

## Current Affairs - January Edition 2020

### Polity, Governance, Policies, Schemes, Acts and National Affairs

1. 'Good Governance Index'	1
2. National Population Register (NPR)	2
3. Grounds for divorce under Hindu law	2
4. What is Eat Right Mela?-	3
5. Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA)	4
6. Sustainable Development Goal Index	5
7. Universal Postal Union (UPU)	6
8. Recycling of Ships Act	6
9. Instrument of Accession	7
10.UGC issues norms for Ethics in Higher Education	8
11.Swadesh Darshan Scheme	9
12.Pradhan Mantri ujjwala Yojana(PMUJ)	10
13.What is a privilege motion?	11
14.Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act	12
15.Creamy layer principle in SC,ST quota for promotion	13
16.Disha Bill	14
17.Accessible India Campaign	15
18.Mental disorders high in South India	16
19.Drug prices control under order	16
20.Samagra Shiksha	17
21.6 <sup>th</sup> schedule of the Constitution	18
22.Parliamentary standing committees	19
23.Removal of Anglo- Indians Reservation in Legislative Bodies	21
24.Indian Railway Management service(IRMS)	21
25.Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandan Yojana(PMVVY)	22
26.Atal Bhujal Yojana	23
27.National Broadband Mission(NBM)	24
28.Can the strength of Lok Sabha be increased?	24
29.Impeachment of US President	25
30.Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group(PVTG)	26
31.Ekal School Abhiyan	27
32.Nagpur Resolution: A holistic approach for empowering citizens	28

33. Centre stops online sale of Medicines	29
34. Taxation Laws ( Amendment ) Bill , 2019	30
35. Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana	31
36. Special Protection Group( Amendment) Bill, 2019	31
37. Portal to Block and Trace Stolen Mobiles	32
38. Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme	33
39. Legal framework for illegal migrants in India	33
40. Skills Build Platform	35
41. Detention centres for illegal migrants	33
42. Citizenship ( Amendment ) Bill, 2019	36
<b>Bilateral and International Affairs</b>	
43. United States commission on International Religious Freedom	38
44. Chabahar Port	39
45. UN medal for Indian peacekeepers in South Sudan	40
46. Islamic cooperation countries	41
47. Global Refugee Forum	42
48. United States- Mexico- Canada Agreement (USMCA)	42
49. Indo-US 2+2 Dialogue	44
50. Land Boundary Agreement (LBA)	45
51. 19 <sup>th</sup> IORA Council of Ministers Meeting	46
52. WTO's dispute settlement mechanism	47
53. Bougainville and nationhood	48
54. Saudi Arabia becomes First Arab Nation to Head G20	49
<b>Geography , Environment and Ecology</b>	
55. Torrefaction to reduce stubble burning	50
56. Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers Rights Authority	50
57. Sustainable development cell for Environmental Mitigation Measures	51
58. Project Dolphin	52
59. The India state of Forest Report 2019	53
60. European Green Deal	54
61. National Green Corps ' Ecoclub '	55
62. Echo Network	56
63. Jal Jeevan Mission	56
64. Global Climate Risk Index 2020	57
65. Operation ' Clean Art ' to crack down on illegal trade in Mongoose Hair	58

66.Namami Gange	59
67.Winter Solstice 2019	60
68.Worls Habitat Award for Odisha JAGA Mission	61
69.Blue flag programme	61
70.Locust Invasion in Gujara t	62
71.Climate change performance Index	63
72.IUCN Redlist of Threatened Species	64
73.Global Carbon Project	65
74.COP25 Climate summit	66
<b>Economy</b>	
75.Bharat Bond ETF	67
76.Guidelines for Licensing of small Finance Banks	68
77.Tripura gets its first SeZ	70
78.Financial Stability Report: RBI	71
79.Contraction in Index of Industrial production	73
80.Forex Reserves	74
81.National Electronic Fund Transfer (NEFT)	75
82.Operation Twist	76
83.What is deposit insurance?	77
84.Consumer Expenditure Survey	78
<b>Security, Science and Technology</b>	
85.Space Force by USA	80
86.Chief of Defence Staff	80
87.Biosimilar Medicine	81
88.New definition of Kilogram	83
89.What are Microdots?	83
90.UN backs Russia on internet convention	84
91.Rare Earth Elements	85
92.RISAT -2BRI	86
93.Snow Ex	87
94.Navic	88
95.Government Instant Messaging System( GIMS)	89
96.StrandHogg	90
97.Fuel Cell Electric Vehicle	90
98.White Dwarfs System	91

**Indian History, Culture , Art & Architecture**

99. South India's earliest Sanskrit Inscription found in AP	92
100. Jangubai Cave Temple and Kaplai caves	93
101. Maharaja Surajmal and the third battle of Panipat	94
102. Sattriya Dance	95
103. Paika Rebellion	96
104. DSC prize for South Asian Literature 2019	96
105. Natyashastra	97

**Important Days, reports , Events and Miscellaneous**

106. Indias first maritime museum in Gujarat	97
107. Top 100 city Destination ranking	97
108. World Soil Day	98
109. Zero FIR	99
110. Human Development Index	99
111. International Human Rights Day	101
112. Railwire Wi-Fi	102
113. National Energy Conservation Day	103
114. Crystal award	104
115. Gender gap index	104
116. Gandhi Citizenship Education Prize	105
117. 2019 Pollution and Health Metrics	105
118. Indian Pharmacopoeia	106
119. West African Nations rename Common Currency –eco	106
120. Tunnel Under Rohtang Pass to be named after Atal Bihari Vajpayee	107
121. Drake Passage	107
122. Cental Equipment Identity Register	107

## Polity, Governance, Policies, Schemes, Acts and National Affairs

### 1. 'Good Governance Index'

**Context:** Latest edition of the 'Good Governance Index' has been launched on the occasion of 'Good Governance Day'.

**Background:**

Good Governance Day is observed on the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee (25th December). It was observed for the first time in 2014.

**What is the Good Governance Index (GGI)?**

It is a tool to assess the status of governance and the impact of various interventions taken up by the State Government and UTs.

**The objectives of GGI are:**

1. To provide quantifiable data to compare the state of governance in all states and UTs.
2. To enable states and UTs to formulate and implement suitable strategies for improving governance.
3. To shift to result-oriented approaches and administration.

**How is the GGI calculated?**

The GGI takes into consideration **10 sectors** — agriculture and allied sectors, commerce and industries, human resource development, public health, public infrastructure and utilities, economic governance, social welfare & development, judicial and public security, environment and citizen-centric governance.

- These 10 governance sectors are further measured on a total of 50 indicators. These indicators are given different weight age under one governance sector to calculate the value.

**The states and UTs are divided into three groups** — big states, north-east and hill states, and Union territories.

**Key Findings of the first GGI Report:**

**Top performers among the big states:** Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat. The bottom six states are Odisha, Bihar, Goa, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand.

**Among the North-East & Hill States:** Top 3 states are Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Tripura. The bottom 3 states are Meghalaya, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh.

**Pondicherry leads among the UTs** followed closely by Chandigarh with Delhi bagging the third spot. Lakshadweep is at the bottom among the UTs.

**Sector-wise ranking:** In the environment sector:

The top three states are West Bengal, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

The bottom 3 states are Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Goa.

**Judicial and public security ranking:** West Bengal is at the bottom two in the judicial and public security ranking. Tamil Nadu tops the chart here.

**Economic governance:** Karnataka is at the top under the economic governance category.

**Health:** Kerala is at the top in the public health sector.

### 2. National Population Register (NPR)

**Context:** Following the footsteps of West Bengal, the Kerala Government has decided to put on hold all proceedings for updating the *National Population Register (NPR)*.

### **Why?**

Because of the *apprehensions among the general public about the conduct of NPR related activities would lead to national register of citizens (NRC) in the wake of citizenship amendment act 2019.*

### **What is National Population Register (NPR)?**

It is a *Register of usual residents of the country.*

It is being *prepared at the local (Village/sub-Town), sub-District, District, State and National level under provisions of the Citizenship Act 1955 and the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003.*

It is *mandatory for every usual resident of India to register in the NPR.*

**Objectives:** To create a comprehensive identity database of every usual resident in the country.

### **Who is a usual resident?**

A usual resident is defined for the purposes of NPR as *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.*

### **Components:**

1. The NPR database would contain demographic as well as biometric details.
2. As per the provisions of the NPR, a resident identity card (RIC) will be issued to individuals over the age of 18.
3. This will be a chip-embedded smart card containing the demographic and biometric attributes of each individual.
4. The UID number will also be printed on the card.

### **What is the controversy around it?**

1. Comes in the backdrop of the NRC *excluding lakhs of people in Assam.*
2. It intends *to collect a much larger amount of personal data on residents of India.*
3. There is *yet no clarity on the mechanism for protection of this vast amount of data.*

### **Why does the government want so much data?**

1. Every country must have a comprehensive identity database of its residents with relevant demographic details. It will *help the government formulate its policies better and also aid national security.*
2. It will *ease the life of those residing in India by cutting red tape.* Not only will it help target government beneficiaries in a better way, but also further cut down paperwork and red tape in a similar manner that Aadhaar has done.
3. With NPR data, *residents will not have to furnish various proofs of age, address and other details in official work.*
4. It would also *eliminate duplication in voter lists, government insists.*

## **3. Grounds for divorce under Hindu law.**

**Context:** Last week, the Supreme Court used extraordinary powers under *Article 142 of the Constitution* to grant divorce in a case of *“irretrievable breakdown of marriage”*.

### **What is “irretrievable breakdown of marriage”?**

The situation that exists when either or both spouses are no longer able or willing to live with each other, thereby destroying their husband and wife relationship with no hope of resumption of spousal duties.

Currently, *Hindu marriage law does not include “irretrievable breakdown of marriage” as a ground for divorce.* However, the apex court in a number of cases has provided the said relief using its extraordinary powers that allow it to do “complete justice”.

### **What are the grounds for divorce under Hindu Law?**

**The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955**, lays down *the law for divorce, which applies to Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs.*

1. **Under Section 13 of the Act**, the grounds for divorce include: “voluntary sexual intercourse with any person other than his or her spouse”; “cruelty”; desertion “for a continuous period of not less than two years immediately preceding the presentation of the petition”; “ceas(ing) to be a Hindu by conversion to another religion”; and being “incurably of unsound mind”.
2. In addition, **Section 13B** provides for “divorce by mutual consent”.
3. **Section 27 of The Special Marriage Act, 1954** provides the grounds for grant of divorce in the case of marriages solemnised under that Act.

However, neither of the two Acts provide for “irretrievable breakdown of marriage” as a ground for divorce.

**What’s the case now?**

Recently, divorce was granted on the ground of irretrievable breakdown of marriage by the Supreme Court (Under Article 142), after examining various judicial pronouncements. It has been noted that such powers are exercised in rare cases, in view of the absence of legislation in this behalf, where it is found that a marriage is totally unworkable, emotionally dead, beyond salvage and has broken down irretrievably.

In the present case, the court said that it believed that “not only is the continuity of this marriage fruitless, but it is causing further emotional trauma and disturbance to both the parties”, and “the sooner this comes to an end, the better it would be, for both the parties”.

**Article 142:**

Article 142 “provide(s) a unique power to the Supreme Court, to do **“complete justice” between the parties**, i.e., where at times law or statute may not provide a remedy, the Court can extend itself to put a quietus to a dispute in a manner which would befit the facts of the case.

**Suggestions made by the Law Commission:**

The Law Commission of India has twice recommended that **“irretrievable breakdown” of marriage be included as a new ground for granting divorce to Hindus under the provisions of the Hindu Marriage Act and the Special Marriage Act.**

#### 4. What is Eat Right Mela?

**Context:** Recently, Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare inaugurated the 2nd edition of **Eat Right Mela** in New Delhi.

**What is ‘Eat Right India’ movement?**

Launched by **the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)**.

**Aim:** to usher in a ‘new food culture’ by nudging businesses and consumers to adopt safe, healthy and sustainable food practices and habits.

**What is Eat Right Mela?**

As part of the Eat Right India movement, the ‘Eat Right Mela’ was conceived to engage, excite and enable citizens to eat right through an info-tainment model. Eat Right Melas have been envisioned for massive outreach to build awareness on safe food and healthy diets through an interactive and informative model.

**Measures in place:**

- FSSAI has put in place **robust regulatory measures under three major pillars:** Eat Safe, Eat Health and Eat Sustainably for the programme.
- FSSAI has prescribed a limit for **Total Polar Compounds (TPC)** at 25% in cooking oil to avoid the harmful effects of reused cooking oil.

**Significance of the campaign:**

The country is in need of a movement on preventive health for all in the backdrop of the increasing burden of non-communicable diseases including diabetes, hypertension and heart diseases, widespread deficiencies of vitamins and minerals and rampant food-borne illnesses. The Eat Right India movement acts as *a crucial preventive healthcare measure to trigger social and behavioural change* through a judicious mix of regulatory measures, combined with soft interventions for ensuring awareness and capacity building of food businesses and citizens alike.

## 5. Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA)

**Context:** The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has declared the entire State of Nagaland as a *“disturbed area” for six more months, under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA).*

**What does the AFSPA mean?**

In simple terms, AFSPA gives armed forces the power to maintain public order in *“disturbed areas”*.

**Powers given to armed forces:**

- They have *the authority to prohibit a gathering of five or more persons in an area, can use force or even open fire after giving due warning if they feel a person is in contravention of the law.*
- If reasonable suspicion exists, the army can also *arrest a person without a warrant;* enter or search premises without a warrant; and ban the possession of firearms.
- *Any person arrested or taken into custody may be handed over to the officer in charge of the nearest police station along with a report detailing the circumstances that led to the arrest.*

**What is a “disturbed area” and who has the power to declare it?**

A disturbed area is one which is declared by notification under *Section 3 of the AFSPA.* An area can be disturbed due to differences or disputes between members of different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities.

*The Central Government, or the Governor of the State or administrator of the Union Territory can declare the whole or part of the State or Union Territory as a disturbed area.* A suitable notification would have to be made in the Official Gazette. As per Section 3, it can be invoked in places where “the use of armed forces in aid of the civil power is necessary”.

**What’s the origin of AFSPA?**

The Act came into force in the context of increasing violence in the Northeastern States decades ago, which the State governments found difficult to control. The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Bill was passed by both the Houses of Parliament and it was approved by the President on September 11, 1958. It became known as the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958.

**Has there been any review of the Act?**

On November 19, 2004, the Central government appointed *a five-member committee headed by Justice B P Jeevan Reddy* to review the provisions of the act in the north eastern states.

The committee submitted its report in 2005, which included the following recommendations: (a) AFSPA should be repealed and appropriate provisions should be inserted in the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967; (b) The Unlawful Activities Act should be modified to clearly specify the powers of the armed forces and paramilitary forces and (c) grievance cells should be set up in each district where the armed forces are deployed.

The 5th report of *the Second Administrative Reforms Commission on public order has also recommended the repeal of the AFSPA.*

## 6. Sustainable Development Goal Index

**Context:** NITI Aayog has released the *2019 SDG India Index*.

The index *evaluates progress of States and Union Territories on social, economic and environmental parameters*.

**Key facts:**

- The SDG India Index, launched last year by Niti Aayog with the help of United Nations, took into account 16 out of 17 goals specified by the United Nations as SDGs.
- The Index this year ranked states based on 54 targets spread over 100 indicators out of 306 outlined by the UN.
- The first report, which was launched in 2018 had 13 goals and 39 indicators.
- The year 2020 will be the fifth anniversary of the adoption of SDGs by 193 countries at the UN General Assembly.
- The SDGs, constituted through an unprecedented consultative process, have 17 goals and 169 related targets to be achieved by 2030.

**Performance of various states:**

- 1) Kerala retained *the top rank with a score of 70*.
- 2) Himachal Pradesh took *the second spot* while Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Telangana shared *the third spot*.
- 3) Chandigarh maintained its *top spot among the UTs with a score of 70*.
- 4) **Relative performance:** Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and Sikkim have shown maximum improvement, but states like Gujarat have not shown any progress vis-a-vis 2018 rankings.
- 5) Bihar, Jharkhand and Arunachal Pradesh are *the worst performing states*.
- 6) **Only three states were placed in the category of Front Runners (with a score in the range 65-99, including both) in 2018** – Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu. **In 2019, five more states joined this league** – Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Sikkim and Goa, taking the total tally to eight.
- 7) With regard to **poverty reduction**, states which have done well include Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Andhra Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Sikkim.
- 8) **On ‘zero hunger’ parameters**, Goa, Mizoram, Kerala, Nagaland and Manipur were the front runners.

**Overall India’s performance:**

1. India’s composite score improved from 57 in 2018 to 60 in 2019 with major success in water and sanitation, industry and innovation.
2. However, nutrition and gender continue to be problem areas for India, requiring more focussed approach from the government.
3. While three out of five states in the top spots perform equal to or better than the country average on 12 goals, the other two states do the same on 11 goals.

## 7. Universal Postal Union (UPU)

**Context:** The Union Cabinet has given its approval to the ratification of *the Tenth Additional Protocol* to the Constitution of *the Universal Postal Union (UPU)*.

**What is UPU?**

Established by the *Treaty of Bern of 1874*.

- It is *a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN)*.
- **Headquarters** are located in Bern, Switzerland.

- The *UPU contains four bodies consisting of the Congress*, the Council of Administration (CA), the Postal Operations Council (POC) and the International Bureau (IB).

**Functions:**

- It also oversees the Telematics and Express Mail Service (EMS) cooperatives. Each member agrees to the same terms for conducting international postal duties.
- It coordinates postal policies among member nations, in addition to the worldwide postal system.

**Benefits of ratification for India:**

- The approval enables the Postal Administration of India to have the Instrument of Ratification signed with the Director-General of the International Bureau of the Universal Postal Union through diplomatic channels along with the approval of other Acts of the Union.
- It will also enable the Department of Posts to bring out any administrative orders to implement the provisions of the UPU Convention in India.

## 8. Recycling of Ships Act

**Context:** *The Recycling of Ships Act* has come into force with President Ram Nath Kovind giving assent to the law which provides for safe and environmentally sound recycling of ships.

The government has also decided to accede to *the Hong Kong International Convention for safe and environmentally sound recycling of Ships, 2009*.

**Background:**

The Union Cabinet had approved the proposal for enactment of *Recycling of Ships Bill, 2019 and accession to the Hong Kong International Convention for Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships, 2009*.

