada-speaking areas in Kasargod in Kerala.
- Karnataka sought areas in Kolhapur, Sholapur and Sangli districts from Maharashtra, and Kasargod from Kerala.
- The commission rejected Maharashtra's claim over Belagavi city while recommending transfer of about 260 villages in the border to Maharashtra and about 250 villages in Maharashtra to Karnataka.
- Maharashtra said the report was inconsistent and an unfair application of its own principle. It also said the report was not a final word on the issue. Karnataka, however, agreed to the report.

**Connecting the dots:**

- Do you think this dispute is detrimental for the integrity of the country?
- How do you think the dispute can be resolved?

## Concept of Democracy, then and now

### **Introduction:**

- We are all familiar with the idea that democracy is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.
- Today, the most **common form of democracy is representative democracy**, in which citizens elect officials to make political decisions, formulate laws, and administer programmes for the public good.

### **Different definitions of Democracy –**

- *“Democracy is a government of the people, for the people, and by the people.”*
- – Abraham Lincoln
- *“Democracy really means nothing more or less than the rule of the whole people, expressing their sovereign will by their votes.”*
- – Bryce
- *“Democracy is not a way of governing, whether by majority or otherwise, but primarily a way of determining, who shall govern, and broadly to what ends.”*
- – Maclver

### **Idea of Democracy during British India and Post-independence**

#### **Mahatma Gandhi on Democracy**

- “Democracy must mean the art of science of mobilizing the entire physical, economic and spiritual resources of all the various sections of people in the service of the common good for all.”
- “To safeguard democracy the people must have a keen sense of independence, self-respect and their oneness, and should insist upon choosing as their representatives only such persons as are good and true.”

Gandhian concept of Self Rule means Swaraj is real democracy, where people’s power rests in the individuals and each one realizes that he or she is the real master of one’s self.

#### **Nehru on Democracy**

- “Democracy, if it means anything, means equality; not merely the equality of possessing a vote but economic and social equality.”

#### **Karachi resolution**

- In 1931, the **resolution at the Karachi session reflected the vision of democracy** that meant not just formal holding of elections but a substantive reworking of the Indian social structure in order to have a genuine democratic society.

The framers of the Indian Constitution were inspired by principles of social equality and political justice to introduce adult suffrage immediately—a big step forward to protect our Indian Democracy.

**After independence**, India decided to have democratic political system. This system is characterised by three elements: one, there is a high degree of autonomy; two, economic

agents and religious organisations are free from political interference; and three, competition between various orders does not endanger integration but helps it.

The first generation of Indian leaders wanted their country to be a liberal democracy, in which a person's faith—or language, or caste, or gender—didn't earn her better or worse treatment by the state.

### **Positive aspects of Democracy**

Positively, democracy seeks to maintain and assert the below rights:

- the right to free expression of opinion and of opposition and criticism of the Government of the day;
- the right to change the Governments of which the people disapprove through constitutional means;
- protection from arbitrary interference on the part of the authorities, primary safeguards against arbitrary arrest and prosecution;
- fundamental rights of citizens, subject to their duties to the state;
- the right of minorities to be protected with equal justice under law;
- equal treatment and fair play for the poor as well as the rich, for private persons as well as Government officials;
- The right to hold unpopular or dissident beliefs.

### **Modern day democracy on decline**

Since independence, India has managed to stay on the democratic path in a way unprecedented among states freed from colonialism during the last century.

The makers of our Constitution designed the institutions of our democracy with great care and attention to detail. They were designed to endure and it was expected that these institutions will strengthen the democracy in India.

Recently, however, the dominance of the Hindu nationalists and the manner in which they have ruled – has given rise to claims that India's democracy and its minorities are in grave danger.

Freedom of expression has been curtailed; institutions of democracy are weakened and diminished; democratic deliberation has been bypassed; attacks on religious minorities have been carried out.

At a time when politics almost everywhere is leaning dangerously towards a centralised, authoritarian, national security state with a strong leader committed to the ideology of cultural nationalism, the values and ideas of democracy provided by early leaders becomes important.

The values and democratic principles embraced by them are relevant not yesterday or today but forever!!

### **Connecting the dots:**

- Examine the democratic principles that took a concrete shape post British India rule.

- Is the future of Indian democracy secure? Critically analyze.

### Curative Petition: Nirbhaya Case convicts file Curative pleas in Supreme Court

**Part of:** GS Prelims- Judiciary and GS Mains –II- Indian Polity

#### **In News**

- A curative petition, which follows the **dismissal of a review petition**, is the last legal avenue open for convicts in the Supreme Court.
- **Came into Existence:** It is a rare remedy devised by a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court in its judgment in the **Rupa Ashok Hurra case in 2002**.
- **Grounds of Filing Curative Petition:** A party can take only two limited grounds in a curative petition —
  - One-that he was not heard by the court before the adverse judgment was passed, and
  - Two- the judge was biased.

### Internet Shutdown and Section 144

**Part of:** GS Prelims- Judiciary and GS Mains –II- Indian Polity

#### **Context:**

- Supreme Court ruling on the internet shutdown in Jammu & Kashmir since August 5th, 2019.
- Also, in recent times whenever there is possibility of peaceful democratic protests, the administrative authorities immediately shut down internet & imposes section 144. This is used as a precautionary measure so that the protests doesn't spiral out of hand leading to violence, arson and law & order issues disturbing public.

#### **What is section 144?**

- It is a section of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which prohibits assembly of five or more people, holding of public meetings, and carrying of firearms and can be invoked for up to two months (extendable upto 6 months)
- Section 144 also empowers the authorities to block the internet access.

#### **What are the impact of such restrictive measures, especially blocking internet access?**

- **Freedom of peaceful assemble** guaranteed under Article 19 (1)(b) is restricted especially when the executive orders imposing this section is not made public
- **Right to Freedom of speech & expression** under Article 19(1)(a) is impacted as the medium to access information i.e. internet is blocked
- Right to carry on trade activities under Article 10(1)(g) is also negatively impacted with the restrictions placed on movement of people.
- Economy of the region adversely affected as access to e-banking facilities blocked due to temporary ban on internet. Internet shutdown around the world in 2019 has cost the global economy over \$8 billion.
- Delivery of government welfare provisions affected especially in today's age of e-governance and digitization of the process

- Healthcare provisions impacted especially where government schemes like Ayushman Bharat have adopted digital means for delivery process

#### **What was the Supreme Court ruling in case dealing with internet shutdown in J&K?**

- Right to Freedom of Speech & Expression is constitutionally protected. Therefore, an order **suspending internet services indefinitely is impermissible**
  - The Court applied the **proportionality doctrine** to reason that “complete blocking/prohibition perpetually cannot be accepted”.
- The review committee should be constituted under the suspension rules (of Indian Telegraph Act) that will conduct a periodic review of the suspension within seven working days of the previous review

#### **With regard to Section 144**

- Any order passed under Section 144, CrPC should be published alongside stating the material facts to enable **judicial review** of the same.
  - Lack of public accessibility of these orders (citing National Security reasons) has prevented citizens from filing cases in High Court against such executive order
  - It was against the “sealed cover jurisprudence” that is a recent phenomenon in Indian Judiciary
- **Section 144 cannot be used to suppress legitimate expression of opinion**
  - Executive cannot arbitrarily impose section 144. Not just an apprehension of danger, but there has to be an emergency question for passing such executive orders
- **Repetitive orders passed under Section 144 would be an abuse of power**

#### **Criticisms of the judgement**

- The judgement was a **statist expression of law**. It was one one premised on legal centrism than one advancing fundamental rights.
- **Lack of powers to review committee**: The committee will be principally composed of bureaucrats and no independent members will lack independence and real power to overturn the initial Internet shutdown orders.
- The court stopped **short of ruling that access to Internet is a fundamental right**, it however said that the Internet as a medium is used to exercise other fundamental rights
- The **judicial review, guaranteed by the court, itself takes a long time** to provide relief as was in the present case. The Supreme Court should have given a timeframe within which such cases should be dealt with given its impact on the Democratic foundations of society.

#### **Way Ahead**

- Given that State has balance the need to ensure liberty & National Security, such type of preventive law & order measures should be used as last resort.

#### **Connecting the dots**

- Sealed Cover Jurisprudence – Cases where such procedures was adopted
- Is Right to access internet a Fundamental right? What are the possible implications on the Indian Polity with such recognition of new right in the age of internet ?





## Challenges of Non-Scheduled Indian Languages

**Part of:** GS Prelims- Judiciary and GS Mains –II- issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure

### **Context**

An MP from Kerala's Kasargud region arguing for **including Tulu in the Eighth Schedule**

### **Present Scheme of Indian Languages**

- Hindi and English are the official languages of the Central Government for communication and administrative purposes, no language in India has been conferred the status of the national language.
- There is **no national language** in India as all the states are free to decide their own official languages. This is primarily to address the huge linguistic diversity in the country.
- The **Eighth Schedule** to the Constitution of India **lists the official languages** of the Republic of India. Presently, it consists of 22 languages.
- Also, till date, six languages have been conferred the status of '**Classical Language**' in India. They are Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Sanskrit, Malayalam and Odia
- However, **Article 351 of the Constitution** says that it shall be the duty of the Union to promote the spread of the Hindi language, to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India
- According to the 2001 Census, India has **30 languages that are spoken by more than a million people each.**
- India also has 1,599 languages, most of which are dialects. These are restricted to specific regions and many of them are on the verge of extinction.

### **Constitutional Safeguards**

- **Article 29** of the Constitution provides that a section of citizens having a distinct language, script or culture have the right to conserve the same.
- Eighth Schedule and Classical Status
- No National Language
- **Article 350B: Appointment of Special Officer for linguistic minority** with the sole responsibilities of safeguarding the interest of language spoken by the minority groups.

### **Cause of Concern**

- Many languages that are kept out of Eighth Schedule are in some ways more deserving to be included in the Schedule
- For Example: Sanskrit, an Eighth Schedule language, has only 24,821 speakers (2011 Census). Manipuri, another scheduled language, has only 17,61,079 speakers.
- Similarly, many unscheduled languages have a sizeable number of speakers: Bhili/Bhilodi has 1,04,13,637 speakers; Gondi has 29,84,453 speakers; Garo has 11,45,323; Ho has 14,21,418; Khandeshi, 18,60,236; Khasi, 14,31,344; and Oraon, 19,88,350.

### **Case for Tulu Language to be included in Eighth Schedule**

- Tulu is a Dravidian language whose speakers are concentrated in two coastal districts of Karnataka and in Kasaragod district of Kerala.
- The Census reports 18,46,427 native speakers of Tulu in India. The Tulu-speaking people are larger in number than speakers of Manipuri and Sanskrit, which have the Eighth Schedule status.

- Robert Caldwell (1814-1891), in his book, A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South-Indian Family of Languages, called Tulu as “one of the most highly developed languages of the Dravidian family”.

#### Advantages of Inclusion of a Language in Eighth Schedule:

- **Recognition** from the Sahitya Akademi.
- Members of Parliament (MP) and Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) **could speak Tulu in Parliament and State Assemblies**, respectively.
- **Translation** of Tulu literary works into other languages
- Option to take **competitive exams in Tulu** including all-India competitive examinations like the Civil Services exam.
- Special **funds** from the Central government.
- **Teaching** of Tulu in primary and high school.

#### Way Ahead

- Placing all language on equal footing will promote Social harmony, inclusion and National Solidarity
- Protection and preservation of diverse languages should not just remain on paper but also implemented on ground with adequate provision of funds on language development programs

#### Did You know?

##### The Yuelu Proclamation:

- The Proclamation was made by the UNESCO at Changsha, China in 2018.
- The *The Yuelu Proclamation* is the first UNESCO document of its kind dedicated to the **protection of linguistic diversity**, and is also an important supporting document for the “UN International Year of Indigenous Languages 2019”.
- It confirms that protecting **linguistic diversity is the cornerstone for building a global community with a shared future**, and for promoting equality, mutual learning and understanding, and facilitating exchanges around the world.
- The document calls on member states **to formulate action plans to promote language and cultural diversity**, and urges academic and indigenous organizations to provide the resources required to help combat the loss of indigenous languages.

#### Connecting the dots

- Languages are an important identity of India’s liberal and democratic society. Elaborate
- How can India accommodate the plethora of languages in its cultural discourse and administrative apparatus ?

### [Sabarimala case: Supreme Court not to review Sabarimala case, to examine ‘larger issues’](#)

**Part of:** GS Prelims –Fundamental Rights and GS-II- secularism

#### In news:

- SC said its objective was not to review the Sabarimala women entry case but examine “larger issues” of law arising from practices such as the prohibition of women from entering

mosques and temples, female genital mutilation among Dawoodi Bohras and the ban on Parsi women who married inter-faith from entering the fire temple.

**From Prelims point of view:**

**ARTICLE 26: FREEDOM TO MANAGE RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS**

Subject to public order, morality and health, every religious denomination or any section thereof shall have the right—

- to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes;
- to manage its own affairs in matters of religion;
- to own and acquire movable and immovable property; and
- to administer such property in accordance with

**ARTICLE 14: EQUALITY BEFORE LAW**

The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.

**ARTICLE 25 : FREEDOM OF RELIGION**

- The Article 25 states that every individual is “equally entitled to freedom of conscience” and has the right “to profess, practice and propagate religion” of one’s choice.
- Practicing religion or the act of propagating it should not, however, affect the “public order, morality and health.”
- The Article doesn’t put any restriction on the government when it comes to making any law to regulate “economic, financial, political or other secular” activities, which may be associated with religious practice.
- According to Article 25, the gates of Hindu religious institutions should be opened to every section of Hindus.
- Here the term ‘Hindus’ also includes individuals who profess Sikh, Jain or Buddhist religion. The same holds true for the term ‘Hindu religious institutions.’

[Kerala files suit against CAA](#)

**Part of:** GS Prelims Polity—and GS-II- Citizenship

**In news:**

- Kerala became the first State to join citizens across the country’s spectrum to challenge in the Supreme Court the constitutionality of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA)

**From Prelims point:**

**Article 131**

- Article 131 vests the Supreme Court with original jurisdiction over any dispute arising between the states or between the centre and state. The article gives the Supreme Court the power to take up such cases straight instead of going through a lower court or reviewing a lower court’s judgement.
- The first judgment reported in 2012 – State of Madhya Pradesh vs Union of India – held that States cannot challenge a central law under Article 131

**Article 256 in The Constitution Of India (Obligation of States and the Union):**

- The executive power of every State shall be so exercised as to ensure compliance with the laws made by Parliament and any existing laws which apply in that State, and the executive power of the Union shall extend to the giving of such directions to a State as may appear to the Government of India to be necessary for that purpose.

## [Data Protection Bill: JPC to invite views from all stakeholders](#)

**Part of:** GS Prelims Polity and GS Mains III– Privacy

**In news:**

- The Joint Parliamentary Committee on Personal Data Protection Bill will throw open its doors for all stakeholders to express objections and point out loopholes in the proposed legislation, the panel decided at its first meeting held

**From Prelims Point of view**

**Personal Data Protection Bill 2019**

- The Personal Data Protection Bill 2019 (PDP Bill 2019) was tabled in the Indian Parliament by the **Minister of Electronics and Information Technology**
- The Bill covers mechanisms for protection of personal data and proposes the setting up of a Data Protection Authority of India for the same.
- Some key provisions the 2019 Bill provides for which the 2018 draft Bill did not such as that the central government can exempt any government agency from the Bill and the Right to Be Forgotten has been included
- In July 2017, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology set up a committee to study issues related to data protection. The committee was chaired by retired Supreme Court judge **Justice B. N. Srikrishna**.

## [Model \(Agricultural\) Land Leasing Act](#)

**Part of:** GS Prelims –Polity and GS-II Acts

**In news:**

- Karnataka government's move to amend The Karnataka Land Reforms Act, 1961 is based on the **Model (Agricultural) Land Leasing Act, 2016**
- **Model (Agricultural) Land Leasing Act, 2016** is proposed by the Centre's think tank NITI Aayog to increase investments in agriculture and productivity.

**From Prelims Point of view**

**Model (Agricultural) Land Leasing Act, 2016:**

1. Legalise land leasing to promote agricultural efficiency, equity and power reduction. This will also help in much needed productivity improvement in agriculture as well as occupational mobility of the people and rapid rural change.
2. This is very important step for land reforms through which needs of landlord as well as lease holder have been taken care.
3. Through this act, the landlord can legally lease the land with mutual consent for agriculture and allied activities. In this act, it has been taken care that in any circumstances the leased holders' claim on land will not be valid.
4. Lease holder may receive institutional loan, insurance and disaster relief so that he may invest more and more in agriculture.
5. Allow automatic resumption of land after the agreed lease period without requiring any minimum area of land to be left with the tenant even after termination of tenancy, as laws of some states require.

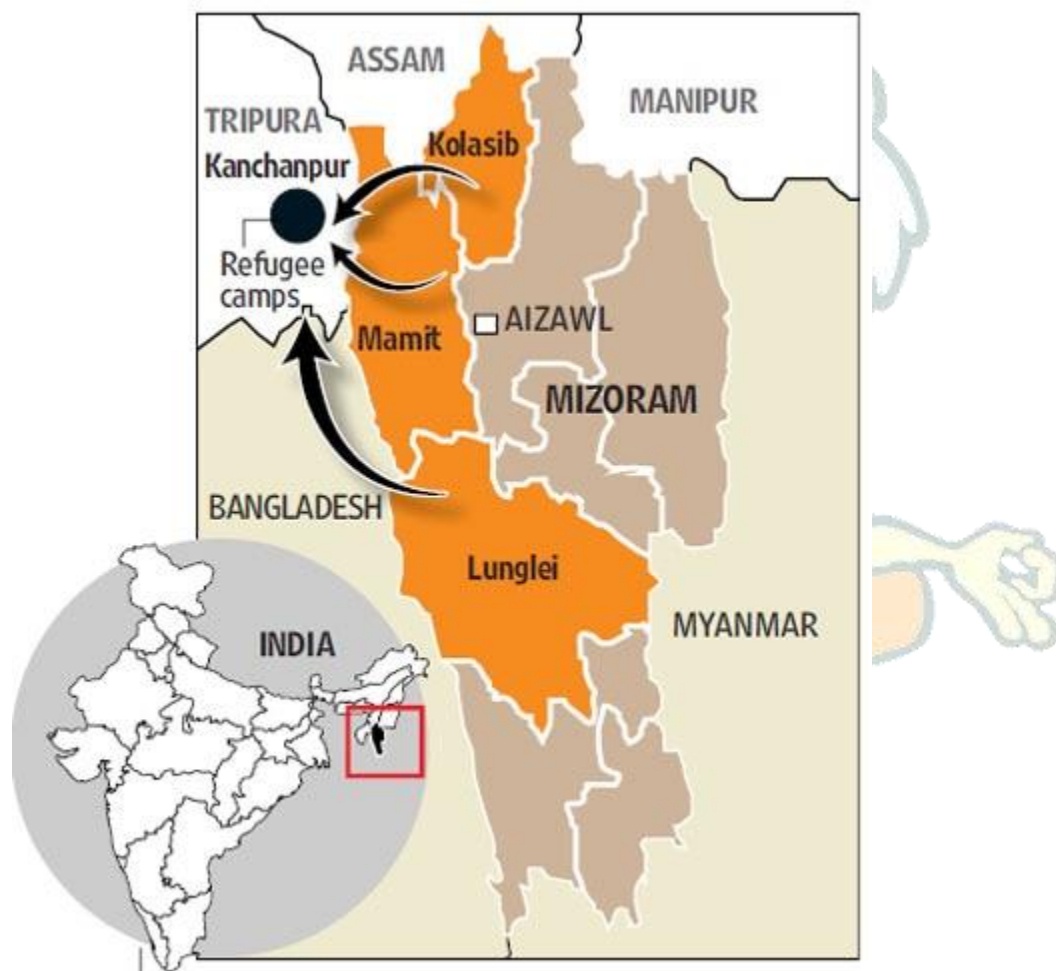
- Incentivise tenants to make investment in land improvement and also entitle them to get back the unused value of investment at the time of termination of tenancy.
- In order to resolve the dispute between the landlord and lease holder, the provision of “Special Land Tribunal” has been made in the Civil Court.

## Bru Refugees

**Part of:** GS Prelims –Polity

**Context:**

The quadripartite agreement signed between Centre, State government of Tripura & Mizoram and representatives of Brus Organisation to settle Brus refugees in Tripura.



Source of Pic

### Who are Brus?

- The Brus, also referred to as the **Reangs**, are spread across the north-eastern states of Tripura, Assam, Manipur, and Mizoram. Reangs or Brus are the second largest ethnic group in Mizoram.
- They are ethnically different from the Mizos, with their own distinct language and dialect
- In Tripura, they are recognised as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG).

### Conflict in Mizoram:

- In 1995, Mizos, the majority tribe of the state of Mizoram, 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 roughly half the Bru population to flee the state in large numbers to neighbouring Tripura.
- Their exodus in 1997 was spurred by violent clashes in Mamith subdivision, a Reang-dominated area, when they **demand creation of an Autonomous District Council (ADC)**, under the 6th Schedule of the Constitution, in western Mizoram that was vehemently opposed by Mizo groups.
- Currently, around 35,000 (more than 5,000 families) **Bru refugees living in Tripura camps.**

### Progress over past two decades

- The Centre and the two State governments involved made **nine attempts to resettle the Brus** in Mizoram. The first was in November 2010 when 1,622 Bru families with 8,573 members went back. **Protests by Mizos stalled the process** in subsequent years.
- In June **2018**, Bru leaders (Mizoram Bru Displaced People's Forum- MBDPF) signed an agreement in Delhi with the Centre and the two state governments, providing for repatriation to Mizoram (deadline to move back to Mizoram was set as Sep 2020) along with **rehabilitation package** (free ration, housing assistance, education)
- However, the camp residents said the package did not **guarantee their safety in Mizoram**, and were not happy with the deadline (to repatriate to Mizoram) provided by the government. Thus fear of repeat of the violence lead to the failure of agreement.

### How is this agreement different from the earlier initiatives taken for the Bru?

- **Allows Bru refugees to permanently settle in Tripura** if they want to stay on. They will be provided voting rights in Tripura. The Bru who returned to Mizoram in the eight phases of repatriation since 2009, cannot, however, come back to Tripura.
- **Fresh Survey:** To ascertain the number of those settled in relief camps
- **Special developmental package** in addition to the Rs 600 crore fund announced for the process, including benefits for the migrants.
- **Rehabilitation Package:** Each family will get 0.03 acre (1.5 ganda) of land for building a home, Rs 1.5 lakh as housing assistance, and **Rs 4 lakh as a one-time cash benefit for sustenance**
- They will also receive a monthly allowance of Rs 5,000,(through **Aadhar enabled Direct Benefit Transfer**) and free rations for two years from the date of resettlement.
- **Timeline provided:** All Bru refugees will be moved to resettlement locations in four clusters, paving the way for the closure of the temporary camps within 180 days of the signing of the agreement and housing & payments completed with 270 days.

### Role of Tripura's erstwhile royal family

- Pradyot Kishore Debbarma, scion of Tripura's erstwhile royal family, claims that the Brus were originally from Tripura, and had migrated to Mizoram after their homes were flooded due to the commissioning of the **Dumboor hydroelectric power project in South Tripura** in 1976
- This effort by a socially respected person led to easy acceptance of Brus by Mizoram political system.
- Pradyot Deb Barman, who is also one of the signatories, committed to **donate 35 acres of land** for the purpose, thus easing the pressure on government in their search for land.

#### Concerns/Challenges:

- It could set a **bad precedent** and "legitimise" the ejection of minority communities by ethnocentric states.
- The displaced **Brus who returned to Mizoram** have already begun demanding a package equivalent to the one those who stayed behind in the Tripura relief camps
- It could **fuel conflict with the locals of Tripura** (between Brus and Bengali non-tribal people)
- **Forests would be razed down** so as to provide the land needed for settling Brus. Nearly 162 acres will be needed for the process and since Tripura is a small state, the government would look to diversion of forest land for human settlement purpose.

#### Connecting the dots

- Naga issues and its linkage with states of Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh
- Cooperative Federalism
- Other internal refugees in India – Kashmiri Pandits

### [Electoral bonds scheme not to be stalled](#)

**Part of:** GS Prelims – Polity and GS-II- Election commission

#### In news:

- Chief Justice of India (CJI) said that the Supreme Court had found it unnecessary to stay the electoral bonds scheme (EBS)
- Supreme Court recently passed an interim order directing political parties to provide complete information to the ECI in sealed covers on every single donor and contribution received by them till date through electoral bonds

#### From Prelims point of view:

##### Electoral bonds

- The Electoral bonds are instruments/securities used to donate funds to the political parties.
- These bonds will be on the lines of bearer bonds or promissory notes wherein the issuer (bank) will be the custodian and will pay the one who holds the bonds (political party)

##### Features:

- The donor may approach these banks and purchase the bonds.
- The donor shall be permitted to buy the bonds through cheque/digital payment. Hence the identity of the donors will be protected (if the donors are identified, they may get caught up in political rivalry-especially if the donor is a businessman).
- The donor will donate these bonds to the political party.



- The political party has to encash it into the account which is registered with the Election Commission of India.

***This is also important for Mains examination we will soon take this issue in Mains Focus section Stay tuned!!***

#### **Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR)**

- Non-partisan, non-governmental organization which works in the area of electoral and political reforms.
- ADR aims at bringing transparency and accountability in Indian politics and reducing the influence of money and muscle power in elections.
- National Election Watch (NEW) is a conglomeration of over 1200 organizations across the country.
- ADR has become the single data point for information/analysis of Indian politics

### Government to seek green clearance for water aerodromes

**Part of:** GS Prelims –Polity and GS-II- Vulnerable section

#### **In news:**

- The Union Civil Aviation Ministry has given in-principle clearance to set up aerial airports (AIRDROME) in the country.
- Five states – Odisha, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Assam – have been identified for its launch.
- In the first phase of the project, Chilka Lake (Odisha), Sabarmati River Front and Sardar Sarovar dam (Gujarat) have been marked for the development of such facilities.

#### **From Prelims point of view:**

##### **UDAN: ‘Ude Desh ka Aam Nagarik’**

- scheme is a part of the National Civil Aviation Policy (NCAP)
- UDAN is a regional connectivity scheme spearheaded by the Government of India (GoI).
- Aims to develop smaller regional airports to allow common citizens easier access to aviation services.

#### **Objectives:**

- Operationalization and development of 425 underserved or unserved airports in the country
- Boost inclusive economic development by providing faster connectivity
- Development of air transport infrastructure in remote areas aiding job growth

### Kerala’s move to challenge CAA

**Part of:** GS Prelims –Polity and GS-II- Governor

#### **In news:**

- Recent controversy concerning the Kerala government’s move to challenge the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019
- Kerala Govt chose to sue the Centre in the Supreme Court under Article 131 without first informing Governor

#### **From Prelims point of view:**

**Article 131**

- **Article 131:** Original and exclusive jurisdiction of the Supreme Court.
- Here, 'Original' and 'Exclusive' means that Court has the power and authority to address, hear and rule a decision in the initial instance.
- The exclusivity factor of the jurisdiction provides an exceptional and particular power to the Court to hear and decide the matter than any other Courts

**Article 167:**

- It is the Chief Minister's duty to communicate to the Governor all decisions of the Council of Ministers relating to the administration and proposals for legislation.
- It enjoins the Chief Minister to furnish such information relating to the administration as the Governor may call for.
- There may be occasions when the Governor may need to ask a top bureaucrat or the head of the police force for a report on a major incident or development, but even that should be for the limited purpose of getting an accurate picture before sending a report to the Centre

**Sarkaria commission:**

- In June 1983 the Union Government appointed a commission under the chairmanship of Justice R.S. Sarkaria to review the question of centre state relationship

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### [High Court of Karnataka: Police need to be trained to follow SC guidelines on registering FIRs](#)

Part of: GS Polity and GS-II – Law & order

**In news:**

- The High Court of Karnataka observed that police officers, including IPS officers, required proper training in the fundamentals of registering First Information Reports in criminal cases as per the guidelines issued in a 2013 Supreme Court verdict in the case of **Lalita Kumari vs. Government of Uttar Pradesh**.

**From Prelims Point of view:****Supreme Court has given Directions to be followed in regards to Registration of an FIR**

- Registration of FIR is mandatory under section 154 of the Code, if the information discloses commission of a cognizable offence and no preliminary inquiry is permissible in such a situation.
- If the information received does not disclose a cognizable offence but indicates the necessity for an inquiry, a preliminary inquiry may be conducted only to ascertain whether cognizable offence is disclosed or not.
- If the inquiry discloses the commission of a cognizable offence, the FIR must be registered. In cases where preliminary inquiry ends in closing the complaint, a copy of the entry of such closure must be supplied to the first informant forthwith and not later than one week. It must disclose reasons in brief for closing the complaint and not proceeding further.
- The police officer cannot avoid his duty of registering offence if cognizable offence is disclosed. Action must be taken against erring officers who do not register the FIR if information received by him discloses a cognizable offence.

- The scope of preliminary inquiry is not to verify the veracity or otherwise of the information received but only to ascertain whether the information reveals any cognizable offence.

## Electoral Bonds

**Part of:** GS Prelims –Polity and GS-II- Governance

### **Context:**

The Supreme Court declined to stay the electoral bond scheme of the government.

Also, a fresh window for purchase of bonds is set to open, coinciding with the Delhi Assembly election.

### **What is Electoral Bond Scheme?**

- An electoral bond is like a promissory note that can be bought by **any Indian citizen or company incorporated in India** from select branches of **State Bank of India**.
- An individual or party will be allowed to purchase these bonds digitally or through cheque after disclosing their identity through know your customer (KYC) norms
- The citizen or corporate can then donate the same to any eligible political party of his/her choice.
- The bonds are similar to bank notes that are payable to the bearer on demand and **are free of interest**. It has to be redeemed by Political parties within 15 days only in their specified account.
- The electoral bonds were introduced with the Finance Bill (2017). On January 29, 2018 the NDA government **notified the Electoral Bond Scheme 2018**.

### **Electoral bonds: Conditions**

- Any party that is registered and has secured **at least one per cent of the votes polled** in the most recent General elections or Assembly elections is eligible to receive electoral bonds
- The electoral bonds **will not bear the name of the donor**. Thus, the political party might not be aware of the donor's identity.

### **Why were electoral bonds introduced in India?**

- The government said that electoral bonds would keep a tab on the use of black money for funding elections. In the absence of electoral bonds, donors would have no option but to donate by cash after siphoning off money from their businesses
- Electoral bonds were being introduced to ensure that all the donations made to a party would be accounted for in the balance sheets without exposing the donor details to the public

### **Restrictions that were done away with after the introduction of the electoral bond scheme**

- Earlier, no **foreign company** could donate to any political party under the Companies Act.
- A firm could donate a maximum of **7.5 per cent of its average three year net profit** as political donations according to Section 182 of the Companies Act
- Also, **companies had to disclose details** of their political donations in their annual statement of accounts.

### **Criticisms of EBS**

**Legalising Political Corruption:** Since neither the purchaser of the bond nor the political party receiving the donation is required to disclose the donor's identity, the shareholders of a corporation will remain unaware of the company's contribution. Voters, too, will have no idea of how, and through whom, a political party has been funded.

**Possibility of Money Laundering:** Since the identity of the donor has been kept anonymous, it could lead to an influx of black money. With doing away with all the safeguard that were present in Corporate donations to Political parties (through Companies Act), Indian, foreign and even shell companies can now donate to political parties without having to inform anyone of the contribution.

**Large Corporations and not common man is utilizing this route:** Nearly 91.76% (Rs 5,624 crore) of the total number of bonds purchased during the 12 phases were in the denomination Rs 1 crore. Thus, there is possibility of unholy nexus developing between Corporates and Political parties for favourable policies which comes at the cost of public welfare

**Against Smaller Regional Parties:** 80.5% of the total Electoral Bonds redeemed between March 2018 and October 2019 were encashed in New Delhi (while maximum value of bonds was purchased in Mumbai) where national parties' headquarters are located

**New sale windows during State elections:** The government's scheme was meant for Lok Sabha elections, but the sale window for bonds had been opened before State Assembly elections repeatedly, which is beneficial for Central ruling party.

**Non Transparency:** The SBI has refused to divulge the names of those who purchased the electoral bonds under the RTI Act. The scheme infringes the citizens' fundamental 'Right to Know' by withholding crucial information regarding electoral funding

#### **Election Commission of India's view on electoral bonds**

ECI, in its response filed in the court, said the provisions would enable the creation of shell companies for the sole purpose of making political donations.

It also stated that the amendments to the law on foreign contributions would mean that there would be unchecked foreign funding of political parties, leading to foreign influence on India's policy-making.

#### **Reserve Bank of India on electoral bonds scheme**

The central bank had warned the government that the bonds would "undermine the faith in Indian banknotes and encourage money laundering."

#### **Supreme Court's View on Electoral Bonds**

In an order in April 2019, SC had asked political parties to disclose to the Election Commission of India (ECI), in sealed covers, details of the donations they had received through the anonymous bond. However, it had refused to stay the scheme on the grounds of "limited time" available then (impending General Elections to Lok Sabha) and "the weighty issues" involved in the matter.

#### **Way Forward**

- According to ADR, political parties redeemed **12,173 electoral bonds worth Rs 6,108.47 crore** between March 2018 and October 2019 in 12 phases. Clear Judicial pronouncement on such matter is of urgent concern
- The concept of donor "anonymity" threatens the very spirit of democracy, the anonymity should be removed by amending the legislation

#### **Connecting the dots:**

- Cash donations to Political Parties also capped at Rs 2000 through Finance Act of 2017. Why cash donations are still allowed?
  - Do Political Parties come under the ambit of RTI?
- 



## [India drops 10 ranks in Democracy Index](#)

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS Mains II– Democracy

**In news:**

- India slipped 10 places in the 2019 global ranking to 51st place.
- The average global score also recorded its worst value ever, down from 5.48 in 2018 to 5.44, driven by a sharp regression in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa, a lesser one in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, and by stagnation in the remaining regions that were covered.
- The report, “A year of democratic setbacks and popular protest”, was done by The Economist Intelligence Unit — the research and analysis division of The Economist Group.

Daily Current Affairs IAS | UPSC Prelims and Mains Exam – 23rd January 2020

## [Speaker’s role in disqualification](#)

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

**Context:**

The Supreme Court’s latest decision on the Speaker as the adjudicating authority under the anti-defection law.