**Key features of the bill:**

1. It restricts and prohibits the use or installation of hazardous material, which applies irrespective of whether a ship is meant for recycling or not.
2. For new ships, such restriction or prohibition on use of hazardous material will be immediate, that is, from the date the legislation comes into force, while existing ships shall have a period of five years for compliance.
3. Restriction or prohibition on use of hazardous material would not be applied to warships and non-commercial ships operated by Government.
4. Ships shall be surveyed and certified on the inventory of hazardous material used in ships.
5. Under the Bill, ship recycling facilities are required to be authorized and ships shall be recycled only in such authorized ship recycling facilities.
6. It also provides that ships shall be recycled in accordance with a ship-specific recycling plan.
7. Ships to be recycled in India shall be required to obtain a Ready for Recycling Certificate in accordance with the HKC- Hong Kong International Convention for the safe and environmentally sound recycling of ships.

**What is Hong Kong convention?**

*The Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships, 2009 (the Hong Kong Convention)*, was adopted at a diplomatic conference held in Hong Kong, China in 2009.

- It was adopted by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in 2009.

- The Convention is aimed at ensuring that ships, when being recycled after reaching the end of their operational lives, do not pose any unnecessary risks to human health, safety and to the environment.
- It also addresses concerns raised about the working and environmental conditions at many of the world's ship recycling locations.
- The Convention is yet to come into force because it has not been ratified by 15 nations, representing 40 per cent of the world merchant shipping by gross tonnage (capacity) and a maximum annual ship recycling volume of not less than 3 per cent of the combined tonnage of the countries.

#### ***Need for legislation:***

India is the leader in the global ship recycling industry, with ***a share of over 30% of the market.***

- As per UNCTAD report on Review of Maritime Transport, 2018, India had demolished 6323 tonnes in 2017, of known ship scrapping across the world.
- The ship-recycling industry is a labour-intensive sector, but it is susceptible to concerns on environmental safety.

### **9. Instrument of Accession**

***Context:*** From 2020, people in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir will have ***a public holiday on October 26 for the first time.*** The day, which will be observed as ***Accession Day,*** marks ***the signing of the Instrument of Accession by the last Dogra ruler of J&K, Maharaja Hari Singh, with the then Governor-General of India, Lord Mountbatten.***

***What happened on October 26?***

As per ***the Indian Independence Act, 1947,*** British India was divided into India and Pakistan and the roughly 580 princely states that had signed subsidiary alliances with the British had their sovereignty restored to them. In essence, ***these princely states were given the option to remain independent or to join the Dominion of India or Pakistan.***

According to ***Section 6(a) of the Act,*** before joining India or Pakistan, these states had to sign ***an Instrument of Accession,*** in which they would specify ***the terms on which they were becoming part of the new dominions.***

***What is Instrument of Accession of J&K?***

It is ***a legal document executed by Maharaja Hari Singh,*** the then ruler of the princely state of Jammu & Kashmir, on October 26, 1947.

It declared that ***the state of Jammu and Kashmir accedes to India.***

The IoA gave India's Parliament ***the power to legislate in respect of J&K only on the matters of defence, external affairs and communications.***

Apart from defence, communications and external affairs, the IoA mentions ***ancillary subjects that include elections to the dominion legislature and offences against laws with respect to any of the said matters.***

Using IoA, ***Article 370 was incorporated in the Constitution of India.***

### **10. UGC Issues Norms for Ethics in Higher Education**

***Why in News***

Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has adopted the ***Higher Education Quality Improvement Programme Mandate*** to improve the quality in higher educational institutions.

- ***The Quality Mandate*** was developed by the ***University Grants Commission (UGC)*** which contains 5 documents covering the ***5 verticals of Quality Mandate-***

- **Evaluation reforms**
- **Eco-friendly and sustainable university campuses**
- **Human values & professional ethics**
- **Faculty induction**
- **Academic research integrity**

### **Key Points**

- The **quality mandate aims at** evolving higher education system to equip the country's next generation with vital skills, knowledge and ethics for leading a rewarding life.
  - Student evaluation plays a crucial role in improving the quality of Higher Education in the country.

### Five Documents on 5 verticals of Quality Mandate

- **Evaluation reforms:** Under this, the report '**Evaluation Reforms in Higher Educational Institutions in India**' has been published in order to make student assessment more meaningful, effective and linked to '**Learning Outcomes**'.
- **Eco-friendly and Sustainable University Campuses:** The **SATAT - Framework for Eco-Friendly and Sustainable Campus development in Higher Educational Institutions** encourages universities to adopt reflective policies and practices to enhance the environmental quality of the campus and to adopt sustainable and green methods in its future.
- **Human Values & Professional Ethics:** A policy framework '**MulyaPravah – Guidelines for Inculcation of Human Values and Professional Ethics in Higher Educational Institutions**' has been developed to discuss and streamline the process that helps to infuse the culture of human values and ethics in educational institutions.
  - The **guidelines** for values and ethics in higher education call for students to-
    - **Observe modesty** in their overall appearance and behaviour.
    - **Maintain good health** and refrain from any kind of intoxicants.
    - **Maintain harmony** among students belonging to different socio-economic status, community, caste, religion or region.
- **Faculty Induction:** The guidelines for **Guru-Dakshta – A guide to Faculty Induction Programme (FIP)** will fulfill its main objective to sensitise and motivate the faculty to adopt learner centred approaches, **Information and Communication Technology (ICT)** integrated learning and new pedagogic approaches to teaching-learning, assessment tools in higher education.
- **Academic Research Integrity:** UGC is putting up efforts for setting up a **Consortium for Academic and Research Ethics (UGC-CARE)** to continuously monitor and identify quality journals across disciplines. It will be useful to create more awareness and help the cause of promoting academic integrity and ethical publishing.

### **University Grants Commission**

- It came into existence on **28<sup>th</sup> December, 1953** and became a **statutory organization** of the Government of India by an **Act of Parliament in 1956**, for the coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination and research in university education.
- The **head office** of the UGC is located in **New Delhi**.

## **11.Swadesh Darshan scheme**

**Context:** The Cabinet approves the release of funds for 10 projects of *the Swadesh Darshan Scheme* sanctioned in 2018-19.

**About Swadesh Darshan Scheme:**

**Tourism Ministry** launched the scheme in 2015.

**Objective:** to develop theme-based tourist circuits in the country. These tourist circuits will be developed on the principles of high tourist value, competitiveness and sustainability in an integrated manner.

**Under the Scheme 15 circuits have been identified for development** namely Himalayan Circuit, North East Circuit, Krishna Circuit, Buddhist Circuit and Coastal Circuit, Desert Circuit, Tribal Circuit, Eco Circuit, Wildlife Circuit, Rural Circuit, Spiritual Circuit, Ramayana Circuit, Heritage Circuit, Tirthankar Circuit and Sufi Circuit.

**Features of Swadesh Darshan Scheme:**

- **100% centrally funded** for the project components undertaken for public funding.
- To leverage the voluntary funding available for **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** initiatives of Central Public Sector Undertakings and corporate sector.
- **Funding of individual project will vary from state to state** and will be finalised on the basis of detailed project reports prepared by **PMC (Programme Management Consultant)**.
- PMC will be a national level consultant to be appointed by the Mission Directorate.
- **A National Steering Committee (NSC)** will be constituted with Minister in charge of M/O Tourism as Chairman, to steer the mission objectives and vision of the scheme.
- **A Mission Directorate** headed by the Member Secretary, NSC as a nodal officer will help in identification of projects in consultation with the States/ UTs governments and other stake holders.

## 12. Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)

**Context:** CAG report raises concerns about **Ujjwala scheme**.

**Concerns raised:**

1. There is the issue of low consumption, diversions and considerable delays in supply of cylinders.
2. Encouraging the sustained usage of LPG remains a big challenge as the annual average refill consumption of 1.93 crore PMUY consumers (who have completed more than one year as on 31 March 2018) was only 3.66 refills as worked out by audit.
3. Similar analysis for 3.18 crore PMUY beneficiaries as on 31 December 2018 revealed that refill consumption declined to 3.21 refills per annum.
4. There are also deficiencies such as the issuance of connections to unintended beneficiaries, and problems with the software of the state-run oil marketing companies for identifying intended beneficiaries and inadequacies in the de-duplication process.

**Recommendations made by CAG:**

1. There should be scrutiny of the entire LPG database to identify and restrict anomalies.
2. Aadhaar numbers of all adult family members of existing as well as new beneficiaries should be entered to make de-duplication effective.
3. Appropriate measures in distributors' software should be put in place to restrict issuance to ineligible beneficiaries.

**For Prelims:**

**Key features of Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana:**

**Aim:** To provide LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) connections to poor households.

**Key features:** A deposit-free LPG connection is given to eligible with *financial assistance of Rs 1,600 per connection by the Centre.*

The scheme gained traction with its *ambit being expanded to include 80 million poor families from the earlier target of 50 million families with an additional allocation of Rs4,800 crore.*

**Eligibility criteria:**

- Applicant must a woman above the age of 18 and a citizen of India.
- Applicant should belong to a BPL (Below Poverty Line) household.
- No one in the applicant's household should own an LPG connection.
- The household income of the family, per month, must not exceed a certain limit as defined by the government of the Union Territories and State Government.
- The name of the applicant must be in the list of SECC-2011 data and should match with the information available in the BPL database that Oil Marketing Companies have.
- Applicant must not be a recipient of other similar schemes provided by the government.

**Value addition for Mains:**

**Objectives of the scheme are:**

1. Empowering women and protecting their health.
2. Reducing the serious health hazards associated with cooking based on fossil fuel.
3. Reducing the number of deaths in India due to unclean cooking fuel.
4. Preventing young children from significant number of acute respiratory illnesses caused due to indoor air pollution by burning the fossil fuel.

**What makes LPG adoption necessary?**

**To reduce household air pollution:**

- A large section of Indians, especially women and girls, are exposed to severe household air pollution (HAP) from the use of solid fuels such as biomass, dung cakes and coal for cooking.
- A report from the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare places HAP as the second leading risk factor contributing to India's disease burden.

**A health threat:**

According to the World Health Organization, solid fuel use is responsible for about 13% of all mortality and morbidity in India (measured as Disability-Adjusted Life Years), and causes about 40% of all pulmonary disorders, nearly 30% of cataract incidences, and over 20% each of ischemic heart disease, lung cancer and lower respiratory infection.

**How can the scheme be made more effective?**

The real test of the PMUY and its successor programmes will be in how they translate the provision of connections to *sustained use of LPG or other clean fuels such as electricity or biogas.*

*Truly smokeless kitchens* can be realized only if the government follows up with measures that go beyond connections to actual usage of LPG. This may require *concerted efforts cutting across Ministries beyond petroleum and natural gas and including those of health, rural development and women and child welfare.*

### 13. What is a privilege motion?

**Context:** Congress moves privilege motion against Smriti Irani for remark on Rahul Gandhi.

**For Prelims and Mains:**

**What is a privilege motion?**

Parliamentary privileges are certain *rights and immunities enjoyed by members of Parliament, individually and collectively*, so that they can “effectively discharge their functions”. When any of these rights and immunities are disregarded, the offence is called a *breach of privilege* and is punishable under law of Parliament.

**Who can move it? How?**

A notice is moved in the form of a motion by *any member of either House against those being held guilty of breach of privilege*. Each House also claims the right to punish as contempt actions which, while not breach of any specific privilege, are offences against its authority and dignity.

**What are the rules governing privilege?**

**Rule No 222 in Chapter 20 of the Lok Sabha Rule Book and correspondingly Rule 187 in Chapter 16 of the Rajya Sabha rulebook** governs privilege.

It says that a member may, with the consent of the Speaker or the Chairperson, raise a question involving a breach of privilege either of a member or of the House or of a committee thereof.

The rules however *mandate that any notice should be relating to an incident of recent occurrence and should need the intervention of the House*.

**What is the role of the Speaker/Rajya Sabha Chair?**

The Speaker/RS chairperson is *the first level of scrutiny of a privilege motion. The Speaker/Chair can decide on the privilege motion himself or herself or refer it to the privileges committee of Parliament*. If the Speaker/Chair gives consent under Rule 222, the member concerned is given an opportunity to make a short statement.

**What is the privileges committee?**

*In the Lok Sabha*, the Speaker nominates a committee of privileges consisting of 15 members as per respective party strengths. A report is then presented to the House for its consideration. The Speaker may permit a half-hour debate while considering the report. The Speaker may then pass final orders or direct that the report be tabled before the House.

A resolution may then be moved relating to the breach of privilege that has to be unanimously passed.

*In the Rajya Sabha*, the deputy chairperson heads the committee of privileges, that consists of 10 members.

#### **14. Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act**

**Context:** Despite a law against the destruction of property, incidents of rioting, vandalism, and arson have been common during protests across the country.

And the Supreme Court has recently expressed *displeasure over rioting and destruction of public property*.

**For Prelims:**

**What the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, 1984 says?**

It *punishes anyone “who commits mischief by doing any act in respect of any public property”* with a jail term of up to five years and a fine or both.

Provisions of this law can be coupled with those under *the Indian Penal Code*.

**What is a public property?**

Public property under this Act includes “any building, installation or other property used in connection with the production, distribution or supply of water, light, power or energy; any oil installation; any sewage works; any mine or factory; any means of public transportation or of telecommunications, or any building, installation or other property used in connection therewith”.

**Value addition for Mains:**

### ***Need for review:***

The Supreme Court has on several earlier occasions found ***the law inadequate, and has attempted to fill the gaps through guidelines.***

**2007:** The court took suo motu cognizance of “various instances where there was large scale destruction of public and private properties in the name of agitations, bandhs, hartals and the like”, and set up ***two Committees headed by former apex court judge Justice K T Thomas and senior advocate Fali Nariman to suggest changes to the law.***

**2009 case of In Re: Destruction of Public & Private Properties v State of AP and Ors:** The Supreme Court issued guidelines based on the recommendations of the two expert Committees.

### ***SC guidelines based on Thomas Committee recommendations:***

- Reverse ***the burden of proof against protesters.***
- ***Prosecution should be required to prove that public property had been damaged in direct action called by an organisation,*** and the accused also participated in such direct action. From that stage the burden can be shifted to the accused to prove his innocence.
- The ***law must be amended to give the court the power to draw a presumption that the accused is guilty of destroying public property,*** and it would then be open to the accused to rebut such presumption.

### ***Based on Nariman Committee’s recommendations:***

- Rioters would be made strictly liable for the damage, and compensation would be collected to “make good” the damage.
- Where persons, whether jointly or otherwise, are part of a protest which turns violent, results in damage to private or public property, the persons who have caused the damage, or were part of the protest or who have organized it will be deemed to be strictly liable for the damage so caused, which may be assessed by the ordinary courts or by any special procedure created to enforce the right.
- High Courts should order suo motu action, and set up a machinery to investigate the damage caused and award compensation wherever mass destruction to property takes place due to protests.

### ***Impact of guidelines:***

Like the law, the guidelines too, have had a limited impact. This is because the identification of protesters remains difficult, especially in cases where there is no leader who gave the call to protest.

In its verdict in ***Koshy Jacob vs Union Of India***, the court reiterated that the law needed to be updated — but it did not grant the petitioner any compensation since the organisers of the protest were not before the court.

## ***15. Creamy layer principle in SC, ST quota for promotion***

***Context:*** Central government has asked the Supreme Court of India to refer to a seven-judge Bench ***the question whether the creamy layer concept should apply (or not) to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes*** while giving them reservation in promotions.

### ***What’s the issue?***

The Centre has asked the CJI to refer a September 26, 2018 judgment of a five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court in ***Jarnail Singh versus Lachhmi Narain Gupta*** to a larger Bench of seven judges for a review.

In ***Jarnail Singh***, the court had agreed with its 12-year-old verdict in the M. Nagaraj case that the creamy layer applied to SCs and STs in order to prevent the socially advanced in a

backward community or class from eating the whole cake while leaving the weak among them impoverished.

***What is the creamy layer concept?***

The '***means-test and creamy layer***' first finds expression in the Supreme Court's landmark judgment in ***Indra Sawhney versus Union of India***, delivered by a nine-judge Bench on November 16, 1992.

'***Creamy layer***' are "some members of a backward class who are highly advanced socially as well as economically and educationally.

***Constitutional basis- Article 335:***

Article 335 recognises that ***special measures need to be adopted for considering the claims of SCs and STs in order to bring them to a level-playing field.***

***Need:*** Centuries of discrimination and prejudice suffered by the SCs and STs in a feudal, caste-oriented societal structure poses real barriers of access to opportunity. The proviso contains a realistic recognition that unless special measures are adopted for the SCs and STs, the mandate of the Constitution for the consideration of their claim to appointment will remain illusory.

***How was the creamy layer made applicable to SC/ST members?***

1. ***Indra Sawhney vs Union of India:***

In its landmark 1992 decision in ***Indra Sawhney vs Union of India***, the Supreme Court had held that ***reservations under Article 16(4) could only be provided at the time of entry into government service but not in matters of promotion.*** And the principle would operate only prospectively and ***not affect promotions already made and reservation already provided*** in promotions shall continue in operation for a period of five years from the date of the judgment.

More significantly, It ruled that ***the creamy layer can be and must be excluded.***

On June 17, 1995, Parliament, acting in its constituent capacity, adopted ***the seventy-seventh amendment by which clause (4A) was inserted into Article 16*** to enable reservation to be made in promotion for SCs and STs.

2. The validity of the amendment was challenged before the Supreme Court in ***the Nagaraj case (2006).***

Upholding the validity of Article 16 (4A), the court then said that it is an enabling provision. ***"The State is not bound to make reservation for the SCs and STs in promotions. But, if it seeks to do so, it must collect quantifiable data on three facets — the backwardness of the class; the inadequacy of the representation of that class in public employment; and the general efficiency of service as mandated by Article 335 would not be affected".***

The court ruled that ***the constitutional amendments do not abrogate the fundamentals of equality.***

***Need of the hour:***

A comprehensive piece of legislature that would deal with ambiguity related to reservation in promotions is needed. The Act should try to rectify the current issues such as

- Undefined parameters of efficiency.
- Absence of transparency in evaluating backwardness and efficiency of STs/SCs
- Presence of ambiguity regarding whole process of promotions in government services.