**About Anti-Defection Law**

- The anti-defection law is contained in the 10th Schedule of the Constitution and was enacted by Parliament Constitution (52nd Amendment) Act, 1985.
- Legislators used to change parties frequently bringing in **Political Instability** and was also considered as **betraying the mandate of voters** (who voted for the legislator considering his political party)
- The purpose of **10th Schedule is to curb political defection by the legislators**. There are two grounds on which a member of a legislature can be disqualified.
  - One, if the member voluntarily gives up the membership of the party, he shall be disqualified.
  - Second, if a legislator votes in the House against the direction of his party and his action is not condoned by his party, he can be disqualified.
- However, there is an **exception** – The 10th Schedule says that if there is a **merger between two political parties** and **two-thirds** of the members of a legislature party agree to the merger, they will not be disqualified.
- The Presiding officer of the House (Speaker/Chairman) is the adjudicating authority with regard to disqualification of legislators under the Tenth Schedule

**Criticism of the anti-defection Law**

- **Curbs the freedom of speech** & expression of law makers
- **Tyranny of Political Parties:** Legislators have to abide by the line taken by Political parties even it is against their own stand or against the interest of her constituency
- **Role of the Speaker is biased:** Speaker who is a member of a political party is often not neutral and comes under the influence of his political party instead of deciding the cases on merit

- **Delay in decision making:** several presiding officers have allowed defectors to bolster the strength of ruling parties and even be sworn in Ministers by merely refraining from adjudicating on complaints against them

Supreme Court Judgements in **Kihoto Hollohan (1992) case:**

- Five Judge Bench of SC **upheld the validity** of the Constitution's Tenth Schedule, or the anti-defection law.
- It was also held in this case that a Speaker or a Chairman, acting Tenth Schedule, **is a Tribunal** and thus his discretionary powers were protected by Constitution. (**dissenting minority view by Justice JS Verma** who questioned the fairness of speaker in adjudication)
- This verdict had also made the **Speaker's order subject to judicial review** on limited grounds and that mere procedural infirmities could not prompt judicial intervention.
- It was also held that **judicial review cannot be available at a stage prior to the making of a decision** by the Speaker/Chairman.

**Recent Supreme Court judgement on the role of Speaker**

**Background:** The top court was hearing the appeal of Congress leader against the Manipur High Court order. The High had refused to direct Speaker to decide on disqualification of another Congress legislator who had defected to BJP & made minister.

Following are the pronouncements of the SC in this case

1. The Speakers should decide Tenth Schedule disqualifications within a **reasonable period**. Unless there were "exceptional circumstances", disqualification petitions under the Tenth Schedule should **be decided by Speakers within three months** (This question on time period raised by two judge bench of Supreme Court in S.A. **Sampath Kumar vs. Kale Yadaiah**, 2016 case)
2. Asked the Parliament to consider having an **independent and permanent body** to decide disqualification petition. Given the fact that a Speaker belongs to a particular political party, the Court mooted this idea, which requires an amendment to the constitution.
  1. Also, Speaker wasn't adjudicating election disputes or **disqualification of members under Articles 103/ 192/ 329** for good reason, because their fairness could be suspected.

**Way Forward:**

- The Constitution is called a living document because of its ability to grow and change with time and circumstances. Clearly, the Tenth Schedule has fallen short in fulfilling its objective of preventing defections and needs a relook.
- Parliament must fix this flaw and institute a tribunal recognising the significance of anti-defection provisions in upholding the sanctity of Parliament.

**Connecting the dots**

- Speakers role in deciding whether the bill is money bill or not
- Britain's model of Speaker's post

## [Goa Opposition disrupts assembly proceedings over Mahadayi river dispute](#)

**In news:**

**From Prelims Point of View:**

### **Kalasa Banduri project**

- The project involves diverting water from **Mahadayi river, the lifeline of Goa**, into the Malaprabha river.
- The Kalasa Banduri project is aimed at **providing drinking water to three important districts of north Karnataka** — Belagavi, Gadag and Dharwad — which go parched in summer due to acute water scarcity.
- Mahadayi river originates from a cluster of 30 springs at Bhimgad in the Western Ghats in the Belgaum district of Karnataka. Then it enters Goa and **finally drains in Arabian sea**.
- Goa state **capital Panaji lies on the banks of Mandovi**
- **Mahadayi Water Tribunal (MWT) Award in 2018:**Karnataka has been allocated 13.5tmcft of water, Goa has been 24tmcft while Maharashtra has been allocated 1.3tmcft

## [Centre refuses to give more funds to Kerala for flood relief](#)

**In news:**

The Centre will not allot any additional assistance to Kerala from the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) as it has failed to produce utilisation certificates for 50% of over ₹3,000 crore fund allotted to it after the 2018 floods

**From Prelims Point of View:**

### **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)**

- The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is the apex **statutory body** for disaster management in India.
- The NDMA was formally constituted on **27th September 2006**, in accordance with the Disaster Management Act, 2005 with **Prime Minister as its Chairperson** and nine other members, and one such member to be designated as Vice-Chairperson.
- In recognition of the importance of Disaster Management as a national priority, the Government of India set up a **High-Powered Committee (HPC) in August 1999** and a **National Committee after the Gujarat earthquake (2001)**.

### **Mercy petition**

- As per the Constitutional framework in India, mercy petition to the President is the last constitutional resort a convict, when he has been punished by the court of law. A convict can present a mercy petition to the President of India under Article 72 of the Constitution of India.
- Similarly, the power to grant pardon is conferred upon the Governors of States under Article 161 of the Constitution of India.



## Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act

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

**In news:**

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)] is making an earnest bid to steer clear of the row over the police slamming the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act

**From Prelims Point of View:**

### **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment**

- Seeks to amend the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967
- UAPA provides special procedures to deal with terrorist activities, among other things.

**Key amendments:**

- To **designate individuals as terrorists** on certain grounds provided in the Act.
- The Bill empowers the Director General of NIA to grant approval of seizure or attachment of property when the case is investigated by the said agency.
- The Bill empowers the officers of the NIA, of the rank of Inspector or above, to investigate cases of terrorism

**Need for the Amendment**

- India faces one of the highest threats of terrorism in the world and therefore its counter-terrorism mechanism must be stringent.
- USA has a very successful example of counter-terrorism mechanism, especially after 9/11, and has been successful in curbing terrorist activities.

## Bodoland Territorial Area District (BTAD): New agreement signed

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-II- Federalism

**In News**

- Agreement signed between Ministry of Home Affairs, Bodo Groups and Assam government which has following provisions:
  - **Renaming:** From BTAD to Bodoland Territorial Region.
  - **Redrawing Boundaries:** Villages dominated by Bodos that were presently outside the BTAD would be included and those with non-Bodo population would be excluded
  - Bodos living in the hills would be granted **Scheduled Hill Tribe status**.
  - **Bodo language** with Devnagri script will become associate official language for entire of Assam and a separate directorate for Bodo medium schools will be set up.
  - **Development Package** of ₹1500 crore by the Centre for the development of Bodo areas
- The agreement also involved **rehabilitation of members of National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB)** factions- over 1500 armed cadres will abjure violence and join the mainstream

## Indian Judiciary's Evolution

### **Context**

Constitution of India came into force 70 years ago on 26<sup>th</sup> Jan 1950 which was an ambitious political experiment involving Universal Adult Franchise, Federalism and Social revolution in deeply unequal Indian Society

Thus, we need to see how Supreme Court has interpreted the text over these past seven decades:

### **Phase One- Textualist Approach**

- In early years, Supreme Court focused on the plain meaning of the words used in the Constitution.
- Example: **K.Gopalan case (1950)** – where Preventive detention was challenged on the grounds that it violated Article 19,21 and 22. The Court held that each of these articles covered different subjects and were to be read separately rather than being read together.
- The Court read the Constitution literally, concluding that there were **no limitations on Parliament's power to amend the Constitution**, especially fundamental rights.

### **Phase two – Structuralist Approach**

- Appeals to the text of the Constitution were gradually overtaken by appeals to the Constitution's **overall structure and coherence**
- **Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala(1973)**, the Court concluded that Parliament's power to amend the Constitution did not extend to altering its "basic structure"
- In **Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India(1978)**, the court reject Gopalan approach and conceived the fundamental rights as a cohesive bill of rights rather than a miscellaneous grouping of constitutional guarantees
- The **right to life was incrementally interpreted** to include a wide range of rights such as clean air, speedy trial, and free legal aid.

**Commonality between First & Second Phase:** Interpretation of the Constitution were entrusted to Constitution Benches (comprising five or more judges of court) and were carefully reasoned. There was limited scope for precedential confusion and any demand for reconsideration were referred to larger Constitution Benches.

### **Phase Three- Eclecticism**

- Supreme Court's interpretive philosophy turned **far more result-oriented** than it had ever been often at the **cost of thorough rights reasoning of the issues**.
- This led to **doctrinal incoherence** with different Benches adopting inconsistent interpretive approaches based on their conception of the Court's role
- Example: Cases that involve substantial questions of interpretation of the Constitution — such as the cases concerning the NRC and the electoral bonds scheme — are still being adjudicated upon by benches of two or three judges

This institutional decline was due to two reasons

- **Increased strength of Supreme Court** from eight to 31 Judges (currently 34) which began to sit in panels of two or three judges, effectively transforming it into a “polyvocal” group of about a dozen sub-Supreme Courts
- The Court began deciding cases based on a certain conception of its own role — whether as sentinel of democracy or protector of the market economy.

#### Phase four -Purpose

- We are currently in the midst of transitioning from the third phase to the fourth.
- In this phase, the Court has acknowledged that the purpose for which the Constitution has been enacted becomes critical to its interpretive exercise
- The Court is now beginning to interpret the Constitution in accordance with its revolutionary and transformative potential which was originally intended by our founders.

#### Way Forward

- With about a dozen significant Constitution Bench decisions from the Supreme Court since September 2018, there has been a **renaissance in decision-making by Constitution Benches**.
- This includes the Court’s decisions striking down Section 377 and the criminal offence of adultery, and bringing the office of the Chief Justice of India within the scope of RTI
- Supreme Court should keep the focus on the purpose for which Constitution was brought in while interpreting the laws/Constitution/executive decision etc.

#### Connecting the Dots

- Regional Benches of Supreme Court – Will it alter the overall doctrinal approach with regard to interpretation of Constitution?

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### [Missing Persons Data now available Online](#)

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-III- Governance

#### In News

- Two Police related Citizen centric service namely ‘**Missing Person Search**’ and ‘**Generate Vehicle NOC**’ will now be **available online to Citizens**.
- Generate Vehicle NOC’ allows citizens to ascertain the status of a vehicle before its second hand purchase, as to whether it is suspicious or clean from Police records
- **Launched by: National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB)** on Crime and Criminal Tracking Network System (CCTNS) platform.

#### Prelims Value Addition

- NCRB was set-up in 1986 under the **Ministry of Home Affairs** to function as a repository of information on crime and criminals so as to assist the investigators in linking crime to the perpetrators.

- **CCTNS** implemented by NCRB is a nationwide network that connects over 15,000 police stations across the country and aims to integrate all the data and records of crime into a Core Application Software

## Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-II- Governance

### **In News**

- The index is prepared **annually** by the Germany-based **Transparency International**.
- India has slipped two spots to number 80 in the CPI, with its score remaining the same at 41 (Zero is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean)
- The average 2019 score is 43, with more than two-thirds of countries scoring below 50.

### **INDIA IN LAST 5 YEARS**

Index Year	Rank	Score	Countries Surveyed
2012	94	36	174
2013	94	36	175
2014	85	38	174
2015	76	38	167
2016	79	40	176
2017	81	40	180
2018	78	41	180
2019	80	41	180

### **INDIA'S NEIGHBOURHOOD**

COUNTRY	RANK	SCORE
India	80	41
China	80	41
Pakistan	120	32
Bangladesh	146	26
Sri Lanka	93	38
Nepal	113	34
Myanmar	130	29

Source: [Indian Express](#)

## Anticipatory Bail

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

### **In News**

- Supreme Court has held that the protection **of anticipatory or pre-arrest bail cannot be limited to any time frame** or “fixed period”
- The **life of an anticipatory bail order** does not normally end at the time and stage when the accused is summoned by the court, or when charges are framed, but **can continue till the end of the trial**.
- A **denial of bail amounts to deprivation of personal liberty (Article 21)**, thus, the Court should lean against the imposition of unnecessary restrictions on the scope of Section 438

**Do You Know?**

- **Sections 438** of the **Code of Criminal Procedure states** that if a person has a reason to believe that he will be arrested on accusation of having committed a **non-bailable offence**, he can approach High Court or Session Court for anticipatory bail i.e. pre-arrest bail
- **Gurubaksh Singh Sibbia Vs State of Punjab, 1980** – Five Judge SC bench- Power to grant anticipatory bail is cast in wide terms and should not be hedged in through narrow judicial interpretations. It held that courts could impose conditions which were appropriate



  
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## SOCIAL ISSUE/WELFARE

### Nepal's Language Seke Near Extinct

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-I- Society

**In News**

- The New York Times recently reported that the “near-extinct” Nepalese language Seke has just 700 speakers around the world.
- Possible reason: Nepali which is Nepal's official language is considered to be crucial for getting educational and employment opportunities outside villages. Thus, the younger generation does not find much use in learning the language, giving preference to Nepali and English.
- The vulnerability of the language is also linked to the migration of people to places where Seke is not spoken, which has reduced the intergenerational transmission of the language

**Do you know?**

- The year 2019, was the International Year of Indigenous Languages, mandated by the United Nations
- As per UNESCO, roughly 57 per cent of the world's estimated 6,000 languages are safe, about 10 per cent are vulnerable, 10.7 per cent are definitely endangered
- There are roughly 201 endangered languages in India and about 70 in Nepal.

### Bru-Reang Refugee Crisis: Home Minister presides over signing of Historic Agreement to end the Bru-Reang Refugee Crisis

**Part of:** GS Prelims History and GS Mains I–Society

**In news:**

- Union Minister for Home Affairs, Shri Amit Shah presided over the signing of an agreement between Government of India, Governments of Tripura and Mizoram and Bru-Reang representatives
- This historic agreement is in line with PM Modi's vision for the progress of the North East and the empowerment of the people of the region.

**Background:**

- In 1997, following ethnic tension, around 5,000 families comprising around 30,000 **Bru-Reang tribals** were forced to flee Mizoram and seek shelter in Tripura. These people were housed in temporary camps at Kanchanpur, in North Tripura.
- Since 2010, Government of India has been making sustained efforts to permanently rehabilitate these refugees.
- The Union government has been assisting the two State governments for taking the care of the refugees.

**From Prelims Point of view:**

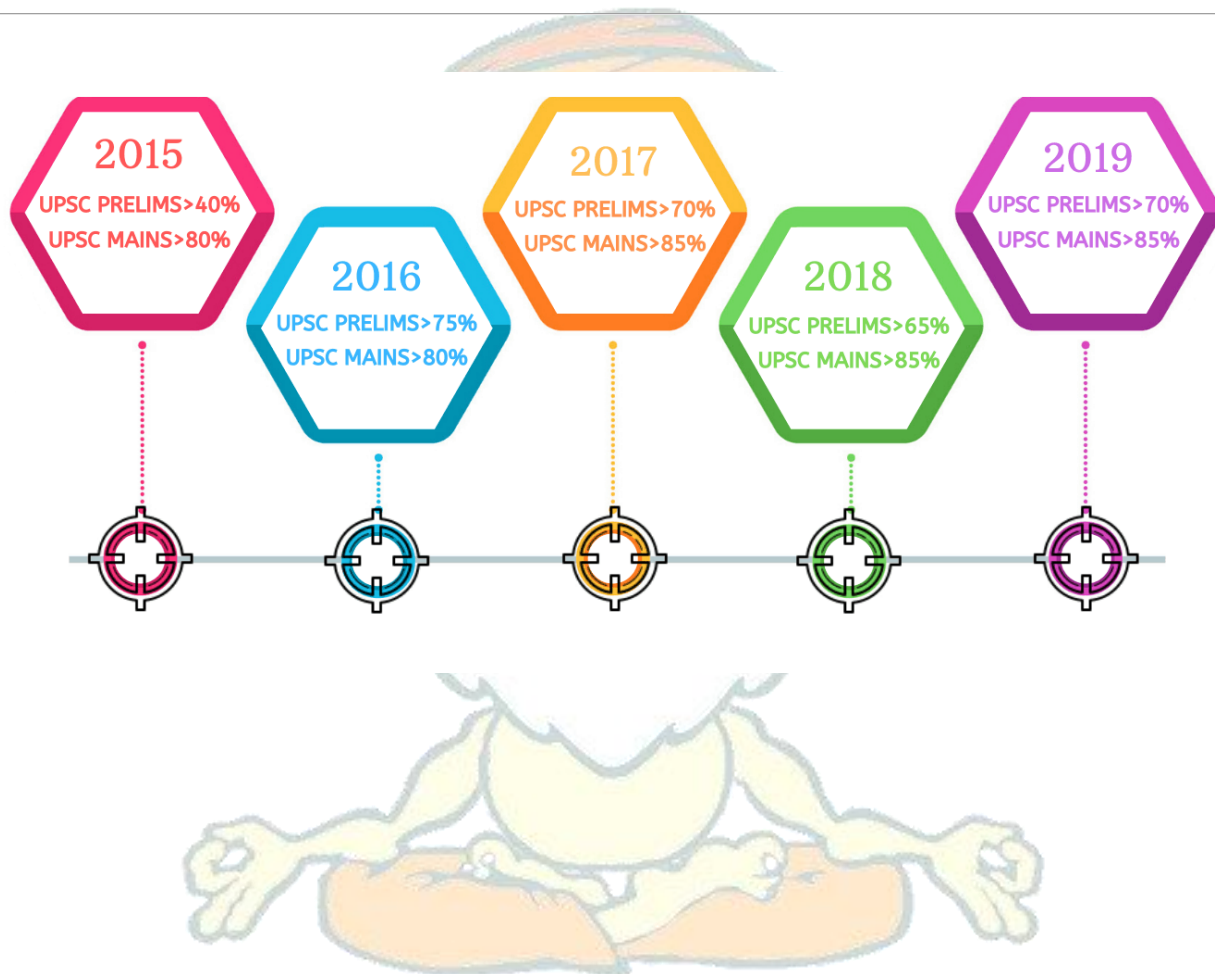
- Bru -Reang are one of the 21 scheduled tribes.
- The Bru can be found Tripura ,Mizoram and Assam

## Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA)

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-II- Polity, GS-I- Society

### In News

- CARA is a **statutory autonomous body** of Ministry of Women & Child Development.
- It is the nodal body for adoption of Indian children and is mandated to monitor and regulate in-country and inter-country adoptions.
- CARA is designated as the Central Authority to deal with inter-country adoptions in accordance with the provisions of the **Hague Convention on Inter-country Adoption, 1993, ratified by Government of India in 2003.**




## WOMEN ISSUE

### Establishment of Chairs named after eminent Women in Universities

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-I- Society, GS-II- Education


#### **In News**

- Union Ministry of Women and Child Development sets up ten Chairs in different fields with an aim to carry out research activities to encourage women.
- The initiative was launched with the assistance of University Grants Commission on the occasion of **National Girl Child Day (January 24)**.
- **Objective:** To highlight and celebrate women achievers of the country to motivate young girls and women towards higher studies.
- The chairs proposed by UGC and approved by the Ministry are:
  - **Administration:** Devi Ahilyabai Holkar
  - **Literature:** Mahadevi Varma
  - **Freedom Fighter (North East):** Rani Gaidinliu
  - **Medicine & Health:** Anandibai Gopalrao Joshi
  - **Performing Art:** Madurai Shanmukhavadiyu Subbulakshmi
  - **Forest/Wildlife Conservation:** Amrita Devi (Beniwal)
  - **Mathematics:** Lilavati
  - **Science:** Kamala Sohonie
  - **Poetry & Mysticism:** Lal Ded
  - **Educational Reforms:** Hansa Mehta



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## HEALTH ISSUE

### Swachh Sarvekshan League 2020: National Cleanliness Rankings Part of:

GS Prelims and GS-II- Health and Sanitation

#### **In News**

- Jamshedpur and Indore have emerged as the cleanest cities with a population upto 10 lakh and upto 20 lakh respectively in India.
- Swachh Sarvekshan League 2020 (SS League 2020) was introduced with the objective of sustaining the onground performance of cities along with continuous monitoring of service level performance when it comes to cleanliness
- SS League 2020 is being conducted **by Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs in three quarters** (April-June, July-September and October-December)
- Sustainability of the sanitation chain has been focused in SS League 2020 whereby parameters such as wastewater treatment and reuse, and faecal sludge management have been given special attention.
- SS League will be integrated with Swachh Sarvekshan 2020, the 5th edition of the annual cleanliness survey of urban India.
- The performance of cities in SS League 2020 is crucial to their ranking in Swachh Sarvekshan 2020 due to the 25% weightage of the quarterly assessments to be included in the annual survey scheduled to commence from 4 January till 31 January 2020.

### Lysosomal Storage Disorders (LSD)

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-II- Health

#### **In News**

- The lysosomes are primary **digestive units within cells**. Their function is to break down complex components into simpler ones. They degrade complex components such as proteins (substrates) into simpler components
- When this process does not take place due to enzyme deficiency, the **toxic substrates begin to accumulate** in the cells. That is why these diseases are called “storage diseases”.
- Therefore, Lysosomal storage diseases are **inherited metabolic diseases** that are characterized by an abnormal build-up of various toxic materials in the body’s cells as a result of **enzyme deficiencies**.
- Most lysosomal storage disorders are inherited in an autosomal recessive manner.
- There are nearly 50 of these disorders altogether, and they may affect different parts of the body, including the skeleton, brain, skin, heart, and central nervous system
- There is currently no approved treatment for many lysosomal storage diseases.

### Infant Mortality Rate: Outrage over deaths of infants in Gujarat & Rajasthan

**Part of:** GS Prelims – Health Statistics and GS-II- Health

**In News**

- The Infant mortality rate (IMR) is the number of deaths **per 1,000** live births of children under one year of age. Currently (2017) India's IMR stands at 33 per 1,000 live births
- India has an **annual birth cohort of approximately 26 million**
- Every day, there is an estimated death of 2,350 babies aged less than one year (annually 8.5 lakh deaths)
- According to the **National Family Health Survey-4, only 78.9% births in India happen in a facility**. This means 21.1% or about 54 lakh births in a year still happen outside of a facility where hygiene levels are low and/or without the help of a trained health worker.

**Value Additions**

- **India Newborn Action Plan (INAP)** was launched in 2014 to make concerted efforts towards attainment of the goals of "Single Digit Neonatal Mortality Rate" and "Single Digit Still birth Rate,"
- **Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)** and **Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakaram (JSSK)** was started to promote institutional deliveries so as to reduce IMR

[NITI Aayog's PPP Policy for Health Sector](#)

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II- Health and Governance

**In News**

- The PPP plan drafted by NITI Aayog involves linking private medical colleges with the government district hospitals, in which the **private entities can convert half of the hospital beds into paid beds**
  - **Reason:** Limited resources available with the Union and State governments
- **Criticism:**
  - Regressive model which commercialises the already small public health system
  - It would further reduce access to public health institutions: especially when **only 25% of non-hospitalised and 45% of hospitalised patients seek health care from public health institutions**
  - Increases out-of-pocket health expenditure of Citizens

[H9N2: India's first case detected by National Institute of Virology, Pune](#)

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

**In News**

- H9N2 viruses have been **observed in poultry in India several** times. However, this is the first identification of the clinical human case of H9N2 virus infection
- It H9N2 is a subtype of the influenza A virus, which causes human influenza as well as bird flu.
- The H9N2 subtype was isolated for the first time in Wisconsin, US in 1966 from turkey flocks.

- H9N2 virus infections in humans are rare, but likely under-reported due to typically mild symptoms of the infections. Cases of human infection have been observed in Hong Kong, China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Egypt

## Polio Disease

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

Context:

The World Health Organization announced that polio will continue to remain a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) for three months.

### **What is Polio?**

- Polio, short for poliomyelitis, or infantile paralysis, is an infectious disease caused by the poliovirus. The virus destroys nerve cells in the spinal cord causing muscle wasting and paralysis.
- There are three wild types of poliovirus (WPV) – type 1, type 2, and type 3. People need to be protected against all three types of the virus in order to prevent polio disease
- Symptoms: Many people who are infected with the poliovirus don't become sick and have no symptoms. However, those who do become ill develop paralysis, which can sometimes be fatal
- Is it Curable?
- There is no cure for polio, it can only be prevented. Polio vaccine, given multiple times, can protect a child for life.
- Vaccine contains weakened-virus activating an immune response in the body, building up antibodies against virus.

### **What is Vaccine derived Polio Virus?**

- These are rare strains of poliovirus that have genetically mutated from the virus strain contained in the oral polio vaccine(OPV) administered to children. 90% of VDPV cases were due to the type 2 component in OPV
- Does Polio still exist?
- Polio does still exist, although polio cases have decreased by over 99% since 1988, from an estimated more than 350 000 cases to 22 reported cases in 2017.
- Today, only 3 countries in the world have never stopped transmission of wild polio virus (Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria).

### **Why has WHO raised the alarm now?**

- Due to the rising risk of international spread of wild poliovirus type-1. There were 156 cases of wild polio type-1 cases in 2019 compared with 28 in 2018.
- An equally disturbing development is on the outbreak of vaccine-derived poliovirus cases in 16 countries; in all, there were 249 vaccine-derived poliovirus cases in 2019.
- Despite the progress achieved since 1988, as long as a single child remains infected with poliovirus, children in all countries are at risk of contracting the disease.
- The poliovirus can easily be imported into a polio-free country and can spread rapidly amongst unimmunized populations.

- Failure to eradicate polio could result in as many as 200 000 new cases every year, within 10 years, all over the world.

### Concern for India

- On 27 March 2014, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared India a polio free country, since no cases of wild polio been reported in for five years.
- With rising case in the neighbouring country, where Pakistan (128 of 156) accounted for the most number of cases in 2019, there are dangers of virus getting exported from Pakistan to Iran and Afghanistan which is already facing humanitarian crisis due to wars.
- Way forward
- Vaccine-derived polioviruses must be managed in the same way as wild poliovirus outbreaks. The solution is the same for all polio outbreaks: vaccinate every child several times with oral polio vaccine to stop polio transmission, regardless of whether the virus is wild or vaccine-derived.
- International community must come together to vaccinate children in Afghanistan (total of 8,60,000 children in Afghanistan did not receive polio vaccine due to security threats) and Pakistan.

### Do you know?

- Nigeria is all set to be declared as having eradicated polio this year, and in turn, the entire African region will become free of wild poliovirus
- Connecting the dots
- Mission Indradhanush of the government of India
- India is one of the largest producers and exporters of vaccines yet has one of the highest preventable childhood mortality rates of any country in the world. Why?

## Coronavirus: New virus identified by Chinese researchers

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

### In News

- Coronaviruses are a specific family of viruses, with some of them causing less-severe damage, such as the common cold, and others causing respiratory and intestinal diseases
- A coronavirus has many “regularly arranged” protrusions on its surface, because of which the entire virus particle looks like an emperor’s crown, hence the name “coronavirus”
- So far, there are four known disease-causing coronaviruses, among which the best known are the SARS corona virus and the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) coronavirus, both of which can cause severe respiratory diseases.
- **Does it impact only humans?**
- Apart from human beings, coronaviruses can affect mammals including pigs, cattle, cats, dogs, martens, camels, hedgehogs and some birds.

### Symptoms of Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

Mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of:

- fever
- cough
- shortness of breath

## China's Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

### **Context:**

800+ cases have been reported and at least 25 people have died from a new coronavirus in China following an outbreak in the central city of Wuhan.

### **About Coronavirus**

- According to WHO, coronaviruses are a **family of viruses** that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe respiratory illness (like SARS & MERS)
- The name “coronavirus” comes from the Latin word “corona”, meaning crown or halo. Under an electron microscope, the image of the virus is reminiscent of a solar corona.
- A novel coronavirus, identified by Chinese authorities on January 7, 2020 and currently named **2019-nCoV**, is a new strain that had not been previously identified in humans.
- Little is known about the new virus but it is considered as a relative of SARS

**Symptoms:** Signs of infection include respiratory symptoms, fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, it can lead to pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death.

**Origin:** The infection from the new strain was traced to a **Wuhan seafood market**, which also sold live animals. The WHO also says an animal source appears most likely to be the primary source of the outbreak.

**Spread:** Beyond China, Thailand has reported four cases, while South Korea, Taiwan, Japan and the United States have each confirmed one. All these cases involve people who had either come from Wuhan or been there recently.

**Transmission:** Though these viruses are zoonotic – transmitted from animals to humans- there is evidence of respiratory transmission of the novel coronavirus from human to human as well.

### **What is being done to stop it spreading?**

- There is no vaccine for the new virus.
- **Chinese authorities effectively sealed off Wuhan** on 23rd Jan 2020, suspending flights and trains out of the city and telling residents they could not leave without a special reason
- Chinese authorities have also stepped up monitoring and **disinfection efforts ahead of the Lunar New Year break**, which formally starts on 25th Jan during which many of the country's 1.4 billion people will travel domestically and overseas.
- Airport authorities across Asia have quickly stepped up screening of passengers from Wuhan
- Health authorities are trying to diagnose and **isolate cases as quickly as possible** and trace people patients have come into contact with to try to stay on top of the virus

**WHO's Standard recommendations to prevent infection spread include** regular hand washing, covering mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing, thoroughly cooking meat and eggs. Avoid close contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing.

### **Is it a global emergency?**

- WHO said that though, this is an emergency in China. But it has not yet become a global health emergency i.e. not yet public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC). It may yet become one in future.

- The PHEIC is defined by the WHO as an extraordinary event that is determined to constitute a public health risk to other states through the international spread of disease and to potentially require a coordinated international response.

### Criticism/Challenges

- **Shutdowns of cities** like Wuhan (11 million inhabitants) cannot prevent human-to-human transmission within the cities. Shutting down entire cities go beyond the normal practice of quarantining infected people and might backfire.
- **WHO should actively communicate** on the progress of virus control measures and if the virus spreads to other countries, declare the outbreak as PHEIC
- **25 Indian students are trapped in Wuhan city**, thus there is a need for Indian authorities to monitor & cooperate with Chinese counterparts to assure the safety of Indians in China.
- **Impact on the Economy especially on Aviation sector:** Since it is period of Chinese New year, the restrictions on travel will impact the tourist sector. Also, the fear of disease spread and suspension of air travel imposed by China in certain cities will have a knock-off international aviation sector (especially Korean, Japanese, Singapore airlines)

### Do You Know?

- SARS (Severe Acute respiratory Syndrome), another coronavirus that originated in China, came from bats and the civet cat, which in turn passed it on to humans.
- The early cases of this new infection were traced to the South China Seafood Wholesale Market. It thus emerged in China in 2002 and spread to 30 countries with 8400+ cases and nearly 800 deaths

### Connecting the dots

- Ebola Virus when WHO declared it as PHEIC
- Wuhan informal Summit in April 2018 – why? Outcome? Any follow up informal summit?

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## GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

### National Pension System (NPS)

**Part of:** GS Prelims – Government Initiatives and GS-III- Economy

**In News**

- 7,000 corporates in the country are currently registered with PFRDA, but only 10 lakh employees from this corporate sector are covered under the NPS.
- NPS currently has a total subscriber base of 3.25 crore, (with ₹4 lakh crore under investment as on December 31)

**About NPS**

- National Pension System (NPS) is a **government-sponsored pension scheme** launched in January 2004 for government employees. However, in 2009, it was opened to all sections.
- **Implementation Agency:** NPS is being implemented and regulated by **PFRDA**(Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority) – a statutory body **established by PFRDA Act, 2013**

**Who can join NPS?**

- Any Indian citizen (Both Resident and Non-Resident) between 18 and 60 years can join NPS. The only condition is that the person must comply with know your customer (KYC) norms.
- However, OCI (Overseas Citizens of India) and PIO (Person of Indian Origin) card holders and Hindu Undivided Family (HUFs) are not eligible for opening of NPS account.

### Central accident database management

**Part of:** GS Prelims –Policy and GS-II- Policy & Schemes

**In news:**

- The government launched a **central accident database management system** that will help in analysing causes of road crashes and in devising safety interventions to reduce such accidents in the country.
- The IT tool, known as the **Integrated Road Accident Database (IRAD)** developed by the Indian Institute of Technology-Madras (IIT-M)
- Implemented by the **National Informatics Centre**.
- Project supported by the **World Bank**

**National Informatics Centre (NIC):**

- National Informatics Centre (NIC) is an attached office under Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India.
- NIC provides infrastructure to help support delivery of Government IT services and delivery of some of the initiatives of Digital India

### Manual scavengers : Maharashtra, Gujarat lag behind in compensation for sewer deaths

**Part of:** GS Prelims –Schemes and GS-II- vulnerable sections

**In news:**

Central Monitoring Committee reviews implementation of manual scavenging prohibition law

**From Prelims point of view:****Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013:**

- The act seeks to reinforce this ban by prohibiting manual scavenging in all forms and ensures the rehabilitation of manual scavengers to be identified through a mandatory survey.
- Prohibits the construction or maintenance of insanitary toilets.
- Prohibits the engagement or employment of anyone as a manual scavenger violations could result in a years' imprisonment or a fine of INR 50,000 or both.
- Prohibits a person from being engaged or employed for hazardous cleaning of a sewer or a septic tank.
- Offences under the Act are cognizable and non-bailable.
- Calls for a survey of manual scavengers in urban and rural areas within a time-bound framework.

**National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK):**

The National Commission for Safai Karamchari was established in the year 1993 as per the provisions of the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act, 1993, for a period of three years i.e. up to 31st March, 1997.

- As per Section 1 (4) of the Act, it was to cease to exist after 31st March 1997, however, validity of the Act was extended up to March, 2002, and then up to February, 2004 vide Amendment Acts passed in 1997 and 2001 respectively.
- The Act ceased to have effect from March 2004. After that the tenure of the NCSK has been extended as a non-statutory body from time to time (total of eight times) The tenure of the present Commission is up to March 2022.
- The Commission is a Non-Statutory body of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India.



 **ASER lessons: Fix early learning in govt schools**

**Part of:** GS Prelims –Schemes and GS-II- govt. scheme

**Context:**

ASER 2019 shows how poor the quality of education in government schools is even at the foundational levels.

**About Annual Status of Education Report (ASER)**

- This is an annual survey (since 2005) that aims to provide reliable estimates of **children's enrolment and basic learning levels** across rural India ( Statewise and district wise)
- ASER is a **household-based** rather than school-based survey. This design enables all children to be included – those who have never been to school or have dropped out, as well as those who are in government schools, private schools, religious schools or anywhere else.
- Children in the age group **3 to 16 are surveyed** to find out their enrollment status in school or pre-school. Children in the age group **5 to 16 are assessed one-on-one** to understand their basic reading and arithmetic abilities.
- It is the largest citizen-led survey in India facilitated by **Pratham NGO**. It is also the only annual source of information on children's learning outcomes available in India today

**About 2019 report**



- The 2019 report focuses on ‘**Early Years**’ (ages 4-8) since these are critical to later-stage learning
- Overall. More than 90% of young children in the age group of 4-8 year **enrolled** in some type of educational institution (91.3% at 4 years to 99.5 at 8 years)
- **Gender gaps** are visible even among these young children with more girls than boys enrolled in government institutions and more boys than girls enrolled in private institutions
- **Disparity between Government & Private schools:**
  - Only 6.7% of government school students in Std I who were aged 4-5 could correctly do early language tasks, this figure was 24.1% for private schools
  - Similarly, only 16.5% of 4&5-year-olds in Std I in government schools could demonstrate early numeracy competency, compared with 35.3% in private schools.
  - In cognitive skills, too, government institutions lagged their private peers by six to 18 percentage points when performance of 5-year-olds was compared

### Implication

- The Right to Education law and the new National Education Policy both set 6 years as the age when a child should enter formal schooling (Standard I)
- **Cognitive development** in the pre-school years is key to learning outcomes in school.
- **Disparity in learning levels:** A higher population of 4&5-year-olds study in standard I in government schools (26.1%) compared with private schools (15.7%)—largely because of the lack of affordable and accessible pre-primary institutions—it can be argued, the feedstock in government schools sets them up for the disparity in learning levels.
- **High dropout rates at higher level:** With the poor learning levels at the primary level (combined with no detention till class 8) many students simply may not be able to cope with the curriculum at the secondary and senior secondary levels thus leading to high dropout rate

### Reasons for poor early learning outcomes is primarily two-fold

- **India’s Anganwadi scheme:** India has one of the largest pre-school care programmes in the world—the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), but it remains primarily focussed on nutrition/healthcare/immunisation, with early learning often neglected at the anganwadis.
- **Distorted Pedagogy:** Content knowledge and instruction as the preferred method when research shows that play-based activities geared towards building memory, reasoning, and problem-solving abilities have a much larger impact on building the foundation for later learning.