## 16. Disha Bill

***Context:*** The Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly has passed ***the Andhra Pradesh Disha Bill, 2019 (Andhra Pradesh Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2019).***

**Disha** is the name given to a veterinarian who was raped and murdered in Hyderabad on November 27.

**For Prelims:**

**Key features of the Bill:**

- 1) It envisages the completion of investigation in seven days and trial in 14 working days, where there is adequate conclusive evidence, and reducing the total judgment time to 21 days from the existing four months.
- 2) It prescribes life imprisonment for other sexual offences against children and includes Section 354 F and 354 G in IPC.
- 3) In cases of harassment of women through social or digital media, the Act states two years imprisonment for the first conviction and four years for second and subsequent convictions. For this, a new Section 354 E will be added in IPC, 1860.
- 4) As per the Bill, the Andhra Pradesh government will establish, operate and maintain a register in electronic form, to be called the 'Women & Children Offenders Registry'. This registry will be made public and will be available to law enforcement agencies.
- 5) The government will establish exclusive special courts in each district to ensure speedy trial. These courts will exclusively deal with cases of offences against women and children including rape, acid attacks, stalking, voyeurism, social media harassment of women, sexual harassment and all cases under the POCSO Act.
- 6) The government will constitute special police teams at the district level to be called District Special Police Team to be headed by DSP for investigation of offences related to women and children.
- 7) The government will also appoint a special public prosecutor for each exclusive special court.

## 17. Accessible India Campaign

**Context:** The deadline for the government's *Accessible India Campaign (AIC)* has been extended to March 2020 due to slow progress.

**About Accessible India Campaign:**

**What is it?** Accessible India Campaign (AIC) is the nationwide flagship campaign of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

**Aim:** The aim of the Campaign is to make a barrier free and conducive environment for Divyangjans all over the country. The campaign has the vision to build an inclusive society in which equal opportunities are provided for the growth and development of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) so that they can lead productive, safe and dignified lives.

**Implementation:** For creating universal accessibility for Persons with Disabilities, the campaign has been divided into three verticals: Built Environment; Transport and Information & Communication Technology (ICT) ecosystem.

**Old Targets:**

1. Making 50% of all the government buildings of NCT and all the State capitals fully accessible by December 2018.
2. Completing accessibility audit of 50% of government buildings and making them fully accessible in 10 most important cities/towns of States by December 2019.
3. Ensuring that 50% of railway stations in the country are converted into fully accessible railway stations by March 2018.
4. Ensuring that 25% of Government owned public transport carriers in the country are converted into fully accessible carriers by March 2018.

5. Conducting accessibility audit of 50% of all government (both Central and State Governments) websites and converting them into fully accessible websites by March 2017.

***Facts for Prelims:***

Accessible India Campaign is in line with the *Article 9 of UNCRPD (UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) to which India is a signatory since 2007.*

### ***18. Mental disorders high in South India***

***Context:*** Highlights of the study titled '*burden of mental disorders across the States of India: Global Burden of Disease Study 1990-2017*'.

It has been *conducted by Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI).*

***Key findings:***

1. Mental disorders of various kinds are adversely affecting a large population of Indians, especially in South Indian States.
2. One in every seven Indians were affected by mental disorders of varying severity in 2017.
3. Back in 2017, there were 19.73 crore people with mental disorders, which comprises of 14.3 per cent of the total population of the country.
4. The proportional contribution of mental disorders to the total disease burden in India has almost doubled from 1990 to 2017.
5. Prevalence of depressive disorders was highest in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Goa and Telangana in the high Socio- demographic index (SDI) State group and Andhra Pradesh in the middle SDI State group.

***Why depression and anxiety high in South India?***

The higher prevalence of depressive and anxiety disorders in southern States could be related to *the higher levels of modernisation and urbanisation in these States and to many other factors that are not yet well understood.*

The study found positive relationship between depression and suicide death rates at the State level, with suicide death rates also being higher in the southern States than in the northern ones.

***What other mental health disorders?***

Other notable mental health disorders in South Indian States were schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, idiopathic developmental intellectual disability (IDID), conduct disorder, autism spectrum disorders, eating disorders and attention deficit hyperactivity disorders (ADHD).

***North-South Divide:***

Interestingly, mental health issues that manifest among adults were generally higher in the more developed Southern Indian States than in less developed Northern Indian States. Prevalence of mental disorders with onset of predominantly in childhood and adolescence was generally higher in the less developed Northern States than in developed Southern States.

***Lessons from the study:***

There is poor coverage of mental health services, lack of awareness, and the stigma attached to mental disorders in the Country. There is a need to invest heavily in mental health services to facilitate prevention where possible and to provide affordable treatment, care, and rehabilitation, as well as to attempt integration of mental and physical health services.

### ***19. Drug prices control order***

**Context:** *National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA)* has allowed an increase in the maximum retail prices of 21 drugs currently ***under price control by as much as 50%***.

**Significance:**

The decision has been taken to ensure that the life saving essential drugs must remain available to the general public at all times. This is to avoid a ***situation where these drugs become unavailable in the market and the public is forced to switch to costly alternatives***. This is the first time the NPPA — which is known to slash prices of essential and life-saving medicines — is increasing prices in public interest.

**What is the “Drugs (Prices Control) Order (DPCO)” ?**

The Drugs Prices Control Order is an order issued by the Government of India under ***Sec. 3 of Essential Commodities Act, 1955*** to regulate the prices of drugs.

The Order inter alia provides ***the list of price controlled drugs, procedures for fixation of prices of drugs, method of implementation of prices fixed by Govt., penalties for contravention of provisions etc.***

For the purpose of implementing provisions of DPCO, powers of Govt. have been vested in NPPA.

**Are all the drugs marketed in the country under price control ?**

No. The National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) 2011 is adopted as the primary basis for determining essentiality, which constitutes the list of scheduled medicines for the purpose of price control. The DPCO 2013 contains more than 600 scheduled drug formulations spread across 27 therapeutic groups. However, the prices of other drugs can be regulated, if warranted in public interest.

**What is NPPA and its role?**

National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA), was established on 29th August 1997 as ***an independent body*** of experts as per the decision taken by the Cabinet committee in September 1994 while reviewing Drug Policy.

**Functions:** The Authority, inter alia, has been entrusted with the task of fixation/revision of prices of pharmaceutical products (bulk drugs and formulations), enforcement of provisions of the Drugs (Prices Control) Order and monitoring of the prices of controlled and decontrolled drugs in the country.

## 20. Samagra Shiksha

**Why in News**

Ministry of Human Resource Development is implementing the **Scheme of Vocationalisation of School Education**.

- Under the scheme, a vocational subject is offered for Classes IX to XII along with the general education to provide necessary employability and vocational skills for a variety of occupations.
- The above scheme is being implemented under the umbrella of ‘**Samagra Shiksha – an integrated scheme for school education**’.

Samagra Shiksha

**Key Provisions:**

- Samagra Shiksha is an **integrated** scheme for school education extending from **pre-school to class XII** to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education at **all levels** of school education.
- It **subsumes** the three Schemes of **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE)**.
  - The scheme treats school education holistically as a **continuum from Pre-school to Class 12**.

- The main emphasis of the Scheme is on improving the quality of school education by focussing on the **two T's – Teacher and Technology**.
- **Vision:**
  - The vision of the Scheme is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education from pre-school to senior secondary stage in accordance with the **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)** for Education.
    - **SDG-4.1:** Aims to ensure that all boys and girls complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.
    - **SDG 4.5:** Aims to eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education.
  - The scheme mainly aims to support States in the implementation of the **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009**.
  - Right to Education Act (RTE) is a fundamental right under **Article 21-A** of the Constitution of India.
- **Funding Pattern:**
  - The Scheme is being implemented as a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme**.
    - The fund sharing pattern for the scheme between Centre and States is at present in the ratio of **90:10 for the North-Eastern States and the Himalayan States and 60:40 for all other States and Union Territories with Legislature**.
    - It is **100% centrally sponsored for Union Territories without Legislature**.
  - The scheme also proposes to give flexibility to the States and UTs to plan and prioritize their interventions within the scheme norms and the overall resource envelope available to them.

### 21.6th Schedule of the Constitution

**Context:** The centre has asserted that *the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019* has been tweaked so that states where the Inner Line Permit (ILP) is applicable, and tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram that are notified under *the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution would be kept out of its purview*.

**What CAB exemption means for 6th Schedule areas?**

The tweaked CAB states that areas under the Sixth Schedule are exempted from its purview, which means non-Muslim refugees from the three countries who are granted Indian citizenship will not have any land or trading rights in the autonomous regions.

This essentially means *the refugees can neither reside or settle in the 10 autonomous districts, nor enjoy benefits extended to the tribals*, even if they are provided with Indian citizenship.

Further, *the laws made by Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) with the powers bestowed upon them by the Sixth Schedule will not be scrapped by the CAB*.

**What is 6<sup>th</sup> schedule?**

Under Article 244, it deals with the *administration of the tribal areas in the four northeastern states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram*.

Passed by the Constituent Assembly in 1949, it seeks to safeguard the rights of tribal population through the formation of *Autonomous District Councils (ADC)*.

**Key provisions:**

*The governor is empowered to organise and re-organise the autonomous districts.*

If there are different tribes in an autonomous district, the governor can divide the district into several autonomous regions.

**Composition:** Each autonomous district has a district council consisting of 30 members, of whom four are nominated by the governor and the remaining 26 are elected on the basis of adult franchise.

**Term:** The elected members hold office for a term of five years (unless the council is dissolved earlier) and nominated members hold office during the pleasure of the governor.

Each autonomous region also has **a separate regional council.**

**Powers of councils:** The district and regional councils administer the areas under their jurisdiction. They can make laws on certain specified matters like land, forests, canal water, shifting cultivation, village administration, inheritance of property, marriage and divorce, social customs and so on. But all such laws require the assent of the governor.

**Village councils:** The district and regional councils within their territorial jurisdictions can constitute village councils or courts for trial of suits and cases between the tribes. They hear appeals from them. The jurisdiction of high court over these suits and cases is specified by the governor.

**Powers and functions:** The district council can establish, construct or manage primary schools, dispensaries, markets, ferries, fisheries, roads and so on in the district. It can also make regulations for the control of money lending and trading by non-tribals. But, such regulations require the assent of the governor. The district and regional councils are empowered to assess and collect land revenue and to impose certain specified taxes.

**Exceptions:** The acts of Parliament or the state legislature do not apply to autonomous districts and autonomous regions or apply with specified modifications and exceptions.

**The governor can appoint a commission to examine and report on any matter relating to the administration of the autonomous districts or regions.** He may dissolve a district or regional council on the recommendation of the commission.

**Related- 125th amendment bill:**

It seeks to **increase the financial and executive powers of the 10 Autonomous Councils** in the Sixth Schedule areas of the northeastern region.

The amendments provide for **elected village municipal councils**, ensuring democracy at the grassroot level.

- **The village councils will be empowered to** prepare plans for economic development and social justice including those related to agriculture, land improvement, implementation of land reforms, minor irrigation, water management, animal husbandry, rural electrification, small scale industries and social forestry.
- **The Finance Commission** will be mandated to recommend devolution of financial resources to them.
- **The Autonomous Councils** now depend on grants from Central ministries and the State government for specific projects. At least one-third of the seats will be reserved for women in the village and municipal councils in the Sixth Schedule areas of Assam, Mizoram and Tripura after the amendment is approved.

## 22. Parliamentary standing committees

**What to study?**

**For prelims and mains: Parliamentary standing committees- roles, need, functions and significance.**

**Context:** Persistent absenteeism from meetings of department-related standing committees should cost MPs their spot on these parliamentary panels was a strong view that emerged during a **meeting of chairpersons of the committees with Rajya Sabha chairman M Venkaiah Naidu** recently.

## THE BEST AND THE WORST

MPs who attended all meetings of DRSCs they are members of	MPs who did not attend any meetings of DRSCs they are members of
Prasanna Acharya (BJD): RS	Nakul Nath (Congress): LS
Rajiv Pratap Rudy (BJP): LS	Bhavana Gawali (Shiv Sena): LS
Ram Gopal Yadav (SP): RS	Satish Chandra Mishra (BSP): RS
Jairam Ramesh (Cong): RS	Dilip Ghosh (BJP): LS
V Vijaysai Reddy (YSRCP): RS	Derek O'Brien (AITC): RS
KK Keshava Rao (TRS): RS	Chirag Paswan (LJP): LS

\* DRSC: Department-related standing committees

### Why have parliamentary committees?

1. Committees are ***an instrument of Parliament for its own effective functioning.***
2. Committees are ***platforms for threadbare discussion on a proposed law.***
3. The smaller cohort of lawmakers, assembled on the basis of the proportional strength of individual parties and interests and expertise of individual lawmakers, could have ***more open, intensive and better-informed discussions.***
4. Committee meetings are 'closed door' and ***members are not bound by party whips,*** which allows them the latitude for a more meaningful exchange of views as against discussions in full and open Houses where grandstanding and party positions invariably take precedence.
5. Members of Parliament may have great acumen but they would require the assistance of experts in dealing with such situations. It is ***through committees that such expertise is drawn into lawmaking.*** They allow for more detailed discussions.
6. This mechanism also enables ***parliamentarians to understand the executive processes closely.***

### What are the types of committees?

**Most committees are 'standing'** as their existence is uninterrupted and usually reconstituted on an annual basis.

**Some are 'select' committees** formed for a specific purpose, for instance, to deliberate on a particular bill. Once the Bill is disposed of, that select committee ceases to exist. **Some standing committees are departmentally related.**

**The three financial committees are** the Public Accounts Committee, the Estimates Committee and the Committee on Public Undertakings.

### Powers:

Parliamentary committees draw their authority from **Article 105** (on privileges of Parliament members) and **Article 118** (on Parliament's authority to make rules for regulating its procedure and conduct of business).

### *How can these committees be made more effective?*

These *committees don't have dedicated subject-wise research support available*. Their work could be made more effective if the committees had full-time, sector-specific research staff.

*The national commission to review the working of the Constitution* has recommended that in order to strengthen the committee system, *research support should be made available to them*.

Besides, *mandatory scrutiny of all bills by parliamentary committees would ensure better planning of legislative business*.

## **23. Removal of Anglo-Indians Reservation in Legislative Bodies**

### **Why in News**

Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved the **removal of reservation for Anglo-Indians in legislative bodies**.

- Anglo-Indians were provided **two nominated seats in the Lok Sabha and one nominated seat in the State Legislative Assemblies** to ensure adequate representation of the community in elected legislative bodies.
- Anglo-Indians constitute a **religious, social, as well as a linguistic minority**. Being numerically an extremely small community, and being interspersed all over India, the Anglo-Indians were provided reservations in legislative bodies.
- The reservation for the Anglo-Indian community was extended till the year 2020 through the **95<sup>th</sup> Amendment, 2009**. Originally, this provision was to **operate till 1960**.

### **Constitutional Provisions**

- **Article 366: It defines Anglo-Indian** as a person whose father or any of whose other male progenitors in the male line is or was of European descent but who is domiciled within the territory of India and is or was born within such territory of parents habitually resident therein and not established there for temporary purposes only.
- **Article 331:** It states that the **President** can nominate two members of the Anglo-Indian community to the Lok Sabha if the community is not adequately represented.
- **Article 333:** It states that the **Governor** of a State may if he is of the opinion that the Anglo Indian community needs representation in the Legislative Assembly of the State and is not adequately represented there in, nominate one member of that community to the Assembly.
- **Article 334(b):** The reservation of the Anglo Indian community in the Legislative bodies was **extended for 40 years in 1949** through the insertion of this article.
- **National Commission for SCs (Article 338) :** It investigates all matters relating to the **Constitutional and other legal safeguards for the Anglo-Indian community** and report to the President upon their working.

## **24. Indian Railway Management Service (IRMS)**

*Context:* Cabinet has approved *the merger of its eight services into one — the Indian Railway Management Service (IRMS)*.

The decision to merge the services is *to ensure that officers put railways first instead of their service which had become the case under the present system*.

This is in line with the recommendations of numerous committees, notably *Rakesh Mohan (2001) and the Bibek Debroy panel (2015)*.

*Changes:*

1. **Railway Board composition:** The Chairman along with four members responsible for infrastructure, operations and business development, rolling stock and finance respectively will form *the Railway Board*.
2. **Roles and functions:** The *Chairman* shall be the cadre controlling officer responsible for Human Resources (HR) with assistance from a DG (HR).
3. The Board will also have some *independent non-executive members*, who will be highly distinguished professionals with deep knowledge and 30 years of experience including at the top levels in industry, finance, economics and management fields. The independent members will help Railway Board in setting a strategic direction.

**Implications:**

Now, just like aspirants to the Union Public Service Commission, candidates aspiring to get into railways will have to appear for their prelims after which they will indicate their preference for *IRMS under five specialities* — four of them engineering specialities for ‘technical’ operations comprising of civil, mechanical, telecom and electrical, and one ‘non-technical’ speciality which will recruit officers for accounts, personnel and traffic.

### **25. Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PMVVY)**

**Context:** Centre has made Aadhaar (the unique 12-digit biometric identity number) mandatory for subscribers of *Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PMVVY)*. In cases where scheme beneficiaries Aadhaar authentication fails due to poor biometrics- *the Department of Financial Services (under Finance Ministry)* through its implementing agency will make provisions to help beneficiaries get Aadhaar number.