### Way Ahead:

- **Funding:** India needs to aggressively bolster its early education programme—in FY20, the Centre budgeted \$3.9 billion for the umbrella ICDS programme while in 2017, China was spending nearly \$19 billion on just early childhood education
- **Reorient Anganwadi** centres as not just centres for nutrition but also centres for early learning
- **Teaching Pedagogy** should be relied more upon play based learning rather than instructional methodology
- Revisit State and National norms for age entry to school: Performance on cognitive, early language, early numeracy, and social & emotional learning tasks is closely related to

children's age, with older children doing better than younger ones. Permitting underage children into primary grades puts them at learning disadvantage which is difficult to overcome

### **Connecting the Dots**

- New Educational Policy
- Operation Digital Board

## SC: Welfare schemes for religious minorities

**Part of:** GS Prelims – Polity and GS-II- Vulnerable section

### **In news:**

- The Supreme Court asked the UP government to respond to a petition alleging that the government is discriminating against Hindus by providing religious minorities with welfare schemes worth thousands of crores.

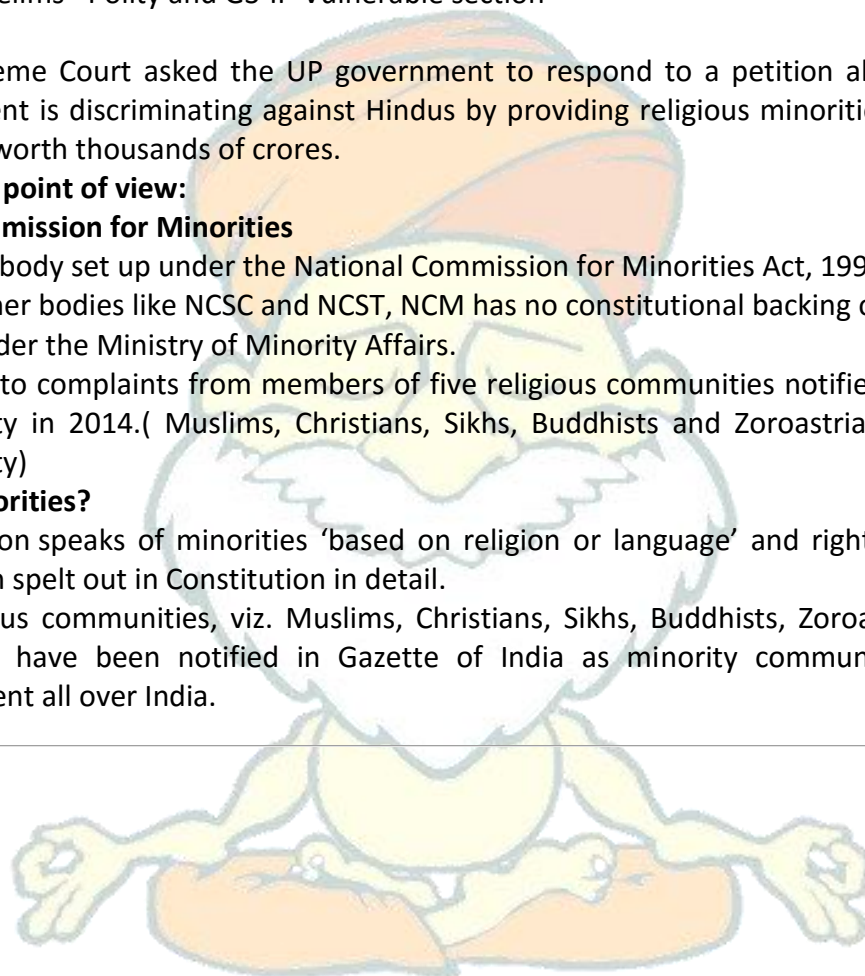
### **From Prelims point of view:**

#### **National Commission for Minorities**

- Statutory body set up under the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992.
- Unlike other bodies like NCSC and NCST, NCM has no constitutional backing or status.
- Works under the Ministry of Minority Affairs.
- It looks into complaints from members of five religious communities notified as a minority community in 2014. ( Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Zoroastrians (Parsis) Jain community)

#### **Who are minorities?**

- Constitution speaks of minorities 'based on religion or language' and rights of minorities have been spelt out in Constitution in detail.
- Six religious communities, viz. Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Zoroastrians (Parsis) and Jains have been notified in Gazette of India as minority communities by Union Government all over India.



## INTERNATIONAL

### US-China: 'phase one' trade deal to be signed January 15

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS Mains I- International relations

**Context:**

- United States and China recently announced a “Phase One” agreement
- With this US will reduce some tariffs in exchange for increased Chinese purchases of American farm and energy goods.

**Background:**

- Donald Trump in 2018 began setting tariffs and other trade barriers on China with the goal of forcing it to make changes to what the U.S. says are “unfair trade practices” of China
- Among those trade practices and their effects are the growing trade deficit, the theft of intellectual property, and the forced transfer of American technology to China
- The trade war has brought struggles for farmers and manufacturers and higher prices for consumers.
- It has also caused economic damage In some countries, some countries have benefited from increased manufacturing to fill the gaps. It has also led to stock market instability.

**Impact of trade war on India :**

- The US manufacturers are setting up their bases in India. For India, this will be beneficial as it would create more jobs for us.
- There is a possibility that China could soon start flooding excess steel and aluminium into India’s market after this raised tariffs on Chinese products by US.
- Mobile phones, refrigerators, washing machines, ACs, water purifiers, and possibly electric vehicles will now see increased investment flow directed towards India.
- The Indian consumers will get the products at a cheaper rate but the domestic producers of India will have to compete with the Chinese imports or else face loss.
- Indian producers will get an opportunity to fill this generated gap and penetrate in the US market. This will increase their trade and profit.
- There will be a short-term impact on the stock markets.

**Features:**

- The US will halve its 15 per cent tariff on about \$120 billion in Chinese goods
- China has agreed to increase its total purchases of US goods and services by at least \$200 billion over the next two years. Also included is a commitment by China to increase its buying of US agricultural products
- *Addresses **unfair currency practices** by committing to refrain from competitive devaluations and exchange rate targeting. “This approach will help reinforce macroeconomic and exchange rate stability and help ensure that China cannot use currency practices to unfairly compete against U.S. exporters”*
  - China have agreed not to pressure foreign companies to transfer their technology to Chinese companies.
  - The agreement also include a dispute-resolution mechanism that will serve as the enforcement arm.

**Critics:**

- It would bring **only temporary relief** in the over 18-month-old trade war between the US and China.
- Does little to resolve the United States' biggest concerns about China's trade practices, including its use of **industrial subsidies and state-owned enterprises to dominate global industries like steel and solar panels.**
- The deal would increase Chinese purchases of American agricultural and energy products,
- It limits on China's ability to weaken its currency and provide greater protection to US companies that are operating in China.

**Way forward:**

- China and the United States, the world's two largest economies, must deal with bilateral economic and trade relations with the big picture in mind.
- Reaching the agreement will serve the fundamental interests of the people of the two countries and the world,
- It is expected to bring positive influences on areas including economy, trade, investment and the financial market

**Conclusion:**

- The economic and political benefits of de-escalation in the trade war have become readily apparent.
- A rollback of tariffs and cancellation of new levies, makes sense for the US economy and for the World economy.

**Connecting the dots:**

- Do you think Phase One" agreement make a positive impact on Indian economy?
- How does this impact India- US relations?

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### [US-Iran: Qassem Soleimani , the head of Iran's elite Quds Force Killed](#)

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS Mains I- International relations

**Context:**

- Tensions between the United States and Iran escalated after a US air raid killed **Qassem Soleimani**, the head of Iran's elite Quds Force, and **Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis**, the deputy commander of Iran-backed militias known as the Popular Mobilisation Forces, or PMF.

**Consequences:**

- These deaths are a potential turning point in the Middle East and are expected to draw severe retaliation from Iran and the forces it backs in the region against Israel and US interests.

**About Soleimani:**

- Soleimani, had a unique celebrity status among Iran's military leaders, was highly popular among the hardliners.
- He was very close to the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who once called him a "living martyr of the revolution".

- He was also the main architect of Iran's recent foreign operations, mainly in Syria and Iraq, which were crucial in saving the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria and defeating the Islamic State (IS) in both countries.

#### **Impacts:**

- The attack has already killed off even the possibility of renegotiating the nuclear deal.
- Iran might see this as an act of war like any sovereign country would do.
- It could trigger multiple attacks across the region, destabilising it further, cause heavy casualties and help the jihadist groups such as al-Qaeda and the IS regroup and re-emerge.
- Resumed attacks on oil tankers and other low hanging but high value economic targets, particularly in the oil sector

#### **Impact on India:**

- India need to be on the right side of the U.S., our ties with Iran, have their own geostrategic logic.
- Rises India's oil import bill
- Creates difficulties in supplies,
- The safety of an estimated eight million expatriates in the Gulf may be affected.
- Iran has the capacity to influence the U.S.-Taliban peace process in Afghanistan which could impact India
- The possibility of some of Shia Muslims being radicalised by this event cannot be ruled out.

#### **Conclusion:**

- U.S. President Donald Trump is responsible for where U.S.-Iran ties stand today as he single-handedly destroyed the co-operation between the two nations established by the 2015 Iran nuclear deal by unilaterally pulling the U.S. out of the agreement in 2018 and reimposing sanctions on Iran.
- By sabotaging the fragile peace negotiated over years between world powers, Mr. Trump, in a single act, pushed both the U.S. and Iran down a dangerous slope.

#### **Connecting the dots:**

- How to think Iran – US relations Impacts India?
- What would be the next step of Iran?

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### [World Trade Organization: U.S. crippled the functioning of the WTO](#)

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS Mains I- International relations

#### **Context:**

- Recently the U.S. chose to spike the Appellate Body of WTO by starving funds for its functioning.
- US stalled the selection process for filling six vacancies at the Appellate Body. Consequently, the Appellate Body is left with only one member, who will not be able to deliver any rulings on pending trade disputes (a minimum of three members is required to adjudicate any dispute)

#### **Why US Chose to spike?**

- Appellate Body has posed hurdles to the U.S. for adopting unilateral measures. Several U.S. provisions for imposing countervailing and anti-dumping measures were found to be inconsistent with core provisions of the WTO agreements.

- Finally, the U.S. chose to spike the Appellate Body by resorting to starving funds for its functioning as well as blocking the selection process for filling six vacancies.
- Consequently, the Appellate Body is left with only one member, who will not be able to deliver any rulings on the pending trade disputes.
- A minimum of three members are required to adjudicate any dispute.

#### **World Trade Organization's Appellate Body :**

- For proper enforcement of trade rules, a binding, two-stage dispute settlement system was established at the World Trade Organization in the 1990s.
- The Appellate Body is the scaffolding of the dispute settlement system, with seven standing members.

#### **Working:**

- In the first stage for adjudicating trade disputes, a panel would decide cases brought before it by the members. Rulings issued by the panels can be appealed at the Appellate Body.
- As part of **the second-stage of adjudication**, the Appellate Body can uphold, modify or reverse the legal findings and conclusions of a panel.
- The Appellate Body's decisions are final and adopted within 30 days by the dispute settlement body.
- Sanctions can be imposed on a member in case of its failure to comply with the Appellate Body's rulings.

#### **Cases dealt:**

- Cases involving trade remedies such as countervailing and anti-dumping measures, and the use of a controversial practice called the zeroing methodology that inflated the anti-dumping duties.

#### **Significance:**

- The establishment of the Appellate Body has given teeth and credibility to the rules-based multilateral trading system.
- Moreover, it provided security and predictability in the multilateral trading system.

#### **India's Stand:**

- "At the core of a functioning multilateral trading system is an effective dispute resolution mechanism." Although not perfect, the dispute settlement system has led to meaningful reductions in unfair trade practices and has helped to strengthen the rules-based international trading system." The U.S. has been one of the bigger users of the dispute settlement system and also a beneficiary "of this public good," India said, cautioning that "unless the Membership acts in concert ... to lift the block on AB vacancies, we are going to lose this public good which has served all of us so well."

#### **Impact:**

- It is a tremendous loss for the majority of WTO members who are all developing and poor countries.
- they "lack the political and economic clout to enforce their rights and protect their interests in a system governed by power and not rules.

#### **Conclusion:**

- The absence of the Appellate Body will create a jungle raj and paves the way for a steep descent into the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, 1947 rules.

**Connecting the dots:**

- How do you think it impacts India?
- Do you think US will change its stand?
- Is the World Trade Organization dying?

**[Iran nuclear deal : Iran has stepped away from the nuclear deal](#)**

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS Mains I- International relations

**Context:**

- Iran said it would abandon limitations on enriching uranium, refusing to adhere to the 2015 nuclear deal it signed with six major powers, but would continue to cooperate with the UN nuclear watchdog.
- Iran's announcement comes after its top security and intelligence commander, Major General Qassem Soleimani, was killed in a US drone attack in Baghdad

**Timeline:**

- Iran ratified the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1970, and planned to expand its nuclear power.
- After the Islamic Revolution, these plans were discontinued, and in the late 1980s, Iran established an undeclared nuclear weapons program called the AMAD project.
- In 2003, under international pressure, Iran halted the program, and signed an Additional Protocol to its NPT safeguards agreement, giving the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) greater powers in verifying the program.
- In 2006, the US, Russia and China joined Britain, France and Germany to form the P5+1 group of nations trying to persuade Iran to curb its nuclear program.
- In 2009, under President Barack Obama, the US conducted extensive one-on-one talks with Iran's top nuclear negotiator.
- In 2013, Iran and the six powers announced an interim agreement that temporarily curbed Tehran's nuclear program and unfroze some Iranian assets, setting the stage for extended negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear accord.
- In 2015, the Iran nuclear deal (formally the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) was signed between Iran and the P5 (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council) plus Germany and the European Union.

**Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action or Nuclear deal:**

- Under JCPOA, Iran agreed to eliminate its stockpile of medium-enriched uranium, cut its stockpile of low-enriched uranium by 98%, and reduce by about two-thirds the number of its gas centrifuges for 13 years.
- For the next 15 years Iran will only enrich uranium up to 3.67%.
- Iran also agreed not to build any new heavy-water facilities for the same period of time.
- Uranium-enrichment activities will be limited to a single facility using first-generation centrifuges for 10 years.
- Other facilities will be converted to avoid proliferation risks.
- To monitor and verify Iran's compliance with the agreement, the International Atomic

**What will Iran get in return?**

- Iran will receive relief from U.S., European Union, and United Nations Security Council nuclear-related sanctions.

**Reason behind the US decision to withdraw from Nuclear deal:**

- Mr. Trump's decision is not about Iran acquiring nuclear weapons. If it was the actual concern, it would have supported a deal that closes the path towards nuclear weapons for Iran.
- Instead, the bigger concern for Mr. Trump as well as Washington's closest allies in West Asia — Israel and Saudi Arabia — is Iran's re-accommodation in the global economic mainstream.
- They fear that if Iran's economic profile rises, it will embolden it to increase its regional presence, posing a strategic threat to the interests of the U.S.-Saudi-Israel axis.

**How does it affect India?**

- The reintroduction of sanctions against Iran is bad news. Iran is now India's third largest source of oil.
- Apart from supply disruptions, a further surge in crude prices will worsen India's current account imbalance and fuel inflation, at a time when the economy is just beginning to show signs of returning to a high growth trajectory.
- For global corporations too, there will be considerable pain. For example, there are said to be around 200 French companies operating in Iran and some like Renault have plants there. They will now have a 90-day period to wind down operations.
- India's Chabahar port project in Iran, which was just showing signs of moving forward, could be in trouble.

**Conclusion:**

- US-Iran ties have continued to worsen since President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal and imposed crippling sanctions on Iran.
- Relations between the two countries first became acrimonious during the 1979 Iranian Revolution, which brought Iran's pro-West monarchy to an end, and replaced it with an Islamic Republic

**Connecting the dots:**

- How do you think this affects India?
- What do you think might be the solution?

**SEA GUARDIANS: Bilateral Naval exercise between China & Pakistan**

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS Mains II- International Affairs

**In News**

- This is the sixth joint naval exercise between china and Pakistan, but it is the first time that the exercise was named "sea guardians."
- It was held in the **northern Arabian Sea**, with the purpose of enhancing security cooperation between the two countries.



- The North Arabian Sea is regarded strategically significant for China which is now developing **Pakistan's deep water Gwadar port** there as a part of **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor(CPEC)** Project of China's Belt & Road initiative
- The Gwadar is also located close to Iran's Chabahar Port being jointly developed by Iran, India and Afghanistan to ensure a trade corridor for Indian exports to Afghanistan.
- Sea guardians is expected to become a series of naval exercises with Pakistan, similar to the 'warrior' series of joint land exercises and the shaheen series of joint air exercises.

### Historic Trump impeachment trial begins in Senate

**Part of:** GS Prelims GS Mains II—Comparing Indian constitution

**In news:**

- The historic impeachment trial of Donald Trump opened in the US Senate, as lawmakers took a solemn oath to be "impartial" in deciding whether to force the 45th US president from office.

**From Prelims point of view:**

**Indian Impeachment process**

- In India, President can be impeached for violation of the Constitution (**Article 61**)
- The motion for impeaching President can be introduced in any House of Parliament.
- After the investigation, the motion of impeachment must be passed by a two-thirds majority of the total membership of the House by both Houses of the Parliament.

### Taiwan, Hongkong and China



Source of Pic

**Context:**

The landslide re-election victory for the **Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP)** Tsai Ing-wen in Taiwan has presented Beijing with a second pressing challenge in its backyard (along with ongoing protests in Hongkong)

Also, pro-democratic political parties swept the local district council elections in Hong Kong, which were widely seen as a referendum on the protests happening in Hongkong pressing for wider Democratic reforms

**Brief Background of Taiwan**

- China's nationalist government, which was defeated in a civil war by the communists in 1949, had been exiled to Taiwan.
- Taiwan has been entirely self-ruled since then, however, China claims the island as a part of its territory
- **Taiwan has a thriving democracy** and has held direct elections to choose its leaders since 1996. China is Taiwan's largest trade partner.

**China's One Country- Two system model**

- This policy was originally proposed by **Deng Xiaoping** shortly after he took the reins of the country in the late 1970s. Deng's plan was to unify China and Taiwan under the One Country Two Systems policy which provided **autonomy to Taiwan**
- Under this system, Taiwan could follow its capitalist economic system, run a separate administration and keep its own army but under Chinese sovereignty. Taiwan, however, rejected the Communist Party's offer.
- The idea of two systems in one country is **replicated again in Hong Kong and Macau** when Britain and Portugal, who were running these territories under lease (since colonial times) returned it to China in 1997 & 1999 respectively. These territories was also given autonomy in its functioning in return for recognition of China's Sovereignty over these areas.

**Election results in Taiwan a referendum on China**

- If the local elections in Hong Kong were a referendum on the protests, the elections in Taiwan ended up becoming a referendum on China — and specifically, on the “one country, two systems”
- The events in Hongkong whereby Chinese authorities were criticized for their handling of protestors (not calling for peace talks) revitalized the **anti-China campaign in Taiwan** (Independence from China)
- The opposition KMT (pro-China) – in power from 2008-16- had chosen to build economic and political bridges with China. The KMT's stance was based on need to boost Taiwan's economic opportunities.
- Polls conducted in Taiwan by the National Chengchi University in June 2019 showed that **56.9% identify as being only 'Taiwanese'**, up from 54.5% a year earlier
- On the choice between independence and reunification, **86.1% favoured maintaining the status quo** (Not accede to China's model)

**Consequences for Taiwan**

- With Ms. Tsai who is at the helm of Taiwan since 2016 and her stated anti-China views, Beijing has pushed with vigour an **international strategy aimed at isolating Taiwan**.

- By the end of 2019, Taiwan was left with only 14 UN member states that maintain diplomatic relations, after losing the Solomon Islands and Kiribati which both shifted to recognising Beijing.
- China believe that the country's "great rejuvenation", which President Mr. Xi has declared as the "China dream", will not be complete without Taiwan's return

#### Consequences for China

- China believe the tide of history is on their side (with economic & military might), and that the island (Taiwan) of 23 million people (roughly the population of Beijing) will inevitably return to the fold.
- However, China needs to offer more than the stability, security, and economic growth that its model promises, when **issues of identity, suffrage and values are involved**
- With China aggressively pushing its mega infrastructure project Belt & Road initiative and aiming at superpower status, it has to show to the world that it is able to solve its own internal problems in a peaceful manner before embarking on taking up **Global leader status**.

#### Lessons for India

- India also follows **asymmetric Federalism** where by many states enjoy greater autonomy in their functioning as compared to other states (Article 371, Schedule V & VI).
- These special provision are also intended to deal with issues to identity & culture. India thus needs to handle these in a democratic manner so as to not see Taiwan/Hongkong type of protests happening in India
- In **International Politics**: India can always use the leverage of Taiwan and Hongkong whenever China meddles in India's own internal issues like Kashmir/ Naga unrest.

#### Connecting the dots

- China's other internal issues – Tibet and Xinjiang province
- Why there are no protests in Macau which also enjoys special powers under the One Country-Two system mode
- How US is trying to exploit this situation? Resolution/laws passed by US legislature aimed at Hongkong/Xinjiang.

### [Iran to quit NPT \(Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons\)](#)

**Part of:** GS Prelims –IR and GS-II- International Organization

#### In news:

- Iran threatened to withdraw from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) if European countries bring alleged violations of the historic nuclear deal with world powers to the United Nations Security Council

#### From Prelims point of view:

#### Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

- The NPT is a landmark international treaty whose objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of

nuclear energy and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament.

- The Treaty represents the only binding commitment in a multilateral treaty to the goal of disarmament by the nuclear-weapon States.
- Treaty establishes a safeguards system under the responsibility of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

#### **Iran Nuclear deal**

- Iran agreed to rein in its nuclear programme in a 2015 deal struck with the US, UK, Russia, China, France and Germany.
- Under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) Tehran agreed to significantly cut its stores of centrifuges, enriched uranium and heavy-water, all key components for nuclear weapons.
- The JCPOA established the Joint Commission, with the negotiating parties all represented, to monitor implementation of the agreement.

### Healthcare: The Brazilian Way

#### **Context:**

The Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro visits to New Delhi this Republic Day and one interesting field of cooperation to explore in the strategic partnership is healthcare.

Brazil, the only country where more than 100 million inhabitants have a universal health system- **Unified Health System (Sistema Único de Saúde – SUS)**. Studying the system will have important lessons for **Ayushman Bharat Scheme**

#### **About Brazils SUS**

- SUS, underpinned by the principles of equity, solidary and social participation, aimed to develop a universal, **comprehensive** and decentralised health system, free of charge at the point of service provision
- The Unified Health System (SUS), which guaranteed free health coverage that included pharmaceutical services, was **written into the new Constitution in 1988**. It defined health as a Universal right and a State responsibility
- The SUS triggered a fundamental restructuring of how the health system is governed which included
  - A **process of decentralization** and new arrangements for sharing of responsibilities across federal, state and municipal levels.
  - A gradual **increase of public spending** on health
- **National Health Identification Card:** allows a patient's health record to be accessed via a central database from any public or private hospital within the Unified Health System network.
- **Family Health Programme:** Community-based healthcare network who perform **monthly visits** to every family enrolled in the programme. They conduct health promotion and prevention activities and effectively manage the relationship between citizens and the healthcare system

### Achievements of SUS

- Every year, the SUS covers more than two million births, 10 million hospital admissions, and nearly one billion ambulatory procedures.
- **Life expectancy** has increased from 64 years to almost 76 years.
- **Infant Mortality Rate** has declined from 53 to 14 per 1,000 live births.
- 95% of those that seek care in the SUS are able to receive treatment
- **Fiscally Prudent** achieved by better regulatory system. The cost of the universal health system in Brazil averages around \$600 per person, while in the U.K., this number reaches \$3,428. Brazil spends 3.8% of GDP on SUS, whereas UK which runs a similar program called NHS spends 7.9% of its GDP
- **The Family Health Programme:** Expanded from 4% of coverage in 2000 to up to 64% of the overall population in 2015 which has reduced IMR and increased adult labour supply

### Challenges for SUS

- **Economic and political crises**, combined with **austerity policies**, pose a major risk to UHC. Thus the system has to remain resilient to such external shocks
- Internal shocks such **rapid ageing** leading to rise in disease burden. Public health spending in Brazil will thus need to increase by nearly 1.6 percentage points of the GDP by 2060 in order to cover the healthcare needs of a fast-ageing society.

### Lesson for India from Healthcare system in Brazil

- Increase in Public health funding -Public health expenditure is still very low in India, at around 1.3% of GDP
- Family Health programme which involved regular visit to families ensures regular monitoring of health needs of people and thus strengthens the primary health care system
- Need for decentralization of the health care responsibilities by empowering municipalities with funds and powers
- National Health Identification Card scheme can be integrated by making use of Aadhar ecosystem so as to create a better system of coordination between public and private sector healthcare institutions regulated by the Health Agency

### Way Ahead

- In a heterogeneous society like India where there is regional disparities, one-size-fits-all approach is not advisable
- Tamil Nadu, Sikkim, and Bihar differ in so many ways and this diversity must be met by an **intricate combination of standardised programmes and autonomy** to adopt policies according to their characteristics.

### Connecting the dots

- Ayushman Bharat's 1.5 Lakh wellness centres and Brazil's Family Health Programme
- UK's National Health Service
- Private Health care provision through Insurance Model Vs Public Health Service delivery through government hospitals

## [Blue Corner notice, issued against Nithyananda](#)

**Part of:** GS Prelims Polity and GS Mains II–International organization

**In news:**

The Interpol has issued a blue corner notice to help locate self-styled godman Nithyananda

**Prelims Point of View**

- Notices are international requests for cooperation or alerts allowing police in member countries to share critical crime-related information.
- There are seven types of notices — Red Notice, Yellow Notice, Blue Notice, Black Notice, Green Notice, Orange Notice, and Purple Notice.

## TYPES OF INTERPOL NOTICES



**RED NOTICE:** To seek the location and arrest of wanted persons with a view to extradition or similar lawful action.



**YELLOW NOTICE:** To help locate missing persons, often minors, or to help identify persons who are unable to identify themselves.



**BLUE NOTICE:** To collect additional information about a person's identity, location or activities in relation to a crime.



**BLACK NOTICE:** To seek information on unidentified bodies.



**GREEN NOTICE:** To provide warnings and intelligence about persons who have committed criminal offences and are likely to repeat these crimes in other countries.



**ORANGE NOTICE:** To warn of an event, a person, an object or a process representing a serious and imminent threat to public safety.



**INTERPOL-UN SECURITY COUNCIL SPECIAL NOTICE:** Issued for groups and individuals who are the targets of UN Security Council sanctions committees.



**PURPLE NOTICE:** To seek or provide information on modus operandi, objects, devices and concealment methods used by criminals.

Source: [www.interpol.int](http://www.interpol.int)

NATION GRAPHICS

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## China Myanmar Economic Corridor

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS Mains II– Foreign relations

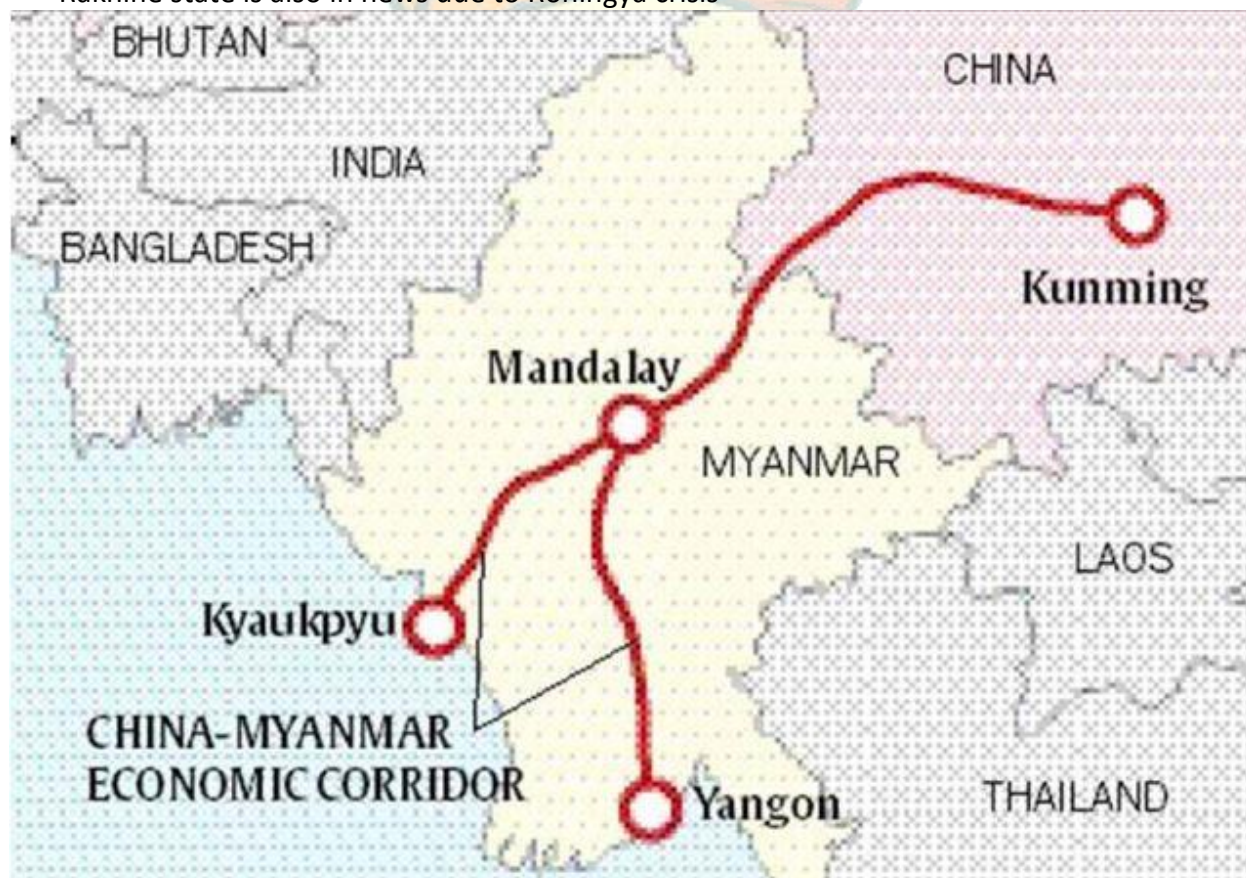
**In news:**

- China's President Xi Jinping will be visiting Myanmar to mark the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Myanmar.
- President's visit will focus on the three pillars of the China Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC)— the Kyaukpyu Special Economic Zone, the China-Myanmar Border Economic Cooperation Zone and the New Yangon City.

**From Prelims Point of View**

### **China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC)**

- China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) is a number of infrastructure projects supporting connectivity between Myanmar and China. It is an economic corridor of the Belt and Road Initiative
- building road and rail transportation from Yunnan Province in China through Muse and Mandalay to Kyaukpyu in Rakhine State.
- Rakhine state is also in news due to Rohingya crisis



Daily Current Affairs IAS | UPSC Prelims and Mains Exam – 23rd January 2020

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## ICJ's ruling on Myanmar Rohingya

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS Mains II– Foreign relations

**In news:**

In an unanimously-ruled order issued by a panel of 17 judges, The Hague-based International Court of Justice (ICJ) upheld the provisions of the 1948 Genocide Convention – saying Myanmar had “caused irreparable damage to the rights of the Rohingya”.

**What is Rohingya issue?**

- An estimated 7.3 lakh Rohingya (Muslim minorities in Buddhist majority Myanmar) have fled to Bangladesh since 2017
- The crisis was triggered when the Myanmar military launched a brutal crackdown on Rohingya villages in the country's coastal Rakhine state.
- In August 2019, the **UN said the army's action was carried out with “genocidal intent”**.

**Who took the Myanmar to ICJ?**

- It was the **Republic of the Gambia** which is predominantly Muslim who took Myanmar to ICJ accusing it of genocide on Rohingya
- Gambia was backed by the 57-member Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC)

**What were the orders of ICJ?**

- ICJ has ordered Myanmar to take emergency measures to prevent genocide of the Rohingya.
- Myanmar was also ordered to prevent the destruction of evidence and to ensure the preservation of evidence related to the alleged genocide

**Is the matter closed?**

- The recent order is a **restraining order. It is just a provisional measure.**
- The hearings dealing with the main, and more serious allegations of genocide by the Myanmar military, have not even started. This is expected to linger for years with no quick closures

**Quick Fact:** So far, only three cases of genocide worldwide have been recognised since World War II: Cambodia (the late 1970s), Rwanda (1994), and Srebrenica, Bosnia (1995)

**Proving genocide has been difficult** because of the high bar set by its ‘intent requirement’ — that is showing the genocidal acts were carried out with the specific intent to eliminate a people on the basis of their ethnicity

**Future Course of action**

Myanmar shall submit a report to the ICJ on all measures taken to give effect to the provisional order within four months, and thereafter every six months, until a final decision is passed.

**Is the ICJ order binding?**

The ruling of the court is binding on Myanmar, and cannot be appealed. However, no means are available to the court to enforce it

**What happens if Myanmar doesn't comply with the provisional measures?**

- When a state fails to comply with ICJ rulings, the UN Security Council has the power to impose sanctions against it and ensure compliance when international security and peace are at stake.
- So far, the Security Council has never taken a coercive measure against any country to get an ICJ ruling implemented.



- Even if it reaches the UNSC, Myanmar has got a friend in China which can veto such proceedings in the council.

#### Implications of the ruling

- Seen as the **first sign of the victory by Rohingya refugees** with an added weight of the unanimity of the ruling
- Dents the **image of Myanmar** in international Politics
- **Role of Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi** who personally led Myanmar's defence at ICJ was not appreciated by international human rights groups. She is an ardent champion of Democracy and is presently leading the government with the support of military
- However, her defence of military actions at ICJ is highly appreciated domestically which will witness the elections by the end of this year.
- Strengthening of **Myanmar-China** ties as China has always supported Military regime of Myanmar.

#### Connecting the Dots

- India's cases at ICJ
- India's stand on Rohingya refugees who entered India's north-east during this period.

### Oslo Accord

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

#### In News

- Palestine has threatened to withdraw from key provisions of the **Oslo Accords** if the US announces its **Middle East Peace Plan**.
- Oslo Accords are a **series of agreements between Israel and the Palestinians** signed in the **1990s**.
- **Oslo I (1993)** formally known as the **Declaration of Principles (DOP)** established a timetable for the Middle East peace process. It planned for an interim Palestinian government in Gaza and Jericho in the West Bank.
- **Oslo II** officially called the **Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza (1995)**, expanded on Oslo I. It included
  - Provisions for the **complete withdrawal of Israeli troops** from six West Bank cities and about 450 towns.
  - **Timetable for elections** for the Palestinian Legislative Council.
- The interim pact was only supposed **to last five years** while a permanent agreement was finalised but it has tacitly been rolled over for more than two decades.
- The question of Jerusalem was left undecided under the Oslo Accords

### West Asia peace plan by USA

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

#### Context

President Donald Trump's Middle East plan, Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People, was recently released.

### Jerusalem

- During the 1967 war, Israel seized control of East Jerusalem, which has Temple Mount, home to the Western Wall, the al-Aqsa mosque and Dome of the Rock.
- According to plan, **Jerusalem will not be divided**, and will remain the sovereign capital of the State of Israel.
- The capital of Palestine can occupy far-flung eastern neighbourhoods lying beyond “the existing security barrier”, which can be renamed Al Quds, the Arabic name for Jerusalem.

### West Bank:

- Israel would be allowed to annex the Jewish settlements on the West Bank as well as **the Jordan Valley**



Picture Source – The Indian Express

Key Elements of the Plan are:

### Palestinian Refugees

- The Palestinian refugees, who were forced out from their homes during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war **would not be allowed to return**.
- They could move to the future Palestinian state, be integrated into the host countries or settled in other regional countries.

### Change of Borders:

- Israel will not have to uproot any settlements, and will incorporate the vast majority of Israeli settlements into contiguous Israeli territory
- This means that illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank would become legal and permanent

### Required Actions from

- **Israel:** Freeze further settlement activities on the West Bank for four years — the time for negotiations.
- **Palestine:** The Palestinian Authority should dismiss its current complaints at the International Criminal Court against Israel and refrain itself from taking further actions. It should also crack down on “terrorist” groups such as Hamas and the Islamic Jihad

### What would Palestinians get?

- **\$50 billion in investment over 10 years** should Palestine accept the proposals.
- In the final settlement, Palestine would get **control over more land than what it currently controls**
- According to the Oslo Accords, the West Bank was divided into three areas and only one of them is under the direct control of the Palestinian Authority (30% is given to Israelis)
- The plan also seeks to enlarge Gaza and connect the strip with the West Bank through a tunnel.
- The Arab towns in the southeast of Israel, which are close to Gaza, could become part of a future Palestinian state.

### Palestine’s Position – backed by most of the world powers

- The formation of an independent, sovereign Palestinian state based on the **1967 border** meaning the whole of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip
- **East Jerusalem as Palestine’s capital** (including the Old City that houses Haram esh-Sharif, also known as Temple Mount, a holy site for both Muslims and Jews).

### Responses to the Plan

- **Israel’s** Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as a “realistic path to a durable peace”
- **Palestinian** President Mahmoud Abbas dismissed the plans as a “conspiracy”
- **India** urged both Israel and Palestine to “engage with each other, including on the recent proposals put forward by the United States, and find an acceptable two-state solution for peaceful coexistence”.

### Analysis of the Plan

- The plan clearly shows that **US has completely sided with Israel** without even involving Palestinians during drafting process.
- Critics have said the real intention could be to **change the start point of future negotiations** — the Palestinians will begin with a disadvantage, and be forced to fight to simply hold on.

### Connecting the Dots

- Impact of the plan on region’s stability especially in the backdrop of escalating US-Iran tensions
- Impact on domestic elections in Israel and USA

## INDIA AND THE WORLD

### [Import duty on crude, refined palm oils Cut](#)

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

**In News**

- Acting on the ASEAN and the India-Malaysia Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreements, the Centre slashed import duty on refined palmolein from 50% to 45%, while that on crude palm oil (CPO) from 40% to 37.5%
- The action is said to have a serious impact on the domestic palm oil refining industry and oilseeds farmers

**Value Addition for Prelims**

- ASEAN stands for the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations**. It was formed in 1967, by Thailand, Singapore, Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia.
- Membership has been extended to include Vietnam, Burma, Laos, Cambodia, and Brunei.
- Apart from economic and political growth it also focuses on social progress, social-cultural evolution among member countries, and provision of mechanisms and strategies to resolve differences peacefully.

### [US President Donald Trump is likely to visit India](#)

**Part of:** GS Prelims Polity—and GS-II- India's Foreign Relations

**In News:**

- A Trump Presidential trip to India has long been on the cards (he has visited India before on business trips) with a pending invitation from Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

**From Prelims Point of view:**

**Generalized System of Preferences (GSP)**

- It is an umbrella that comprises the bulk of preferential schemes granted by industrialized nations to developing countries.
- It involves reduced Most Favored Nations (MFN) Tariffs or duty-free entry of eligible products exported by beneficiary countries to the markets of donor countries.

### [India to invite Pakistan PM Imran Khan to regional SCO summit](#)

**Part of:** GS Prelims International Organizations and GS Mains II—India's foreign relation

**In news:**

New Delhi will invite Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit

**From Prelims point of view:**

**SCO:**

- SCO is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation.
- It's a Eurasian political, economic and military organisation aiming to maintain peace, security and stability in the region.

- It was created in 2001.
- The SCO Charter was signed in 2002, and entered into force in 2003.
- It is a statutory document which outlines the organisation's goals and principles, as well as its structure and core activities.
- The SCO's official languages are Russian and Chinese.

### India and Brazil : Bilateral Investment Treaty

Part of: GS International and GS-II – India's Foreign relations

#### **In news:**

- India and Brazil will upgrade their strategic partnership with an "action plan" and sign a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT)
- Strategic Partnership Action Plan will serve as an "umbrella agreement", for plans between the two countries to increase defence cooperation, technology sharing and a logistics agreement.

#### **From Prelims Point of view:**

#### **Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT)**

- A bilateral investment treaty (BIT) is an agreement establishing the terms and conditions for private investment by nationals and companies of one state in another state.
- In 2018 Indian investments in Brazil were around U.S.\$ 6 billion and Brazilian investments in India are estimated at U.S.\$ 1 billion.( Total 8 bn )

### Nepal PM positive of resolving all 'pending issues' with India

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

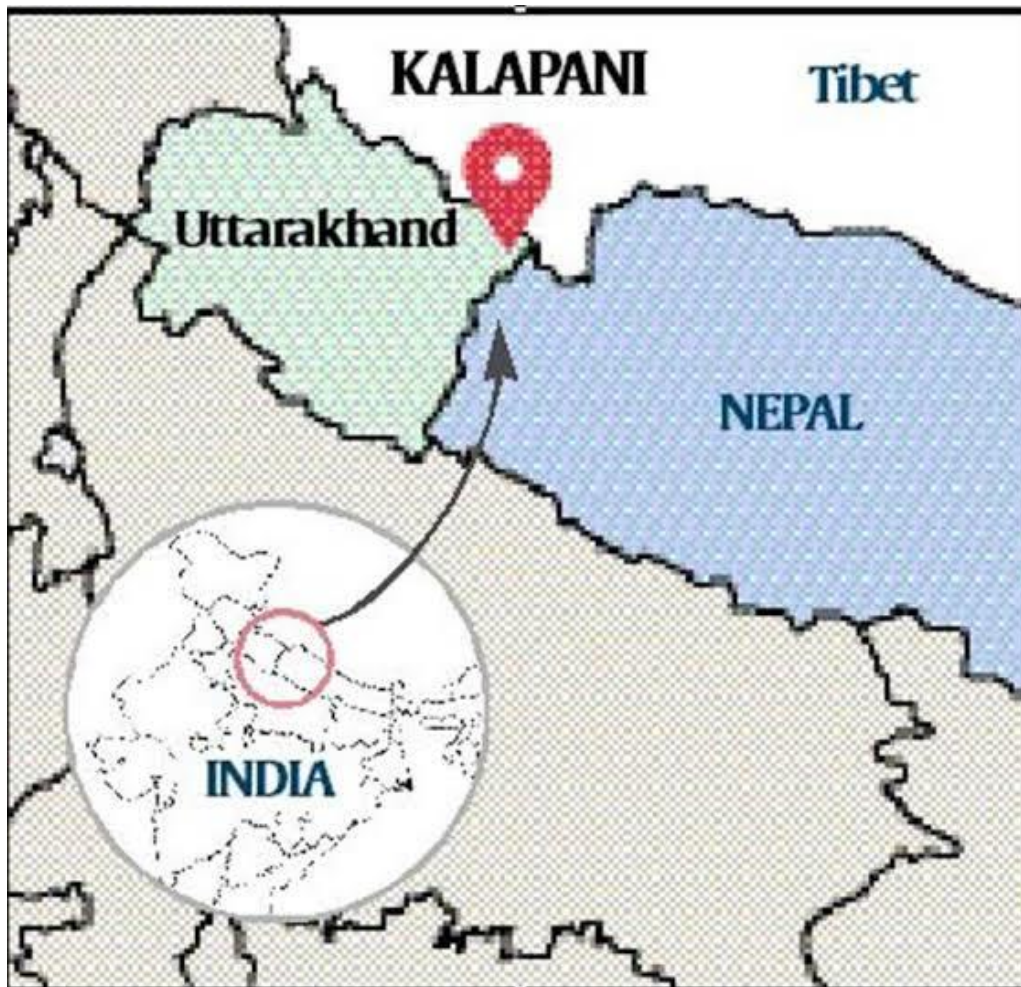
#### **In news:**

- Nepal Prime Minister said bilateral disputes with India should be dealt with dialogue, indicating Kathmandu's political willingness to resolve the row over the Kalapani territorial issue.
- The Kalapani issue was reignited after India published a new political map in November 2019 that displayed its continued position over the territory as part of Uttarakhand.

#### **From Prelims Point of view:**

#### **Kalapani territorial issue:**

- Kalapani is a valley that is administered by India as a part of the Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand. It is situated on the Kailash Mansarovar route.
- The Kali River in the Kalapani region demarcates the border between India and Nepal.
- **The Treaty of Sugauli** signed by the Kingdom of Nepal and British India (after Anglo-Nepalese War) in 1816 located the Kali River as Nepal's western boundary with India.
- Kalapani has been controlled by India's Indo-Tibetan Border Police since the Sino-Indian War with China in 1962
- The discrepancy in locating the source of the river led to boundary disputes between India and Nepal, with each country producing maps supporting their own claims.



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### Miscellaneous Topics in News

#### All Assam Student's Union

- All Assam Students' Union or AASU is a students' organisation in Assam
- Known for leading the six-year Assam Movement against illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.
- It formed a political party **Asom Gana Parishad (AGP)**, which formed government in Assam twice.

#### Coronaviruses (CoV)

- Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV).
- A novel coronavirus (nCoV) is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans. Some transmit easily from person to person, while others do not.
- spreading through of contact with animals, contaminated food, and/or person-to-person.

#### Trillion Tree Campaign

- In 2006, the Billion Tree Campaign was launched, by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as a response to the challenges of global warming, as well as to a wider array of sustainability challenges from water supply to biodiversity loss
- The Billion Tree Campaign was inspired by Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Wangari Maathai, founder of the Green Belt Movement.
- WWF, the Wildlife Conservation Society and BirdLife International today launched the Trillion Trees programme, a new 25-year initiative to help scale global forest commitments and spur greater ambitions towards protecting and restoring one trillion trees by 2050
- During the World Economic Forum 2020 in Davos, World Economic Forum announced a platform for governments, businesses, civil society to support UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030, led by UNEP and FAO

### **Buriganga river**

- Bangladesh's High Court has asked authorities to shut down 231 factories surrounding the highly polluted Buriganga river
- The Buriganga River is a river in Bangladesh that ranks among the most polluted rivers in the country.

### **Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG)**

- FMCG grew at 9.7% in 2019, much lower than the previous year's growth of 13.5%.
- Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) are products that are sold quickly and at a relatively low cost.
- Examples include non-durable household goods such as packaged foods, beverages, toiletries, over-the-counter drugs, and other consumables

## [United Nations Military Observer Group for India and Pakistan \(UNMOGIP\)](#)

**Part of:** GS Prelims Polity and GS Mains II—India's Neighborhood relations

### **In news:**

Imran Khan asks US and United Nations to help de-escalate tension between India, Pakistan

### **From Prelims Point Of View:**

- India took Jammu Kashmir matter to the UN Security Council which established the **United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP)** to investigate the issues and mediate between the two countries.
- Following the cease-fire of hostilities, it also established the **United Nations Military Observer Group for India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP)** to monitor the cease-fire line.

## [India-Brazil relationship](#)

**Part of:** GS Prelims Polity and GS Mains II—India's Neighborhood relations

### **Context**

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro is on a visit to India and also as chief guest for 2020 Republic Day.

### **Introduction**

India and Brazil established diplomatic relations between India and Brazil in 1948. The long bilateral strategic partnership is based on a common global vision, shared democratic values,

and a commitment to foster economic growth with social inclusion for the welfare of the people of both countries.

Brazil and India formally declared each other 'strategic partners' way back in 2006.

### **Convergence of Interests**

- Both India & Brazil have historically been **leaders of the Global South**
- Brasilia and New Delhi jointly pursued aspirations of permanent **seats in the UN Security Council**
- Both aspire for a **multipolar world** where large developing countries can frame global rules and democratise international institutions.
- Innovative coalitions **like IBSA & BRICS** were not just for practical economic gain but as part of a transformative movement to multilaterally reorder the world.

### **Is there a shift in Brazil's Foreign Policy in recent times (particularly after Bolsonaro)?**

#### **1. Political Worldview**

- Since 1990s, Leftist Brazilian Presidents – Fernando Cardoso and Lula da Silva – had made India the pillar of Brazil's foreign policy within the context of South-South cooperation and opposition to a Western-dominated world order.
- However, Far-right Bolsonaro unexpectedly stormed to power in October 2018 following a prolonged economic slump and governance collapse.
- Ideologically, **Bolsonaro's faction feel closer to the Global North than to the Global South.**
- This has made Brazil move closer to USA often at the **cost of Global South-South cooperation.**
- For Example: Bolsonaro agreed to abandon Brazil's designation as a 'developing country' and is wooing USA so as to join OECD

#### **2. Trade**

- Bilateral trade between India and Brazil is \$8.2 billion in 2018-19. It comprised \$3.8 billion of Indian exports to Brazil and \$4.4 billion as imports by India
- Meanwhile, Brazil's trade with China is over \$110 billion in 2018-19.
- This indicates growing dependence of Brazil's economy on China thus giving diplomatic advantage to china to pursue its interests often at the cost of Indian interests.

#### **3. Climate Change**

- India has been at the forefront with regard to taking actions so as to tackle Climate Change Ex: International Solar Alliance and ambitious targets under Paris Climate Deal
- Bolsonaro has been sceptical about the Climate Change and has enacted policies that prioritize development at the cost of environmental degradation. Ex: The controversy over Amazon Forest Fires

### **Does that mean Brazil and India are on path of divergence? – Not Necessarily**

- Trade protectionism offers negligible market access to Brazilian exports, Bolsonaro has no option but to look to Asia for more preferential trade agreements.
- Brazil is well placed to be an **alternative hydrocarbon source for India's energy security**, especially when there is political tensions in neighbouring Venezuela (one of India's major oil import source)
- India is often seen by Brazil as a softer benign power for reducing overdependence on China.

### **Key MoUs/Agreements exchanged during the Visit:**



- MoU for establishing a nodal institution in India to carry out research on Bioenergy.
- Agreement on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters.
- MoU on cooperation in the field of Traditional Systems of Medicine and Homeopathy.
- Cultural Exchange Programme for the period 2020-2024.
- MoU between Invest India and the Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency.

#### Connecting the Dots:

- Non-Alignment Policy – Does India still pursue it
- India and overall Latin America relations

### Operation Vanilla

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

#### In News

- Launched by **Indian Navy**
- **Objective:** To provide **humanitarian assistance and disaster relief** to the affected population of Madagascar post devastation caused by **Cyclone Diane**.

### India-Australia Relationship

India-Australia relationship has been traditionally characterised as one of the perpetually unfulfilled promises

Historically, India-Australia relations suffered from at least **four deep structural impediments**. They are:

#### 1. The logic of the Cold War

- After the end of Cold war, Australia aligned with USA & sided with Pakistan whereas India adopted Non-alignment policy (at times tilting towards USSR).
- This prevented the growth of India-Australia bilateral relationship

#### Progression in recent times

- With the end of Cold war in 1991 (disintegration of USSR) and simultaneous opening of the Indian economy, the logic of cold war has vanished
- India's adoption of a free-market economic model and India's growing closeness with the USA has enabled both India & Australia to come out of cold war closet and nurture their relationship

#### 2. India's nuclear status outside the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

- This resulted in Australia taking a particularly strong stance against India's 1998 nuclear tests, which came soon after French nuclear tests in the South Pacific.

#### Progression in recent times

- However, **the 2008 waiver** granted to India by the **Nuclear Suppliers Group**, the subsequent lifting by Australia of its uranium ban against NPT non-signatories, and

a **bilateral civil nuclear agreement** between India & Australia in 2014-2015 largely addressed the matter.

### 3. **Absence of people-to-people content – “**

- The backdrop to this was the “White Australia” policy, which discouraged immigration from Asia

#### **Progression in recent times**

- In recent years, however, Indian immigrants have been among the largest contributors to Australia’s population growth.
- In addition to the **massive influx of Indian students**, Indian tourists are also visiting Australia in larger numbers.

### 4. **Lack of economic content – It is here that both Nations are yet to exploit the full potential**

- The trade between the two countries has been at a modest \$31 billion, largely composed of resources like coal and other minerals.
- Negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement, which began in 2011, have not moved forward significantly.

#### **Weak Spots in Trade relationship**

The weakest link in India’s exports to Australia is in merchandise. India needs to look at three broad areas

- First, despite globalisation, **markets are country-specific and culturally sensitive**. Therefore, Indian companies need to research on Australian consumer expectations and lifestyles before entering the Australian market
- Second, **Australia is a brand-conscious market** while India has not created a single consumer brand of international acceptance.
- Third, **innovation** is emerging as the single-most-important factor for sustained success in every sphere. Innovation in Cricket like 20/20 format has kept the game alive and popular. Global trade cannot be different.

#### **Brighter Prospects in Future with regard to Trade**

- India-Australia trade has been steadily evolving into a new architecture underpinned by developments in digital technology. There has been a **noticeable shift in the trade basket from resources to services**.
- Young Australians, like young Indians, carry the compelling vision of 21st-century globalisation, multiculturalism and quality education.
- As a result, the young can see issues like immigration and outsourcing with far more equanimity than the older generation.
- **India Economic Strategy 2035 Report** prepared by Peter Varghese, a diplomat and former Australian High Commissioner to India. It observes that no single market over the next 20 years will offer more growth opportunities for Australia than India.

#### **Conclusion**

In recent times there has been a **Strategic Convergence between India & Australia** due to China’s assertiveness and economic profile, shared concerns about Southeast Asian cohesion, and anxieties about US’s strategic commitment to the Indo-Pacific.

This strategic common interest should be expanded to increase the economic interlinkage between the two countries.

## ECONOMY

### Sugar production fallen

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS III- Economy

#### **In News**

- The country's sugar production has fallen sharply by 30.22% to 7.79 million tons (MT) in the first three months of current marketing year ending September
- Sugar production has been pegged lower at 26 MT this year from 33.16 MT in 2018-19.
- The average sugar recovery in Maharashtra has declined to 10% from 10.5% achieved in the year-ago period due to loss of sucrose content in the flood-affected sugarcane crop

#### **Value Addition for Prelims**

- **Price of sugarcane is fixed by the centre/State**, while the price of **sugar is market determined**
- Fair and remunerative price (FRP) is the minimum price at which rate sugarcane is to be purchased by sugar mills from farmers
- The **FRP is fixed by Union government** on the basis of recommendations of Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).
- FRP assures margins to farmers, irrespective of whether sugar mills generate a profit or not.
- This will be uniformly applicable all over the country. Besides FRP, some states such as Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand, UP and TN announce a State Advised Price, which is generally higher than the FRP.

### GDP growth rate for 2019-20 expected to be 5% (previous fiscal 6.8%)

**Part of:** GS Prelims – National Income and GS-III- Economy

#### **In News**

- GDP decline in 2019-20 s attributed to slowdown in Manufacturing (2%) and Construction sector (3.2%)
- **Gross Domestic product(GDP)** is the total monetary or market value of all the finished goods and services produced within a country's borders in a specific time period.
- Gross value Addition (GVA) is the sum of a country's GDP and net of subsidies and taxes in the economy (**GVA=GDP+ Subsidies on Products–Taxes on Products**)
- GVA gives a picture of the state of economy from the producers' side or supply side, the GDP gives the picture from the consumers' side or demand perspective

### Green Credit Scheme

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-III- Economy, Conservation

#### **In News**

- In the current system, industry needs to compensate the loss of forest acquired for its commercial activity by paying the Forest department a fee. The department is then responsible for reforestation on other patch of land acquired by industry.

### About Green Credit Scheme – yet to be implemented

- It allows agencies to identify land and begin growing plantations. After three years, they would be eligible to be considered as compensatory forest land
- An industry needing forest land could then approach the agency and pay it for parcels of such forested land, and this would then be transferred to the Forest Department and be recorded as forest land.

### Benefits of the Scheme

- This allows “forests” to be traded as a commodity.
- The Scheme allows the Forest Department to outsource one of its responsibilities of reforestation to non-government agencies.
- It thus fast tracks industrial projects and enhances ease of doing business without compromising on the environmental assets of the Nation.

## Coal Sector in India: Norms liberalised for entry and regulations relaxed

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-III- Economy

### Context:

The Cabinet approved the promulgation of Mineral Laws (Amendment) Ordinance 2020.

### What provisions does Ordinance contain?

- It allows Coal **mining by any Companies**
  - Earlier: Only those in Power, Iron & Steel and Coal washery Business could bid for Mines
- It also **does away with captive end-use criteria** i.e. Coal can be commercially mined and sold to any buyer in an open market
  - Earlier: The Coal mined by a licensee could be used for only specified purpose like for its own Thermal power plant i.e. they could not be sold in Open market like that of Coal India Ltd (Public Sector Enterprise)

### What are the advantages accruing from this changed regulatory regime?

- **Expands the pool of Potential bidders:** This will lead to better competition during auctions thus fetching better revenues for the government.
- **Development of Coal market:** End use restriction inhibited the growth and development of the market thus driving down the Coal production and also distorting free price discovery of the mined coal.
- **Reduces Coal imports:** India imported 235 million tonnes worth 1.71 Lakh Crore Rupees. Of these 135 million tonnes could have been substituted by domestic Coal production. Reduction in Coal imports leads to saving on foreign exchange reserves and also better our **trade balance**.
- **Brings an end to Monopoly of Coal India Ltd.:** Movement from State controlled system to free-market economy which incentivizes the private sector to act as engines of growth.
- **Efficient use of resources:** Enhanced competition will inevitably lead to better utilization of the natural resources available in the country.
- **Employment:** Large investments in mining will create jobs in the country.
- **Demand creation for other Sectors:** Opening up of the sector will set off demand in critical sectors such as mining equipment and **Heavy commercial vehicle industries**.

- **Infusion of Modern technologies into Coal Sector:** The move will also help India gain access to sophisticated technology for underground mining used by global miners
- Helps achieve **government target** of 1.5 billion tonnes of domestic coal production by 2023-24.

#### **What are the possible challenges/demerits of this step?**

- **Procedural Delays:** Government should ensure that approval and compliance procedures are not archaic & draconian which will increase the upfront cost thus deterring private players to enter the sector.
- **Climatic Concerns:** When countries across the world are moving away from fossil fuel resources this step to enhance Coal production is criticized by environmentalists
- **Health Concerns:** Coal burning releases Carbon dioxide, particulate matter, sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxide and mercury- thus damaging the health of many people around the region.
- **Interest of Coal India Ltd:** This is a Maharatna PSU which is considered as a National asset and is listed in the stock exchanges. Opening up of the sector should not compromise the capability of CIL and avoid the way BSNL went down in telecom market.
- **Employers of CIL:** Nearly 3 Lakh people are employed in CIL. Opening of the sector should not endanger the growth prospects of CIL and the livelihood aspects of the employers.
- **Labour Standards:** Private companies in order to reduce their input costs and maximise their profits may subvert labour guidelines which may have detrimental effect on workers engaged in those enterprises.

#### **Way Ahead**

- The move comes at a time when the window for fossil fuels is rapidly closing, and the global energy landscape evolving, with fundamental changes to the investment culture amid growing climate concerns.
- Government thus needs to balance its commitments towards Climate Change and its imperative to push the developmental agenda. Promotion of **Clean Coal Technology** which is at present Cost prohibitive is the way to move ahead

#### **Connecting the dots**

- Impact of opening up of Coal sector on India's pledges made during Paris Climate Deal, especially in the backdrop of US withdrawing from the deal
- Should Railway sector also be opened up for private players
- Lessons learnt from Liberalisation of Telecom sector in the wake of declining fortunes of BSNL
- Should Air India be privatized in the light of mounting losses

### [Retail inflation : Retail inflation at 5-year high of 7.3% in December](#)

**Part of:** GS Prelims –Inflation and GS-III- Economy

#### **In news:**

- Retail inflation ascended to a five and a half year high of 7.35%
- Released by the **National Statistical Office**
- **Retail inflation** was only 2.11% in last year

**From Prelims point of view:**

**National Statistical Commission**

- The new NSO as an agency was envisaged firstly by **Rangarajan Commission** to implement and maintain statistical standards and coordinate statistical activities of Central and State agencies as laid down by the National Statistical Commission (NSC).
- This commission had also recommended setting up of the NSC, headed by a person with a Minister of State-level designation, to serve as a nodal and empowered body for all core statistical activities of the country.
- According to recent order, NSO will be formed with the merger of NSSO and CSO under MoSPI.
- This recent restructuring seems to be a reaction to the resignations tendered by the member and acting Chairman of the NSC earlier this year

#### **What Is the Consumer Price Index (CPI)?**

- The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is a measure that examines the weighted average of prices of a basket of consumer goods and services, such as transportation, food and medical care. It is calculated by taking price changes for each item in the predetermined basket of goods and averaging them.
- Changes in the CPI are used to assess price changes associated with the cost of living;
- the CPI is one of the most frequently used statistics for identifying periods of inflation or deflation.

### Middle Income Trap

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-III- Economy

#### **Context:**

- GDP growth for FY20 is likely to come in at 5%, an 11-year low. Nominal GDP growth will likely be at more than a four-decade low.
- Apart from the debate on whether the slowdown is cyclical or structural, there is also concern among the economists about the dangers of Middle-Income trap in medium to long term

#### **What is Middle Income trap?**

- In 2006, economists Indermit Gill and Homi Kharas at the World Bank coined the term “middle-income trap” while working on growth strategies for East Asian economies.
- Simply put, low-income countries with cheap labour and access to ready-made technology grow fast and start becoming wealthier.
- However, as they reach middle-income status, they tend to slow down as they lose some of their advantages. They fail to converge with wealthier nations and do not get beyond middle-income status.
- It is a status of low productivity and entrenched inequality.
- Mexico and Brazil are classic examples of such countries.
- A few, such as South Korea, have escaped the trap. China is at the cusp.

#### **On what basis are countries usually categorized?**

World Bank has used the 2018 data of gross national income (GNI) per capita to categorize countries into following four categories

1. **Low income:** Countries with GNI per capita is up to \$1,025

2. **Lower middle-income:** Those with GNI per capita from \$1,026 to \$3,995. Ex: **India** – its per capita income in 2018 was \$2,020, at the halfway point for the lower middle-income category.
3. **Upper middle-income:** Countries with GNI Per capita between \$3,995 and \$12,375 are upper middle income Ex: **Brazil, South Africa, Mexico, China**
4. **High income:** Per capita income above \$12,375 makes a country high income. Ex: US, Germany, Japan, Korea.

The way the World Bank's income classification system works is that as economies grow, the thresholds for these four categories also change. The threshold for the low-income category in 1988 was only \$545.

Overall, the lower and upper middle-income thresholds have increased at 2% per year over the last three decades. Over this period, India's per capita income grew at an annual rate of about 5.6%.

#### **Cause of Concern for India**

- If we assume that World Bank thresholds and India's income per capita grow at the same pace as they have in the past 30 years, it will take India until 2038 to reach the lower end of the upper middle-income threshold.
- Likewise statistics reveal that even in 2050, India would be well below Brazil and South Africa.
- India's growth since the 1990s was on the back of consumption by the top 100 million Indians. The inequality has widened since then and therefore, the future growth has to come from bottom sections of societal pyramid
- For this to happen there has to be adequate demand from these sections of society & thus adequate jobs and rising incomes

#### **Way Ahead**

- Thus there has to be a comprehensive agenda of policy and institutional change to create a dynamic capitalism, else there is a risk of a Latin Americanization of India's path
- This involves changes in education, healthcare, skilling, agricultural, judicial and regulatory reforms.

#### **Connecting the dots**

- Impact on slowdown on India's diplomatic might.
- Doubling of Farmers income and Make in India initiative
- Political and Constitutional federal structures which enables comprehensive changes

### [Reform of grain management system](#)

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-III- Economy

#### **Context**

In the second quarter of 2020 fiscal year, GDP growth rate has plummeted to 4.5 per cent and the agriculture GDP (GDPA) growth is at mere 2.1 per cent.

#### **What are the reasons for Slowdown?**

- One of the main reason is **the low demand in the economy.**

- The demand is low because of the incomes have remain subdued particularly the **rural incomes (Consecutive Bad Monsoons)**. As a result, demand for manufactured goods, housing and other goods have remained low.
- Apart from the above cited cyclical reason, there is also **structural reason – primarily supply side constraints** like inefficient infrastructure network which raises the cost of goods & services thus impacting the competitiveness of the product.

#### **What measures government has taken recently?**

- Government announced **corporate tax cuts** which intends to boost investment cycle.
- Government has also announced an **investment package for infrastructure of about Rs 102 lakh crore over the next five years**, which implies more than doubling the growth in infra-investments from its current levels.
- Government also **intends to cut income tax levels** in the upcoming budget so as to boost demand in the economy (as it leaves more money in the hands of people to spend)

#### **Possible consequences of the above measures:**

- Boosting demand can also **cause inflation** (beyond the threshold level of 6 per cent to be maintained by the RBI).
- There is the challenge of not **slipping on the fiscal deficit target of 3.3 per cent**, although the CAG has already indicated that the real fiscal deficit of the country is much more if one accounts for the loans taken by many PSUs
- **Difficulty in raising funds** to fund the massive infrastructure project (102 lakh crore over five years)

#### **Possible Way Out:**

- One of the **way to raise (save) Rs 50,000 crore per annum** to finance infrastructure projects without causing high inflation or without breaching the fiscal deficit target is by **addressing inefficiency in the grain management system** under the National Food Security Act (NFSA)
- The NFSA gives certain quantities of wheat and rice to 67% of the population at Rs 2/kg and Rs 3/kg respectively -the economic cost of these to the Food Corporation of India is Rs 25/kg and Rs 35/kg respectively.
- This has led to a provision of Rs **1.84 lakh crore for food subsidy** in the last Union budget
- The grain stocks with the FCI are far more than double the buffer stock norms as on January 1, every year.

#### **The reason for inefficiency in grain management system:**

- The procurement for wheat and rice (paddy) remains open-ended, but the disbursal of those stocks remains largely restricted to the public distribution system (PDS).
- The open market operations (OMO) are much less compared to what is needed to liquidate the excessive stocks.
- The money locked in these excessive stocks (beyond the buffer norm) is more than Rs 1 lakh crore.
- If the government decides to liquidate half of it, it can garner Rs 50,000 crore to finance at least half of its infrastructure projects

#### **Way forward (As recommended by Ashok Gulati):**

1. While the poor under the Antyodaya category should keep getting the maximum food subsidy, for others, **the issue price should be fixed at ~50% of the procurement price** (as was done under Atal Bihari Vajpayee for the BPL category).



2. Limit subsidised grain distribution under **NFSA to 40 per cent** of the population rather than the current 67 per cent
3. **Limit the procurement of rice** particularly in the north-western states of Punjab and Haryana where the groundwater table is depleting fast, and invite private sector participation in grain management

#### Connecting the dots

- Doubling of Farmers Income
- Shanta Kumar Committee recommendations on PDS reform

## Inflation

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-III- Economy

#### Context:

- Consumer price inflation (Retail inflation) has touched a high of 7.35% in December which has set off fears over whether India is entering a period of slow growth accompanied by high inflation, in other words, **stagflation**.

**Inflation** is defined as a situation where there is sustained, unchecked increase in the general price level of goods and services in an economy

#### Indices which measure inflation in an economy

##### Wholesale Price Index (WPI)

- WPI measures the changes in the prices of goods sold and traded in bulk by wholesale businesses to other businesses. In other words, WPI tracks **prices at the factory gate** before the retail level.
- The numbers are released by the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**
- Even as the WPI is used as a key measure of inflation in some economies, the RBI no longer uses it for policy purposes, including setting repo rates.

##### Consumer Price Index (CPI) – Retail Inflation

- It is an index measuring retail inflation in the economy by collecting the change in prices of most common goods and services used **by consumers**.
- It is released by Central **Statistics Office (CSO)** under Ministry of Statistics and Programme implementation
- In April 2014, the RBI had adopted the CPI as its key measure of inflation

#### What is the difference between WPI & CPI?

- WPI, tracks inflation at the **producer level** and CPI captures changes in prices levels at the **consumer level**.
- Both baskets measure inflationary trends (the movement of price signals) within the broader economy, the two indices differ in which **weightages are assigned to food, fuel and manufactured items**.
- WPI does not capture changes in the **prices of services**, which CPI does.

#### Headline Retail Inflation vs Core Inflation

- **Headline inflation** is the raw inflation figure reported through the Consumer Price Index (CPI) that is released by CSO. The headline figure is not adjusted for seasonality or for the often-volatile elements

- **Core inflation** removes the CPI components that can exhibit large amounts of volatility from month to month, which can cause unwanted distortion to the headline figure. The most commonly removed factors are those relating to the cost of food and energy.

#### Concern for RBI

- **Price stability** in an economy is one of the major responsibility of the Central Bank. Untamed inflation will eventually erode confidence in an economy thus derailing economic growth.
- The December inflation is also way above the monetary policy committee's **(MPC) mandated limit of CPI at 6%** (4% plus 2%)
- High inflation means RBI is **constrained to cut rates** (repo rate) further especially when there is pressure on the central bank to cut rates at least one more time **to stimulate growth** (projected GDP growth for FY-2020 is just 5%)

#### What is the reason for unexpected inflation in December?

- The headline inflation number is driven mainly by **food inflation at 14.12%**
- Since the overall **retail inflation has 45.86 per cent of food articles**, the overall CPI has also shot up.
- **Heavy rains** from september to November 2019 has caused heavy damage to the standing Kharif crops leading to supply shortage and thus driving up the food prices
- **Onion pushed up price inflation** in vegetables to a huge 60.50% compared to December 2018, prices of other food items such as meat and fish (up 9.57%), milk (up 4.22%), eggs (up 8.79%) and some pulses were also on the upswing.
- Minus the increase in prices of onion, potato and ginger, headline CPI inflation would be just 4.48%.
- **Core inflation**, which is the one that should be of concern, has only inched up marginally from 3.5% in November to **3.7% in December**.