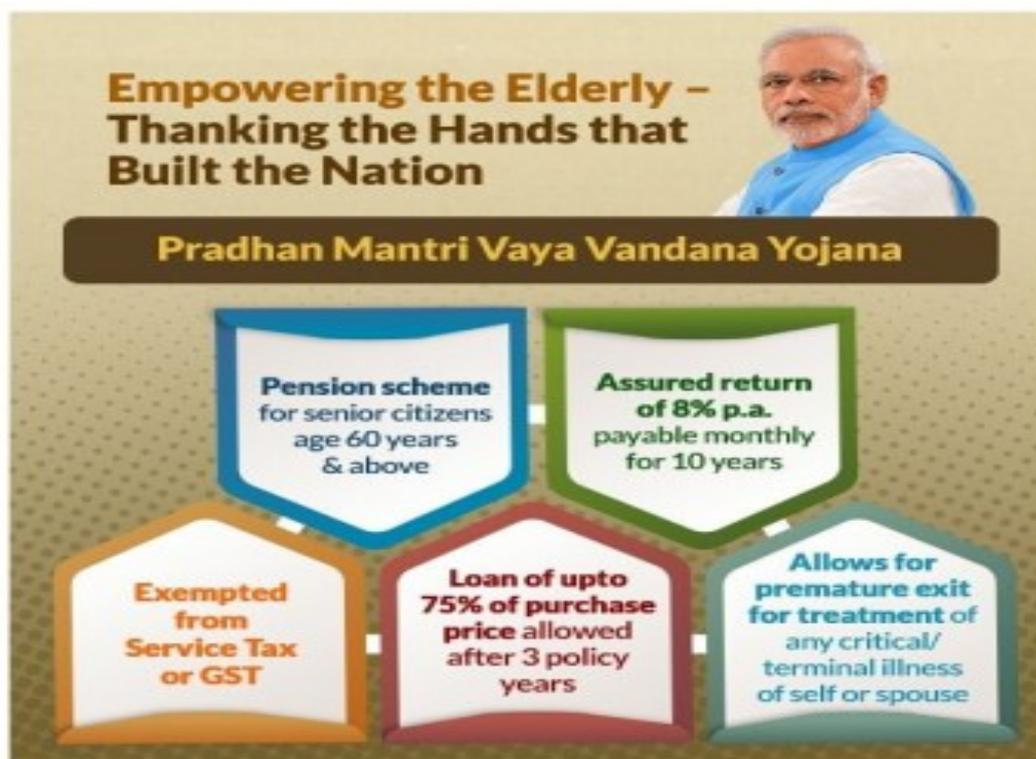
**About PMVVY:**

It is *a Pension Scheme exclusively for the senior citizens aged 60 years and above.*

The Scheme *can be purchased offline as well as online through Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India* which has been given the sole privilege to operate this Scheme.

**Key features of the scheme:**

1. Scheme provides an assured return of 8% p.a. payable monthly (equivalent to 8.30% p.a. effective) for 10 years.
2. Pension is payable at the end of each period, during the policy term of 10 years, as per the frequency of monthly/ quarterly/ half-yearly/ yearly as chosen by the pensioner at the time of purchase.
3. The scheme is exempted from Service Tax/ GST.
4. On survival of the pensioner to the end of the policy term of 10 years, Purchase price along with final pension installment shall be payable.
5. Loan upto 75% of Purchase Price shall be allowed after 3 policy years (to meet the liquidity needs). Loan interest shall be recovered from the pension installments and loan to be recovered from claim proceeds.
6. The scheme also allows for premature exit for the treatment of any critical/ terminal illness of self or spouse. On such premature exit, 98% of the Purchase Price shall be refunded.
7. On death of the pensioner during the policy term of 10 years, the Purchase Price shall be paid to the beneficiary.



## 26. Atal Bhujal yojana

### *About Atal Bhujal Yojana:*

It is a Rs.6000 crore *World Bank* approved *Central Sector Scheme* of the *Ministry of Jal Shakti*.

The *funding pattern is 50:50* between *Government of India and World Bank*.

*Aims* to improve ground water management in priority areas in the country through community participation.

### *Priority areas:*

- The priority areas identified under the scheme fall in the states of Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.
- These States represent about 25% of the total number of over-exploited, critical and semi-critical blocks in terms of ground water in India.
- They also cover two major types of groundwater systems found in India – alluvial and hard rock aquifers- and have varying degrees of institutional readiness and experience in groundwater management.

### *Implementation of the scheme:*

Funds under the scheme will be provided to the states for strengthening the institutions responsible for ground water governance, as well as for encouraging community involvement for improving ground water management to foster behavioural changes that promote conservation and efficient use of water. The scheme will also facilitate convergence of ongoing Government schemes in the states by incentivizing their focussed implementation in identified priority areas.

### *Value addition for Mains:*

#### *Expected outcomes:*

The implementation of the scheme is expected to have several positive outcomes like better understanding of the ground water regime, focused and integrated community based approach for addressing issues related to ground water depletion, sustainable ground water

management through convergence of on-going and new schemes, adoption of efficient water use practices to reduce ground water use for irrigation and augmentation of ground water resources in targeted areas.

***Status of groundwater in India:***

Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA) is regulating ground water development in States/UTs. As per the assessment of dynamic ground water resources of country carried out jointly by CGWA and State ***Ground Water Departments, out of the total 6584 numbers of assessment units (Block/ Taluks/ Mandals/ watershed/ Firkka), 1034 units have been categorized as 'Over-exploited'. This may be due to increase in population, rapid urbanization & industrialization and other related factors.***

## ***27. National Broadband Mission (NBM)***

***Context:*** The union government has launched ***the National Broadband Mission (NBM).***

***What is NBM?***

The mission will facilitate ***universal and equitable access to broadband services across the country, especially in rural and remote areas.***

It also involves laying of incremental 30 lakh route km of optical fibre cable and increasing tower density from 0.42 to 1 tower per thousand population by 2024.

The mission also ***envisages increasing fiberisation of towers to 70% from 30% at present.***

The mission will envisage stakeholder investment of \$100 billion (Rs 7 lakh crore) including Rs 70,000 crore from ***Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)*** in the coming years.

- The mission also involves the development of ***a Broadband Readiness Index*** to measure the availability of digital communication infrastructure and foster conducive policy ecosystem within a state/UT.
- It will also strive for the creation of ***a digital fibre map of the communications network and infrastructure***, including optical fibre cables and towers across the country.

***Significance:***

- The broadband mission aims to fast-track growth of digital communications infrastructure, bridge the digital divide, facilitate digital empowerment and inclusion, and provide affordable and universal access of broadband to all.
- It will lay emphasis on universality, affordability and quality of services. The Centre will work with the states and UTs for having consistent policies pertaining to expansion of digital infrastructure, including for Right of Way (RoW) approvals required for laying of optical fibre cable.

## ***28. Can the strength of Lok Sabha be increased?***

***Context:*** Former President Pranab Mukherjee has advocated for ***increase in the number of seats in Lok Sabha should be increased to 1,000 from the present 543.***

***How the strength of Lok Sabha is determined presently?***

- Article 81 of the Constitution defines the composition of the House of the People or Lok Sabha.
- It states that the House shall not consist of more than 550 elected members of whom not more than 20 will represent UTs.
- It also mandates that the number of Lok Sabha seats allotted to a state would be such that the ratio between that number and the population of the state is, as far as possible, the same for all states. This is to ensure that every state is equally represented.

- Exceptions: However, this logic does not apply to small states whose population is not more than 60 lakh.
- So, at least one seat is allocated to every state even if it means that its population-to-seat-ratio is not enough to qualify it for that seat.

#### ***Basis for determination of population:***

***As per Clause 3 of Article 81***, population, for the purpose of allocation of seats, means “*population as ascertained at the last preceding Census of which the relevant figures have been published*” — in other words, the last published Census.

However, as a result of an amendment to this Clause in 2003, ***the “population” now means population as per the 1971 Census — and will be so until the first Census that is taken after 2026.***

#### ***Need for more seats:***

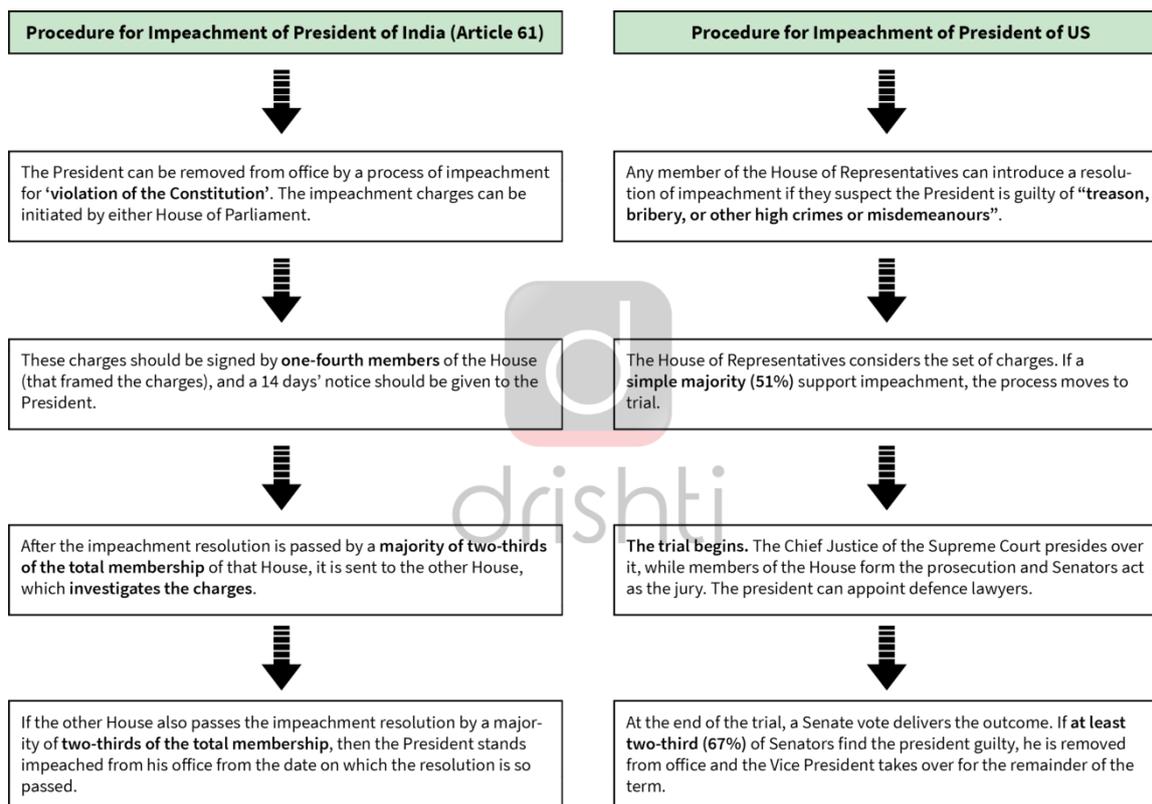
1. The composition of the Lower House has remained more or less the same for four decades. Every MP currently represents an average 16-18 lakh Indians — too large a number to be kept in touch with in a meaningful way. Therefore, the number of Lok Sabha seats should be rationalized on the basis of population.
2. The Constitution (126th Amendment) Bill passed by Parliament last week, while extending the reservation for SC/STs, did away with the provision for nomination of Anglo Indians. This has brought the strength of Lok Sabha down to 543 now.
3. Besides, even after statehood was attained by Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram in 1986, the creation of a Legislative Assembly for the National Capital Territory of Delhi, and the creation of new states such as Uttarakhand, *the number of seats have not been revised.*

## **29. Impeachment of US President**

### ***Why in News***

Donald Trump has become the third US President in history to be impeached by the House of Representatives. The trial will now start in the Senate.

- The two prior impeachments were: Andrew Johnson (1868) and Bill Clinton (1998).
- The legislature of the United States of America i.e. **Congress of the United States** consists of two houses: the Senate, in which each state, regardless of its size, is represented by two senators, and the House of Representatives, to which members are elected on the basis of population.
- The US Constitution states that the President can be removed for conviction of treason, bribery, or other high crimes or misdemeanour".
  - **In India, the President can be removed only for ‘violation of the Constitution’** and the Constitution does not define the meaning of the phrase ‘violation of the Constitution’.



### 30. Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG)

#### What to study?

**For Prelims and Mains:** About PVTGs, spread in different states, issues related to their protection and statutory rights given to them.

**Context:** The Union Minister of Tribal Affairs recently informed about the funds released under the PVTGs scheme, to the Parliament.

#### About 'Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)':

PVTGs are **more vulnerable among the tribal groups**.

- They have declining or stagnant population, low level of literacy, pre-agricultural level of technology and are economically backward.
- They generally inhabit remote localities having poor infrastructure and administrative support.

#### Identification:

In 1975, the Government of India initiated to identify the most vulnerable tribal groups as a separate category called PVTGs and declared 52 such groups, while in 1993 an additional 23 groups were added to the category, making it a total of 75 PVTGs out of 705 Scheduled Tribes, spread over 18 states and one Union Territory (A&N Islands) in the country (2011 census).

Among the 75 listed PVTG's the highest number are found in Odisha (13), followed by Andhra Pradesh (12)

#### Scheme for development of PVTGs:

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs implements **the Scheme of "Development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)"** exclusively for them.

- Under the scheme, Conservation-cum-Development (CCD)/Annual Plans are to be prepared by each State/UT for their PVTGs based on their need assessment, which are then appraised and approved by the Project Appraisal Committee of the Ministry.
- Priority is also assigned to PVTGs under the schemes of Special Central Assistance (SCA) to Tribal Sub-Scheme(TSS), Grants under Article 275(1) of the Constitution, Grants-in-aid to Voluntary Organisations working for the welfare of Schedule Tribes and Strengthening of Education among ST Girls in Low Literacy Districts.

***The criteria followed for determination of PVTGs are as under:***

1. A pre-agriculture level of technology.
2. A stagnant or declining population.
3. Extremely low literacy.
4. A subsistence level of economy.

### **31. Ekal School Abhiyan**

#### ***Why in News***

Recently, the Prime Minister admired the role of **Ekal Vidyalaya Sangathan** for leading the '**Ekal School Abhiyan**' and in **nation-building by imparting education and awareness** to more than 2.8 million rural and tribal children who reside in the remotest locations across **India and Nepal**.

#### ***Key Points***

- '**Ekal School Abhiyan**' aims to **promote education among rural and tribal children**.
- The Sangathan has remarkably promoted the education amongst rural and tribals through the '**Panchatantra Model of Education**' that include:
  - Promotion of nutrition through **Poshan Vatikas**,
  - Training for **bio-fertilizers** use in farming,
  - Imparting **skills** for using medicinal qualities of herbs,
  - Training for employment, and
  - Generation of Social Awareness.
  - This helps in realizing **Gandhi's ideals** of 'Gram Swaraj', 'Social Justice' of **Baba Saheb**, 'Antyodaya' of **Deen Dayal Upadhyay**, and **Swami Vivekanand's** 'dream of a Glorious India'.
- Ekal Sangathan makes the use of **e-education and digitization** to achieve the desired objective and aims to launch a **single real-time dashboard** for monitoring the progress of all the Ekal Vidyalayas in a comprehensive way.
- Ekal Vidyalaya is a **movement involving integrated and holistic development** of rural & tribal people of India and Nepal. The main activity undertaken in this movement is to **run one-teacher schools (known as Ekal Vidyalayas)** all over India, in the remotest villages so as to educate every child.
  - The Ekal movement aims to help **eradicate illiteracy** following the **philosophy of rural development** based on the criteria of **equality and inclusiveness** across all the sections of the society.
- **Recognition:** The Ekal Vidyalaya Sangathan has been awarded the **Gandhi Peace Prize in 2017** for its contribution in providing education for rural and tribal children in remote areas, rural empowerment, gender, and social equality.
- Other schemes of government like scholarship for scheduled tribe's children, **Eklavya model residential school**, **Poshan Abhiyan**, **Mission Indradhanush**, and school holidays on the occasion of tribal festivals, etc. have

helped not only in checking the school dropout rates but also promoted the holistic development of children.

### **32. Nagpur Resolution: A holistic approach for empowering citizens**

**Context:** The 'Nagpur Resolution – A holistic approach for empowering citizens' has been adopted at the end of the *Regional Conference on 'Improving Public Service Delivery – Role of Governments'*, held recently in Nagpur, Maharashtra.

**Key facts:**

- The conference was organised by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), Government of India, in collaboration with the Government of Maharashtra and the Maharashtra State Commission for Right to Public Services.
- Previously, the Shillong Declaration and the Jammu Resolution have been adopted for good governance.

**Overview of the resolution:**

As per the resolution, the GOI, the Government of Maharashtra and other participating States shall collaborate to:

1. To empower the citizens by policy interventions for better service delivery through timely updation of citizens charters, implementation of enactments and benchmarking standards for continuous improvement;
2. To empower citizens by adopting a bottom-up approach to bring massive improvements in quality of grievance redressal and reduction in timelines of grievance redressal;
3. To adopt a holistic approach of systemic public grievance reforms through improved mapping, formulation of monitoring matrix, data collection and evaluation in quality of grievance redressal;
4. To provide an enabling environment for States and Ministries/Departments of the Government of India for creating web portals and to adopt a holistic approach for improved service delivery through digital platforms;
5. To focus on dynamic policy-making and strategic decisions, monitoring of implementation, appointment of key personnel, coordination and evaluation;
6. To achieve a sense of common identity by exchange of technical expertise in the areas of Improved Service Delivery between the paired States under the Ek Bharat – Shreshth Bharat Program;
7. To ensure timely publication of Good Governance Index to identify the quality of governance in 10 sectors especially those pertaining to welfare and infrastructure at the Union, State and District levels.
- 8.

### **33. Centre stops online sale of medicines**

**Context:** *Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI)* has asked all states and Union Territories *to prohibit sale of drugs by online pharmacies* as per the Delhi High Court order.

**Background:**

The Delhi High Court in December 2018 had ordered *the ban on sale of illegal or unlicensed online sale of medicines till the government drafts rules to regulate e-pharmacies.*

*How online pharmacies are currently operating in India?*

Online pharmacies are ***operating in the country without a drug licence*** as there are no rules framed for the sector.

***What's the issue now?***

The PIL filed in the court observed that ***the online illegal sale of medicines would lead to a drug epidemic, drug abuse and misuse of habit forming and addictive drugs.***

The PIL also said that since there was no mechanism to control the sale of medicines online, this puts health and lives of people at a high risk and affects their right to a safe and healthy life under ***Article 21 of the Constitution.***

In response, E-pharmacies told the Court that ***they do not require a license for online sale of drugs and prescription medicines as they do not sell them,*** instead they are only delivering the medications akin to food-delivery app Swiggy.

***Other risks that exist in buying drugs online:***

1. Supply of fake and illegal drugs.
2. Abuse on account of fake or forged or no prescriptions.
3. Lack of verification of the ultimate user.
4. Unhealthy competition.
5. Abuse of critical health data generated online.
6. Mishandling during transport.

***Draft rules:***

***Ministry of health and family welfare,*** in September 2018, issued ***a draft notification on the sale of drugs by E-Pharmacies.*** It sought to amend ***the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules*** to enable registration of the e pharmacies and monitoring of their functioning.

***Highlights of the Draft:***

1. All the e-pharmacies have to be registered compulsorily with the Central Drugs Standard control organisation.
2. Psychotropic substances, habit-forming medicines like cough syrup and sleeping pills, schedule x drugs will not be sold online.
3. Apart from registration, the e pharmacies have to obtain a license from the State government to sell the medicines online.
4. The application of registration of e-pharmacy will have to be accompanied by a sum of Rs 50,000 while asserting that an e-pharmacy registration holder will have to comply with provisions of Information Technology Act, 2000 (21 of 2000).
5. The details of patient shall be kept confidential and shall not be disclosed to any person other than the central government or the state government concerned, as the case may be.
6. The supply of any drug shall be made against a cash or credit memo generated through the e-pharmacy portal and such memos shall be maintained by the e-pharmacy registration holder as record.
7. Both state and central drug authorities will be monitoring the data of sales and transactions of e pharmacies. Any violation of rules the registration of e-pharmacies will be suspended, and it can be cancelled too.
8. The premises from which e-pharmacy is operated regular inspections will be conducted every two years by the central licencing authority.

***Need for regulation:***

Ministry of Health, Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation and an expert committee appointed by the drug consultative committee have already concluded that ***the online sale of medicines is in contravention of the provisions of Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and the other allied laws.***

Still lakhs of drugs are being sold on internet every day. Some of the drugs/medicines contain narcotic and psychotropic substances and some can even cause antibiotic resistant-bacteria which is a threat not only to the patient but to the humanity at large.

### 34. Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2019

#### Why in News

The Rajya Sabha approved the **Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2019**, replacing an ordinance that was promulgated to **cut corporate tax rates** to boost growth rate in a slowing economy. Since it deals with taxes, the bill was introduced as a money bill in the Lok Sabha earlier.

- Corporate tax is a tax imposed on the **net income of the company**.

#### Key Points

- The **Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2019** replaces an ordinance that **reduced the tax rate for domestic companies from 30% and 25%** (for those with an annual turnover of over ₹400 crores) to **22%**.
  - These rates are applicable for companies if they don't claim certain exemptions under the Income Tax Act.
- The rate for **new domestic manufacturing companies** set up after October 1 was **lowered to 15%**.
- The new effective tax rate inclusive of surcharge and cess for domestic companies would be 25.17% and for new domestic manufacturing companies would be 17.01%.

#### Money Bill

- A Bill is said to be a **Money Bill** if it only contains provisions related to **taxation**, borrowing of money by the government, expenditure from or receipt to the Consolidated Fund of India. Bills that only contain provisions that are incidental to these matters would also be regarded as Money Bills.
- A Money Bill may **only be introduced in Lok Sabha**, on the recommendation of the President. It must be passed in the Lok Sabha by a simple majority of all members present and voting.
- The **Rajya Sabha cannot amend money bills** but can recommend amendments. A money bill, that solely concerns taxation or government spending, must be returned to the Lok Sabha **within 14 days**, or the bill is deemed to have passed both houses in the form it was originally passed by the Lok Sabha.
- 

### 35. Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana

**Context:** In line with the provisions of *National Policy for Farmers (NPF) (2007)*, the *Department of Rural Development*, Ministry of Rural Development is implementing a programme exclusively for women farmers namely, **Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP)**.

**Funding** support to the tune of up to 60% (90% for North Eastern States) for such projects is provided by the Government of India.

#### About Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana:

It is **a sub component of the Deendayal Antodaya Yojana-NRLM (DAY-NRLM)**.

It seeks to **improve the present status of women in Agriculture**, and to enhance the opportunities available to empower her.

MKSP recognizes **the identity of "Mahila" as "Kisan"** and strives to build the capacity of women in the domain of agro-ecologically sustainable practices.

### ***Objectives and significance:***

- The focus of MKSP is on capacitating smallholders to adopt sustainable climate resilient agro-ecology and eventually create a pool of skilled community professionals.
- Its objective is to strengthen smallholder agriculture through promotion of sustainable agriculture practices such as Community Managed Sustainable Agriculture (CMSA), Non Pesticide Management (NPM), Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF), Pashu-Sakhi model for doorstep animal care services, Sustainable regeneration and harvesting of Non-Timber Forest Produce.

### ***Need for feminization of agriculture:***

Rural women form the most productive work force in the economy of majority of the developing nations including India.

- More than 80% of rural women are engaged in agriculture activities for their livelihoods.
- About 20 per cent of farm livelihoods are female headed due to widowhood, desertion, or male emigration.
- Agriculture support system in India strengthens the exclusion of women from their entitlements as agriculture workers and cultivators.
- Most of the women-headed households are not able to access extension services, farmers support institutions and production assets like seed, water, credit, subsidy etc. As agricultural workers, women are paid lower wage than men.

## ***36.Special Protection Group (Amendment) Bill, 2019***

### ***Why in News***

Recently, the Parliament has **passed** the **Special Protection Group\_(Amendment) Bill, 2019**. The SPG Bill will amend the **SPG Act of 1988**.

- The proposed amendments in the **Special Protection Group (SPG) Bill** aims to **reduce the financial burden of VIP security on the state exchequer**.
- The reduction of SPG coverage will also help to **eliminate the notion of a status symbol** attached to it.

### ***Special Protection Group***

- The SPG was raised in **1985** to provide security cover to the Prime Minister, former Prime Ministers and their immediate family members.
- The SPG comprises of the personnel from the CRPF, Border Security Force and other Central and State forces.

### ***Amendments***

- **Reduced SPG Coverage:**
  - The protection to be offered **only to the Prime Minister, former Prime Ministers and their immediate family** members that will reside with him at **his official residence**.
  - Currently, the security cover is provided to the Prime Minister, former Prime Ministers and their immediate family members.
- **Time period:**
  - The security will be provided **only for a period of five years to the former Prime Ministers** and their immediate family **after they leave the office**.
  - However, the immediate family members need to be residing with the former Prime Minister at the allotted residence.
- **Withdrawal:**

- When the proximate security is withdrawn from a former Prime Minister such proximate security will also stand withdrawn from members of his immediate family.

### 37. Portal to Block and Trace Stolen Mobiles

#### Why in News

Recently, the government has launched a portal that will enable blocking and tracing of stolen or lost mobile phones.

- The initiative was launched in **Mumbai in September 2019** and has been rolled out for **Delhi-NCR now**. It will be extended to **other parts** of the country **in 2020**.

#### Key Points

- The project is **backed by the** Central Equipment Identity Register (**CEIR**) **system**, which was undertaken by the telecom department for addressing security, theft and other concerns including reprogramming of mobile handsets.
- It will facilitate requests for **blocking** of stolen or lost mobile phones by customers, allowing services to other existing customers having mobile phones with the same **International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI)** number, **sharing of traceability data** with police authorities, as well as **unblocking** of recovered phones.

#### International Mobile Equipment Identity

- Every phone or mobile broadband device has this **unique 15 digit code** that precisely identifies the device.
- Mobile phone manufacturers assign IMEI numbers to each device based on ranges allotted to them by the **Global System for Mobile Communications Association**.
- Dual-SIM phones will have two IMEI numbers.
- IMEI number is programmable and criminals can reprogramme the 15-digit unique number, which results in the cloning of IMEI. Consequently, there are multiple phone devices and hundreds of numbers with the same IMEI number.
- If such IMEI is blocked, a large number of mobile phones stand the risk of being blocked causing inconvenience to genuine customers.
  - The software that has been developed now allows an individual phone to be blocked even if it is on a cloned IMEI number.
- Moreover, because of the centralised nature of the register or database, all the operators can block the particular stolen or lost device across the country even though the phone is being serviced by one particular operator.

### 38. Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme

#### Key features of the scheme:

- It allows for purchase of high-rated pooled assets from financially-sound non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and housing finance companies (HFCs) by public sector banks (PSBs).
- The scheme would cover NBFCs and HFCs that might have slipped into “SMA-0” category during the one-year period prior to August 1, 2018, and asset pools rated “BBB+” or higher.
- The window for one-time partial credit guarantee offered by the government would remain open till June 30, 2020 or till such date by which Rs 1 lakh crore worth of assets get purchased by the banks, whichever is earlier.
- The Finance Minister would have the power to extend the validity of the scheme by up to three months by taking into account its progress.

### **Significance:**

- The proposed Government Guarantee support and resultant pool buyouts will help address NBFCs/HFCs resolve their temporary liquidity or cash flow mismatch issues.
- This will also enable them to continue contributing to credit creation and providing last mile lending to borrowers, thereby spurring economic growth.

## **39. Legal Framework for Illegal Migrants in India**

### **Why in News**

Recently, the Home Minister informed in the Rajya Sabha that the **National Register of Citizens (NRC)** will be implemented across India, and repeated **again in Assam**.

- According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, the implementation of NRC is expected to keep a check on illegal migrants.
- However, India already has a number of rules and regulations in place to control illegal migration in the country.

### **Existing Legal Framework**

- **The clause for the expulsion of foreigners:**
  - **Foreigners Act, 1864**
    - It was the **first** enactment made for dealing with foreigners that provided for the **expulsion of foreigners**.
    - It also allowed arrest, detention, and for a ban on foreigners entry into India after detention.
  - **Introduction of Passport:**
    - **The Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920**
      - The act empowered the government to make rules requiring persons entering India to be in possession of passports.
      - It also granted the government the power to remove from India any person who entered without a passport.
    - **Concept of ‘burden of proof’ lies with the person, and not with the authorities:**
      - **Foreigners Act, 1940**
        - It was enacted during the Second World War, under which the concept of **“burden of proof”** was introduced.
        - This meant that whenever a question arose with regard to the nationality of a person, the onus of proving that he was not a foreigner lay upon the person.
      - **Foreigners Act, 1946**
        - It **replaced** the Foreigners Act, 1940 conferring wide powers to deal with all foreigners.
        - The act empowered the government to take such steps as are necessary to prevent illegal migrants including the **use of force**.
        - The concept of **‘burden of proof’ lies with the person, and not with the authorities** given by this act is **still applicable in all States and Union Territories**. This concept has been **upheld** by a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court.
        - The act empowered the government to establish **tribunals which would have powers similar** to those of a **civil court**.
        - Recent **amendments (2019)** to the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964 empowered even district magistrates in all States and Union Territories to

set up tribunals to decide whether a person staying illegally in India is a foreigner or not.

- **Increased burden of migrants because of absence of the “burden of a proof” clause:**
  - **Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983**
    - The **absence** of any provision related to the ‘**burden of proof**’ in the **Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983** put a very **heavy burden upon the authorities** to establish whether a person is an illegal migrant.
    - Moreover, a **number of non-Indians** who may have entered Assam after March 25, 1971, without possession of valid documents, continued to reside in Assam.
    - The **act was struck down** by the **Supreme Court in Sarbananda Sonowal v. Union of India (2005)**. The Supreme Court also closed all tribunals in Assam functioning under the Act.
    - The Supreme Court, then, **transferred all pending cases** at the IMDT tribunals to the **Foreigners Tribunals** constituted under the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964.
- **Existing Procedure for Appeal:**
  - **Assam:**
    - Currently, any person excluded from the National Register of Citizens (NRC) can approach the Foreigners Tribunals, established only in Assam, within 120 days of receiving a certified copy of rejection.
  - **Other states and Union Territories:**
    - In other States, a person suspected to be a foreigner is produced before a local court under the Passport Act, 1920, or the Foreigners Act, 1946.
    -

#### **40. Skills Build Platform**

**Context:** India is the 4th country where this Skills Build platform has been launched on 4th Nov’19.

**About Skills Build Platform:**

It is a **digital platform developed by IBM** enabling holistic learning and aligning it with Skills India initiative by Government of India.

Launched by **Directorate General of Training (DGT)**, under the aegis of Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE).

As part of the programme, **a two-year advanced diploma in IT, networking and cloud computing, co-created and designed by IBM, will be offered at the Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) & National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs).**

**Significance of the programme:**

- The digital platform will provide a personal assessment of the cognitive capabilities and personality via MyInnerGenius to the students.
- They will then learn foundational knowledge about digital technologies, as well as professional skills such as resume-writing, problem solving and communication.
- Students will also receive recommendations on role-based education for specific jobs that include technical and professional learning.
- This initiative is part of IBM’s global commitment to create a job-ready workforce and to build the next generation of skills needed for new collar careers.

## 41. Detention centres for illegal migrants

**Context:** *Detention Centres for illegal migrants* have been at the centre of a political debate as the government and the opposition parties trade charges over the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Registry for Citizens.

**What are detention centres?**

They are *places designated to keep illegal migrants (people who have entered a country without necessary documents)* once they are detected by the authorities till the time their nationality is confirmed and they are deported to the country of their origin.

**Does India have detention centres?**

Yes, there are 6 detention centres in Assam. The combined capacity of these temporary centres is 1000, but the centres are overcrowded.

**How were the detention centres set up in Assam?**

Detention centres were set up in Assam after the Union government authorized the state to do so under the provisions of *Section 3(2)(e) of the Foreigners' Act, 1946 and Para 11(2) of the Foreigners Order, 1948*.

A detailed manual on '*model detention centres*' has been circulated to all the states.

As per the manual:

1. States require no specific approval from the Centre to set up these centres.
2. These centres should be setup outside the jail premises.
3. Their numbers and size should be decided by the states keeping in view the actual number of foreigners to be housed as well as the progress in deportation proceedings.

**Why are detention camps in focus now?**

The issue has come into focus amid talks of a nation-wide NRC, especially after the process in Assam identified a little over 19 lakh people without proper citizenship documents in the state.

## 42. Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019

**Why in News**

The Parliament has passed the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill (CAB), 2019.

- The Bill seeks to grant Indian Citizenship to persons belonging to **Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian** communities who have migrated to India after facing persecution on grounds of religion in **Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh**.
- It basically intends to make it easier for **non-Muslim immigrants** from India's three Muslim-majority neighbours to become citizens of India.

**Background**

- In India, **citizenship is regulated by the Citizenship Act, 1955**. The Act specifies that citizenship may be acquired in India through five methods – by birth in India, by descent, through registration, by naturalisation (extended residence in India), and by incorporation of territory into India.
- However, **illegal migrants cannot become Indian citizens**. Under the Act, an illegal migrant is a foreigner who:
  - enters the country without valid travel documents like a passport and visa, or enters with valid documents, but stays beyond the permitted time period.
  - Illegal migrants may be put in jail or deported under the Foreigners Act, 1946 and the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920.
- In 2015 and 2016, **the government exempted specified groups of illegal migrants** from provisions of the 1946 and 1920 Acts. They were Hindus, Sikhs,

Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, who reached India on or before December 31, 2014.

- This meant that these particular categories of illegal migrants would not be deported or jailed for being in India without valid documents.
- The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016 was introduced in Parliament to amend the Citizenship Act, 1955, so that these people could be made eligible for citizenship of India.
- The Bill lapsed with the dissolution of the 16th Lok Sabha. Subsequently, the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 was introduced in Lok Sabha in December 2019.

## CITIZENSHIP ACT & AMENDMENT

A LOOK AT WHAT THE BILL AIMS TO DO IN VIEW OF THE ACT, AND THE RESPONSE IT RECEIVED

### FOR SELECT FEW

Citizenship Amendment Bill seeks to amend the Citizenship Act 1955 in order to make illegal migrants — Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan — eligible for citizenship after six years of stay in India instead of 12 even if they don't possess proper document.

### CHANGE IN ELIGIBILITY

Under the Citizenship Act, the applicant must have resided in India during the last 12 months, and for 11 of the last 14 years to get citizenship. The Bill relaxes this 11-year requirement to five years for persons belonging to the 6 religions and 3 countries. It also makes those who entered India till 2014 eligible.

### CRITICISM RECEIVED SO FAR

The Bill has come under severe criticism with critics saying that the Bill violates Clause 6 of the Assam Accord, which stipulates "constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards" for the preserving the culture and identity of Assamese people. Critics have also said that the extensive exercise of updating the National Register of Citizens (NRC) will become null and void due to this exercise.

### *Key Features*

- **Citizenship on the basis of religion:** The Bill amends the Citizenship Act, 1955, and for the first time, will grant citizenship on the basis of religion to non-Muslim communities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, who entered India on or before December 31, 2014.
- **Non - Muslim Communities Included:** Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, and Christian. This implies that migrants, who identify themselves with any group or community other than those mentioned here, from the above mentioned countries won't be eligible for citizenship.
- **Exceptions:** The provisions on citizenship for illegal migrants **will not apply to two categories** - states protected by the '**Inner Line**', and areas covered under the **Sixth Schedule** of the Constitution.
  - **Inner Line Permit (ILP):** This is a special permit that citizens from other parts of India require to enter a state protected by the ILP regime. Without an ILP granted by the state government, an Indian from another state cannot visit a state that is under the ILP regime.
  - **Sixth Schedule:** The Sixth Schedule relates to special provisions in administration of certain Northeastern states (Assam, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Tripura). It provides special powers for Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) in these states.
- **Citizenship by Naturalization**
  - Under The Citizenship Act, 1955, one of the requirements for citizenship by naturalisation is that the applicant must have resided in India **during the last 12 months**, as well as for **11 of the previous 14 years**.

- The amendment **relaxes** the second requirement from **11 years to 5 years** as a specific condition for applicants belonging to the specified six religions, and the above mentioned three countries.
- **Additional Ground for Cancelling Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) Registration** i.e. violation of any law notified by the central government.
  - However, the Bill does not provide any guidance on the nature of laws which the central government may notify. The Supreme Court has noted that this guidance is necessary to set limits on the authority's powers and to avoid any arbitrariness in exercise of powers.

### ***Arguments Against the Bill***

- The fundamental criticism of the Bill has been that it **specifically targets Muslims**. Critics argue that it is **violative of Article 14 of the Constitution** (which guarantees the right to equality) and the principle of **secularism**.
- India has several other refugees that include **Tamils from Sri Lanka** and **Hindu Rohingya from Myanmar**. They are **not covered under the Act**.
- Despite exemption granted to some regions in the Northeastern states, the prospect of citizenship for massive numbers of illegal Bangladeshi migrants has triggered deep anxieties in the states.
- It will be difficult for the government to differentiate between illegal migrants and those persecuted.

### ***Arguments in Favour***

- The government has clarified that Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh are Islamic republics where **Muslims** are in majority hence they **cannot be treated as persecuted minorities**. It has assured that the government will examine the application from any other community **on a case to case basis**.
- This Bill will come as a big boon to all those people who have been the **victims of Partition** and the subsequent conversion of the three countries into theocratic Islamic republics.
  - Citing partition between India and Pakistan on religious lines in 1947, the government has argued that millions of citizens of undivided India belonging to various faiths were staying in Pakistan and Bangladesh from 1947.
  - The constitutions of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh provide for a specific state religion. As a result, many persons belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities have faced persecution on grounds of religion in those countries.
  - Many such persons have fled to India to seek shelter and continued to stay in India even if their travel documents have expired or they have incomplete or no documents.
- After Independence, not once but twice, **India conceded that the minorities in its neighbourhood is its responsibility**. First, immediately after Partition and again during the Indira-Mujib Pact in 1972 when India had agreed to absorb over 1.2 million refugees. It is a historical fact that on both occasions, it was only the Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and Christians who had come over to Indian side.