#### Is High Food inflation going to continue in near future?

- High prices of vegetables being mostly **seasonal and short-duration** are expected to fall in the coming months.
- The prices will reverse once the supply shortfall is addressed.

#### Food price may ease due to same reason it rose

- **Heavy rains** in recent months have helped to **recharge groundwater aquifers**, and filled the major irrigation reservoirs to near full capacity, proving beneficial to the rabi crop
- Data shows that there has been **8 per cent more area sown** and this coupled with the improved soil moisture conditions and a normal winter, is **expected to translate into a bumper harvest, offsetting any Kharif losses** and cutting the food prices

#### Caution

- One major factor that can still keep the customers paying more for the food articles is a **turbulence in the global prices** as the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation's Food Price Index (base year: 2002-04 = 100) averaged 181.7 points in December 2019, the highest since the 185.8 level of December 2014.
- This reflected a hardening trend in the international prices of food items which makes imports of food articles (like Palm oil, pulses) costlier.

#### Way Ahead

- Climate resilient agriculture which is able to better adapt to frequent climate extremities.

- Better collaboration at international level to ensure that essential food articles are distributed evenly across the globe where at present we have wastage on one hand & hunger/shortage on other hand

### Connecting the Dots

- FAO index rise is driven largely by which food components and its bearing on Indian domestic economy
- Is high food prices impact on farmers income and thus boosting rural demand ?

## Indian Economy: Comparison with other economies in the Asian region

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-III- Economy

### Context:

- India's Economic growth (2QFY20 GDP growth at **4.5%**) is at its lowest in six years, while inflation (December 2019- CPI is 7.35%) is at its highest in five years.
- **Trade war** going on between USA and China that has led to **realigning of global supply chain** providing an opportunity for India to tap this shift.

**Comparison with rest of Asian economies that are broadly at a comparable level of development as India**

### 1. Economic Growth

- India is no longer the fastest growing economy in the region.
- There are eight regional economies that are growing faster than India is at this point in time, including China, Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Vietnam, Bangladesh and Nepal.

### 2. Slowdown in the past

- Many of these countries have experienced growth slowdowns in the past couple of years. China, the Philippines and Nepal have lost the momentum. Nevertheless, there are some that have broadly maintained their rates of economic expansion, such as Cambodia, Indonesia, Vietnam and Myanmar,
- Trade tensions, inventory de-stocking, weak corporate investment, new emission norms and the electronics technology cycle are some of the reasons which can explain this broad regional economic slowdown.
- One country that has actually accelerated in the midst of the regional slowdown, Bangladesh.
- There is no country that has **slowed down as sharply as India has since 2017, by 2.2 percentage points.**

### 3. 1.Macro-economic Stability (Fiscal Deficit and Inflation)

- Most regional economies have macro stability indicators, fiscal and monetary, that are on par with India's.
- Most of the other regional Asian economies run on relatively tight budgets, ranging from the Philippines (1.1%) and Cambodia (1.3%) to Vietnam (4.4%) and Bangladesh (4.8%).
- **What does this (better fiscal management) mean?**
  - This essentially means that these countries have more policy space to increase public spending to support growth in case it falters.

- The only other comparable regional economy that has a fiscal deficit in excess of 5% of gross domestic product (GDP) is China, though the actual number is likely to be far higher than the Indian fiscal deficit
- **2.Inflation**
  - Four of the eight Asian countries have average annual inflation that was higher than India's in 2019. The other four have lower inflation. India is the median.
- **What does it mean?**
  - This challenges the growing consensus in India that the pursuit of low inflation has wrecked growth, because there are countries such as the Philippines that are growing faster than India with lower inflation

#### 4. Trade Diversion

- it is well known that Vietnam and Bangladesh have got an early lead in the race to attract global supply chains that are moving away from China. They have been the principal beneficiaries of trade diversion
- **What were some of the reasons that led India to falter in tapping the opportunities?**
  - Indian public discourse gave up on manufacturing too early in the game, either citing a unique growth model based on services or arguing that automation was anyway killing manufacturing jobs
  - India's Make in India scheme could not take off
  - Domestic Financial crisis – Twin Balance sheet problem & NBFC crisis- has negatively impacted the demand and thus weakened the prospects of FDI inflow.

#### However, there is still reason for hope

- A look at **manufacturing as a percentage of value added** in the eight Asian countries provides hope for India to revive its tag of fastest growing nation in the world
- China is obviously the leader, with manufacturing accounting for 20% of gross value added. India is at 15%, which does not compare too badly with Cambodia (16%), Indonesia (20%), the Philippines (19%), Vietnam (16%) and Bangladesh (18%)
- This data suggests that there is still an opportunity for India to take advantage of the trade war, rather than prematurely losing hope.

#### Way Ahead

- India will need a **policy framework** that plugs it into global supply chains, rather than moving back into a **protectionist shell**.
- Timely implementation of the **infrastructure projects** which reduces logistics cost thus enhancing the competitiveness of Indian products.(104 Lakh Crore announced for Infrastructure development between 2019-24)
- There needs to be **domestic peace & harmony** to ensure that business sentiment is intact thus assuring that economy will thrive in a Vibrant Democratic market

#### Connecting the dots

- International Monetary Fund says that China is running a fiscal deficit that is in double-digit territory as a proportion of GDP. What will be the impact of such opaqueness in fiscal reporting by China?

## Vodafone Idea tanks 39% on AGR verdict, Airtel shrugs off concerns

**Part of:** GS Prelims Economy and GS Mains III–Tax Evasion

**In news:**

- Shares of Vodafone Idea Ltd tanked 39.3% on Friday, a day after the Supreme Court rejected the review petition by Vodafone Idea and Bharti Airtel challenging the apex court's 24 October order on adjusted gross revenues (AGR)

**From prelims point of view:**

**What is AGR?**

- Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) is the usage and licensing fee that telecom operators are charged by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT).
- It is divided into spectrum usage charges and licensing fees, pegged between 3-5 percent and 8 percent respectively.

**How is it calculated and what's the contention?**

- 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.

## Fertiliser Subsidy: Direct Benefit Transfer

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-III- Economy

**Context:**

- A survey conducted by NITI Aayog showed that nearly two-thirds of the farmers don't favour direct benefit transfer (DBT) of fertiliser subsidy.

**The present regime of fertilizer subsidy – Partial DBT (Since April 2018)**

- Manufacturers of fertilizers receive 100% of subsidy after fertiliser is delivered to the farmer, and the latter's identity viz. Aadhaar is captured on the point of sale (PoS) machine at the dealer's shop.
- Therefore, the subsidy continues to be routed through manufacturers even though the sale of fertilizer is being verified using Aadhar ecosystem
- The manufacturers **sell urea at the maximum retail price (MRP) controlled by the Centre, which is kept at a low level**. They also get subsidy reimbursement on unit-specific basis under the new pricing scheme (NPS).
- The manufacturers of non-urea fertilisers are given 'uniform' subsidy (on per nutrient basis) under the nutrient based scheme (NBS).

**Example to illustrate the scheme**

- At present, for a bag of urea (containing 50 kg) a farmer pays Rs 268 —as against the cost of supply that is at least twice as much, or Rs 536
- The difference is claimed by the manufacturer as subsidy from the government (after the sale to farmer has been verified through Aadhar)
- Under this arrangement, subsidy to farmer is embedded in the price—also termed as subsidised price.

**Implications:**

This system helps ensure the subsidy is not being siphoned off by another beneficiary, but it doesn't help the larger issue of farmers overusing urea many times over as there is a huge subsidy on it.

The unacceptably large urea subsidy has ensured that against the **ideal N:P:K ratio of 4:2:1**, the average is 6.1:2.5:1, and it is as much as 25.8:5.8:1 in states like Punjab.

**What is the full-fledged DBT scheme?**

- The farmer will have to pay the higher cost-based price or Rs 536 to the manufacturer, and get subsidy of Rs 268 'directly' in his bank account.
- In total, he will be spending Rs 268 only for bag of Urea.
- Yet, the switch-over makes a big difference as he has to first pay the full price, and thereafter, get the subsidy.

**Benefits of Direct Benefit Transfer Scheme:**

- It will empower farmers to make the **right choices based on crop/soil need**, as now the market for fertilizers will be less under government control
- It **reduces imbalance in fertiliser use** – as DBT would mean a dramatic increase in urea prices, farmers would buy only the amount of urea they really need and more of other fertilisers
- It improves **efficiency in the supply chain** as now private players will be encouraged to enter the sector and give a boost to 'Make in India'.
- It will **lead to saving on the subsidy** by eliminating misuse, and owing to better targeting.

**Why government has not undertaken full-fledged DBT?**

- **Inadequate working Capital among farmers:**
- Farmer has to sell out entire cost price of fertilizer (if subsidy is not provided before hand by the government). Given that 85% of Indian farmers are small and marginal and that their incomes are meagre it would be burdensome for them to arrange for this high upfront money.
- This would make them depend on informal money lenders making them vulnerable to debt trap
- **Cash- Strapped government which puts it in a politically difficult situation for DBT**
- In FY 2020, the government could end up owing Rs 60,000 crore to the industry. While it is possible to accumulate such dues in the current system (partial DBT), the **government will have to make upfront payment to farmers to overcome the above obstacle**
- If farmers don't get the subsidy before they buy the fertiliser, they will never buy it as doing so will mean a big dent in their budgets – thus impacting production & food security
- Cash- strapped government will thus not be able to postpone payments (which is being done in present system). Owing payment to farmers will be politically sensitive issue which is thus deterring government to adopt full-fledged DBT

**Way forward**

Government should ensure fiscal discipline and undertake reforms in subsidy management (rationalisation and DBT) so as to ensure that neither the food security of a Nation nor the welfare of farmers is not compromised.

**Think!**

DBT in food subsidy, Food coupons

Sustainable agriculture – Organic farming – Zero Budget Natural Farming

## The perils of RBI's fixation on inflation

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-III- Economy

**Context:**

Retail inflation climbed to a six-year high of 7.35 per cent breaching the Reserve Bank of India's upper band of 6 per cent for the first time since the Monetary Policy Committee was created.

**RBI's Mandate**

In India, the RBI had earlier pursued a 'multiple indicators approach', implying concern for outcomes other than inflation, including even the balance of payments.

However, the Indian government instituted inflation targeting as the sole objective of monetary policy since 2016-17. This was hailed by the government as the adoption of the 'modern monetary policy framework' by India.

Till now inflation remained within the range envisaged, however with the recent data showing the retail inflation breaching the 6% range, doubts have been raised over narrow objective of Inflation targeting as the main objective of RBI

**Criticism of RBI's fixation on Inflation**

1. **RBI's responsibility to regulate the financial sector may have taken a back seat** after adoption of inflation targeting as the main objective. Some of the crisis in financial sector which is partly attributed to short comings in regulations are:
  - Within three years of adoption of inflation targeting as goal, a **crisis engulfed IL&FS**– It defaulted on several of its obligations, including repayment of bank loans and the redemption of commercial paper
  - **Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative Bank**- fictitious accounts created and deposits were siphoned off as loans to the promoters
2. **Inefficiency of Monetary Policy tools:**
  - Recent spike in inflation is primarily due to rise in food prices which is temporary and seasonal phenomenon. Inflation led by rising prices of food stuff cannot quickly or easily be contained by the mode of control which RBI uses.
  - Thus, the inflation rate was within the intended range so far, may have been due to both declining food prices and, for a phase, oil prices.
3. **Bad management of Currency**
  - Ordinary Indian considers the RBI's principal mandate as the management of the currency so that trade is facilitated.
  - There is shortage of small denomination notes in the bazaars of India

**Way Ahead**

The establishment of some of the world's oldest central banks was inspired by the goal of maintaining financial stability. Central Banks emerged as lender of last resort accompanied by tough regulatory oversight powers over banking system

However, with the rise of neoliberalism whereby markets should be given free play, the regulatory role of central banks took a back seat. They came to be primarily mandated with inflation control.

Central Banks need to revisit their mandate in the spate of financial crisis.

### Do you know?

#### Monetary Policy Framework

- The Government of India and Reserve Bank of India signed a Monetary Policy Framework Agreement in 2015.
- The objective of monetary policy framework is to primarily maintain price stability, while keeping in mind the objective of growth.
- As per the agreement, RBI would set the policy interest rates and would aim to bring inflation below 6 per cent by January 2016 and within 4 per cent with a band of (+/-) 2 per cent for 2016-17 and all subsequent years.

#### Monetary Policy Committee (MPC):

- Monetary Policy is announced by MPC which has been setup based on recommendations of Urjit Patel committee.
- MPC consist of six members, 3 from RBI and 3 appointed by the Government.
- Members from RBI are governor of RBI, a deputy governor and one officer of RBI.
- Members from government are appointed on the recommendations of a search cum selection committee headed by cabinet secretary.

## A new Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Blockchain Technology in Bangalore

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-III- Economy

### In news:

- A new Centre of Excellence (CoE) for **Blockchain Technology**, which will strive to adapt emerging technology to create e-governance solutions is established in Bangalore
- The CoE by **National Informatics Centre (NIC)** is the third such centre, following CoE for Data Analytics and Artificial Intelligence.

### From Prelims Point of View:

#### Blockchain Technology:

- Blockchains are a new data structure that is secure, cryptography-based, and distributed across a network.
- The technology supports cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin, and the transfer of any data or digital asset.
- Spearheaded by Bitcoin, blockchains achieve consensus among distributed nodes, allowing the transfer of digital goods without the need for centralized authorisation of transactions.

#### National Informatics Centre (NIC):

- National Informatics Centre (NIC under Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India.
- NIC provides infrastructure to help support delivery of Government IT services and delivery of some of the initiatives of Digital India.



## NBFCs to get more lending room

**Part of:** GS Prelims –Economy and GS-III Banking sector

**In news:**

- The government is debating a mechanism to get credit flowing by providing support to non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) amid a growing realisation that financial sector stress has impacted demand and stalled economic recovery.
- The options that have been deliberated ahead of the February 1 budget include a plan akin to the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) that the US put in place after the subprime mortgage crisis that sparked the financial crisis of 2007-08.

**From Prelims Point of view**

**NBFC :**

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

**Read more about NBFC here :** [https://iasbaba.com/2019/02/daily-current-affairs-ias-upsc-prelims-and-mains-exam-04th-february-2019/#NBFCs and its significance](https://iasbaba.com/2019/02/daily-current-affairs-ias-upsc-prelims-and-mains-exam-04th-february-2019/#NBFCs%20and%20its%20significance)

**Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) :**

- TARP, expanded as the Troubled Asset Relief Program was an innovative measure launched by the U.S. Treasury in order to stabilize the financial system of the country, restore the growth of economy and prevent foreclosures during the wake of the financial crisis that struck the US in 2008.
- The Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) is a program of the United States government to purchase toxic assets and equity from financial institutions to strengthen its financial sector

**Miscellaneous Topics For Prelims**

**Stagflation :**

**Stagflation** is an economic scenario where an economy faces both high inflation and low growth (and high unemployment) at the same time. (Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had warned about the imminent risk of stagflation facing the economy)

**Niranjan Bhat committee:**

- The Supreme Court has, forms committee to draft mediation law
- The panel, to be headed by mediator Niranjan Bhat, will recommend a code of conduct for mediators

**Gig economy**

- A labour market characterized by the prevalence of short-term contracts or freelance work as opposed to permanent jobs.

## Hong Kong Crisis :



<https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn%3AAND9GcTFXA61d2zSmurCH3nH2WYdKwQGQkQSVEsu4B06GI4DPvED0mRN>

## The gig economy

Part of: GS Economy and GS-III – Employment

### In news:

- A gig economy is a free market system in which temporary positions are common and organizations contract with independent workers for short-term engagements
- Examples of gig employees in the workforce could include freelancers, independent contractors, project-based workers and temporary or part-time hires.

### From Prelims and Mains Point of view:

- Global Gig Economy Index report has ranked India among the top 10 countries.
- The report says there has been an increase in freelancers in India from 11% in 2018 to 52% in 2019, thanks to various initiatives including **Startup India and Skill India**.

## Make In India: Is it a failure?

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III- Economy

### Context:

Impending Union Budget for FY 2020-21 in the background of fears of stagflation in economy and completion of five years of Make in India Scheme

### What is Make in India Scheme?

- The Make in India initiative was launched by Government in September 2014 to **transform India into a global design and manufacturing hub**.

- It was launched in the **backdrop of India's growth rate falling** and rising youth population who were looking for **jobs** (which can be absorbed in large numbers by manufacturing sector)
- It is designed to facilitate investment, foster innovation, enhance skill development, protect intellectual property and build best in class manufacturing infrastructure in the country.
- The initiative is based on four pillars:
  - **New Processes:** Ease of doing Business is identified as important factor for promoting investment & entrepreneurship
  - **New Infrastructure:** To develop industrial corridors and smart cities to provide infrastructure based on state-of-the-art technology with modern high-speed communication and integrated logistic arrangements
  - **New Sectors:** Make in India' has identified 25 sectors in manufacturing, infrastructure and service activities. These include: automobiles, aviation, chemicals, IT & BPM, pharmaceuticals, construction, defence manufacturing, electrical machinery, food processing etc.
  - **New Mindset:** Government will act as facilitator of economic growth (partnering with private sector) and not as regulator.

#### **The targets of the Scheme**

1. To increase the manufacturing **sector's growth rate to 12-14%** per annum
2. To increase the contribution of the **manufacturing sector to 25% of the GDP by 2020** from the current 16%
3. Creation of **100 million additional manufacturing jobs** in the economy by 2022

#### **Has the above targets been achieved?**

1. **Growth of investment in the economy:** Gross fixed capital formation of the private sector, a measure of aggregate investment, declined to 28.6% of GDP in 2017-18 from 31.3% in 2013-14 (Economic Survey 2018-19). This indicates weak investment by private sector in spite of flexible policies from this scheme
2. **Output growth:** Monthly IIP pertaining to manufacturing has registered double-digit growth rates only on two occasions during the period April 2012 to November 2019.
3. **Employment:** Unemployment leapt to a four-decade high of 6.1 per cent according to the National Sample Survey Office's study for 2017-18 that was released in May 2019.

#### **Way forward**

- Such type of mega projects which have **long gestation periods** and lag effects the assessments of scheme can be premature.
- **Resolving Banking Sector Crisis:** Twin balance sheet problem and NBFC crisis needs to tackled aggressively so as to boost the credit outtake growth rate.
- **Boosting Consumer demand:** Weak monsoons along with disruption caused by demonetization & hasty implementation of GST lead to falling incomes which impacted the consumer demand. This kick-starts the investment cycle and thus manufacturing growth
- **Skilling of people:** It will ensure that people are equipped with necessary skills and thus reducing the training costs for firms.

#### **Connecting the Dots**

- New manufacturing Policy
- Impact on US-China trade war on Make In India Scheme

## GST- Critical analysis of its working

### **Context:**

Goods and services tax (GST) that was introduced in India in July 2017 has been widely criticized as having failed to deliver the benefits that were expected of it especially in the backdrop of low GDP growth rate.

### **What were the basic expectations (benefits) from GST regime?**

- Integration of the Indian marketplace
- Creation of scale efficiencies and
- Enhanced gross domestic product (GDP) growth

There is no systematic study yet of the first two, while GDP growth has slowed in the past few years.

**It is wrong to blame GST regime alone for the present state of economy** as multiple players are responsible for the state of affairs. Some of the other factors are:

1. **Technology was the biggest let-down** during the rollout and this was handled by a private-sector entity. Blaming the government for technological issues is uncalled for.
2. **Revenues of local bodies** going down after GST introduction was blamed on GST regime as some of the local taxes were subsumed under GST

**Counter Argument:** State Governments have been reluctant to devolve funds to local bodies. They have been quite delinquent in constituting finance commissions and thus formulating rules for the devolution of financial revenues to local bodies

3. **Shortfall (relative to expectations) in GST collections** is now being blamed, in part, on lax supervision and oversight.

**Counter Argument:** The decision to rely on self-declarations and filings, rather than on oversight and supervision, was deliberate. It was meant to provide time for businesses to adapt to the new regime.

4. **Tax rates are high with multiple slabs:** The Arvind Subramanian committee pegged the revenue-neutral GST rate at 15%

**Counter Arguments:** When the new tax was launched in July 2017, the rate was 14.4%, and over the next two years, it had come down to around 11.6%. The number of items taxed at the highest GST slab rate of 28% had come down from 226 in July 2017 to a mere 28

Further, several key categories of goods remain outside the GST's purview.

Thus, far from being a deterrent to economic activity, the GST had acted as a **countercyclical fiscal policy too**

### **What then is the reason for slowdown?**

- **Exemptions granted** to various businesses from having to pay the tax, the composition schemes made available to small businesses and weaker economic activity have contributed to slower growth in GST revenues.
- **Rural Sector Slowdown** due to bad monsoons in consequent years
- **Banking Sector Crisis**

### **So is GST all fine and has it not added to economic difficulties?**

GST still has certain issues and where GST might have contributed to the country's overall economic difficulties is in the **services sector**.

The **number of forms** that service producers have to file **has increased** considerably. In part, this is because of the separate registrations needed in each state, as opposed to the single registration pre-GST

With the services sector being the Indian economy's biggest, the increased complexity and difficulties faced by service providers might have overshadowed the efficiency gains that accrued to goods and logistics providers

#### Way Forward

- Rates would be **adjusted only once in a year**, which is agreed to by GST Council. This ensure **tax predictability** thus enhancing ease of doing business.
- Forms and returns needs to be simplified.
- **Exemption limits** for the filing of GST could be raised further without any impact on revenue

#### Connecting the Dots

- Direct tax code
- GST regime and its impact on Federal fiscal structure

### Adjusted gross revenue (AGR) Crisis

#### Context

In Oct 2019, the Supreme Court had directed telecom service providers to pay the pending dues –**aggregating to over Rs 1.47 lakh crore** – to the government by 23rd January 2020

The decision impacts over 15 telecom firms, both current and defunct, but those with the highest liabilities are Vodafone-Idea Ltd (Rs 53,038 crore), Airtel (Rs 35,586 crore) and Tata Teleservices (Rs 13,823 crore)

#### Brief History of the issue:

**1994** – Telecom sector was liberalised under the National Telecom Policy under which licenses were issued to companies in return for a fixed license fee.

**1999** – The government gave an option to the licensees to migrate to the **revenue sharing fee model**, so as to provide relief from high licence fees .

- Under this, telcos were required to share a percentage of their **adjusted gross revenue (AGR)** with the government as annual license fee (LF) and spectrum usage charges (SUC).
- The LF and SUC were set at 8 per cent and between 3-5 per cent of AGR respectively, based on the agreement.

Department of Telecom's(DOT) Stand	Telecos Stand
AGR includes all revenues (before discounts) from both telecom and non-telecom services	AGR should comprise just the revenue accrued from core services and not dividend, interest income or profit on sale of any investment or fixed assets.

**2005**– Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) challenged the government's definition for AGR calculation.

**2015** – TDSAT (Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal) ruled in favour of Telecoms

**Oct 2019** – Supreme Court set aside TDSAT's order and upheld DOT's definition of AGR

**Jan 2020** – Supreme Court has accepted petition of Telecoms request to extend the deadline fixed at 23rd Jan 2020 to pay up the dues (but not on the definition of AGR)

### **Why the definition of AGR is important?**

Because it has revenue implications for both government & Telecoms.

- **For government** – it means increase in its revenue collection which helps maintaining fiscal deficit and undertake welfare measures
- **For Telecom Operators**– Added financial burden especially at a time where their assets are over leveraged and profits are under pressure from severe competition (after Jio's entry)

### **Implication of the Supreme Court's 2019 Order**

- **On Telecom companies:** Increased liability means losses in their operation in short term. It also erodes the telcos' net worth impacting retail investors
- **On Telecom Sector:** It could potentially lead to Vodafone Idea's exit due to its weak financial position & its inability to pay its dues. This leads to the creation of a Airtel-Jio duopoly which may not augur well for the competitiveness in the sector and thus the government's vision of Digital India.
- **On Banking Sector:** AGR issue has triggered panic in the banking industry, given that the telecom sector is highly leveraged. Vodafone Idea alone has a debt of Rs 2.2 lakh crore. mutual fund industry having exposure to telecom sector will also see erosion of value.
- **On Consumers:** Competition in the sector will always lead to better prices and better technology. Possibility of creation of duopoly will impact the competition in negative manner.

### **Way ahead**

- Government should realize the consequences of the failure/weakness of the sector on the broader economy & on its long term vision of Digital India.
- Therefore, instead of being inflexible on AGR for short term revenue gain, it should accommodate the interests of the telecom operators (like extension of deadline, foregoing interest on dues) so that long term vision is not compromised

### **Connecting the Dots**

- Twin Balance sheet problem
- Which other sectors have duopoly or oligopoly structures?

## **Merchanting Trade Transactions (MTT) – Guidelines Revised**

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-III- Economy

### **In News**

- Merchanting transaction is one which involves shipment of goods from one foreign country to another foreign country involving an Indian Intermediary. Hence, it is also called **Intermediary Trade**.
- According to revised guidelines, for a trade to be classified as merchanting trade, goods acquired shall not enter the Domestic Tariff Area. Also, the entire MTT shall be completed within an overall period of nine months.

- Revised guidelines were issued by RBI under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999.

### Kolkata Port Tableau in Republic Day

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-III- Infrastructure, Economy

#### **In News**


- 2020 is the 150th year of **Kolkata Port Trust, Ministry of Shipping**.
- It was recently renamed as **Syama Prasad Mukherjee Port** by the Prime Minister.
- For the first time, a port is featured in the Republic Day tableau
- Type of Harbour : Coastal Breakwater, River Natural, Medium Seaport
- Major exports are Iron ore, leather, cotton textiles and major imports are Wheat, Raw Cotton, Machinery, Iron & steel

### 3rd GLOBAL POTATO CONCLAVE: Held in Gujarat

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-III- Economy, Agriculture


#### **In News**

- The Conclave is being organized by Indian Potato Association (IPA) in collaboration with Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi, and ICAR-Central Potato Research Institute, Shimla and International Potato Center (CIP), Lima, Peru.
- Gujarat is one of the leading producers of Potato in the country with highest productivity of more than 30t/ha.
- In the last eleven years alone, while the area under potato in India, has increased by 19%, it has increased by about 170% in Gujarat.
- During last two decades two Global Potato Conferences were organized during 1999, and 2008




**AS PART OF IASBABA'S INTERVIEW MENTORSHIP PROGRAM (IMP) 2019-20**

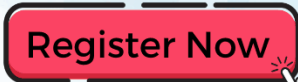
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1st February, 2020 @ Bengaluru  
2nd February, 2020 @ Delhi



## AGRICULTURE

### Farmers' Innovation Fund: To be set up by ICAR

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS II- Agriculture

**In News**

- The fund will be used to scientifically validate, scale up and propagate the innovations of progressive farmers
- The intention was to link farmers and farming with science and to ensure that their farm practices were science-based
- Innovations of farmers were already being documented by the Krishi Vigyan Kendras, however, the additional system would encourage farmers to continue their work.

**About The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)**

- It is an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India.
- 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.
- With 101 ICAR institutes and 71 agricultural universities spread across the country this is one of the largest national agricultural systems in the world.

### Yellow Rust Disease: Detected in wheat crop in parts of Punjab & Haryana

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-III- Agriculture

**In News**

- Yellow rust is a **fungal disease** which turns the crop's leaves into a yellowish colour and **stops photosynthesis activity**
- This could eventually result in a drop of **wheat crop productivity**
- The recent rains in the region (sub-mountainous) coupled with a slight increase in the temperature and humid conditions are favourable for yellow rust

**Prelims Value addition**

- Wheat is a **rabi (winter) crop**, is sown between late October till December while the harvesting of the crop starts from April onwards.
- India is the **second-largest producer of wheat** after China.

### India's Cotton Story

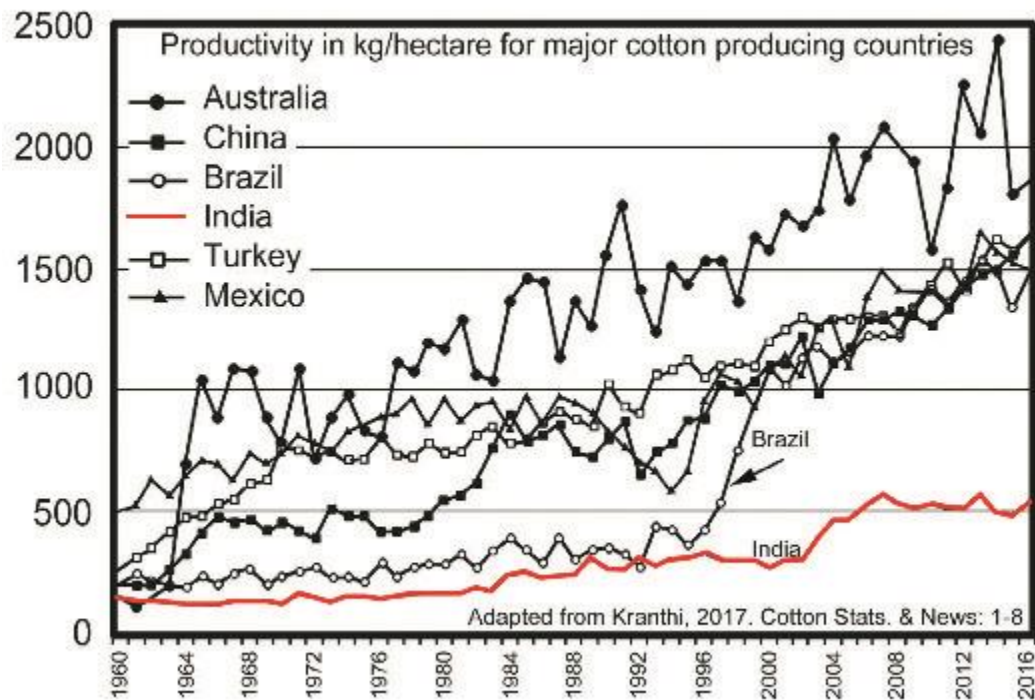
India's **Cotton Productivity** is low in comparison to other major cotton producing nations in spite of India expected to be world's largest cotton producer this year surpassing China Genetically Modified (**GM**) pest resistant **Bt cotton hybrids** have captured the Indian market since their introduction in 2002. These now cover over **95% of the area under cotton**, with the seeds produced entirely by the private sector.



India's cotton production in **2019 is projected as the highest ever: 354 lakh bales**. This threefold increase in cotton production during past two decades is used by proponent of GM crops to extend the technology to other crops as well

India is the only country that **grows cotton as hybrids** and the first to develop hybrid cotton back in 1970

### Cotton productivity in India is low compared to other countries



Source: The Hindu

#### Difference between hybrids and varieties

Varieties (Used in Brazil)			Hybrids (Used in India since 1970s)
Varieties are those for which seeds are produced by self-fertilization.			Hybrids are made by crossing two parent strains having different genetic characters. These plants have more biomass than both parents, and capacity for greater yields
Varieties can be <b>propagated over successive generations</b> by collecting seeds from one planting and using them for the next planting;			Hybrid seeds have to be remade for each planting by crossing the parents. So for hybrids, farmers must purchase seed for each planting. <b>Increased dependence on seed companies</b>
<b>High</b>	<b>Density</b>	<b>Planting</b>	Hybrids are planted at ten-fold lower density ( <b>0.5 kg</b>

<b>(HDP) Methodology:</b> These varieties are planted at high density (5 kg seeds/acre)	<b>seeds/acre).</b>
They are compact and short duration.	hybrids in India are bushy and long duration
Lower boll production by compact varieties (5-10 bolls per plant) – compensated by high density	High boll production (20-100 bolls/plant)
Cotton is a dryland crop; therefore, shorter duration variety has a major advantage as it reduces dependence on irrigation	65% of area under cotton in India is rain-fed. Farmers with insufficient access to groundwater in these areas are entirely dependent on rain. Thus risk associated with hybrid cotton cultivation is higher due to unpredictability of rains
Low requirement of <b>fertilizer</b> (100 kg/ha for varieties)	High fertilizer requirement: 200 kg/ha for hybrids
lies vulnerability to <b>damage from insect</b> pests due to a shorter field duration.	High vulnerability to damage from insect pests due to a longer field duration.
Low water requirement	High water requirement
Low cost of seeds	High Cost of Hybrid seeds. Increased yield from a hybrid is supposed to justify the high price

Hybrid model is inferior to the HDP model being used in other countries on three important counts: much lower productivity; higher input costs; and increased risk particularly for low resource farmers in rain-fed areas.

The steep increase in productivity for **Brazil, from 400 to 1,000 kg/hectare lint between 1994 and 2000** coincides with the large-scale shift to a **non-GM compact variety**.

**Why HDP model not adopted despite having advantages for India?**

1. **During First Phase (From 1980 to 2002):** Hybrids were promoted at the cost of Compact varieties. This was primarily due to **weakness of agricultural research establishment** who failed to identify the benefits of compact varieties
2. **Second phase (2002 onwards):** During introduction of GM Bt hybrid seeds. However, the scope of evaluation by the **GM regulatory process in India was narrow** and did not take into account on the form in which it would be deployed (hybrids versus varieties)

Consequently, commercial Bt hybrids have completely taken over the market, accompanied by withdrawal of public sector cotton seed production.

The Indian cotton farmer today is left with little choice but to use Bt hybrid seed produced by private seed companies. The current annual value of cotton seed used for planting is about ₹2,500 crore, and that of lint cotton produced is ₹68,000 crore.

It is likely that **production levels could have been much higher, with considerably lower risk and input costs, had compact varieties** been developed and used in India, especially given the agricultural distress faced in India.

### Conclusion

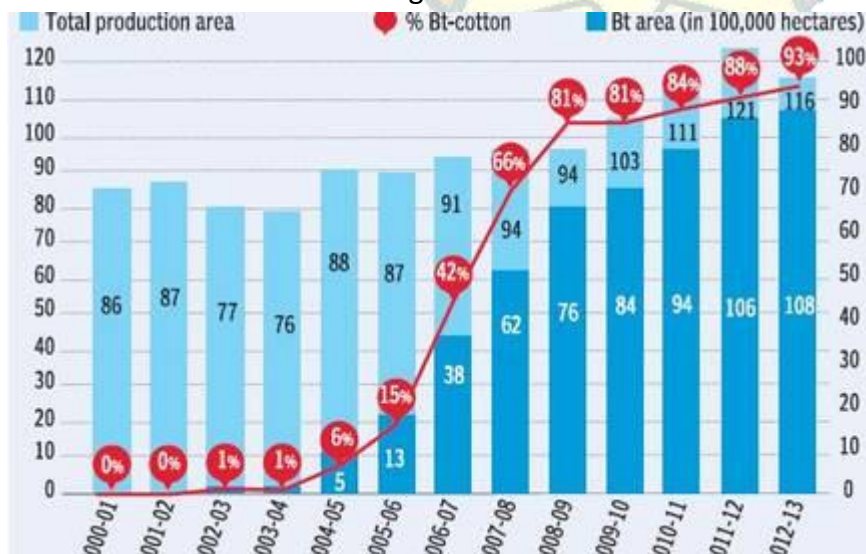
- We must be clear that the outcome of using a technology such as Bt is **determined by the context in which it is deployed**, and not just by the technology itself. Brazil (until 2012) and Turkey (up to the present) have achieved high productivity without the use of GM cotton by using alternative pest-management approaches.
- There is a need for **better consultation in policy**, be it agriculture as a whole or crop-wise. Socioeconomic and need-based considerations should be a part of GMO regulatory process in India.