## **Bilateral and International Affairs**

### **43. United States Commission on International Religious Freedom**

### *Why in news*

Recently, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has raised concern over **Citizenship (Amendment) Bill (CAB), 2019**.

- This concern is related to the provision of **granting citizenship based on religion** in CAB, 2019.
- Earlier in August, 2019 USCIRF had also issued a statement against the **National Register of Citizens (NRC)** in Assam and a mob lynching incident in Jharkhand.

### *Controversial Clause of CAB, 2019*

- In 2016, a Bill was introduced to amend the **Citizenship Act, 1955**. However, it lapsed with the dissolution of the 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha.
  - Subsequently, the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 is has been introduced in the Parliament in December 2019.
- The 2019 amendment Bill provides for an exception for **Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians** from **Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan**, with regard to qualification for citizenship.

### *USCIRF*

- It is an independent, bipartisan **U.S. federal government commission** created by the **International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA), 1998**. It monitors the universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad.
- USCIRF uses **international standards** to monitor religious freedom violations globally, and **makes policy recommendations** to the President, the Secretary of State, and Congress.
- USCIRF Commissioners are **appointed by** the President and Congressional leaders of both political parties.
  - Their work is supported by a professional, nonpartisan staff. USCIRF is separate from the State Department, although the Department's Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom is a non-voting ex officio Commissioner.
- Its recommendations are **not binding** and acts only as a conscience-keeper for the two branches in the US government — the legislature and the executive.

### *International Religious Freedom report, 2019*

- USCIRF releases International Religious Freedom report annually. The Report consists of country-wise chapters.
- The 2019 report on India discussed mob-related violence, religious conversion, the legal status of minorities and government policies.
- It has placed India on its **Tier 2** category for engaging in or tolerating religious freedom violations that meet at least one of the elements of the “systematic, ongoing, egregious” standard for designation as a “**country of particular concern,**” or **CPC**, under the **International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA)**.

## **44. Chabahar Port**

**Context:** India, Afghanistan and Iran recently met to *discuss the issues in the implementation of Chabahar port in Iran*.

This was *the second meeting of the Follow-up Committee for implementation of the trilateral Chabahar Agreement between India, Afghanistan and Iran at the level of Joint Secretary/ Director General*.

### *Outcomes of the meet:*

1. The three countries have decided to open Mormugoa and New Mangalore Port in addition to JNPT, Mundra, Kandla and Cochin as part of designated route under the Chabahar Agreement.

2. It was agreed to finalise the protocol to harmonise transit, roads, customs and consular matters. Till that time, the TIR Convention will continue to be used for cargo movement.

**Background:**

The work of the Chabahar port is being conducted by *the Port Global Ltd Company*.

**Where is Chabahar Port?**

Located on *the Gulf of Oman* and is *the only oceanic port of the country*.

**Why Chabahar port is important for India?**

1. With this, India can bypass Pakistan in transporting goods to Afghanistan.
2. It will also boost India's access to Iran, the key gateway to the International North-South Transport Corridor that has sea, rail and road routes between India, Russia, Iran, Europe and Central Asia.
3. It also helps India counter Chinese presence in the Arabian Sea which China is trying to ensure by helping Pakistan develop the Gwadar port. Gwadar port is less than 400 km from Chabahar by road and 100 km by sea.
4. With Chabahar port being developed and operated by India, Iran also becomes a military ally to India. Chabahar could be used in case China decides to flex its navy muscles by stationing ships in Gwadar port to reckon its upper hand in the Indian Ocean, Persian Gulf and Middle East.
5. Trade benefits: With Chabahar port becoming functional, there will be a significant boost in the import of iron ore, sugar and rice to India. The import cost of oil to India will also see a considerable decline. India has already increased its crude purchase from Iran since the West imposed ban on Iran was lifted.
6. From a diplomatic perspective, Chabahar port could be used as a point from where humanitarian operations could be coordinated.

#### 45. UN medal for Indian peacekeepers in South Sudan

**Context:** Indian peacekeepers have received *the United Nations Medal* for their dedication and sacrifice serving so far away from home to protect civilians and build durable peace in South Sudan.

**Contributions of India Peacekeepers:**

- The soldiers were particularly praised for their efforts to support peace talks between Government and Opposition forces in the Upper Nile region and establishing the first-ever UNMISS base on the west bank of the Nile at Kodok.
- Outside of their duties, the peacekeepers have also supported local communities by building veterinary hospitals at Kodok and Malakal, training cattle-keepers to better care for their livestock and provided life-saving medical assistance to people in need.

**Background:**

India has been *the largest troop contributor to UN missions since inception*. So far India has taken part in 49 Peacekeeping missions with a total contribution exceeding 2,45,000 troops and a significant number of police personnel have been deployed.

**For Prelims and Mains:**

**What is peacekeeping? It's significance?**

United Nations Peacekeeping was *created in 1948*. Its first mission involved the establishment of *the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO)*, which served to observe and maintain ceasefire during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.

**Significance and the need for peacekeeping:**

- United Nations Peacekeeping helps countries torn by conflict create conditions for lasting peace.

- Peacekeeping has proven to be one of the most effective tools available to the UN to assist host countries navigate the difficult path from conflict to peace.
- Peacekeeping has unique strengths, including legitimacy, burden sharing, and an ability to deploy and sustain troops and police from around the globe, integrating them with civilian peacekeepers to advance multidimensional mandates.

***UN Peacekeeping is guided by three basic principles:***

1. Consent of the parties.
2. Impartiality
3. Non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate.

***Global partnership:***

UN peacekeeping is a unique global partnership. ***It brings together the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Secretariat, troop and police contributors and the host governments in a combined effort to maintain international peace and security.*** Its strength lies in the legitimacy of the UN Charter and in the wide range of contributing countries that participate and provide precious resources.

***About United Nations Mission in South Sudan:***

On 9 July 2011 ***South Sudan became the newest country in the world.*** The birth of the Republic of South Sudan is the culmination of ***a six-year peace process which began with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005.***

- However, the Security Council determined that the situation faced by South Sudan continued to constitute a threat to international peace and security in the region and established the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) to consolidate peace and security and to help establish conditions for development.
- Following the crisis which broke out in South Sudan in December 2013, the Security Council reinforced UNMISS and reprioritized its mandate towards the protection of civilians, human rights monitoring, and support for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and for the implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement.

## **46. Islamic Cooperation countries (OIC)**

***Context:*** The ***Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)*** has voiced concern over ***the Citizenship Amendment Act and the verdict in the Ayodhya case.***

The body has usually been ***supportive of Pakistan and often sided with Islamabad in its disputes with India.***

***Background:***

The Citizenship Amendment Bill was passed by the Parliament and signed into law by the President this month.

According to ***the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)***, members of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities who have come from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan till December 31, 2014 following religious persecution there will get Indian citizenship.

***Observations made by OIC:***

- The OIC urged the Indian government to ensure the safety of the Muslim minority and the protection of their religious sites.
- It also cautioned that “any action, contrary to these principles and obligations, may lead to further tensions and may have serious implications on peace and security across the region.”

***About the OIC:***

- Organisation of Islamic Cooperation is an international organization founded in 1969, consisting of 57 member states.

- It is the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations.
- The organisation states that it is “the collective voice of the Muslim world” and works to “safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony “.
- The OIC has permanent delegations to the United Nations and the European Union.
- Permanent Secretariat is in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

#### **Significance of OIC for India:**

- OIC’s growing economic and energy interdependence with India has become important in recent times.
- That India has one of the world’s largest Muslim populations, of course, is the immediate explanation of the surprising invite for Swaraj to address the OIC.

### **47. Global Refugee Forum**

**Context:** *First ever Global Refugee Forum* is being held in **Geneva, Switzerland**.

**Jointly hosted by** United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) along with Government of Switzerland.

**For Prelims:**

**What is Global Refugee Forum?**

Guided by *the Global Compact on Refugees*, the Global Refugee Forum is *an opportunity to translate the principle of international responsibility-sharing into concrete action*.

The Forum will showcase *impactful pledges and contributions and the exchange of good practices*.

**Value addition for Mains:**

**Refugees situations- concerns and challenges:**

- Refugee situations continue to increase in scope, scale, and complexity. There are 25.4 million refugees around the world, and 85 per cent of them are hosted in low- and middle-income countries facing their own economic and development challenges.
- Despite the tremendous generosity of host countries and donors, the gap between needs and the resources available to meet them continues to grow.

There is an urgent need for a more equitable sharing of the burden and responsibility for hosting and supporting the world’s refugees. Refugees and host communities should not be left behind.

**What is Global Compact on Refugees?**

It was affirmed by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2018. It represents the determination of the international community to strengthen solidarity with refugees and the countries that host them. The Compact sets out arrangements to ensure that host countries receive predictable and sustainable support; that refugees can contribute to their host communities and secure their own futures; and that solutions are sought from the outset.

### **48. United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA)**

**Context:** *The House of Representatives* has passed *the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement — the replacement for NAFTA, or the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement*. The new deal includes stronger labor and environmental provisions. American labor groups have backed the new trade deal.

**About United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA):**

It’s basically *NAFTA 2.0*, with major changes on cars and new policies on labor and environmental standards, intellectual property protections, and some digital trade provisions. The changes include:

**Country of origin rules:** Automobiles must have 75% of their components manufactured in Mexico, the US, or Canada to qualify for zero tariffs (up from 62.5 percent under NAFTA).

**Labor provisions:** 40 to 45 percent of automobile parts have to be made by workers who earn at least \$16 an hour by 2023. Mexico has also agreed to pass laws giving workers the right to union representation, extend labor protections to migrant workers, and protect women from discrimination. The countries can also sanction one another for labor violations.

**US farmers get more access to the Canadian dairy market:** The US got Canada to open up its dairy market to US farmers, which was a big issue for Trump.

**Intellectual property and digital trade:** The deal extends the terms of copyright to 70 years beyond the life of the author (up from 50). It also extends the period that a pharmaceutical drug can be protected from generic competition.

**It also includes new provisions to deal with the digital economy,** including prohibiting duties on things like music and e-books, and protections for internet companies so they're not liable for content their users produce.

**Sunset clause:** The agreement puts in a 16-year “sunset” clause — meaning the terms of the agreement expire, or “sunset,” after a set period of time. The deal is also subject to a review every six years, at which point the US, Mexico, and Canada can decide to extend USMCA.

#### **What is NAFTA?**

NAFTA is the initialism for **the North American Free Trade Agreement**, an agreement signed by Canada, Mexico, and the United States that reduced or eliminated trade barriers in North America. (Since the U.S. and Canada already had a free trade agreement (signed in 1988), NAFTA merely brought Mexico into the trade bloc.)

Negotiations for the trade agreement began in 1990 under the administration of George H.W. Bush and were finalized under Bill Clinton’s presidency in 1993. **The agreement went into effect on January 1, 1994.**

#### **What was the purpose of NAFTA?**

1. In 1993 the European Union (EU) created a “single market”—one territory without any internal borders or other regulatory obstacles to the free movement of goods and services. This allowed every country and business in the EU to have access to more than 500 million consumers.
2. NAFTA, which was approved that same year, was designed to have a similar effect, providing a way to allow the exchange of goods and services to flow more freely across national borders without the artificial restrictions.
3. NAFTA provided for progressive elimination of all tariffs on any goods qualifying as North American. The deal also sought to protect intellectual property, establish dispute-resolution mechanisms, and, through corollary agreements, implement labor and environmental safeguards.

#### **Why is NAFTA controversial?**

NAFTA was controversial when first proposed, mostly because **it was the first [free trade agreement] involving two wealthy, developed countries and a developing country.** Some people felt that allowing free trade with a developing country provides an incentive for U.S.-based business to move their operations to that country.

Since its implementation NAFTA has remained **a prime target of trade protectionists (those who advocate taking measures such as taxing imports to “protect” domestic industries from foreign competition).**

## **49. Indo – US 2+2 Dialogue**

### *Why in News*

India and the US have recently concluded **second 2+2 ministerial dialogue** in **Washington**. Several landmark agreements in both **defence and Civilian sectors** were signed.

#### Key Points

- **Industrial Security Annex (ISA)**
  - ISA to the **General Security Of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA)** will provide a framework for exchange and protection of **classified** military information **between the U.S. and Indian defence industries**.
  - Currently, under GSOMIA, such information is exchanged between the Government authorities of the two countries but not between **private parties**.
  - This will further promote **“Make in India”** in the defence sector.
    - In accordance with the budget announcement (2018-19), the government has already decided to set up **two Defence Industrial Corridors** in the country, **one in Uttar Pradesh and another in Tamil Nadu**.
- **Peacekeeping for Indo-Pacific**
  - Cooperation in **capacity-building** of UN peacekeepers from Indo-Pacific countries, based on demands from the countries concerned.
  - Counter-terrorism efforts were also discussed including dangers of cross border terrorism.
- **Tiger Triumph Exercise**
  - To hold the **India-U.S. joint tri-services ‘Tiger Triumph’** on an **annual** basis.
  - **The first edition** was held in **November 2019** as a Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (**HADR**) exercise.
- **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)**
  - The **CDRI** was launched at the **UN Climate Action Summit** in **New York, USA** in September 2019. It is **headquartered in New Delhi, India**.
  - The US is now part of it.
- **Water Resource Management**
  - Memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between Ministry of **Jal Shakti** and the **U.S. Geological Survey** to promote **technical cooperation** in water resources management and water technology.
- **Space Situational Awareness (SSA)**
  - Cooperation for **exchange** of information including **space debris and space traffic management**.
  - It ensures **navigational safety of our space assets**.
- **Young Innovators Internship Programme (YIIP)**
  - Create **internship** opportunities in **key areas of science and economy**.
  - New opportunities for **young entrepreneurs**.
- **Parliamentary Exchange and Judicial cooperation**
  - **Reciprocal visits** by Parliamentarians from both countries.
  - The U.S. Federal Judicial Center and **India’s National Judicial Academy in Bhopal** to cooperate in the area of **counter-terrorism jurisprudence** to new areas of **criminal jurisprudence** including **money laundering, drug trafficking** etc.

### *‘2+2’ Dialogue*

- It is a format of dialogue where the **defense and foreign ministers or secretaries** meet with their counterparts from another country. 2+2 Ministerial is the highest-level institutional mechanism between the two countries.
- India holds such talks with **Australia**, at the foreign secretary and defense secretary level but with **Japan** and the **US** at the **ministerial level**.
- With the US this was the **second 2+2 meeting (Washington)**, first was held in New Delhi in September 2018.
- US holds such ministerial dialogues with **Australia and Japan** also.

## 50. Land Boundary Agreement (LBA)

**Context:** More than four years after the historic **Land Boundary Agreement (LBA)** between India and Bangladesh, a report released by civil rights organisations on the situation in erstwhile **enclaves** states that **protest and resistance have become an essential part of their survival in India**.

### What's the issue now?

The situation has not improved. There are marked continuities in the problems that existed in the pre-LBA years, although the nature and context of the problems have perceptibly changed.

- On India's part, the spotlight has now shifted from the identity crisis faced by erstwhile enclave dwellers in the pre-LBA situation, to issues of poor governance, as well as conflict of interest between the Centre and the state in the post-LBA years.



### What are the concerns?

The intractable discord regarding the implementation of the measures as promised to the new citizens, coupled with lack of coordination between the Centre and the state in India, has apparently transformed the enclaves into hotbeds of local politics.

### About the Land boundary agreement:

Under the Land Boundary Agreement between, **the Bangladeshi enclaves in India and Indian enclaves in Bangladesh were transferred on July 31, 2015.**

The agreement involved handing over 17,000 acres of land to Bangladesh in return for 7,000 acres in 162 enclaves in West Bengal, Assam, Tripura and Meghalaya. It also required *an amendment to the Constitution (the 119th amendment)*.

### 51.19th IORA Council of Ministers Meeting

#### Why in News

Recently, the 19<sup>th</sup> Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Council of Ministers (COM) Meeting was held in Abu Dhabi (UAE) under the theme of “Promoting a Shared Destiny and Path to Prosperity in the Indian Ocean”.

- The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has assumed the position of Chair while Bangladesh will be Vice-Chair of the IORA for the period of 2019-2021.
  - South Africa was the chair for the period of 2017-2019.
- The meeting was attended by IORA’s 22 Member States and nine Dialogue Partners.

#### Key Points

- It is the **only ministerial-level organization** that focuses purely on the Indian Ocean region, bound together by growing economic and trade linkages and a shared interest in promoting prosperity, peace and stability.
- In 2014, India hosted the **first Indian Ocean Dialogue in Kochi, Kerala** bringing together officials, academics and other strategic thinkers to discuss **six broad themes** – the geo-political contour of the Indian Ocean Region, maritime security challenges, strengthening regional institutions, information sharing, cooperation in disaster relief and management, and economic cooperation. The Kochi Consensus was adopted as its outcome document.
  - The **Indian Ocean Dialogue (IOD)** is a **flagship initiative** of IORA, with its origins in the 13th Council of Ministers meeting, held in November 2013 in Perth, Australia.
  - The **sixth edition of IOD will be held on 13 December 2019 in New Delhi, India.**

#### India’s Role

- India continues to promote its official policy of “**coordination, cooperation and partnership**” in the regional maritime domain.
- As coordinator to the priority area on disaster risk management, India has **published guidelines for IORA**. It has also urged partners to join the **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure** launched at the UN in **September 2019**.
- India has been **trying to emerge as the net provider of information** in the IOR and in that direction it created the **Information Fusion Centre** located in **Gurugram** to assist member countries of IOR with real-time crisis information. **Bangladesh, Mauritius, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Seychelles** have been part of the information support structure of India.
- Indian policy takes into consideration that IOR is not an India-run maritime domain and that is reflected in the government’s **Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) programme**, which **aims to turn the region more inclusive**.

#### Indian Ocean Rim Association

- It was **established in 1997** and is a regional forum that seeks to build and expand understanding and mutually beneficial cooperation through a consensus-based, evolutionary and non-intrusive approach.