### Connecting the Dots

- Bt Brinjal Controversy
- Genetic Engineering in other fields – Medicines, disease prevention and cure.

### Case for Biotechnology adoption

Part of: GS Prelims and GS II- Agriculture



Pic Source: [The Hindu](#)

### Context

Arguments made against Bt Cotton seeds vis-à-vis variety seeds in the article [India's Cotton Story](#).

The article brings out difference between Hybrid Bt seeds vs Varieties and points out to various advantages of High Density Planting of **non-Bt varietal cotton seeds** – low cost labour, higher productivity, non-dependence on foreign seed companies, less use of pesticides and suitable for India's climatic conditions.

The following are the counter-arguments made in support of Bt Hybrid Cotton seeds.

**Argument 1:** GM cotton covers 95% of the area under cotton and that there are no choices for farmers.

**Counter Arguments:**

- Farmer adopts technologies which are beneficial to him and does not go by the recommendations of the industry or any other persons.
- Also, **farmers grow varietal crops in 90-100% of the area in the case of rice, mustard**, many oilseeds, and pulses. If seed companies were powerful, they would have pushed farmers to adopt hybrid varieties in these crops as well.
- This shows that farmers adopt only those technologies which yield him benefits. Attributing too much power to seed companies w.r.t. curbing choice of farmers is unreasonable

**Argument 2: Low productivity of India's Bt Cotton as compared to other Countries****Counter Arguments:**

- Hybrid Bt Cotton has helped increase cotton yields by over 1.8 times — **from 241 kg/hectare in 2002-2003 to 541 kg/hectare in 2018-2019.**
- Additionally, increase in **yield is not just dependent on technology** but also on other factors like knowledge of cultivation and correct agronomic practices, where there is scope for improvement in case of India
- New technology introduction has stopped in India since 2005, affecting growth of yields.

**Argument 3: Availability of low cost manual labour for adoption of non-bt varietal cotton seed****Counter Argument:**

- Today, labour accounts for over 58% of a farmer's cost of cultivation per acre. India's farmers instead need the best technologies to remain competitive.

**Argument 4: Indian farmers need to buy seeds repeatedly.****Counter Arguments:**

- The fact is that not just biotech cotton, but all hybrid seeds lose their benefits if replanted, creating reduced and erratic yields.
- New seeds help farmers sustain high yields year on year.

**Other arguments/facts in support of Bt Cotton Seeds are:**

1. **India's cotton yields** which were at 169 kg/hectare in 1980-81 increased to 278 kg/hectare in 2000-01 and then 542 kg/hectare in 2016-17 (Cotton Advisory Board data)
2. **Increased Revenues:** Highest production of 398 lakh bales of cotton in India was achieved in 2013-14, valued at around Rs. 72,000 crore.
3. **Additional incomes** were generated from cotton seeds oil (1.3 million tons) and cotton seed oilmeal (11 million tons) worth Rs. 13,000 crore and Rs. 22,000 crore, respectively.
4. **Meagre Bt Cotton Seed market:** It is about Rs. 3,000 crore, making it hardly 2.5% of the total value generated.
5. **Global acceptance:** Cotton Production (source USDA) – 2017-18 -India (35million bales), China (28m bales), the U.S. (21m bales), Brazil (9m bales) and Australia (5m bales). All of them are GM cotton countries, contributing to more than 90% of global cotton production.
6. **Helps conserve biodiversity:** with higher production from the same area, the expansion of agricultural land into forest areas has been slowed.
7. **Socio-economic ripple benefits reaped by hybrid Bt cotton seed farmers:**
  - 85% of them invested in better education for children;
  - 77% reported better intake of nutritious food;
  - 75% reported better health of their family members;
  - 64% invested on the health of livestock;

- Female workers on Bt cotton fields earned an average 55% higher income;
- 42.4 crore additional days of rural employment have been generated, thereby doubling cotton production.

**Way forward**

- New technology introduction that has been stopped in India since 2005, should be restarted.
- Research extension services should be strengthened.
- Farmers need to be provided with updated knowledge with regard to adoption of best agronomic practices.

**Connecting the Dots:**

- Bt Brinjal and Bt Mustard
- Genetic engineering Appraisal committee



## ENVIRONMENT/POLLUTION

### Invasive alien plants in Nilgiri Biosphere Region

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS III- Environment

**In News**

- Invasive alien species are plants, animals, pathogens and other organisms that are non-native to an **ecosystem**, and which may cause economic or environmental harm or adversely affect human health
- The spread of invasive plants, especially *Senna Spectabilis*, is posing a major threat to the Nilgiri forest region, owing to its quick growth and coppicing character
  - The thick foliage **arrests the growth of other indigenous species** of trees and grass, and causes **food shortage for the wildlife population**, especially herbivores, during summer.
  - Moreover, wildlife would not feed on the leaves of the tree as it was not palatable for them
- The plant started to invade in adjacent tiger reserves, including Bandipur and Nagarhole in Karnataka and the Mudumalai tiger reserve in Tamil Nadu

### Smog Towers: Delhi gets its first tower to tackle pollution

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

**In News**

- Smog towers are structures designed to **work as large-scale air purifiers**.
- These air filters shall draw in the air through fans installed at the top before passing it through the filters and releasing it near the ground.
- The filters installed in the tower will **use carbon nanofibres** as a major component and will focus on reducing particulate matter load.
- The Supreme Court had directed the Centre and the Delhi government to prepare a plan to install 'smog towers' across the capital to deal with air pollution.
- The 100m Xi'an tower in China which is dubbed the world's largest has reportedly brought down PM 2.5 by 19% in an area of around 6 sq km in its vicinity.

### Australia Wildfires

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

**Context**

Australia's devastating fire season that began in August 2019 continues unabated and caused large scale destruction particularly in New South Wales and Queensland region

**Why are the wildfires unprecedented?**

- Although Australia has always had bushfires, this season has been a lot worse than normal with nearly 12 million acres burned by the fires

- **Very high temperatures** (averaging 42°C), **extended drought** period (driest spring on record) and **strong winds** (spreads the bushfires) have converged to create disastrous fire conditions.



Source: [Newsweek.Com](http://Newsweek.Com)

### Is Climate Change to Blame?

- Australia is normally hot and dry in the summer, but climate change, which brings longer and more frequent periods of extreme heat, worsens these conditions and makes vegetation drier and more likely to burn.
- Australia's bush fires will become now more frequent and more intense as climate change worsens.

### Impact of Such wildfires

- Agricultural Production impacted
- Loss of Human lives
- Loss of Flora and Fauna- Loss of Biodiversity
- Leads to evacuation of communities – Temporary migration to other places
- Economic disruption
- Frequent wildfires in near future will make the region uninhabitable and thus catalysing environmental migration.

- Questions the developmental Model of the Country (Dependence on Coal Sector for its economic development which leads to GHG emissions)
- Questions the commitment of World towards battling Climate Change especially its impact now being clearly felt. This will pressurize US (which has withdrawn from the Paris deal) and other Countries to increase their Paris Deal commitments

### Impact on India

- Strengthen the voices of people who argue against India's dependence on fossil fuels like Coal & petroleum
- India's ability to import high quality of Coal from Australia will be impacted.
- Indian investment in Australia's coal sector will be endangered Ex: Adani Carmichael Coal mine project in Galilee Basin in Queensland, Australia
- Moral Pressure on India to take up leadership of fighting climate change in the Asia-Pacific region.

### Way Ahead

- Adoption of Cleaner technologies which emits less greenhouse gases.
- **Enhancing capabilities of government** authorities to face similar such incidents in the future.
- **Citizen awareness** about the dangerous of Climate Change and thus persuade them to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle having less carbon footprint
- **Diversifying energy basket** so as to reduce dependence on Coal & other fossil fuels. Instead promoting use of renewable energy like solar power.
- Developing a comprehensive **Migration & Refugee Policy** in the wake of increasing possibilities of environmental refugees

### Connecting the dots

- Does India also have Climatic conditions similar to that in Australia which were responsible for wildfires?

### Do You Know?

- Coal is Australia's second largest export behind iron ore. In 2016-17 Australia exported 202 million tonnes of thermal coal and 177 million tonnes of metallurgical coal with a combined value of \$54 billion.
- Australian coal is highly sought after around the world for its high energy content and low impurities which make it ideal for use in modern High Efficiency-Low Emission (HELE) power plants and steel mills.
- India is the fourth largest producer of Coal and second largest importer of Coal

## [Centre eases CRZ rules for 'Blue Flag' beaches](#)

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

### In News:

- The Environment Ministry has relaxed **Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ)** rules that restrict construction near beaches to help States construct infrastructure and enable them to receive '**Blue Flag**' certification.

### From Prelims Point of view:

### Blue Flag certification:



- It beaches to create certain infrastructure — portable toilet blocks, grey water treatment plants, a solar power plant, seating facilities, CCTV surveillance and the like.
- The certification is accorded by the Denmark-based Foundation for Environment Education, with 33 stringent criteria under four major heads for the beaches, that is, (i) Environmental Education and Information (ii) Bathing Water Quality (iii) Environment Management and Conservation and (iv) Safety and Services.
- The 'Blue Flag' beach is an 'eco-tourism model' and marks out beaches as providing tourists and beachgoers clean and hygienic bathing water, facilities/amenities, a safe and healthy environment, and sustainable development of the area.

### **Coastal Regulation Zones**

Coastal stretches of seas, bays, estuaries, creeks, rivers, and backwaters were declared as CRZs under coastal zone regulation notification in 1991.

CRZs have been classified into 4 zones for the purpose of regulation:

- CRZ-I: includes ecologically sensitive areas, where no construction is allowed except activities for atomic power plants, defense.
- CRZ-II: includes designated urban areas that are substantially built up. Construction activities are allowed on the landward side only.
- CRZ-III: includes relatively undisturbed areas, mainly rural areas. No new construction of buildings allowed in this zone except repairing of the existing ones. However, constructions of dwelling units in the plot area lying between 200-500m of the high tide line is allowed.
- CRZ-IV: includes the water area covered between Low Tide Line and 12 nautical miles seaward. Except for fishing and related activities, all actions impugning on the sea and tidal water will be regulated in this zone.

### [Arunachal to start red-listing of orchids](#)

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

**In news:**

- Arunachal has become the first state in the country to initiate the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) 'red listing' at the state level

**From Prelims point of View:**

**Red List**

- The IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species is a critical indicator of the health of the world's biodiversity. A powerful tool to inform and catalyze action for biodiversity conservation and policy change, it is critical in protecting the natural resources.

**The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**

- IUCN is a membership union uniquely composed of both government and civil society organisations.
- Created in 1948, it is the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it.
- It is headquartered in Switzerland.
- The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, is the world's most comprehensive inventory of the global conservation status of plant and animal species.

- It uses a set of quantitative criteria to evaluate the extinction risk of species. These criteria are relevant to most species and all regions of the world.
- The IUCN Red List Categories define the extinction risk of species assessed. Nine categories extend from NE (Not Evaluated) to EX (Extinct). Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN) and Vulnerable (VU) species are considered to be threatened with extinction.
- It is recognized as the most authoritative guide to the status of biological diversity.
- It is also a key indicator for the SDGs and Aichi Targets.

### Green clearance for onshore and offshore oil and gas exploration

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

**In news:**

The Environment Ministry has exempted oil and gas firms, looking to conduct exploratory drilling, from seeking an environmental clearance (**both on-shore and offshore drilling explorations**)

**From Prelims Point of View:**

**Environment impact assessment (EIA):**

- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a process of evaluating the likely environmental impacts of a proposed project or development, taking into account inter-related socio-economic, cultural and human-health impacts, both beneficial and adverse.

**Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC):**

- Indian Multinational Crude Oil and Gas Corporation
- It is the largest oil and gas exploration and production company in the country.
- It produces around 70% of India's crude oil (equivalent to around 57% of the country's total demand) and around 84% of its natural gas
- Maharatna status

### What is the state of forests in India?

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

**Context:**

The India State of the Forest Report 2019 was released recently which shows that India has increased its forest cover

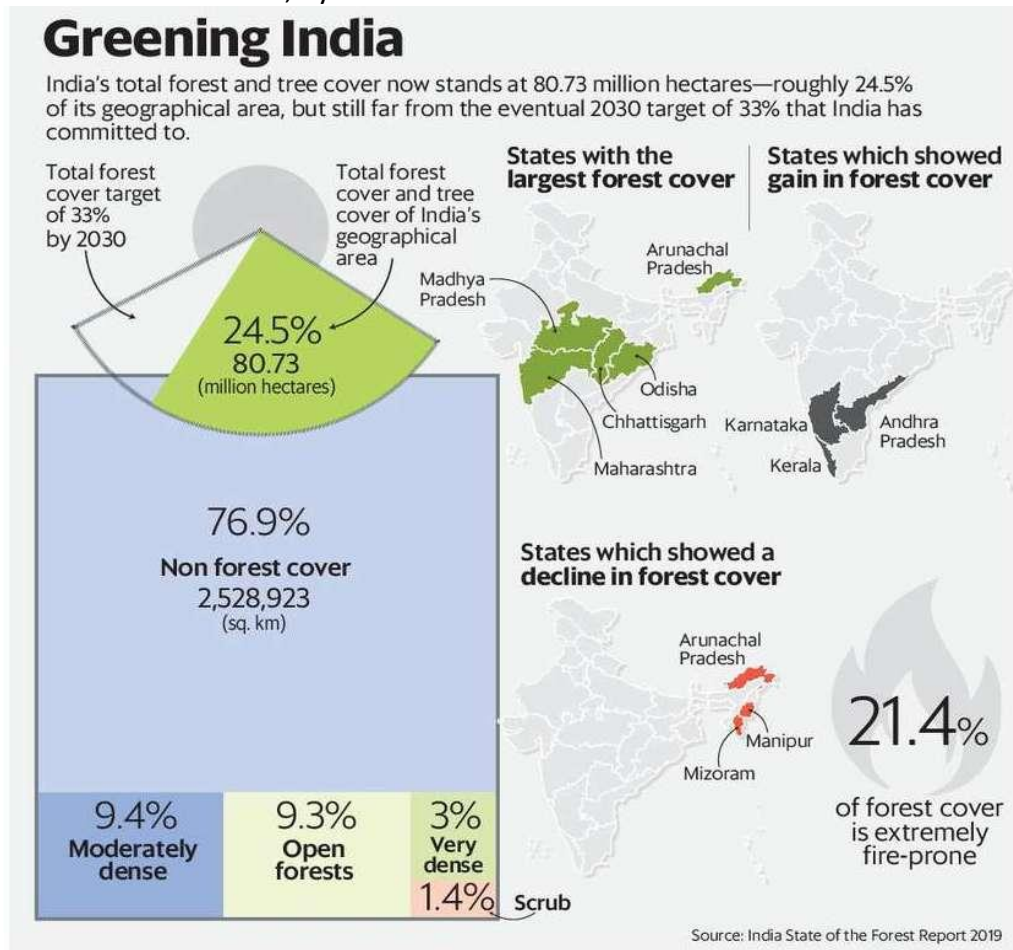
**About India State of the Forest Report (ISFR)**

- ISFR is a **biennial publication of Forest Survey of India (FSI)**, an organization under the Ministry of Environment Forest & Climate Change.
- The ISFR assesses the forest and tree cover, bamboo resources, carbon stock and forest fires.
- The 2019 report for the first time has assessed the qualitative nature of the forest cover, including listing its biodiversity and the type of plants and trees found.
- It also created a **national forest inventory** for the **first time** on produce from forests.

**Some of the findings of the report**

- India's forest cover has increased by 3,976 sq. km since 2017—a rise of 0.56%.
- **Tree cover**—tree patches of size less than one hectares outside the recorded forest areas, also showed a rise, albeit a little higher at 1.29%

- India's total forest and tree cover now stands at 80.73 million hectares—roughly 24.5% of its geographical area, and still far from the eventual target of 33%, which India has committed to raise to, by 2030.



Source: [Livemint](#)

#### Concerns expressed by ecologists are:

##### 1. Definition of Forest Cover

- Forest Survey of India defines forest cover as “all patches of land, with a **tree canopy density of more than 10%** and more than one hectare in area, irrespective of land-use, ownership and species of trees”—an assessment **relying majorly on satellite mapping**.

##### Counter Arguments:

- Therefore, then any fruit garden, coconut or coffee plantation, or even urban parks would come under ‘forest cover’
- Such a definition will give incomplete picture of our Natural forests, especially with regard to what is happening in Western Ghats & Himalayan Forests

##### 2. Blame on Forest-dwelling communities

- FSI's new study to assess the dependence of people, living in over 170,000 ‘forest fringe villages’, states that this dependence could be a “major driver of impairment of forest productivity”

### Counter Arguments

- These communities have been living in harmony with nature since centuries and dependent on forests for their livelihood. Coexistence with nature and not competition with the nature is their way of life
- However, the big impact areas—the diversion of forest land for roads, dam projects— has been completely disregarded while putting blame on these communities

### 3. Compensatory Plantation

- Compensatory plantation done to replace the original, natural forests during diversion of forest-lands for projects have so far yielded no impactful results.
- Some of these new areas were even earmarked for other projects or expansion of existing ones, even though they remain under government's Recorded Forest Area (**extent of forests in terms of legal status**).

### Way Ahead

- Changing the **definition of Forest Cover**: Instead of just canopy cover or hectares, the need is to focus on what is a 'thriving forest' or an 'ecosystem'
- **Real time spatial data** of our forest land. share those maps in real time so we know where we are losing our forests.
- Any afforestation activity undertaken must include an **adaptation programme** in the light of Climate Change, else the exercise will be futile
- To stop the **fragmentation of forests**—especially a problem in the North-East where forest cover is declining—so that forest areas remain connected to form one big habitat

### Do You Know?

- Forests are sink and reservoirs of carbon, thus critical in adaptation to climate change.
- As part of its climate action plan, India has committed to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5-3 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent through additional forest cover and tree cover by 2030.

### Connecting the Dots:

- Other findings of the State of Forest report 2019
- Kasturirangan and Gadgil Committee report on Western Ghats
- Environmental Impact Assessment

### [India Climate Collaborative \(ICC\)](#)

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-III- Environmental Conservation; GS-II- Role of Civil Society

### In News

- It is a partnership of philanthropy arms of top corporates including the Tatas, Mahindras, Godrejs and Premjis **to minimise the climate change impact**.
- It will be working to strengthen the climate community locally, build a climate narrative and drive solutions that will ensure both the natural world and people thrive

## [Ramsar Sites: 10 more wetland in India declared as Ramsar Sites](#)

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

### **In News**

- The Convention, signed in 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar, is inter-governmental accord for **preserving the ecological character of wetlands**
- Aim of Convention: To develop a global network of wetlands for conservation of biological diversity and **for sustaining human life.**
- Wetlands declared as Ramsar sites are protected under strict guidelines.
- Maharashtra gets its first Ramsar site – Nandur Madhameshwar
- Punjab added 3 more – Keshopur-Miani, Beas Conservation Reserve, Nangal
- UP has added 6 more – Nawabganj, Parvati Agra, Saman, Samaspur, Sandi and SarsaiNawar
- With this, India totally has 37 Ramsar Sites.

## [HCFC-141b – India has achieved its complete phase-out](#)

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-III- Environmental Conservation

### **In News**

- Hydrochlorofluorocarbon (HCFC)-141 b is one of the most potent ozone depleting chemical after Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs)
- HCFC-141 b is used mainly as a blowing agent in the **production of rigid polyurethane (PU) foams.**
- HCFC-141b is not produced in the country and all the domestic requirements are met through imports. India stopped the issuance of import license for HCFC-141b from **1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2020**, through notification by Environment Ministry
- The complete phase out of HCFC 141 b from the country in foam sector is among the first at this scale in Article 5 parties (developing countries) under the **Montreal Protocol.**

## [E-flows in River Ganga: 4 hydropower projects in upper Ganga violating e-flows](#)

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

### **In News**

- According to the Central Water Commission(CWC), the hydropower projects **violating Ganga ecological flow (e-flow) norms.**
  - Vishnuprayag Hydroelectric project – Alaknanda
  - Srinagar Hydroelectric project – Alaknanda
  - Maneri Bhali Phase 2 – Bhagirathi
  - Pashulok – Ganga Mainstream
- Centre’s ecological flow notification (**under Environment Protection Act of 1986**) mandates that project developers ensure a minimum supply of water all through the year

- CWC is the designated authority responsible for the supervision, monitoring, regulation of flows in the rivers

#### About Central Water Commission

- Central Water Commission is a premier technical organization of India in the field of Water Resources, formed via notification in 1975
- It is presently functioning as an attached office of the Ministry of Jal Shakti

### UN's new rules for ships in the Arctic region

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III- Environmental Conservation

#### In News

- **International Maritime Organization (IMO)**, the shipping agency of UN, has banned ships from using fuels with a **sulphur content above 0.5 %**, compared with 3.5 % previously.
- It affects more than 50,000 merchant ships worldwide.
- The new limits are monitored and enforced by national authorities of countries that are members of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (**MARPOL**) Annex VI.
- Only ships fitted with **sulphur-cleaning devices, known as scrubbers**, are allowed to continue burning high-sulphur fuel. Alternatively, they can opt for cleaner fuels, such as marine gasoil (MGO) and very low-sulfur fuel oil (VLSFO).

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## ANIMALS/NATIONAL PARKS IN NEWS

### Great Indian Bustard

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

#### **In News**

- The Great Indian Bustard (GIB), is **one of the heaviest flying birds**, and is found mainly in the Indian subcontinent. Barely 150 of these birds are estimated to be surviving now globally
- Today, its population is confined mostly to **Rajasthan and Gujarat**. Small population also occur in **Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh**.
- Along with chick-rearing centre for GIB in Jaisalmer, Sorsan in Rajasthan has been identified as the most conducive site for their rearing, due to availability of grasslands, access to roads and well suited climatic conditions
- Vanishing grasslands, uncontrolled use of pesticides and insecticides in farms which has impacted their food habitat, attacks by dogs & foxes, poaching and presence of high voltage power lines are a major threat to the GIB
- **Conservation status:**
  - Listed in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972,
  - Listed in Appendix I of CITES
- Listed as **Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List**

### Tiger Reserves: Demand to notify certain areas of Wildlife Sanctuaries in Goa as Tiger Reserve

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

#### **In News**

- **Mahadayi, Netravali and Cotigao** sanctuaries and some part of **Mahaveer National Park in Goa** has seen the presence of Tigers that has pushed Politicians & activists to demand Tiger Reserve status in these areas
- Sanctuaries and National Parks are areas of significant ecological, floral, faunal or natural significance. They are notified by State Governments and protected by the Forest Department under the provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- A National Park or Wildlife Sanctuary that is considered significant for protecting tigers can be additionally designated as a **Tiger Reserve**
- A Tiger Reserve consists of a 'Core' or 'Critical Tiger Habitat', which is to be managed as an inviolate area, and a 'Buffer' or Peripheral area immediately abutting a Core area, which may be accorded a lesser degree of habitat protection.
- The **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)** is a **statutory body** formed in 2005-06, with an overarching supervisory/coordination role, performing functions as provided in the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.

## Diego, the giant tortoise

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

**In news:**

The Galapagos National Park, where Diego lived, called off the captive breeding programme.

**Do you Know ?**

- Tortoises on the Galápagos Islands served as excellent source of food for seafarers in the 1800s.
- They could survive inside ships for upto a year, and so a large number were picked up from the islands.

**From Prelims point of view:**

**Galapagos National Park**

- Established in 1959 is Ecuador’s first national park and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- In 1979 UNESCO declared the Galápagos Islands Natural Heritage for Humanity

**Diego Turtle**

- Classified as “**threatened**” by the International Union for Conservation of Nature
- A member of the **Chelonoidis hoodensis**, or the giant tortoise species, Diego has spent much of his long life — he is 100 years old — in saving his kind

## Nearly extinct northern white rhino

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

**In news :**

- Researchers had created the third embryo the nearly extinct **northern white rhino**, a remarkable success in an ongoing global mission to keep the species from going extinct.

**From Prelims Point of view**

**The northern white rhinoceros**

- **The northern white rhinoceros**, is one of two subspecies of the white rhinoceros (the other being the southern white rhinoceros).
- Found in several countries in East and Central Africa south of the Sahara,
- It is a grazer in grasslands and savanna woodlands.
- According to the latest International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) assessment from 2011, the subspecies is considered “Critically Endangered (Possibly Extinct in the Wild).

**The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**

- IUCN is a membership union uniquely composed of both government and civil society organisations.
- Created in 1948, it is the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it.
- It is headquartered in Switzerland.
- The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, is the world’s most comprehensive inventory of the global conservation status of plant and animal species.
- It uses a set of quantitative criteria to evaluate the extinction risk of species. These criteria are relevant to most species and all regions of the world.



- The IUCN Red List Categories define the extinction risk of species assessed. Nine categories extend from NE (Not Evaluated) to EX (Extinct). Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN) and Vulnerable (VU) species are considered to be threatened with extinction.
- It is recognized as the most authoritative guide to the status of biological diversity.
- It is also a key indicator for the SDGs and Aichi Targets.

### Chinese paddlefish (*Psephurus gladius*): Gone Extinct

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

#### **In News**

It is a freshwater fish, dating back from 200 million years ago whose ancestral home was the **Yangtze River**.

It is also known as Chinese swordfish with a snot like structure packed with cells to detect electrical activity in prey animals such as crustaceans

It is declared extinct by Chinese researchers based on the Red List criteria of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

Overfishing and habitat fragmentation — including dam building — caused its population to dwindle from the 1970s onward

### Rare migratory eagle

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

#### **In news:**

A lone endangered steppe eagle (*Aquila nipalensis*) has been sighted by a group of birdwatchers

#### **From Prelims Point of view**

#### **Steppe eagle**

- Romania east through the south Russian and Central Asian steppes to Mongolia. The European and Central Asian birds winter in Africa, and the eastern birds in India
- IUCN Endangered
- It is also the National bird (animal) of Egypt

### Irrawaddy dolphins

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

#### **In news :**

- Irrawaddy dolphins sighted in Odisha's Chilika lake
- India's largest brackish water lake (Chilika) is home to their highest single lagoon population

#### **From Prelims Point of view**

#### **Irrawaddy dolphins:**

- Endangered — IUCN
- Living in brackish water near coasts, river mouths and in estuaries in South and Southeast Asia

- Found in – Ganges, Mekong and Irrawaddy river system

#### **Chilika Lake:**

- Chilika Lake It is largest coastal lagoon or brackish water lake in India and Asia and second largest lagoon in the world

### [African Cheetah: Supreme Court allows Centre to introduce it in India](#)

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-III – Environmental Conservation

#### **In News**

- The apex Court's decision followed a petition filed by National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) seeking permission for the introduction of the **African cheetah from Namibia** as rare Indian cheetah is almost extinct in the country.
- In 2012, the plan to introduce African Cheetahs in **Palpur Kuno sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh** was stalled by the Court
- Cheetah is the fastest land animal. It has been classified as **endangered by the IUCN**; and listed under Appendix I of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species).
- It inhabits a variety of **mostly arid habitats like dry forests**, scrub forests, and savannahs.

### [National Park : Commercial activities near Bannerghatta National Park banned](#)

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

#### **In news:**

Developmental and commercial activities have been stopped within 10-km radius of **Bannerghatta National Park** area, which is part of the **eco-sensitive zone**.

#### **From Prelims Point of view**

#### **Bannerghatta National Park**

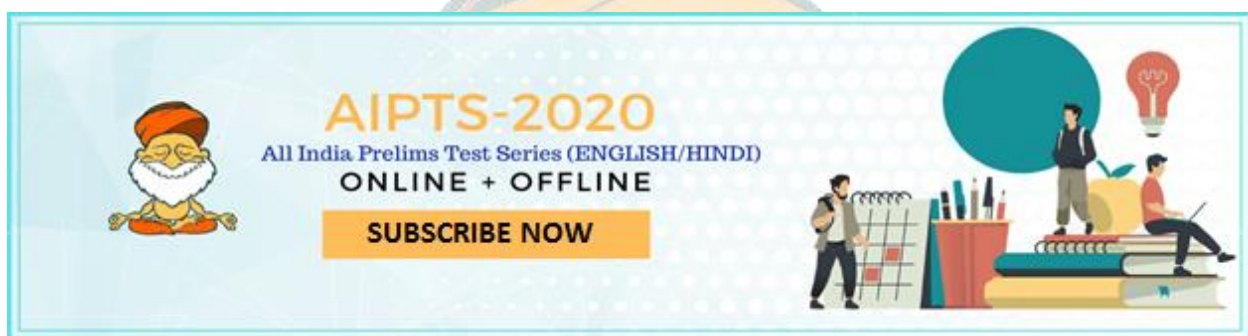
- The Bannerghatta National Park is located near Bangalore in **Karnataka**.
- Wildlife such as elephants, gaur, leopard, jackal, fox, wild boar, sloth bear, Sambar, Chital, spotted deer, barking deer, common langur, bonnet macaque, porcupine and hares are found in abundance.
- The **Bannerghatta Biological Park** has been an integral part of Bannerghatta National Park and emerged out as an independent establishment during the year 2002.
- In order to meet the growing demand for eco-recreation, eco-tourism and conservation, some area of forest from the National park were set aside to constitute as Biological Park.

#### **Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ)**

- Eco-Sensitive Zones or Ecologically Fragile Areas are **areas notified by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**, Government of India around Protected Areas, National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries.
- Activities conducted in eco-sensitive zones are regulated under the **Environment (Protection Act) of 1986** and no polluting industry or mine is allowed to come up in such areas.
- As a general principle width of the eco-sensitive zone could go up to 10 km around a protected area. In case of places with sensitive corridors, connectivity and ecologically

important patches, crucial for landscape linkage, even area beyond 10 km width can also be included in the eco-sensitive zone.

- Industries classified as prohibited under guidelines for declaration of eco-sensitive zones around national parks and wildlife sanctuaries are not allowed to operate in these zones.
- The guidelines prohibit activities such as commercial mining, commercial use of firewood and major hydropower projects.
- Activities such as felling of trees, commercial use of natural water resources, including groundwater harvesting and setting up of hotels and resorts, are regulated in these areas.
- The basic aim is to regulate certain activities around National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries so as to minimise the negative impacts of such activities on the fragile ecosystem encompassing the protected areas.



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## INFRASTRUCTURE/ENERGY

### Pharma City in Telangana

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS Mains II- Competitive Federalism; GS-III- Economy

**In News**

- Pharma City project **planned** by Telangana Government as **world's biggest pharma cluster** near Hyderabad has obtained the National Investment and Manufacturing Zone (NIMZ) approval and the environmental clearance for it from the Centre
- Basic infrastructure at the Pharma City like setting up sub-stations and laying roads has already commenced. The government would have to work on establishing an **effluent treatment plant to make it a pollution-free project**.

**About NIMZ**

- NIMZs are one of the important instruments of **National Manufacturing Policy, 2011**.
- **Objective:** To increase the share of manufacturing to 25 percent of the country's GDP while also creating 100 million jobs over the next decade
- NIMZs have been conceived as large integrated industrial townships with state-of-the-art infrastructure; land use on the basis of zoning; clean and energy efficient technology; necessary social infrastructure; skill development facilities, etc.
- To enable the NIMZ to function as a self-government and autonomous body, it will be declared by the State Government as a Industrial Township under Article 243 Q (I) (c) of the Constitution
- These NIMZs would be **managed by a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV)** which would ensure master planning of the zone; pre-clearances for setting up the industrial units to be located within the zone and undertake such other functions

### Integrated Steel Hub

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS Mains –II- Indian Polity- Cooperative Federalism; GS-III- Economy

**In News**

- Integrated Steel Hub will encompass Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal and Northern Andhra Pradesh
- It aims to attract investment of nearly \$70 billion in the steel sector and spur economic growth across eastern India
- It is a 'Purvodaya' initiative for focused development of eastern states.
- The eastern states collectively hold nearly 80% of the country's iron ore, most of domestic coking coal reserves and significant portion of chromite, bauxite and dolomite reserves.
- Out of the 300 mt steel capacity by 2030-31, the region alone is capable of contributing over 200 mt.

### Inland Waterways Authority of India

**Part of:** GS Prelims & GS-III- Economy infrastructure

**In news:**

- IWAI is the statutory body in charge of the waterways in India.

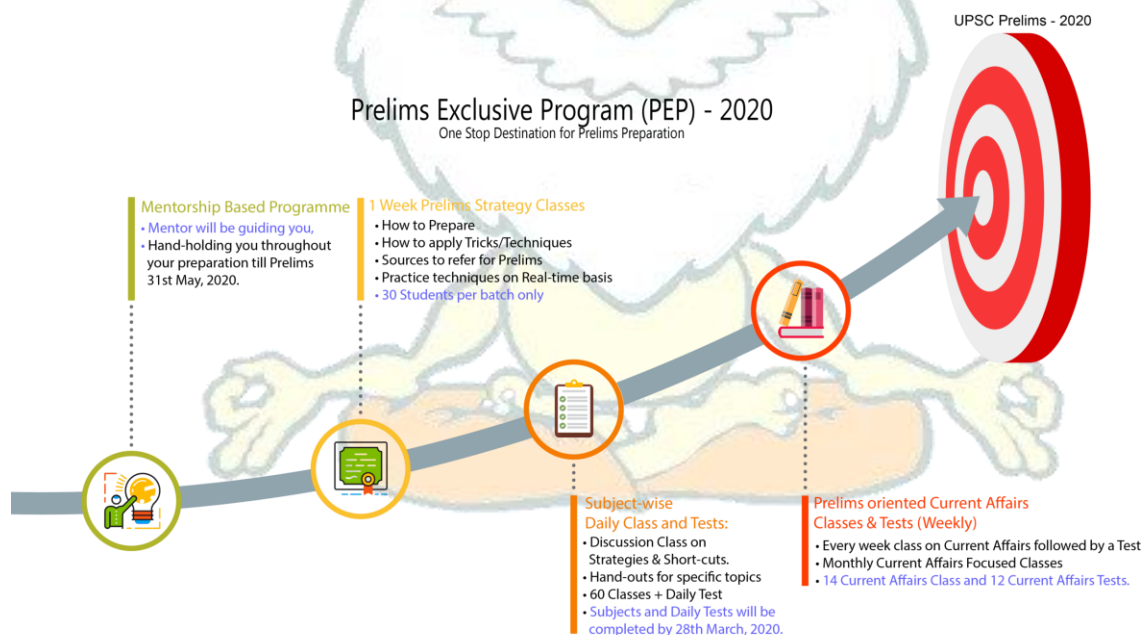
- Its headquarters is located in Noida, UP.
- Its main function is to build the necessary infrastructure in the inland waterways, surveying the economic feasibility of new projects and also carrying out administration and regulation.
- It undertakes projects for development and maintenance of IWT infrastructure on national waterways through grant received from Ministry of Shipping.