- **IORA has 22 member states**, including Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, UAE, and Yemen.
- Its **Secretariat is based in Cyber City, Ebène, Mauritius**.
- It manages, coordinates, services and monitors the implementation of policy decisions, work programmes and projects adopted by the member states.
- The association gains importance by the fact that the Indian Ocean carries half of the world's container ships, one-third of the world's bulk cargo traffic and two-thirds of the world's oil shipments.
- It is a lifeline of international trade and transport and the Indian ocean region is woven together by trade routes and commands control of major sea-lanes.

## **52. WTO's dispute settlement mechanism**

**Context:** *The World Trade Organization's (WTO's) dispute settlement mechanism* is on the brink of collapsing. Of the three members currently on the seven-member body, the terms of two has ended.

### ***What's the issue now?***

The dispute settlement mechanism requires at least three members to function, and world trade is about to enter a phase in which there will be no official resolution for many international disputes — potentially creating the circumstances for a free-for-all.

### ***Who is to be blamed for the situation?***

- Over the last couple of years, the membership of the body has dwindled to (the present) three persons (instead of the required seven) as the United States has blocked the appointments of new members, and the reappointments of members who had completed their four-year tenures.
- The US believes the WTO is biased against it, and has criticised it for being “unfair”. The administration of President Donald Trump has, therefore, taken the decision to starve the body of personnel and to disregard its authority — imposing new tariffs on not just China, but also American allies such as Canada, Europe, and Japan.

### ***What is the WTO's Appellate Body, and why is it important?***

The Appellate Body, set up in 1995, is a standing committee of seven members that presides over appeals against judgments passed in trade-related disputes brought by WTO members.

### ***Who can approach?***

- Countries involved in a dispute over measures purported to break a WTO agreement or obligation can approach the Appellate Body if they feel the report of the panel set up to examine the issue needs to be reviewed on points of law. Existing evidence is not re-examined; legal interpretations are reviewed.
- The Appellate Body can uphold, modify, or reverse the legal findings of the panel that heard the dispute. Countries on either or both sides of the dispute can appeal.

### ***Significance:***

The WTO's dispute settlement procedure is seen as being vital to ensuring smooth international trade flows. The Appellate Body has so far issued 152 reports. The reports, once adopted by the WTO's disputes settlement body, are final and binding on the parties.

### ***So, what is the problem in the WTO Appellate Body?***

Over the last two years, *the membership of the body has dwindled to just three persons instead of the required seven.*

**The understaffed appeals body** has been unable to stick to its 2-3 month deadline for appeals filed in the last few years, and the backlog of cases has prevented it from initiating proceedings in appeals that have been filed in the last year.

With the Appellate Body unable to review new applications, **there is already great uncertainty over the WTO's dispute settlement process.**

- If the body is declared non-functional, countries may be compelled to implement rulings by the panel even if they feel that gross errors have been committed.
- Should such a country refuse to comply with the order of the panel on the ground that it has no avenue for appeal, it will run the risk of facing arbitration proceedings initiated by the other party in the dispute.

### 53. Bougainville and nationhood

**Where is Bougainville?**

It is an island in the Pacific.

**Why in news?**

It is holding a **referendum to decide if it wants to remain a part of Papua New Guinea or become an independent country.**

**How does a territory become a new country?**

There is **no straightforward rule.** A region's quest for nationhood mainly depends on **how many countries and international organisations it manages to convince to recognise it as a country.**

The biggest sanction of nationhood is **the United Nations recognising a territory as a country.**

**Why UN recognition matters?**

With UN recognition, a new country has **access to the World Bank, the IMF, etc.**

- Its **currency is recognised**, which allows it to trade.
- There is **protection against parent country's aggression**, and international trade.

And as per **1933's Montevideo Convention**, a region wanting to become independent should meet 4 criteria:

A country-hopeful must have **a defined territory, people, government, and the ability to form relationships with other countries.**

### 54. Saudi Arabia Becomes First Arab Nation to Head G20

**Why in News**

Recently, **Saudi Arabia became the first Arab nation** to take over the **G20 Presidency on December 1, 2019.**

- It has taken over from **Japan** and it will host the **G20 Summit** in its capital, **Riyadh** on **November 21 and 22, 2020.**
- The **theme** of Summit- "**Realising Opportunities of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century for All**".
- **The three key aims of the G20 Presidency, 2020 are:**
  - **Empowering People** by creating the conditions in which all people mainly women and youth can live, work and thrive.
  - **Safeguarding the Planet** by fostering collective efforts to protect our global common-pool resources.

- **Shaping New Frontiers** by adopting long-term and bold strategies to share the benefits of innovation and technological advancement.

### Challenges

- As the presiding nation, Saudi Arabia has to **work towards mitigating global risks** like climate change, demographic issues, such as low birth rates, rising life expectancy and aging societies which requires coordinated efforts at global level. However, **rising populism and nationalism** may prevent the progress at the multilateral level.
- It has promoted a **liberalisation drive**, including granting greater rights to women. However, incidents like the **murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi drew intense global criticism over human rights issues in Saudi Arabia.**
- Therefore, G20 member states should **exert pressure on the Saudi Arabia** for its **authoritative policies** and hold it accountable for its human rights obligations.

### G20

- **About**
  - The **G20** is an **informal group of 19 countries and the European Union**, with representatives of the **International Monetary Fund** and the **World Bank**.
  - The G20 membership comprises a mix of the world's largest advanced and emerging economies, representing about two-thirds of the world's population, 85% of global gross domestic product, 80% of global investment and over 75% of global trade.
- **Headquarter**
  - The G20 operates as a forum and not as an organisation. Therefore, it **does not have any permanent secretariat or management and administrative structure.**
- **Origin**
  - **1997-1999 Asian Financial Crisis:** This was a **ministerial-level forum** which emerged after G7 invited both developed and developing economies. The finance ministers and central bank governors began meeting in 1999.
  - **Amid 2008 Financial Crisis** the world saw the need for a new consensus-building at the highest political level. It was decided that the G20 leaders would begin meeting once annually.
- **Members**
  - The members of the G20 are **Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union.**
  - One nation holds the Chair every year, known as '**G20 Presidency**'. Argentina chaired the G20 summit of 2018 and Japan for 2019.

## Geography, Environment and Ecology

### 55. Torrefaction to reduce stubble burning

**Context:** India tests Swedish **torrefaction technology** to reduce stubble burning.

**What is torrefaction?**

It is a *thermal process* used to produce *high-grade solid biofuels from various streams of woody biomass or agro residues*.

**The end product** is a stable, homogeneous, high quality solid biofuel with far greater energy density and calorific value than the original feedstock, providing significant benefits in logistics, handling and storage, as well as opening up a wide range of potential uses.

**How it works?**

1. Biomass torrefaction involves heating the biomass to temperatures between 250 and 300 degrees Celsius in a low-oxygen atmosphere.
2. When biomass is heated at such temperatures, the moisture evaporates and various low-calorific components (volatiles) contained in the biomass are driven out.
3. During this process the hemi-cellulose in the biomass decomposes, which transforms the biomass from a fibrous low quality fuel into a product with excellent fuel characteristics.

### **56. Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority (PPV&FR)**

**Context:** A document which food and beverages giant PepsiCo India cited to support its charges against Gujarat potato farmers earlier this year is being revised by *the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers Rights Authority (PPV&FRA)*, following complaints from major farmers groups.

**What's the issue?**

The Frequently Asked Questions or FAQ document had claimed that *“only small and marginal farmers involved in subsistence farming” are eligible to claim rights under the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers Rights (PPV&FR) Act, 2001*. The FAQ also said these rights are not for “commercial farmers” and are only meant for “small scale” use.

- PepsiCo has used the same argument in an ongoing case at the Authority over its registered potato variety used for Lays chips. The company has also cited the FAQ document to justify dragging more than nine farmers to court in 2018 for growing and selling its registered variety.
- The company faced product boycotts and major protests across the political spectrum for slapping a ₹4.2 crore lawsuit against four farmers, and ultimately withdrew all cases after government intervention just before Lok Sabha elections in May 2019.

**The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPV&FR) Act, 2001:**

- Enacted by India in 2001 adopting *sui generis system*.
- It is in conformity with *International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV), 1978*.
- The legislation *recognizes the contributions of both commercial plant breeders and farmers in plant breeding activity and also provides to implement TRIPs in a way that supports the specific socio-economic interests of all the stakeholders* including private, public sectors and research institutions, as well as resource-constrained farmers.

**Objectives of the PPV & FR Act, 2001:**

1. To establish an effective system for the protection of plant varieties, the rights of farmers and plant breeders and to encourage the development of new varieties of plants.
2. To recognize and protect the rights of farmers in respect of their contributions made at any time in conserving, improving and making available plant genetic resources for the development of new plant varieties.

3. To accelerate agricultural development in the country, protect plant breeders' rights; stimulate investment for research and development both in public & private sector for the development new of plant varieties.
4. Facilitate the growth of seed industry in the country which will ensure the availability of high-quality seeds and planting material to the farmers.

***Rights under the Act:***

***Breeders' Rights:*** Breeders will have exclusive rights to produce, sell, market, distribute, import or export the protected variety. Breeder can appoint agent/ licensee and may exercise for civil remedy in case of infringement of rights.

***Researchers' Rights:*** Researcher can use any of the registered variety under the Act for conducting experiment or research. This includes the use of a variety as an initial source of variety for the purpose of developing another variety but repeated use needs prior permission of the registered breeder.

***Farmers' Rights:***

1. A farmer who has evolved or developed a new variety is entitled for registration and protection in like manner as a breeder of a variety;
2. Farmers variety can also be registered as an extant variety;
3. A farmer can save, use, sow, re-sow, exchange, share or sell his farm produce including seed of a variety protected under the PPV&FR Act, 2001 in the same manner as he was entitled before the coming into force of this Act provided farmer shall not be entitled to sell branded seed of a variety protected under the PPV&FR Act, 2001;
4. Farmers are eligible for recognition and rewards for the conservation of Plant Genetic Resources of land races and wild relatives of economic plants;
5. There is also a provision for compensation to the farmers for non-performance of variety under Section 39 (2) of the Act, 2001 and
6. Farmer shall not be liable to pay any fee in any proceeding before the Authority or Registrar or the Tribunal or the High Court under the Act.

### ***57. Sustainable Development Cell for Environmental Mitigation Measures***

***Context:*** The Ministry of Coal has decided to establish a '*Sustainable Development Cell*'.

***For Prelims:***

***About the cell:***

***Objective:*** To promote environmentally sustainable coal mining in the country and address environmental concerns during the decommissioning or closure of mines.

***Roles and functions:***

- Advise, mentor, plan and monitor the mitigation measures taken by the coal companies for maximising the utilisation of available resources in a sustainable way.
- Act as nodal point at Ministry of Coal level in this matter. Formulate the future policy framework for the environmental mitigation measures including the Mine closure Fund.

***For mains:***

***Implications:***

This move gains significance as the new private entities are now going to form a significant part of the future, a set of guidelines for proper rehabilitation of mines need to be evolved in tune with global best practices.

### ***58. Project Dolphin***

**Context:** The government is planning to launch a programme called “*Project Dolphin*”, along the lines of “Project Tiger” to enhance the population of these dolphins.

**For Prelims:**

**Protection status:**

Dolphins have been included in *Schedule I of the Indian Wild Life (Protection) Act 1972*, in *Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)*, in *Appendix II of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)* and categorised as ‘*Endangered*’ on the *International Union for the Conservation of Nature’s (IUCN) Red List*.

**Characteristic features:**

The Gangetic river dolphins can *only live in freshwater, are blind and catch their prey in a unique manner, using ultrasonic sound waves*.

*They are distributed across seven states in India:* Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

**For Mains:**

**Need for conservation:**

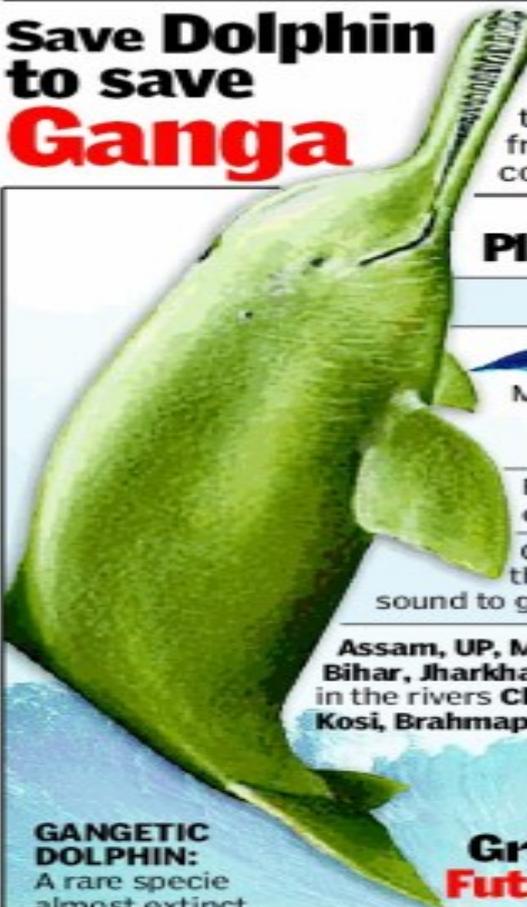
The Gangetic river dolphins were *officially discovered in 1801* and are *one of the oldest creatures in the world along with some species of turtles, crocodiles and sharks*, according to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

- They once lived in the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Karnaphuli-Sangu river systems of Nepal, India, and Bangladesh, but are now mostly extinct from many of its early distribution ranges.
- Today, their numbers have dwindled mainly because of direct killing, habitat fragmentation by dams and barrages and indiscriminate fishing.

## Save Dolphin to save Ganga

The Centre has declared the dolphin a national aquatic animal to save the rare freshwater species from disappearing from the country's aqua map

Know about **Platanista gangetica**

 **1.67 m**

Males grow up to **2.12 m** | Females grow up to **2.67 m**

Females give birth to only one calf, once in **2-3 yrs**

Generally blind, they catch their prey by emitting ultrasonic sound to gauge distance, mass etc

**Assam, UP, MP, Rajasthan, Bihar, Jharkhand & W Bengal** in the rivers **Chambal, Sone, Kosi, Brahmaputra** Prefer deep waters, in & around Indian river confluences

**GANGETIC DOLPHIN:** A rare specie almost extinct  
**Lost cousin:** The Yangtze dolphin, Baiji, of China

**Grim Future** | Once counted in 10's of 1000's, the amount has reduced in last century to **1,500**  
 "Endangered" & placed in **Schedule-I of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**

Dwindling number due to killing, habitat fragmentation



*Some of the efforts made to preserve and increase the numbers of these dolphins include:* Setting up of *the Conservation Action Plan for the Gangetic Dolphin (2010-2020)*, which has identified threats to Gangetic dolphins and impact of river traffic, irrigation canals and depletion of prey-base on dolphin populations. The Gangetic dolphins have been *included in Schedule -I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972*, which means they have the highest degree of protection against hunting. They are also one among the 21 *species identified under the centrally sponsored scheme, "Development of Wildlife Habitat"*.

### 59. The India State of Forest Report 2019

**Context:** The *India State of Forest Report 2019* has been released.

**Key findings:**

1. Total tree and forest cover in the country increased by 5,188 square kilometer in the last two years.
2. There is an increase of 42.6 million tonnes in the carbon stock of the country as compared to the last assessment of 2017.
3. There is a decrease of forest cover to the extent of 765 sq km (0.45 per cent) in northeast India region. Except Assam and Tripura, all states in the region show decrease in forest cover.

4. The loss in the North East is attributed primarily due to the traditional farming practice of Shifting Cultivation.
5. The mangrove cover in the country has increased by 54 sq km (1.10 per cent) as compared to the previous assessment.
6. Karnataka tops the country in growing the maximum amount of forest in the last two years.
7. Karnataka is followed by Andhra Pradesh (990 sq km) and Kerala (823 sq km).
8. Total bamboo bearing area of the country is estimated as 1,60,037 sq km. There is an increase of 3,229 sq km in bamboo bearing area as compared to the previous estimate.

## **60. European Green Deal**

**Context:** On the sidelines of recently concluded annual Madrid Climate talks, the European Union came up with an announcement *on additional measures it would on climate change*. It is Called *the European Green Deal*.

**Overview and key features of the European Green Deal:**

**Climate neutrality:** The EU has promised to bring a law, binding on all member countries, to ensure it becomes “climate neutral” by 2050.

- **What is it?** Climate neutrality, sometimes also expressed as a state of net-zero emissions, is achieved when a country’s emissions are balanced by absorptions and removal of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere. Absorption can be increased by creating more carbon sinks like forests, while removal involves technologies like carbon capture and storage.

**Increase in 2030 emission reduction target:**

- In its climate action plan declared under the Paris Agreement, the EU was committed to making a 40 per cent reduction in its emissions by 2030 compared to 1990 levels. It is now promising to increase this reduction to at least 50 per cent and work towards 55 per cent.

**Significance of the deal:**

EU with 28 member countries are together *the third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the world after China and the United States*. Therefore, the announcement was hailed as a major step forward, even though it needs complementary efforts from other countries to make a significant impact.

**Implications and Lessons for other countries:**

- Over the last few months, there had been a growing demand for countries to commit to net-zero emissions by 2050. The UN Secretary-General had convened a special meeting on the sidelines of the General Assembly session in September to persuade countries to commit to this target. Over 60 countries had agreed to scale up their climate actions, or to the 2050 target, but these were all relatively small emitters. *The EU is now the first major emitter to agree to the 2050 climate neutrality target*.
- The EU also happens to be *only one among major emitters to retain the 1990 baseline for emission cuts*, originally mandated under *the Kyoto Protocol* for all developed countries. Most other countries have shifted their baselines to 2005 or even later under the 2015 Paris Agreement.

**What else is expected from developed regions like EU?**

EU has not been fulfilling all its climate obligations. *The Kyoto Protocol required the rich and developed countries to provide finance and technology to the developing countries to help them fight climate change*. In those respects, there has been little climate money flowing out of the EU, especially for adaptation needs of developing countries, and transfer of new climate-friendly technologies has been mired in patent and ownership complications.

This is the reason why developing countries, like India and China, have been repeatedly raising *the issue of unfulfilled obligations of developed countries in the pre-2020 period, that is covered by the Kyoto Protocol.*

**Concerns and challenges:**

The *Green Deal is important but inadequate in itself to achieve the emission reductions* that scientific assessments say would be required to save the world from catastrophic and irreversible impacts of climate change.