### Country's First Fruit Train

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-III- Infrastructure

#### **In News**

- This is the first time in India where 'fruit train' i.e. an entire train is being sent to the gateway port (JNPT) for export.
- **From:** Tadipatri Railway Station in Anantapur district in **Andhra Pradesh**
- **To: Jawaharlal Nehru Port in Mumbai**, from where the consignment will be exported to Iran.
- Cargo: 980 metric tonnes of locally (AP) grown bananas under the brand name "Happy Bananas"
- The train helps save both time and fuel as 150 trucks would have been required to send a consignment of this size by road to JNPT, which is over 900 km away



## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

### Chandrayaan-3: Launch this year

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS Mains III- Space Science & technology

**In News**

- India will launch Chandrayaan-3 in 2020, government stated, asserting that the mission cost will be less than Chandrayaan-2. The experience gathered from Chandrayaan-2 and available infrastructure would bring down the cost of Chandrayaan-3

**Value Addition for Prelims**

- Chandrayaan-2 mission was India's first attempt to land on lunar surface. The ISRO had planned the landing on the South Pole of the lunar surface. However, the lander Vikram hard-landed.
- Nevertheless, the Chandrayaan 2 orbiter remains in good health
- ISRO's new commercial arm New Space India Ltd. (NSIL) will oversee the technology transfer to the private sector and manufacturing of space components by the industry.

### 5G: India decides to include Chinese telecom major Huawei in the 5G trial

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

**In News**

- 5G is the 5th generation mobile network which will take much larger role than previous mobile network generations
  - 1G delivered analog voice.
  - 2G introduced digital voice (e.g., CDMA).
  - 3G brought mobile data (e.g., CDMA2000).
  - 4G LTE ushered in the era of mobile Internet.
- 5G **supports new services** (like IoT), uses spectrum better than 4G, **faster** than 4G (up to 20 Gigabits-per-second) and has **more capacity** than 4G (it will support a 100x increase in traffic capacity and network efficiency)
- Inclusion of the tech giant in the Indian scene had become a diplomatic issue with opposition from the U.S. and Japan.
- The Chinese major was banned by the U.S. in May 2019 on issues of security & privacy which led to an international campaign to stop other countries from including it in 5G projects

### Gaganyaan : In mission mode, says ISRO

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

**In news:**

- Four pilots from the Indian Air Force (IAF) will leave for Russia this month to receive training as astronauts of Gaganyaan, the first Indian crewed flight to space.
- It is a ₹10,000-crore Indian human space flight scheduled for 2022.

- The chosen astronauts will be sent to space on-board Gaganyaan, a crew capsule, to be launched with the help of Geo-Synchronous Launch Vehicle (GSLV)
- If Gaganyaan is successful, India would become the fourth nation to achieve the feat
- India has signed agreements with Russia and France for cooperation on the Gaganyaan mission.
- DRDO signed MoUs with ISRO to offer technologies for the mission, including space food, survival kits for crew, radiation protection equipment and parachutes.
- India's first man in space Rakesh Sharma, who flew aboard the Soyuz T-11, launched on 2 April 1984, was an Indian Air Force pilot.

## On flight path

ISRO has planned 25 missions for the year 2020. Ground work for Gaganyaan and Chandrayaan-3 progressed smoothly in 2019. A status check:

**1** Gaganyaan, the country's maiden manned space mission, is progressing well. Four Indian Air Force personnel have been identified for the mission and their astronaut training will start from the third week of this month in Russia

**2** Chandrayaan-3, the country's third lunar mission, has been approved. The mission, which will cost around ₹600 crore, will also try to land in the lunar south pole like Chandrayaan-2. The take-off may get postponed to next year

**3** Communication satellite GSAT-30 is 2020's first scheduled launch

**4** In the first half of 2020, SSLV or small satellite launcher will make its debut

ISRO has sought ₹14,000 crore as budget for 2020-21

### WHAT WENT WRONG WITH CHANDRAYAAN-2

We are looking at all navigation guidance and control aspects. We learnt from telemetry data that the design could not take the large difference in velocity. We have learnt our lessons from the failure

K. SIVAN  
ISRO CHAIRMAN



### SRC: The Hindu

#### Background and Timeline: From an idea to a plan

- Preparations have been going on since 2004, when the manned space mission was first endorsed by the ISRO Policy Planning Committee; there was lack of clarity on when exactly the mission would be launched, the target initially in was 2015.
- 2004: ISRO Policy Planning Committee recommends manned space mission
- 2006: National committee comprising 80 scientists and technocrats endorses proposal
- 2007: First public announcement of the human space programme
- 2009: Another experts' committee, discusses the desirability and feasibility of the programme and expresses support
- 2010: Failure of GSLV-D3 and Failure of GSLV-F06
- 2014: Successful testing of experimental flight of GSLV Mk-III; this also successfully tests an experimental crew module, demonstrating re-entry capability
- June 2017: First 'developmental' flight of GSLV Mk-III
- July 2018: First successful flight of the crew escape system or "pad abort" test.
- August 15, 2018: Prime Minister announces manned mission to take place before 2022

**Challenges:**

- A manned space mission is very different from all other missions that ISRO has so far completed.
- In terms of complexity and ambition, even the missions to the Moon (Chandrayaan) and Mars (Mangalyaan) are nowhere in comparison.
- For a manned mission, the key distinguishing capabilities that ISRO has had to develop the ability to bring the spacecraft back to Earth after flight, and to build a spacecraft in which astronauts can live in Earth-like conditions in space.
- Over the years, ISRO has successfully tested many of the technologies that are required, but many others are still to be developed and tested.

**The rocket: GSLV Mk-III**

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

**Re-entry & recovery tech**

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

**Crew Escape System**

- This is a crucial safety technology, involving an **emergency escape mechanism** for the astronauts in case of a faulty launch.



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

#### **Life support**

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

#### **Astronaut training**

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

#### **Budget**

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

#### **Conclusion:**

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

#### **Connecting the dots:**

- What advantages would India's proposed manned mission to space bring to the society?
- Do you think this mission makes India the world leader in space mission?

### Mobile Aided Note Identifier (MANI)

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

**In News**

- RBI has launched a mobile app, Mobile Aided Note Identifier (MANI) to **help visually challenged people to identify denomination of currency notes.**
- Through the downloaded app, users can scan the notes using the camera. The audio output will give the result in Hindi and English.
- The app can also work offline once it is installed.

### Human Space Flight Centre (HSFC): To be established in Karnataka

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

**In News**

- India's world-class facility for training astronauts will come up at Challakere, a shrubby, arid oilseeds town in Karnataka. will be the single-stop consolidating infrastructure and activities related to space travellers.
- It will be a self-contained facility there so that in future, whatever training and activities India is now doing in Russia for the Gaganyaan crew can all be done here

**About Gaganyaan**

- Gaganyaan is the human space flight programme under which 3 Indian astronauts will go into space by 2022. This will be done by using its own capabilities. A **GSLV-Mk III launch vehicle will lift them to their orbit.**
- If successful, India would become the fourth nation to conduct a human space flight programme **after USSR/Russia, USA and China.**

### Indian Data Relay Satellite System (IDRSS)

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

**In News**

- India plans to bring in its own system of space-to-space tracking and communication of its space assets by putting up a new satellite series called IDRSS. It is basically a set of satellites that will track, send and receive information from other satellites.
- The two-satellite IDRSS is planned to track and **be constantly in touch with Indian satellites**, in particular those in low-earth orbits which have limited coverage of earth
- IDRSS satellites of the **2,000 kg class** would be launched on the **GSLV launcher** to **geostationary** orbits around 36,000 km away
- The first beneficiary would be the prospective crew members of the Gaganyaan mission of 2022 who can be fully and continuously in touch with mission control throughout their travel.
- It will be useful in monitoring launches and vital for ISRO which has planned in future several advanced Low Earth Orbit (LEO) missions such as space docking, space station, as well as distant expeditions to moon, Mars and Venus

## Data privacy law : California's new privacy law — the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) (Part-1)

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-III- Awareness in the fields of IT

### **Context:**

California's new privacy law — the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) — is first-of-its-kind data legislation went into effect recently.

### **Need :**

- Data are increasingly commodified by technology conglomerates

### **California's new privacy law gives right to users:**

- *Users have the right to see what personal information businesses collect about them, and the purpose and process of the collection. Personal information refers to any information that can be linked back to the user.*
- User can request and view what inferences the businesses make about them,
- User have the right to see details about their personal information being sold or given to a third party.
- Users can make businesses delete their personal information, and opt out of having their data sold to third parties.
- Users can get a copy of the collected personal information for free.
- Parents have to give permission to companies before the companies can sell the data of their children under the age of 13 to third parties.

### **Why Right to ask for deletion?**

- The more a company knows about you, the more power it has to shape your daily life.
- Such as showing you a shoe ad, to selecting your job, your housing, or helping to shape what candidate you support in an election.

### **Exceptions:**

- *The law lays out some exceptions, such as information necessary for completing transactions, providing a service, protecting consumer security, and protecting freedom of speech.*

### **Affects of this law:**

- Many firms are finding it easier to make the legal changes for all users rather than trying to distinguish users from California. *Microsoft will roll out changes for all Americans, and Mozilla (which owns the Firefox browser) will make changes for all their users.*
- The European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) too, shifted the entire Internet economy, not just that of the EU

### **Criticisms:**

- The Act gives users the right to stop the selling of their data, but not the collection of their data.
- *It does not do much to affect companies like Facebook and Google that make most of their money by collecting the data, not by selling it. Advertisers pay Facebook to target ads to users based off that data; they don't pay Facebook for the data itself.*
- The act places the burden of navigating this complex economy on users.

- Many of the provisions are vaguely worded — leaving concepts such as “third-party sharing” or “selling” up to interpretation.

**Conclusion:**

- Users get right to access the data, the right to ask for its deletion, and the right to prevent its sale to third parties. Because of the global nature of the Internet, these changes will affect users worldwide.

**Connecting the dots:**

- What are the challenges regarding data protection and how can they be addressed?
- Do you think Data protection is one of the key elements for a robust cyber policy?

## Genome of Indian Cobra mapped

**Part of:** GS Prelims- Government Schemes and GS Mains III-Science & Technology

**In News**

- Researchers have mapped the genome of cobra which will help in understanding the chemical constituents of the snake venom and contribute to **development of new anti-venom therapies.**

**What is Gene?**

- Gene is part of chromosome, a unit of heredity which is transferred from a parent to offspring and is held to determine some characteristic of the offspring.
- A genome is an organism’s complete set of DNA, including all of its genes

**Value addition for Prelims**

- **Genome India Initiative** is a project by Department of Biotechnology (DBT), **Ministry of Science and Technology** that involves scanning of 20,000 Indian individual’s genomes (in the next five years 2019-24)
- **Objective:** To develop diagnostic tests and effective therapies for treating diseases (such as cancer)

## Ranitidine

**Part of:** GS Prelims Science & Tech and GS Mains III–Pharmaceutical industry

**In News:**

- A group of doctors came forward to clear “misconceptions” about Ranitidine, an active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) used in drugs to treat gastric acidity.
- Following a U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) warning about the presence of low levels of carcinogens in Ranitidine, there are a lot of misconceptions about its use

**From Prelims Point of view:**

**Ranitidine**

- Ranitidine is one of the oldest drugs to be used in acidity and upper intestinal ulcers and has been considered to be safer than similar other drugs like proton pump blockers.
- It is a **commonly prescribed medicine for countering acidity** and also on the **World Health Organisation’s ‘Model List of Essential Medicines’.**
- In India, a host of companies including GlaxoSmithKline, Dr. Reddy’s, Sun Pharmaceuticals sell over 180 versions of the drug. Some commonly known brands of Ranitidine are Zantac, Aztec, Giran, etc.

**N-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA)**

- N-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA) has been classified by the **International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC)** as **probably carcinogenic to humans**.
- It is an **environmental contaminant** found in water and foods.
- It is the same impurity that the US FDA had investigated in blood pressure drugs valsartan and losartan over the last year.

**Myeloma**

**Part of:** GS Prelims Science & Tech and GS Mains II–Health

**In news:**

- Myeloma risk may be higher among Indians than whites

**From Prelims point of view****Myeloma**

- Myeloma is a cancer that forms in a type of white blood cell called a plasma cell. Plasma cells help you fight infections by making antibodies that recognize and attack germs.
- Multiple myeloma causes cancer cells to accumulate in the bone marrow, where they crowd out healthy blood cells. Rather than produce helpful antibodies, the cancer cells produce abnormal proteins that can cause complications.

**Naval version of LCA Tejas takes off from INS Vikramaditya**

**Part of:** GS Prelims Science & Tech and GS Mains II-Defence

**In news:**

A naval prototype of the homegrown Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas successfully took off from the deck of Indian Navy's sole aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya

**From Prelims Point of view:**

- India is now among a select group of countries that have the capability to design a fighter jet that can operate from an aircraft carrier.

**LCA Tejas:**

- Tejas is a Light Combat Aircraft developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation's Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) in coordination with the Aircraft Research and Design Centre of Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd
- Single-engine, delta wing, multirole light fighter

**INS Vikramaditya**

- The country's most powerful aircraft carrier.
- It was built in 1987 and had served the Soviet navy
- It can carry over 30 aircraft comprising MiG-29Ks, Kamov-28s, Kamov-31s, ALH-Dhruv and Chetak helicopters.
- It was retrofitted with a Barak missile system under joint development with Israel.
- It is based at its home port at Karwar in Karnataka.

## Hawaii telescope: Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT)

Part of: GS Sci & Tech and GS-III – Technology

### In news:

- India Wants Thirty-Metre Telescope Shifted Out of Hawaii (Mauna kea)



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### Why oppose?

- The proposed site is considered sacred to indigenous Hawaiians.

### From Prelims Point of view:

#### The Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT):

- The Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) is a proposed astronomical observatory with an extremely large telescope (ELT).
- It is an international project being funded by scientific organisations of Canada, China, India, Japan and USA.
- **Planned location: Mauna Kea on the island of Hawaii in the US state of Hawaii.**
- The TMT is designed for near-ultraviolet to mid-infrared observations, featuring adaptive optics to assist in correcting image blur.
- TMT will enable scientists to study fainter objects far away from us in the Universe, which gives information about early stages of evolution of the Universe
- It will give us finer details of not-so-far-away objects like undiscovered planets and other objects in the Solar System and planets around other stars.

## SC : Disqualification power from Speakers

Part of: GS Sci & Tech and GS-III – Technology

### **In news:**

- The Supreme Court asked Parliament to amend the Constitution to strip Legislative Assembly Speakers of their exclusive power to decide whether legislators should be disqualified or not under the anti-defection law.

### **SC Suggestions:**

- Disqualification petitions under the Tenth Schedule should be adjudicated by a mechanism outside Parliament or the Legislative Assemblies.
- The court suggested a permanent tribunal headed by a retired Supreme Court judge or a former High Court Chief Justice.

### **From Prelims Point of view:**

#### **Tenth Schedule: anti-defection law**

- **The Tenth Schedule was inserted in the Constitution in 1985 by the 52nd Amendment Act.**
- **Lays down the process by which legislators may be disqualified on grounds of defection by the Presiding Officer of a legislature**
- The decision on question as to disqualification on ground of defection is referred to **the Chairman or the Speaker of such House, and his decision is final.**
- **The law applies to both Parliament and state assemblies.**

#### **Disqualification:**

If a member of a house belonging to a political party:

- Voluntarily gives up the membership of his political party, or
- Votes, or does not vote in the legislature, contrary to the directions of his political party. However, if the member has taken prior permission, or is condoned by the party within 15 days from such voting or abstention, the member shall not be disqualified.
- If an independent candidate joins a political party after the election.
- If a nominated member joins a party six months after he becomes a member of the legislature.

**Supreme Court in 1992**, thereby allowing appeals against the Presiding Officer's decision in the High Court and Supreme Court. However, it held that there may not be any judicial intervention until the Presiding Officer gives his order.

#### **Exceptions :**

- Legislators may change their party without the risk of disqualification in certain circumstances.
- The law allows **a party to merge with or into another party provided that at least two-thirds of its legislators are in favour of the merger.**
- In such a scenario, neither the members who decide to merge, nor the ones who stay with the original party will face disqualification.

## Archaea

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III- Science

**In News**

- New archaeon was discovered by Indian scientists in **Sambhar Salt Lake of Rajasthan**
- Archaea are a **primitive group of microorganisms** that thrive in extreme habitats such as hot springs, cold deserts and hypersaline lakes.
- These slow-growing organisms are also **present in the human gut**, and have a potential relationship with human health.
- They are known for producing **antimicrobial molecules**, and for anti-oxidant activity with applications in eco-friendly waste-water treatment.
- Archaea are extremely **difficult to culture** due to challenges in providing natural conditions in a laboratory setting.
- New archaea is named *Natrialba swarupiae*, after Dr Renu Swarup, secretary, Department of Biotechnology, for her initiative in supporting microbial diversity studies in the country

**VYOMMITRA**

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

**In News**

- It is a half-humanoid designed & developed **by ISRO** Inertial Systems Unit in Thiruvananthapuram
- The humanoid will **simulate the human functions** required for space before real astronauts take off before August 2022 (Gaganyaan Mission)
- Two trial flights without crew will take place with a humanoid — the first around December 2020 and the second around July 2021.

**Anti-satellite weapons (ASAT) – Showcased during Republic Day Parade**

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-III- Science & Technology; Security

**In News**

- It is missile-based system to attack moving satellites.
- India had tested the Anti-Satellite System(A-SAT) from **Dr A P J Abdul Kalam Island**, formerly known as Wheeler Island, an island off the coast of Odisha in March 2019. The test was **named as Mission Shakti**.
- With such capabilities India is now in the league of three countries after the U.S., Russia, and China to have such technology

**SIS-DP PROJECT – Space based Information Support for Decentralised Planning**

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

**In News**

- **ISRO** had launched 'SISDP' project **to assist gram panchayats** at grassroots level with **basic planning inputs derived from satellite data** for preparing developmental plans, its implementation and monitoring of activities.
- National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC), located in Hyderabad, is the lead centre to execute the project. NSRC is one of the centres of ISRO.



- SISDP Phase-I project was **launched in 2011** and successfully concluded in 2017. The second phase has been started now.
- The geodatabase, products and services prepared under this project are expected to be disseminated through **Bhuvan geoportal**, an easy to use Geo portal developed for database visualization, data analytics etc. for the benefit of Gram Panchayat members and others.

## SPITZER SPACE TELESCOPE

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

### In News

- It is an infrared space telescope named after astronomer Lyman Spitzer, who had promoted the concept of space telescopes in the 1940s.
- Launched by **NASA** in 2003 and is planned to be retired on 30 January 2020.
- It is **one of the elements of NASA's Great Observatories** that include the Hubble Space Telescope and the Chandra X-Ray.
- Using different infrared wavelengths, Spitzer was able to see and reveal features of the universe including objects that were too cold to emit visible light.



## DEFENCE/INTERNAL SECURITY/ SECURITY

### Department of Military Affairs (DMA): Created in the Defence Ministry,

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

#### **In News**

- The Department of Military Affairs (DMA) has been created in the Defence Ministry, and General Bipin Rawat who is the new Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) will head it.
- The DMA will be the **fifth department in the Ministry** after the Department of Defence, the Department of Defence Production, the Department of Defence Research and Development and the Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare.
- The DMA's mandate includes **promoting jointness in procurement, training and staffing for the Services**; facilitating restructuring of the military commands for optimal utilisation of resources by bringing about a jointness in operations, including through the establishment of joint/theatre commands and promoting use of indigenous equipment
- The DMA would deal with
  - The armed forces;
  - The integrated headquarters of the Ministry, comprising the Army, Naval and Air and defence staff headquarters;
  - The Territorial Army; and
  - Works relating to the three services and procurement exclusive to them, except capital acquisitions.

### Chief of Defence Staff (CDS): Gen. Bipin Rawat Appointed as first CDS

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

#### **Context:**

- General Bipin Rawat (December 30) appointed the first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), a newly created post meant to enhance the quality of military advice to the political leadership through integration of service inputs.
- The CDS is a high military office that will oversee and coordinate the working of the three Services, and offer seamless tri-service views and single-point advice to the Executive (in India's case, to the Prime Minister) on long-term defence planning and management, including manpower, equipment and strategy, and above all, "jointmanship" in operations.

#### **Need for Chief of Defence Staff**

- In general, the policy formulation is done by Defense Secretary, who is a bureaucrat, while its execution rests with Chiefs of armed forces. **This makes defence policy incoherent.**
- The emergence of **modern warfare domains** like Space, Cyber etc, requires a more **integrated approach** to defense strategy.
- A **group of ministers that was formed in 2001** to explore necessary reforms required to improve India's national security had also favored creating the post of Chief of Defence Staff.
- In **2012 Naresh Chandra task force** recommended the appointment of a permanent chairman of chiefs of staff committee.

- The permanent chairman of chiefs of staff committee is the senior most of the three Chiefs.
- The CDS is also one of the 99 recommendations made by the **Lt. General D.B. Shekatkar (retd.) committee (2016)**.

#### Significance

- The creation of the CDS will eventually lead to the **formation of tri-service theatre commands** intended to create vertical integration of the three forces.
- This is expected to **save money** by avoiding duplication between the Services, at a time of shrinking capital expenditure within the defence budget.
- It will help India in **Defense diplomacy**.

#### United States: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

- According to the US Department of Defence website, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) is the nation's highest-ranking military officer and the principal military adviser to the President, the Secretary of Defence (equivalent to Minister for Defence in India) and the National Security Council.

#### United Kingdom: Chief of the Defence Staff

- The Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) is the professional head of the Armed Forces and principal military adviser to the Secretary of State for Defence (equivalent to Minister for Defence in India) and the government.
- The UK CDS reports to the Defence Secretary and the Prime Minister.

#### Australia: Chief of the Defence Force

- Australia has a diarchy system, under which the Chief of the Defence Force (CDF) and the Secretary for the Department of Defence (a senior civilian public servant in the Ministry) jointly manage the Defence organisation, per the Department of Defence website.

#### Challenges:

1. The KRC Report pointed out that **India is the only major democracy where the Armed Forces Headquarters is outside the apex governmental structure**.
2. It observed that **Service Chiefs devote most of their time to their operational roles**, "often resulting in negative results".
3. Long-term defence planning suffers as day-to-day priorities dominate.
4. Also, **the Prime Minister and Defence Minister do not have the benefit of the views and expertise of military commanders**, in order to ensure that higher level defence management decisions are more consensual and broad-based.
5. The CDS is also seen as being vital to the creation of **"theatre commands", integrating tri-service assets and personnel like in the US military**.

#### Connecting the dots:

- Do you think CDS is required for India?
- Do you think CDS will create co-ordination between all the three wings of the defence?

### [DRDO Young Scientists Laboratories \(DYSL\)](#)

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

#### In News

- Five defence laboratories led by **under-35 directors** and young military scientists were formally launched by Government

- **Objective:** To drive the country's war technologies of the future under the Defence Research & Development Organisation.
- The labs operating in Bengaluru, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and Hyderabad will each pursue a key technology necessary for developing the nation's next generation of defence systems.
- There would be no fund constraints for the new labs and the new leaders enjoy the same administrative and financial powers as the directors of existing defence labs

## Saras Mk2

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

### **In News**

- It is a light transport aircraft which is indigenously developed by National Aerospace Laboratory (NAL)
- The 19-seater aircraft, developed with a target cost of ₹50 crore, is at least 20-25% lower in cost than other aircraft in the similar category.
- NAL is been pitching Saras Mk-2 for the government's UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik), since it has the capacity to operate in "ill-equipped", "semi-prepared" and "unpaved airstrips".

## GOCO model: Government Owned Contractor Operated Model

**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS Mains –III- Security, Investment Models

### **In News**

- In order to **improve operational efficiency**, Indian army is looking to implement the **Government Owned Contractor Operated (GOCO)** model for its maintenance of its Army Base workshops
- The GOCO model was one of the recommendations of the Lt. Gen. DB **Shekatkar committee** to enhance combat capability and re-balance defence expenditure.

## Indian Coast Guard Ships (ICGS) — Annie Besant and Amrit Kaur —commissioned

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

### **In News**

- ICGS Annie Besant will be based at Chennai and ICGS Amrit Kaur will be based at Haldia.
- The ships are fitted with state-of-the-art technology, and navigation equipment, along with Bofors 40/60 guns and 12.7 mm Stabilised Remote Controlled Guns for enhanced fighting efficiency.

### **About Rajkumari Amrit Kaur**

- Kaur co-founded the All India Women's Conference along with Margaret Cousins in 1927.
- She was also a member of Constituent Assembly and a member Sub-Committee on Fundamental Rights and Sub-Committee on Minorities.
- She went on to become **independent India's first health minister**

## Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) Inaugurated

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

### **In News**

- The I4C is a seven-pronged system, which includes a cybercrime reporting portal, analysis of threats, capacity building, research and innovation, creating an ecosystem for cybercrime management and a joint cybercrime investigation platform for law enforcement agencies.
- I4C is located in New Delhi

### **Do you know?**

- In Aug 2019, the MHA had unveiled its National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal through which citizens can report any kind of cybercrime irrespective of the place where it has occurred
- So far, more than 700 police districts and more than 3,900 police stations have been connected with this portal

## Tigersharks : India is placing Sukhoi jets in South India

**Part of:** GS Prelims –Polity and GS-II- Internal Security

### **In news:**

- Air force commissioned the 222 squadron, also known as ‘Tigersharks’, for their Thanjavur base Tamil Nadu
- It will play a key role in keeping China’s growing clout in the Indian Ocean region
- The squadron has **Sukhoi-30** carrying the **BrahMos** cruise missile.

### **From Prelims point of view:**

#### **Sukhoi Su-30MKI**

- A twinjet multirole air superiority fighter developed by Russia
- Integrates Indian systems and avionics as well as French and Israeli sub-systems.

#### **BRAHMOS**

- **Joint venture** between India & Russia.
- Brahmos is named on the **rivers Brahmaputra and Moskva**.
- **air to surface missile** with a flight range of around **300 km**.

**India’s entry into the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) has extended the range of the BRAHMOS missile to reach 450 km-600km, a shade above its current MTCR capped range of 300 km.**

- Brahmos is the **heaviest weapon to be deployed on Su-30 MKI fighter aircraft**, with a weight of 2.5 tonnes.
- Brahmos is a **multiplatform** i.e it can be **launched from land, air, and sea**.
- It operates on the **“Fire and Forgets”** principle i.e it does not require further guidance after launch.

## EXERCISE SAMPRITI

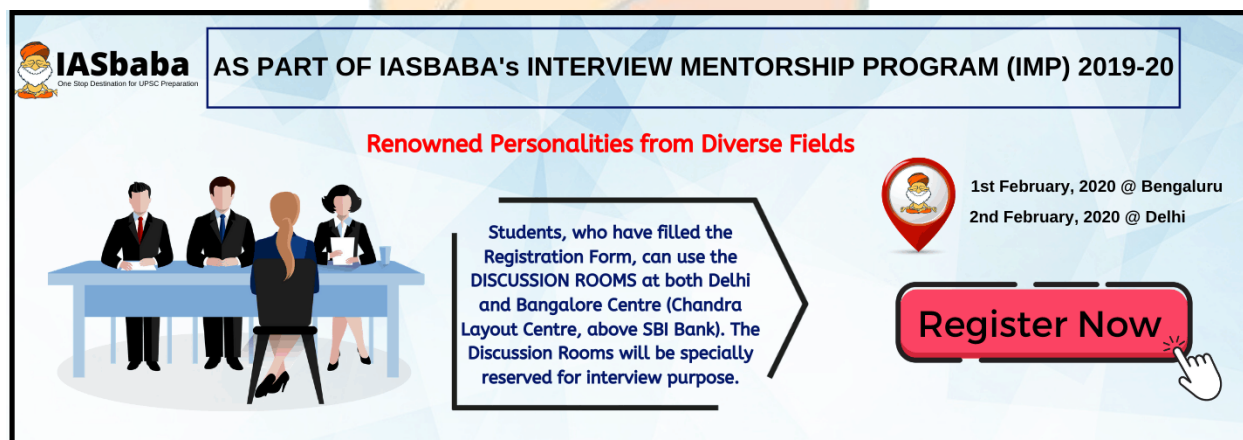
**Part of:** GS Prelims and GS-III- Security

### **In News**

- It is a joint military exercise between India and Bangladesh which is hosted alternately by both countries.
- The ninth edition **will be conducted at UMROI, Meghalaya, India** from 03 Feb to 16 Feb 2020



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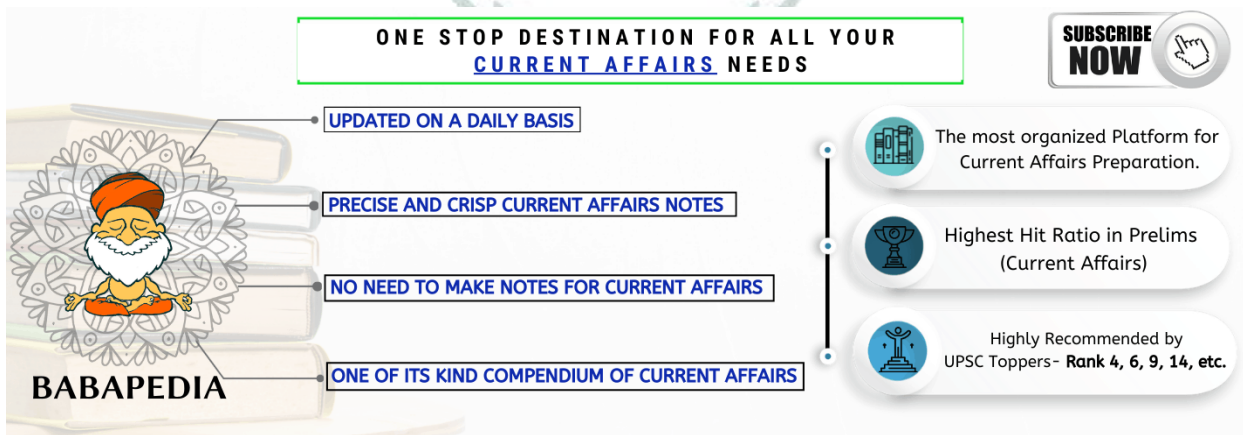
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## MISCELLANEOUS

In News	Description
1. Indian Science Congress: 107th Edition to begin in Bengaluru	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 107th Indian Science Congress, will be held from January 3 to 7, 2020 at University of Agricultural Sciences, Bengaluru</li> <li>• The main focus of this year's congress will be on Rural Development through Science and Technology</li> <li>• Farmers Congress: for the first time in the history of ISC, a Farmers Science Congress is being held. It will cover themes ranging from farmers innovation on integrated agriculture and entrepreneurship for doubling farmers income, climate change, bio-diversity, conservation, agrarian distress etc.</li> <li>• Children's Science Congress: The aim is to provide a unique opportunity for children to view selected projects and listen, interact with eminent scientists and Nobel Laureates.</li> <li>• Organisers have also taken "special care" to ensure that 'pseudo-scientific' articles or talks did not creep in during this Congress.</li> <li>• Indian Science Congress Association is a premier scientific organisation of India with headquarters at Kolkata, West Bengal. The association started in the year 1914 in Kolkata and it meets annually in the first week of January</li> </ul>
1. Extraocular vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ability to see without eyes is known as extraocular vision</li> <li>• Latest research shows that species of brittle stars, which are relatives of starfish, can see even though it does not have eyes. It becomes only the second creature, after a sea urchin species, known to have this ability</li> <li>• The brittle star sees with the help of light-sensing cells that cover its entire body. These light-sensing cells give the brittle star visual stimuli, allowing it to recognise coarse structures such as rocks</li> </ul>
2. Yada Yada alphavirus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yada Yada is an alphavirus, a group of viruses that the researchers described as "small, single-stranded positive-sense RNA viruses (that) include species important to human and animal health, such as Chikungunya virus and Eastern equine encephalitis virus</li> <li>• Alphavirus are transmitted primarily by mosquitoes and (are) pathogenic in their vertebrate hosts".</li> <li>• Yada Yada does not pose a threat to human beings.</li> </ul>

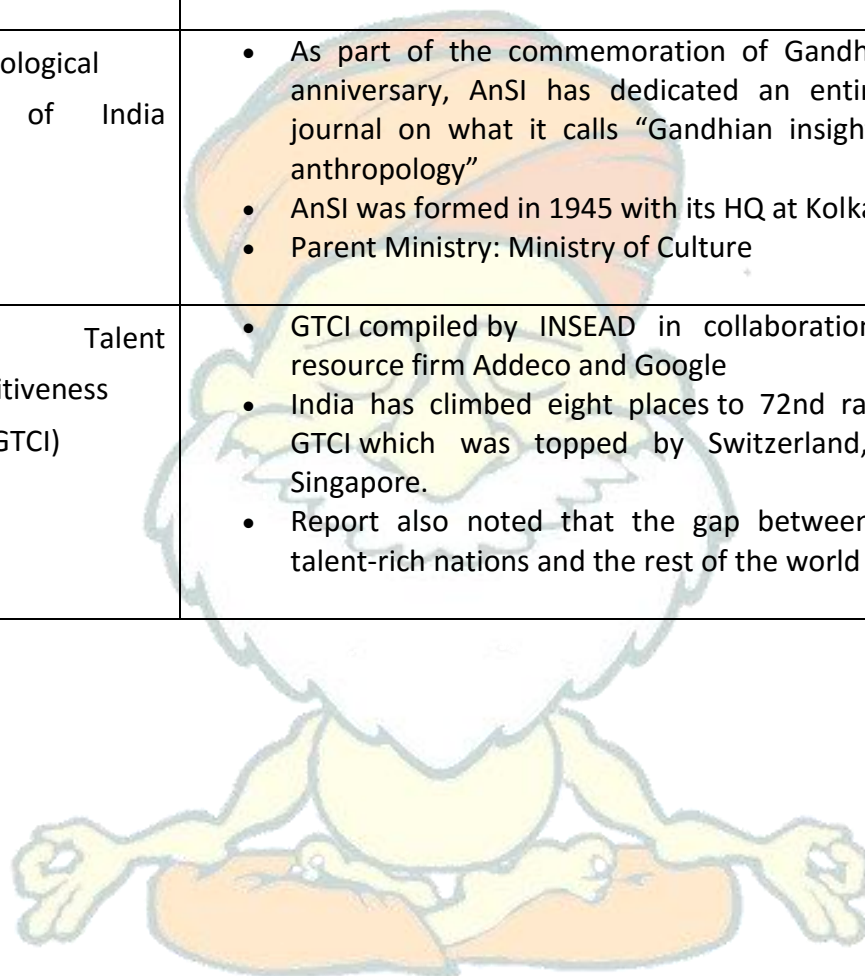
3. bi Ka Maqbara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is a tomb located in Aurangabad, Maharashtra.</li> <li>• The structure, known as the 'Taj of the Deccan' because of its striking resemblance to the Taj Mahal, was commissioned by Emperor Aurangzeb in 1660 in the memory of his wife Dilras Banu Begum.</li> </ul>
4. Scientific Social Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under this programme, researchers who are working on a science project funded by any of the Ministries under the Central government will have to undertake activities to popularise science and make it more accessible to the public.</li> <li>• Centre would draw up a list of activities which could be taken up under the Scientific Social Responsibility programme, that was similar to Corporate Social Responsibility.</li> <li>• The activities could range from going to colleges delivering lectures, writing an article in a magazine or doing something beyond the curriculum.</li> <li>• The move would not only bridge the gap between research institutes and the civilians, but also help scientists hone their communication skills.</li> </ul>
5. Snow and Avalanche Study Establishment (SASE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SASE which is a laboratory of the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) has issued an Avalanche warning to Leh in Ladakh region.</li> <li>• SASE's objective: To be a centre of excellence in 'Cryospheric Science and Technology' to facilitate high operational mobility for troops in snow bound regions of Indian Himalayas.</li> <li>• HQ of SASE is located near Manali, Himachal Pradesh.</li> <li>• The cryosphere is the frozen water part of the Earth system. Thus it includes those portions of Earth's surface where water is in solid form, including sea ice, lake ice, river ice, snow cover, glaciers, ice caps, ice sheets, and frozen ground</li> </ul>
6. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) is celebrated on 9th January every year to mark the contribution of Overseas Indian community in the development of India.</li> <li>• January 9 was chosen as the day to celebrate this occasion since it was on this day in 1915 that Mahatma Gandhi returned to India from South Africa, led India's freedom struggle and changed the lives of Indians forever.</li> <li>• Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Convention is celebrated once in every two years to strengthen the engagement of the overseas Indian community with the Government of India and reconnect them with their roots.</li> <li>• During the Convention, selected overseas Indians are also</li> </ul>



	<p>honoured with the prestigious Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award to recognize their contributions to various fields both in India and abroad.</p>
7. World Hindi Day: Celebrated on Jan 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>World Hindi day is commemorated every year with the objective to promote use of Hindi language abroad</li> <li>On this day in 2006 the First World Hindi Conference was organized in Nagpur with the aim to promote the language worldwide and since then every year 10th January is being observed as the World Hindi Day.</li> </ul>
8. STATE ENERGY EFFICIENCY INDEX 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The index tracks the progress of Energy Efficiency initiatives in 36 States and Union Territories based on 97 significant indicators.</li> <li>The index is developed by Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) in association with Alliance for an Energy Efficient Economy (AEEE).</li> <li>The first such Index was launched on August, 2018.</li> <li>The index this year incorporates qualitative, quantitative and outcome-based indicators to assess energy efficiency initiatives, programs and outcomes in five distinct sectors – buildings, industry, municipalities, transport, agriculture, and DISCOMs.</li> <li>For rational comparison, States/UTs are categorised as ‘Front Runner’, ‘Achiever’, ‘Contender’ and ‘Aspirant’ based on aggregated Total Primary Energy Supply (TPES) required to meet the state’s actual energy demand (electricity, coal, oil, gas, etc.) across sectors.</li> <li>The top performing states in the State EE Index 2019 – Haryana, Kerala and Karnataka – are in the ‘Achiever’ category.</li> </ul>
9. Budget 2020: “ArthShastri” campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finance Ministry to explain economic terms through #ArthShastri social media campaign</li> <li>Through the “#ArthShastri” campaign, the ministry would explain several economic terms through interesting animated videos to help common man and students understand budget exercise in a simple way</li> </ul>
10. Brahmakalashothsava	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brahmakalashothsava festival is celebrated in the ancient Chandkuru Sri Durga Parameshwari Temple annually in Polali, Dakshina Kannada district in Karnataka</li> </ul>
11. Mein Kampf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mein Kampf (My Struggle or My Fight) is a 1925 autobiographical manifesto by Nazi Party leader Adolf Hitler.</li> <li>The work describes the process by which Hitler became</li> </ul>

	antisemitic and outlines his political ideology and future plans for Germany.
12. On Speakers and disqualification	<p>Landmark judgment in Kihoto Hollohan (1992)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upheld the validity of the Constitution's Tenth Schedule, or the anti-defection law.</li> <li>• This verdict had also made the Speaker's order subject to judicial review on limited grounds.</li> </ul> <p>Constitution Bench judgment (Rajendra Singh Rana, 2007)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Uttar Pradesh Speaker's order refusing to disqualify 13 BSP defectors was set aside on the ground that he had failed to exercise his jurisdiction to decide whether they had attracted disqualification, while recognising a 'split' in the legislature party.</li> </ul>
13. Annual meeting of world economic forum 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This year is the 50th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos</li> </ul> <p>From Prelims Point of View: The World Economic Forum (WEF)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The World Economic Forum (WEF) is a Swiss nonprofit foundation established in 1971, based in Geneva, Switzerland.</li> </ul> <p>Major reports published by WEF are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Global Competitiveness Report</li> <li>• Global IT Report</li> <li>• Global Gender Gap Report</li> <li>• Global Risk Report</li> <li>• Global Travel and Tourism Report</li> </ul>
14. Income tax appellate tribunal (ITAT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is a quasi-judicial institution set up in 1941 under section 5A of the Income Tax Act, 1922.</li> <li>• Initially, it had three Benches at Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai. But presently ITAT has 63 Benches at 27 different stations</li> <li>• It deals with appeals under the Direct Taxes Acts namely, the Income-tax Act, 1961.</li> <li>• The orders passed by the ITAT are final, an appeal lies to the High Court only if a substantial question of law arises for determination.</li> </ul>

<p>15. National voters' day (nvd)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celebrated on January 25th since 2011 to mark the Foundation day of Election Commission of India, which was established on 25th January 1950</li> <li>• Objective: To encourage, facilitate and maximize the enrolment, especially for the new voters; To spread awareness among voters for promoting informed participation in the elections.</li> <li>• Theme for NVD-2020 is 'Electoral Literacy for Stronger Democracy</li> </ul>
<p>16. Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As part of the commemoration of Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary, AnSI has dedicated an entire issue of its journal on what it calls "Gandhian insights into applied anthropology"</li> <li>• AnSI was formed in 1945 with its HQ at Kolkata</li> <li>• Parent Ministry: Ministry of Culture</li> </ul>
<p>17. Global Talent Competitiveness INDEX (GTCI)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GTCI compiled by INSEAD in collaboration with human resource firm Addeco and Google</li> <li>• India has climbed eight places to 72nd rank in the 2020 GTCI which was topped by Switzerland, the US and Singapore.</li> <li>• Report also noted that the gap between high income, talent-rich nations and the rest of the world is widening</li> </ul>



**(TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE)**

**Model questions: (Answers are provided at the end)**

**Q.1) Consider the following statements about Chandrayaan-2 Mission**

1. Chandrayaan-2 mission was India's first attempt to land on lunar surface.
2. The ISRO had planned the landing on the South Pole of the lunar surface

Which of the above statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

**Q.2) Consider the following statements about Military Affairs Department**

1. The department will be headed by Defence Secretary
2. It will facilitate restructuring of the military commands for optimal utilisation of resources by bringing about a jointness in operations, including through the establishment of joint/theatre commands

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.3) The National Population Register exercise will be carried out by which body/Ministry?**

- a. Office of the Registrar General of India, Union Home Ministry
- b. National Sample Survey Office
- c. Prime Minister's Office
- d. None of the above

**Q.4) Consider the following statements about 5G**

1. While 4G LTE focused on delivering the data much faster, 5G will also support new services such as mission-critical communications and Internet of Things (IoT).
2. 5G has lower latency than 4G i.e. it has the potential to deliver more instantaneous, real-time access: a 10x decrease in end-to-end latency down to 1ms.

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 Gaganyaan Mission**

1. Astronauts will be sent to space onboard Gaganyaan, a crew capsule, to be launched with the help of Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV)
2. India is cooperating with Russia and France for a successful Gaganyaan mission.

Which of the above 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 National Investment Manufacturing Zones**

1. The aim to increase the share of manufacturing to 25 percent of the country's GDP while also creating 100 million jobs over the next decade
2. It will be declared by the State Government as a Industrial Township under Article 243 Q (I) (c) of the 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.7) Mudumalai tiger reserve is located in which State of India?**

- a. Karnataka
- b. Kerala
- c. Andhra Pradesh
- d. Tamil Nadu

**Q.8) Consider the following statements about ASEAN**

1. The 10-member South East Asian grouping not only has objective on improving economic cooperation and growth but on social progress, social-cultural evolution among member countries
2. India has a Free Trade Agreement with ASEAN

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.9) Consider the following statements about DRDO Young Defence Laboratories**

1. These are led by under-35 directors and young military scientists

2. The aim is to drive the country's war technologies of the future under the Defence Research & Development Organisation.

Which of the above statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

**Q.10) Consider the following statements about Fair and remunerative price (FRP)**

1. FRP is fixed by Union government on the basis of recommendations of Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices.
2. This will be uniformly applicable only in the sugar producing states which are Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu .

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.11) Consider the following statements about National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)**

1. NSAP is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme of the Government of India that provides financial assistance to the elderly, widows and persons with disabilities in the form of social pensions
2. It represents a significant step towards the fulfillment of the Directive Principles in Article 41 of the 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.12) Consider the following statements about Lord Curzon**

1. He became the youngest Viceroy of India in 1899 at age 39, and remained in office until his resignation in 1905
2. It was during his tenure as Viceroy that Bengal was partitioned in 1905 which was finally reversed in 1911 by Lord Hardinge

Which of the above statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

**Q.13) Consider the following statements about Northeast monsoons**

1. It does not have anything to do with India's Northeast, even though a part of the system does originate from the area above it. Rather, it derives its name from the direction in which it travels — from the northeast to the southwest.
2. The northeast monsoon brings rain to just five of the 36 meteorological divisions in the country

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.14) Satyashodhak Samaj was started by**

- a. Bal Gangadhar Tilak
  - b. Raja Ram Mohan Roy
  - c. Dayananda Saraswati
  - d. Savitribai Phule & Jyotiba Phule
3. will focus on reducing particulate matter load.

Which of the above statement(s) given above is/are correct?

**Q.15) Consider the following statements about Zonal Councils**

1. They are the statutory bodies established by an Act of the Parliament, that is, States Reorganisation Act of 1956 & North-Eastern Council Act of 1971.
2. Prime Minister is the Common Chairman of all Zonal Councils

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.16) Consider the following statements about National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)**

1. It is a Constitutional Body established under Article 338-A
2. It has its own institutionalised mechanism for investigation of Human rights abuses and also the power to enforce its decisions.

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.17) Consider the following statements about Smog Towers**

1. These air filters shall draw in the air through fans installed at the top before passing it through the filters and releasing it near the ground.
2. The filters generally use carbon nanofibres as a major component and

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

**Q.18) Consider the following statements about Saras Mk2**

1. It is a light transport aircraft which is indigenously developed by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)
2. It will be ideal for commuter connectivity under the UDAAN scheme and other applications like aerial search/survey, executive transport, disaster management and border patrol

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.19) Belum Caves is located in which state of India?**

- a. Kerala
- b. Maharashtra
- c. Andhra Pradesh
- d. Karnataka

**Q.20) Consider the following statements about Gaganyaan Mission**

1. It is ISRO's human space flight programme under which 3 Indian astronauts will go into space by 2022.
2. Russian launch vehicle will lift Indian astronauts to their orbit.

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.21) Consider the following statements about UJALA Scheme**

1. The main objective is to promote efficient lighting, enhance awareness on using efficient equipment which reduce

electricity bills and help preserve environment

2. The scheme is being implemented by NITI Aayog in collaboration with State governments.

Which of the above statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

**Q.22) Consider the following statements about Great Indian Bustard**

1. It is the state bird of state of Rajasthan
2. It is listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List

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 about Indian Data Relay Satellite System (IDRSS)**

1. Without data relay satellites, ISRO would have to create a large number ground stations everywhere or hire them globally
2. IDRSS satellites are of the 2,000 kg class that would be launched on the GSLV launcher to geostationary orbits around 36,000 km away.

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.24) Consider the following statements about Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR)**

1. It is an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India.
2. It 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.

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.25) Bandar Abbas, the Iranian port city is located on the Strait of Hormuz. This strait connects which two water bodies?**

- a. Persian Gulf and Gulf of Aden
- b. Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman
- c. Red Sea and Gulf of Aden
- d. Red Sea and Gulf of Oman

**Q.26) Cryosphere often seen in the news is related to which of the following?**

- a. Inner core part of earth system consisting of radioactive materials
- b. Outer atmospheric part of earth system
- c. Frozen water part of the earth system
- d. None of the above

**Q.27) Consider the following statements about National Pension system(NPS)**

1. It is being implemented by Ministry of Labour
2. Non-Resident India(NRI), OCI (Overseas Citizens of India) and PIO (Person of Indian Origin) card holders and Hindu Undivided Family (HUFs) are eligible for opening of NPS account

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) Consider the following statements about Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)**

1. It is a Statutory body established under Companies Act, 2013.
2. It regulates National Pension System (NPS) and other pension schemes subscribed by employees of public and private sector of India.

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.29) Article 46 of the Constitution deals with which of the following?**

- a. Freedom of Speech
- b. Martial Law
- c. Uniform Civil Code
- d. None of the above

**Q.30) Shekatkar committee often seen in the news deals with which of the following?**

- a. Military Modernisation
- b. Financial Inclusion
- c. Doubling of Farmers Income
- d. Improving relations with Pakistan

**Q.31) Consider the following statements about GDP and Gross value Addition (GVA)**

1. GVA is the sum of a country's GDP and net of subsidies and taxes in the economy



2. GDP gives a picture of the state of economy from the producers' side or supply side, whereas GVA gives the picture from the consumers' side or demand perspective

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

**Q.32) Mahadaya and Mahaveer National Park are located in which State/UT of India?**

- Karnataka
- Goa
- Pondicherry
- Maharashtra

**Q.33) Rupa Ashok Hurra case in 2002 led to related to which of the following judicial remedies/pronouncements?**

- Writ of Habeas Corpus
- Restriction of detention by State authorities
- Curative review petition
- None of the above

**Q.34) which of the following are the benefits of the Green Credit Scheme?**

- It allows forests to be traded as a commodity.
- It allows the Forest Department to outsource one of its responsibilities of reforestation to non-government agencies

Select the correct answer from the codes given below

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

**Q.35) Madhavpura Mela often seen in news is celebrated in which State?**

- Rajasthan
- Uttar Pradesh
- Gujarat
- Maharashtra

**Q.36) Consider the following statements**

- Project Tiger was launched in 1973 with 9 tiger reserves for conserving our national animal, the tiger.
- Project Tiger is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change providing central assistance to the tiger States for tiger conservation in designated tiger reserves.
- A National Park or Wildlife Sanctuary that is considered significant for protecting tigers can be additionally designated as a Tiger Reserve

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- 1 and 2 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 1,2 and 3

**Q.37) Seke language often seen in news is predominantly associated with which region/country?**

- North-East region of India
- Bhutan
- Nepal
- Sri Lanka

**Q.38) Indian Cyber Crime Coordination (I4C) is located in which City of India?**

- Bengaluru
- Chennai
- Hyderabad
- None of the above

**Q.39) Consider the following statements about Chinese paddlefish**

1. It is a freshwater fish having an ancestral home in Yangtze river and Yellow river basin in China
2. It is in Critically endangered list of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

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 Integrated Steel Hub that is being planned in Eastern part of India**

1. It aims to attract investment of nearly \$70 billion in the steel sector and spur economic growth across eastern India
2. It is part of 'Purvodaya' initiative for focused development of eastern 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.41) Consider the following statements about CoronaVirus**

1. These are newly discovered species of virus which can cause severe respiratory and intestinal diseases
2. They are known to infect only humans

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.42) Consider the following statements about State Energy Efficiency Index**

1. It is released by NITI Aayog
2. It helps states contribute towards national goals on energy security and climate action by helping drive Energy Efficiency policies and programs

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.43) Sea Guardian is a bilateral Naval Exercise between which two countries?**

- a. India and Japan
- b. India and Sri Lanka
- c. China and Pakistan
- d. Pakistan and Russia

**Q.44) Jallikattu often seen in the news is predominantly associated with which region/state of India?**

- a. Karnataka
- b. Tamil Nadu
- c. Gujarat
- d. Nagaland

**Q.45) Consider the following statements about Amrit Kaur**

1. She co-founded the All India Women's Conference in 1927

2. She was Independent India's first Health minister

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

**Q.46) Consider the following statements about H9N2**

- It is a subtype of the influenza A virus, which causes human influenza as well as bird flu
- Recently in Jan 2020, H9N2 viruses has been observed for the first time in poultry in India

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

**Q.47) Yuelu Proclamation is related to which of the following field?**

- Gender Security
- Terrorism
- Food Safety
- Language Protection

**Q.48) Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion etc. (Article 15 of the Constitution of India) is a Fundamental Rights classifiable under:**

- The Right to Freedom of Religion
- The Right against Exploitation
- The Cultural and Educational Rights
- The Right to Equality

**Q.49) One of the implications of equality in society is the absence of**

- Privileges
- Restraint

- Competition
- Ideology

**Q 50) Which one of the following Muslim rulers was hailed as the 'Jagadguru' by his Muslim subject because of his belief in secularism?**

- Hussain Shah
- Zain-ul-Abidin
- Ibrahim Adil Shah
- Mahmud II

**Q 51) In India, inflation is measured by the:**

- Wholesale Price Index number
- Consumers Price Index for urban non-manual workers
- Consumers Price Index for agricultural workers
- National Income Deflation

**Q 52) A rapid increase in the rate of inflation is sometimes attributed to the "base effect". What is "base effect"?**

- It is the impact of drastic deficiency in supply due to failure of crops
- It is the impact of the surge in demand due to rapid economic growth
- It is the impact of the price levels of previous year on the calculation of inflation rate
- None of the statements (a), (b) and (c) given above is correct in this context

**Q 53) With reference to India, consider the following statements:**

- The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) in India is available on a monthly basis only.**
- As compared to Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (CPIIW), the WPI gives less weight to food articles.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- 1 only

- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Q 54) Consider the following statements about the National Informatics Centre**

1. Objective to a single point to access the information and services of the Government of India
2. Government Instant Messaging System (GIMS)'is developed by Kerala unit of National Informatics Centre (NIC)

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Q.55) The power of the Supreme Court of India to decide disputes between the Centre and the State falls under its:**

- (a) advisory jurisdiction
- (b) appellate jurisdiction
- (c) original jurisdiction
- (d) constitutional jurisdiction

**Q.56) Consider the following statements:**

1. **The Standard Mark of Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) is mandatory for automotive tyres and tubes.**
2. **AGMARK is a quality Certification Mark issued by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).**

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Q 57) The “Red Data Books” published by the International Union for Conservation**

**of Nature and Natural resources (IUCN) contain lists of ?**

1. Endemic plant and animal species present in the biodiversity hotspots.
2. Threatened plant and animal species.
3. Protected sites for conservation of nature and natural resources in various countries.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 and 3
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3
- (d) 3 only

**Q 58) With reference to the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which of the following statements is/are correct?**

1. IUCN is an organ of the United Nations and CITES is an international agreement between governments.
2. IUCN runs thousands of field projects around the world to better manage natural environments
3. CITES is legally binding on the States that have joined it, but this Convention does not take the place of national laws.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Q.59) Which of the following country was not the founding member of the SCO?**

- a. China
- b. Kazakhstan
- c. Uzbekistan
- d. Russia

**Q.60) The main aim of SCO is to generate cooperation between member nations on:**

- Resolving border issues
- Countering Terrorism
- Economic Cooperation
- All of the above

**Q.61) Consider the following statements about AGR**

- The AGR directly impacts the outgo from the pockets of telcos to the DoT as it is used to calculate the levies payable by operators.
- Telecom companies now owe the government not just the shortfall in AGR for the past 14 years but also an interest on that amount along with penalty and interest on the penalty.

**Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?**

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

**Q.62) With reference to 'Eco-Sensitive Zones', which of the following statements is/are correct?**

- Eco-Sensitive Zones are the areas that are declared under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- The purpose of the declaration of Eco-Sensitive Zones is to prohibit all kinds of human activities in those zones except agriculture.

**Select the correct answer using the code given below.**

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

**Q 63) Which of the following diseases can be transmitted from one person to another through tattooing?**

- Chikungunya
- Hepatitis B
- HIV-AIDS

**Select the correct answer using the codes given below.**

- 1 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

**Q 64) Consider the following statements:**

- NTPC is the largest power utility in India
- ONGC accounts for half of the LPG production of India
- Indian Oil Corporation operates all the refineries in India
- The Indian Ordnance Factory is the largest departmentally run industrial undertakings in the country

**Which of these statements is/are correct?**

- 1 only
- 2 and 3
- 2, 3 and 4
- 1 and 4

**Q 65) Consider the following pairs of Terms sometimes seen in news vs Context /Topic:**

- Belle II experiment: Artificial Intelligence
- Blockchain technology: Digital/Cryptocurrency
- CRISPR – Cas9: Particle Physics

**Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched ?**

- 1 and 3 only
- 2 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

**Q 66) With reference to 'Bitcoins', sometimes seen in the news, which of the following statements is/are correct?**

1. Bitcoins are tracked by the Central Banks of the countries.
2. Anyone with a Bitcoin address can send and receive Bitcoins from anyone else with a Bitcoin address.
3. Online payments can be sent without either side knowing the identity of the other.

**Select the correct answer using the code given below.**

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

**Q.67) Which of the following statements is/are correct?**

1. Viruses lack enzymes necessary for the generation of energy.
2. Viruses can be cultured in any synthetic medium.
3. Viruses are transmitted from one organism to another by biological vectors only

**Select the correct answer using the codes given below.**

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

**Q 68) Which of the following statements is/are correct?**

Viruses can infect

1. bacteria
2. fungi
3. plants

**Select the correct answer using the code given below.**

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 3 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

**Q 69) Consider the following statements:**

1. In tropical regions, Corona virus disease is transmitted by the same mosquito that transmits dengue.
2. Sexual transmission of Corona virus disease is possible.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

**Q 70) The “Red Data Books” published by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural resources (IUCN) contain lists of ?**

1. Endemic plant and animal species present in the biodiversity hotspots.
2. Threatened plant and animal species.
3. Protected sites for conservation of nature and natural resources in various countries.

**Select the correct answer using the codes given below:**

- a. 1 and 3
- b. 2 only
- c. 2 and 3
- d. 3 only

**Q 71) With reference to the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which of the following statements is/are correct?**

1. IUCN is an organ of the United Nations and CITES is an international agreement between governments.
2. IUCN runs thousands of field projects around the world to better manage natural environments.

3. CITES is legally binding on the States that have joined it, but this Convention does not take the place of national laws.

**Select the correct answer using the code given below.**

- 1 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

**Q.72) The Dinesh Goswami Committee was concerned with:**

- de-nationalisation of banks
- electoral reforms
- steps to put down insurgency in the north-east
- the problem of the Chakmas

**Q.73) Given below are two statements, one labelled as Assertion (A) and the other labelled as Reason (R) :**

Assertion (A) : The word minority is not defined in the Constitution of India.

Reason (R) : The Minorities Commission is not a constitutional body.

**In the context of the above two statements, which one of the following is correct?**

- Both A and R are true and R is the correct explanation of A
- Both A and R are true but R is not a correct explanation
- A is true but R is false
- A is false but R is true

**Q.74) Consider the following statements about the minorities India:**

- The Government of India has notified five communities, namely, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists and Zoroastrians as Minorities
- The National Commission for Minorities was given statutory status in 1993

- The smallest religious minority in India are the Zoroastrians
- The Constitution of India recognizes and protects religious and linguistic minorities

**Which of these statements are correct?**

- 2 and 3
- 1 and 4
- 2, 3 and 4
- 1, 2 and 4

**Q.75) The power of the Supreme Court of India to decide disputes between the Centre and the State falls under its:**

- advisory jurisdiction
- appellate jurisdiction
- original jurisdiction
- constitutional jurisdiction

**Q.76) In the context of space technology, what is "Hawaii telescope", recently in the news?**

- A mini satellite launched by ISRO for promoting the distance education in India
- The name given to the next Moon Impact Probe, for Chandrayan-II
- A geoportal of ISRO with 3 D imaging capabilities of India
- proposed astronomical observatory with an extremely large telescope

**Q.77) Which one of the following schedules of the Constitution of India contains provisions regarding anti-defection Act?**

- Second Schedule
- Fifth Schedule
- Eighth Schedule
- Tenth Schedule

**Q.78) Consider the following statements:**

- The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly shall vacate his/her office if he/she ceases to be a member of the Assembly.

2. Whenever the Legislative Assembly is dissolved, the Speaker shall vacate his/her immediately.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

**Q.79) Other than India and China, which one of the following groups of countries border Myanmar?**

- Bangladesh, Thailand and Vietnam
- Cambodia, Laos and Malaysia
- Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia
- Thailand, Laos and Bangladesh

**Q.80) Consider the following pairs: Community sometimes in the affairs of mentioned in the news**

- Kurd Bangladesh
- Madhesi Nepal
- Rohingya Myanmar

**Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?**

- 1 and 2
- 2 only
- 2 and 3
- 3 only

**Q 81) Where is Davos, the venue of the annual meeting of World Economic Forum; located?**

- France
- Germany
- Switzerland
- Luxemburg

**Q 82) Which of the following gives 'Global Gender Gap Index' ranking to the countries of the world?**

- World Economic Forum
- UN Human Rights Council

- UN Women
- World Health Organization

**Q.83) Consider the following statements**

- Ministry of Human Resources Development establishes 10 Chairs named after eminent Women in Universities with an aim to carry out research activities to encourage women.
- National Girl Child Day is celebrated on January 24th

**Which of the above statement(s) given above is/are correct?**

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

**Q.84) Consider the following statements about Archaea**

- They are known for producing antimicrobial molecules, and for antioxidant activity with applications in eco-friendly waste-water treatment
- They are also present in human gut and have a potential relationship with human health.

**Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?**

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

**Q.85) Consider the following statements about Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT)**

- It is a quasi-judicial institution set up in 1941 under section 5A of the Income Tax Act, 1922.
- The orders of ITAT are final and cannot be appealed only in Supreme Court of India

**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 Vyommitra**

1. It is a half humanoid designed and developed by ISRO in collaboration with NASA
2. It will simulate the human functions required for space before real astronauts take off in India's Gaganyaan mission.

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 about India Climate Collaborative(ICC)**

1. It is partnership between Confederation of Indian Industry, Union Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change and NITI Aayog
2. It will be working to strengthen the climate community locally, build a climate narrative and drive solutions that will ensure both the natural world and people thrive

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 Child Adoption Resource Authority (CARA)**

1. It is a statutory body under Ministry of Home Affairs

2. CARA primarily deals with the adoption of the orphan, abandoned and surrendered children through its associated /recognised adoption agencies.

Which of the above statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

**Q.89) Consider the following statements about Global Talent Competitiveness Index (GTCI)**

1. It is released annually by World Bank in collaboration with International Labour Organisation
2. India has climbed eight places to 72nd rank in the 2020 report of GTCI

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.90) Consider the following statements about Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI)**

1. It is a premier research institute in India for anthropological research in bio-cultural studies.
2. It works under the overall control & guidance of 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.91) Oslo Accords often seen in the news is related to which region/countries?**

- a. North Korea-South Korea
- b. Israel-Palestine
- c. India-Pakistan
- d. None of the above

**Q.92) Consider the following statements about ASAT Weapons recently in news**

1. It is missile-based system to attack moving satellites.
2. With such capabilities India is now in the league of three countries after the U.S., Russia, and China to have such technology

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.93) Consider the following statements about Prabhavatigupta**

1. She was the granddaughter of Samudragupta who married Vakataka king Rudrasena II
2. She had a pivotal role in propagation of Vaishnava practices in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra

Which of the above 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) Corruption Perception Index is prepared by**

- a. World Economic Forum
- b. World Bank
- c. IMF
- d. Transparency International

**Q.95) Which of the following states enjoy special provision under Sixth Schedule of the Constitution**

1. Assam
2. Arunachal Pradesh
3. Meghalaya
4. Tripura
5. Mizoram

Select the correct answer from the codes given below:

- a. 1,2 and 3 only
- b. 2 only
- c. 1,3,4 and 5 only
- d. All of them

**Q.96) Consider the following statements about Global Potato Conclave**

1. The First such edition is being held in Gujarat, India from 28th Jan 2020 – 31st Jan 2020
2. In the last eleven years alone, while the area under potato in India, has increased by 19%, it has increased by about 170% in Gujarat.

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**

1. Between third and fifth centuries, Vakatakas were ruling the North-Western Part of India while the more powerful Guptas were ruling the Central & Deccan part of India
2. Vakataka rulers followed the Shaivism while the Guptas were staunch Vaishnavites.

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) Consider the following statements about Hydrochlorofluorocarbon (HCFC)-141 b**

1. It is a chemical used by foam manufacturing enterprises and one of the most potent ozone depleting chemical
2. India is one of the leading producer and exporter of this chemical

Which of the above statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

**Q.99) Palpur Kuno sanctuary is located in which State/Union Territory of India?**

- a. Maharashtra
- b. Madhya Pradesh
- c. Chandigarh
- d. Puducherry

**Q.100) Consider the following statements about Ramsar Convention**

1. It is an inter-governmental accord for preserving the ecological character of wetlands
2. India got its first Ramsar Site in 2019 through addition of Chilka Lake under the aegis of the Convention.

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.101) Consider the following statements about SIS-DP recently in news**

1. It is a project to assist gram panchayats at grassroots level with basic planning inputs derived from satellite data.
2. It is being implemented by NITI Aayog in collaboration with ISRO & NASA.

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 Spitzer Space Telescope**

1. It is a space telescope developed by Russia
2. It could see through large amounts of gas using infrared wavelengths to find objects that may otherwise have been invisible to human beings. These included exoplanets, brown dwarfs and cold matter found in the space between stars

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 CCTNS – Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems**

1. It is nationwide network that connects over 15,000 police stations across the country
2. It is implemented by NITI Aayog in collaboration with Ministry of Home Affairs

Which of the above 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) Nagoba Jatara seen in news is celebrated in which State/Union Territory of India?**

- a. Telangana
- b. Madhya Pradesh
- c. Chattisgarh
- d. Puducherry

**Q.105) Consider the following statements about Operation Vanilla recently in news**

1. It is launched by Indian Navy
2. Its objects was to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to the affected population of Sri Lanka post devastation caused by Cyclone Diane.

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) Consider the following statements about Yellow Rust disease**

1. It is a fungal disease which turns the crop's leaves into a yellowish colour and stops photosynthesis activity
2. Appropriate insecticides need to be sprayed on the crops so as to contain it.

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.107) Section 438 of Code of Criminal Procedure deals with which of the following?**

- a. Sedition
- b. Dowry & Harassment of Women
- c. Anticipatory Bail
- d. None of the above

**Q.108) Consider the following statements about Central Water Commission**

1. It is a premier technical organization of India in the field of Water Resources, formed via notification in 1975
2. It is presently functioning as an attached office of the Ministry of Home Affairs

Which of the above 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) Exercise Sampriti is a bilateral military exercise between India and which other country?**

- a. Sri Lanka
- b. Nepal
- c. Bangladesh
- d. None of the above

**Q.110) Consider the following statements about Beating Retreat Ceremony**

1. It officially denotes the beginning of Republic Day festivities.
2. It is conducted on the evening of 23 January, the third day before Republic Day.

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



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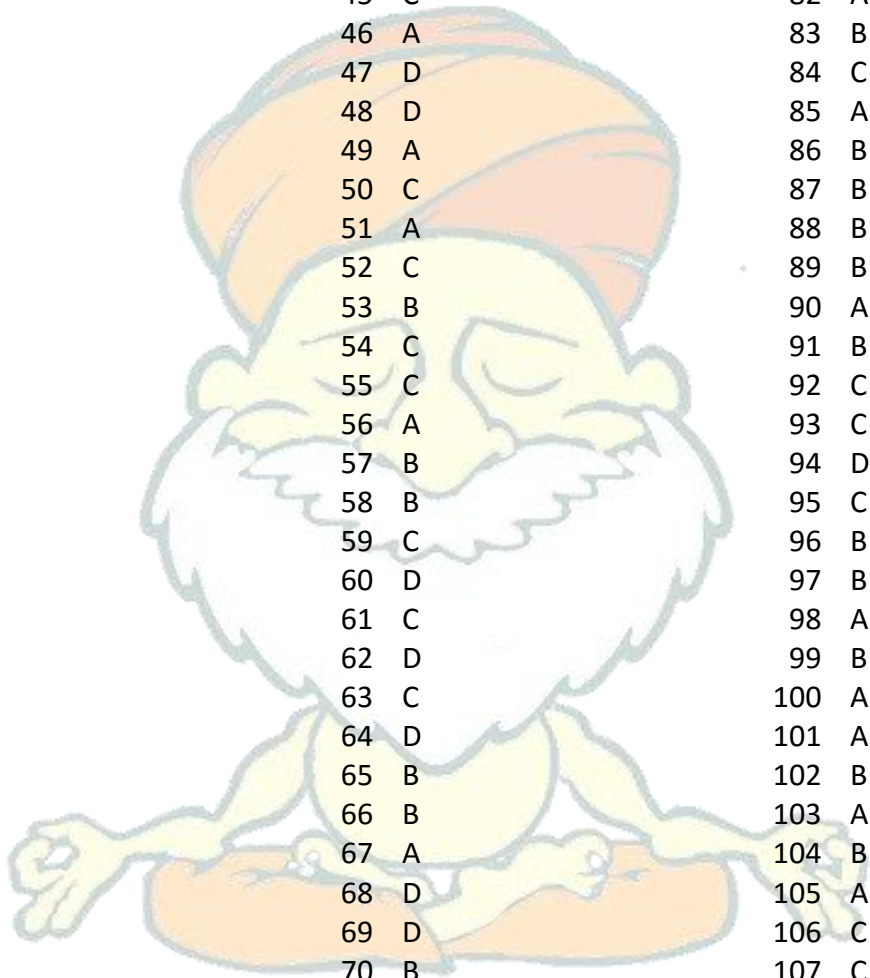
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1	c	38	d	75	C
2	b	39	A	76	D
3	a	40	C	77	D
4	c	41	A	78	A
5	B	42	B	79	D
6	C	43	C	80	C
7	D	44	B	81	C
8	C	45	C	82	A
9	C	46	A	83	B
10	A	47	D	84	C
11	C	48	D	85	A
12	C	49	A	86	B
13	C	50	C	87	B
14	D	51	A	88	B
15	A	52	C	89	B
16	d	53	B	90	A
17	C	54	C	91	B
18	B	55	C	92	C
19	C	56	A	93	C
20	A	57	B	94	D
21	A	58	B	95	C
22	C	59	C	96	B
23	C	60	D	97	B
24	C	61	C	98	A
25	B	62	D	99	B
26	C	63	C	100	A
27	D	64	D	101	A
28	B	65	B	102	B
29	D	66	B	103	A
30	A	67	A	104	B
31	A	68	D	105	A
32	B	69	D	106	C
33	C	70	B	107	C
34	C	71	B	108	a
35	C	72	b	109	C
36	d	73	B	110	D
37	C	74	D		





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