*There has been no signal from other big emitters*, including large developing countries like China and India, that they were considering immediate scaling up of their climate actions.

- As long as many international partners do not share the same ambition as the EU, there is a risk of carbon leakage, either because production is transferred from the EU to other countries with lower ambition for emission reduction, or because EU products are replaced by more carbon-intensive imports.
- If this risk materializes, there will be no reduction in global emissions, and this will frustrate the efforts of EU and its industries to meet the global climate objectives of the Paris Agreement.

## 61. National Green Corps 'Ecoclub'

**What is it?**

Launched under *the Environment Education Awareness and Training (EEAT)*, the National Green Corps (NGC) popularly known as *"a programme of Ecoclubs"* is a nationwide initiative of the Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India (now Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change).

**Objectives:**

- To impart knowledge to school children, through hands-on experience, about their immediate environment, interactions within it and the problems therein.
- To develop requisite skills of observation, experimentation, survey, recording, analysis and reasoning for conserving the environment through various activities.
- To inculcate the proper attitude towards the environment and its conservation through community interactions.
- To sensitize children to issues related to environment and development through field visits and demonstrations.
- To promote logical and independent thinking among children so that they are able to make the right choices in a spirit of scientific inquiry.
- To motivate and stimulate young minds by involving them in action projects related to environmental conservation.

**Methodology:**

1. The scheme is being operated through Eco-clubs of 50-60 students having interest in environment related issues, formed in member schools.
2. Eco clubs are supervised by a Teacher In-charge, who is selected from among the teachers of the member school.
3. There is District Implementation and Monitoring Committee to supervise, organise training for In-charge teachers, and monitor periodically the implementation of scheme at the District level.
4. There is a State Steering Committee for guidance, direction and to oversee the implementation of the scheme.
5. The State Nodal Agency coordinates the implementation of the scheme in the State and organize related activities like training to Master Trainers.

6. The National Steering Committee will give overall direction to the programme and ensure linkages at all levels.

## 62. EChO Network

**Context:** Indian Government has launched a network to encourage cross-disciplinary leadership- Called **EChO Network**.

**Aim:** To identify gaps in knowledge regarding environment and then train postdoctoral leaders in research and outreach on these topics, incorporating current public and private efforts.

**Key features:**

- It will provide a template for cross-disciplinary leadership in India with the specific focus of increasing research, knowledge, and awareness of Indian ecology and the environment.
- The Network would develop a national network to catalyse a new generation of Indians who can synthesize interdisciplinary concepts and tackle real-world problems in medicine, agriculture, ecology, and technology.

**How it works?**

1. Through interactive sessions with citizens, industry, academia, and the government, the Network will identify gaps in knowledge regarding selected topics in human and environmental ecosystems.
2. The program will then train postdoctoral leaders in research and outreach on these topics, while also incorporating current public and private efforts into a national network.
3. It would then go on to establishing nation-wide awareness in these issues through public discourse and education for citizens, industry, and government with information exchange at all educational levels.

**The need:**

Despite concerted efforts to promote ecological and environmental research, **India lacks trained scientists with interdisciplinary skills and collaborative mind-set.** Educators and students need to be trained to identify and solve problems in **an interdisciplinary manner.**

This network will inspire an entirely new approach to Indian education and exploration necessary for the post-technological world.

## 63. Jal Jeevan Mission

**Context:** Operational guidelines for the implementation of **Jal Jeevan Mission** have been released.

**About Jal Jeevan Mission:**

**The Mission was announced in August 2019.**

The chief objective of the Mission is **to provide piped water supply (Har Ghar Jal) to all rural and urban households by 2024.**

It also aims **to create local infrastructure for rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge and management of household waste water for reuse in agriculture.**

The Mission will **converge with other Central and State Government Schemes to achieve its objectives of sustainable water supply management across the country.**

**Benefits of the mission:**

- Household pipeline water supply.
- Clean and drinkable water.
- Recharge of groundwater level.

- Better local infrastructure.
- Less water-borne diseases.
- Less water wastage.

***Need for and significance of the mission:***

***India has 16% of the world population, but only 4% of freshwater resources.*** Depleting groundwater level, overexploitation and deteriorating water quality, climate change, etc. are major challenges to provide potable drinking water.

It is an urgent requirement of water conservation in the country because of the decreasing amount of groundwater level. ***Therefore, the Jal Jeevan Mission will focus on integrated demand and supply management of water at the local level.***

## 64. Global Climate Risk Index 2020

### ***Why in News***

The international environmental think tank ‘Germanwatch’ has recently released the Global Climate Risk Index 2019.

- The index analyses the extent to which countries and regions have been affected by the impacts of weather-related loss events (storms, floods, heat waves etc.).

### ***Key Findings***

- **Worst affected in 2018:** Japan, Philippines and Germany
- **Worst affected between 1999-2018 (long-term index):** Puerto Rico, Myanmar and Haiti
- **Deaths and financial loss between 1999-2018:** Altogether, about 5 lakh people died as a direct result of more than 12 000 extreme weather events globally. Losses amounted to around US\$ 3.54 trillion (in purchasing power parities).
- **Poor countries had to face much higher impacts:** Of the ten most affected countries and territories in the period 1999-2018, seven were developing countries in the low income or lower-middle income country group, two were classified as upper-middle income countries (Thailand and Dominica) and one was an advanced economy generating high income (Puerto Rico).
- **Link between climate change and the frequency & severity of extreme heat:** Heatwaves were one major cause of damage in 2018.
  - Of the ten most affected countries in 2018, Germany, Japan and India were suffering from extended periods of heat.
  - Across Europe, extreme heat spells are now up to 100 times more likely than a century ago.
  - Impact of heatwaves on African countries may be under-represented due to a lack of data.

### ***India***

- India, which suffered water shortages, crop failures and worst flooding, holds the **5<sup>th</sup> position**. It has fallen from its 14<sup>th</sup> rank of countries hit most by climate change-induced weather phenomena in 2017.
  - India has also recorded the **highest number of fatalities due to climate change** and the **second-highest monetary losses from its impact in 2018**.

### ***Suggestions***

- The 2019 Climate Summit in Madrid needs to address the lack of additional climate finance to help the poorest people and countries to address loss and damage.
  - These countries are **more vulnerable to the damaging effects** of a hazard but **have lower coping capacity**.

- The climate summit needs to result in:
  - a decision on how the need for support for vulnerable countries concerning future loss and damage is to be determined on an ongoing basis
  - the necessary steps to generate and make available financial resources to meet these needs
  - strengthening the implementation of measures for adapting to climate change.

#### Germanwatch

- Germanwatch, based in Bonn and Berlin (Germany), is an independent development and environmental organisation which works for sustainable global development.

### 65. Operation 'Clean Art' to Crackdown on Illegal Trade in Mongoose Hair

#### Why in News

Recently, there has been a widespread crackdown on factories making **paint brushes with mongoose hair** across the country.

#### Key points

- Brushes made of mongoose hair are preferred because they are **superior and hold colour better**.
- Mongoose is listed in **Schedule II Part 2 of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972** and any smuggling or possession of its body part is a non-bailable offence.
- **IUCN Red List status- Least Concerned.**
- **All six species** are listed on **CITES Appendix III** with a zero quota for commercial trade.
- There are **six species of mongoose found in India**- Indian grey mongoose, Small Indian mongoose, Ruddy mongoose, Crab-eating mongoose, Stripe-necked mongoose and Brown mongoose.
  - The **Indian grey mongoose** is the **most commonly found** species and also the **most hunted**.



#### Operation Clean Art

- It was the **first pan India operation** to crackdown on the smuggling of mongoose hair in the country.
- It was conceived by **Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB)** with the singular aim of ensuring that the **mongoose hair brush trade should be closed down across the country**.

## 66. Namami Gange

### *For Prelims:*

#### *About Namami Gange Programme:*

It is *an umbrella programme* which integrates previous and currently ongoing initiatives by enhancing efficiency, extracting synergies and supplementing them with more comprehensive & better coordinated interventions.

*Implemented by* the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), and its state counterparts—State Programme Management Groups.

#### *National Ganga Council (NGC):*

Created in October 2016 under *the River Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management) Authorities Order, 2016*, dissolving the National Ganga River Basin Authority.

Headed by *the Prime Minister*.

It replaced *the National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA)*.

NGC would have *on board the chief ministers of five Ganga basin states—Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh (UP), Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal—besides several Union ministers and it was supposed to meet once every year.*

#### *Main Pillars of the Namami Gange Programme are:*

1. Sewerage Treatment Infrastructure
2. River-Surface Cleaning
3. Afforestation
4. Industrial Effluent Monitoring
5. River-Front Development
6. Bio-Diversity
7. Public Awareness
8. Ganga Gram

#### *Value addition for Mains:*

#### *Why we need “Namami Gange” programme?*

1. River Ganga has significant economic, environmental and cultural value in India.
2. Rising in the Himalayas and flowing to the Bay of Bengal, the river traverses a course of more than 2,500 km through the plains of north and eastern India.
3. The Ganga basin – which also extends into parts of Nepal, China and Bangladesh – accounts for 26 per cent of India’s landmass.
4. The Ganga also serves as one of India’s holiest rivers whose cultural and spiritual significance transcends the boundaries of the basin.

If we are able to clean it, it will be a huge help for the 40 per cent population of the country.

#### *What are the pollution threats to Ganga?*

1. Rapidly increasing population, rising standards of living and exponential growth of industrialization and urbanization have exposed water resources to various forms of degradation.
2. The deterioration in the water quality of Ganga impacts the people immediately.
3. Ganga has become unfit even for bathing during lean seasons.
4. The impacts of infrastructural projects in the upper reaches of the river Ganga raise issues.

#### *Challenges ahead:*

1. Sewage treatment.
2. Restoring the flow.
3. Sludge control.

4. Cost overruns.
5. Governance glitches.

### 67. *Winter solstice 2019*

**Context:** *Winter Solstice* this year falls on **December 22**.

**For Prelims and Mains:**

**What is Winter Solstice?**

- The winter solstice happens every year when the Sun reaches its most southerly declination of -23.5 degrees. In other words, it is when the North Pole is tilted farthest away from the Sun, delivering the fewest hours of sunlight of the year.
- The Sun is directly overhead of the Tropic of Capricorn in the Southern Hemisphere during the December solstice and is closer to the horizon than at any other time in the year.
- The day after the winter solstice marks the beginning of lengthening days, leading up to the summer solstice in June.

**What does 'solstice' mean?**

The term 'solstice' derives from the Latin word '*solstitium*', meaning '*Sun standing still*'. On this day the Sun seems to stand still at the Tropic of Capricorn and then reverses its direction as it reaches its southernmost position as seen from the Earth. Some prefer the more teutonic term '*sunturn*' to describe the event.

### 68. *'World Habitat Award' for Odisha's JAGA Mission*

**Why in News**

Recently, **Odisha** has won the '**World Habitat Award**' for its ambitious initiative- **Jaga Mission**.

- It **aims** at transforming the slums into liveable habitat with all necessary civic infrastructure and services at par with the better off areas within the same urban local body and to continuously improve the standard of the infrastructure and services and access to livelihood opportunities.

**World Habitat Award**

- This award is given by **World Habitat**, in partnership with **United Nations Habitat**, **every year**, in recognition of innovative, outstanding, and revolutionary ideas, projects, and programmes from across the world in the field of housing.

**United Nations Habitat or United Nations Human Settlements Programme**

- It is the **United Nations agency for human settlements**. It is mandated by the **UN General Assembly** to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all.
- It was **established in 1978** as an outcome of the **first UN Conference on Human Settlements and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat I)** held in Vancouver, Canada, in 1976.
- UN-Habitat is **headquartered at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, Kenya**.

**World Habitat**

- It is an **international not-for-profit organisation/foundation** established in the **United Kingdom**.
- It works internationally to help bring the best housing to the people who need it the most.

### ***Jaga Mission***

- **Odisha Liveable Habitat Mission (OLHM)- JAGA** is a society under the Housing & Urban Development Department, Government of Odisha.
- The **slum land titling mission** was being executed in **collaboration with Tata Trusts and Norman Foster Foundation**.
- Odisha government rolled out this **first of its kind project** on **May 7, 2018**.
- This mission was also awarded the '**India Geospatial Excellence Award**' for **technological innovation** in transforming the lives of urban poor.

### ***India Geospatial Excellence Award***

- This award is given by **GeoSmart India** which is an **interactive platform** that demonstrates the collective and shared vision of the Indian geospatial community and is the **most prominent stakeholder event** of the **Indian geospatial ecosystem**.

## **69. Blue flag programme**

**Context:** The MoEFCC has embarked upon a programme for '**Blue Flag**' Certification for select beaches in the country.

### ***Beaches identified in India:***

**13 pilot beaches** have been identified for the certification.

**These include** Ghoghala Beach (Diu), Shivrajpur beach (Gujarat), Bhogave (Maharashtra), Padubidri and Kasarkod (Karnagaka), Kappad beach (Kerala) etc.

**Chandrabhaga beach** of Odisha's Konark coast was the first to complete the tag certification process will be the first in Asia to get the Blue Flag certification.

### ***Blue flag programme:***

The **Blue Flag Programme for beaches and marinas** is run by **the international, non-governmental, non-profit organisation FEE (the Foundation for Environmental Education)**.

- It started in France in 1985 and has been implemented in Europe since 1987, and in areas outside Europe since 2001, when South Africa joined.
- Japan and South Korea are the only countries in South and southeastern Asia to have Blue Flag beaches.
- Spain tops the list with 566 such beaches; Greece and France follow with 515 and 395, respectively.

### ***Criteria:***

There are nearly 33 criteria that must be met to qualify for a Blue Flag certification, such as the water meeting certain quality standards, having waste disposal facilities, being disabled-friendly, have first aid equipment, and no access to pets in the main areas of the beach. **Some criteria are voluntary and some compulsory.**

## **70. Locust Invasion in Gujarat**

### ***Why in News***

The **migratory insect - locust** has swarmed the northern parts of Gujarat, causing significant damage to agriculture.

- The **locusts**, known as **tiddis locally**, destroyed standing crops of castor, cumin, jatropha, cotton, and potato, and fodder grass in around 20 talukas.
- **Gujarat has not witnessed such an invasion** of locusts **since 1993-94**.
- The locusts emerged in February 2019 from Sudan and Eritrea in Africa's Red Sea Coast and travelled through Saudi Arabia and Iran to enter Pakistan, where they invaded the Sindh province and from there they moved into Rajasthan and Gujarat, where south western monsoon had prolonged this time.

- The **UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)** had issued an alert of a massive locust attack in South Asia covering Pakistan and India.
- The **Locust Warning Organization (LWO)** in Jodhpur also noticed the swarms and predicted their trajectory across the international border.

### **Locust**

- A locust is a large, mainly **tropical grasshopper** with strong powers of flight. They **differ from ordinary grasshoppers** in their ability to change behaviour (gregarize) and form swarms that can migrate over large distances.
- Locusts are generally seen during the months of June and July as the insects are active from summer to the rainy season.
- Locusts have a high capacity to multiply, form groups, migrate over relatively large distances (they can fly up to 150 km per day). They can rapidly reproduce and increase some 20-fold in three months.
- **Threat to Vegetation:** Locust adults can eat their own weight every day, i.e. about two grams of fresh vegetation per day. A very small swarm eats as much in one day as about 35,000 people, posing a devastating threat to crops and food security.
- **FAO** provides information on the general locust situation to the global community and gives timely warnings and forecasts to those countries in danger of invasion.
- **Locust Warning Organisation (LWO)**, Directorate of Plant Protection Quarantine and Storage, **Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare**, is responsible for monitoring, survey and control of Desert Locust in Scheduled Desert Areas mainly in the States of Rajasthan and Gujarat.

## **71. Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) 2019**

**Context:** The latest edition of *Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI)* was recently presented at *the climate summit in Madrid*.

**For Prelims:**

**What is Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI)?**

Designed by the German environmental and development organisation Germanwatch e.V.

- Published in cooperation with the New Climate Institute and Climate Action Network International and with financial support from Barthel Foundation.
- Objective: To enhance transparency in international climate politics.
- First published in 2005 and an updated version is presented at the UN Climate Change Conference annually.
- In 2017, the underlying methodology of the CCPI was revised and adapted to the new climate policy framework of the Paris Agreement from 2015. The CCPI was extended in order to include the measurement of a country's progress towards the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and the country's 2030 targets.

The national performances are assessed based on 14 indicators in the following four categories:

1. GHG Emissions (weighting 40%).
2. Renewable Energy (weighting 20%).
3. Energy Use (weighting 20%).
4. Climate Policy (weighting 20%).



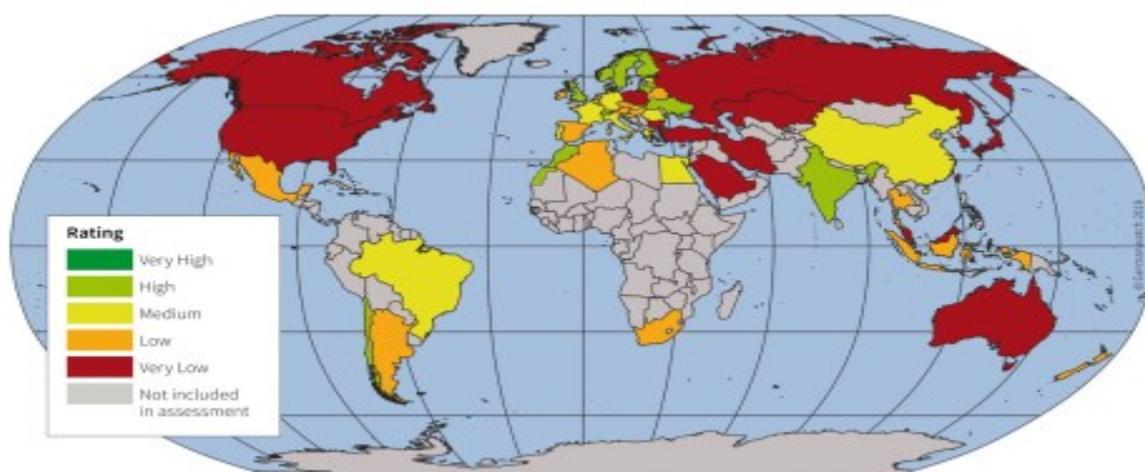
### India's performance:

- India, at rank 9, joins the top ten countries.
- Despite high ratings for the performance of its climate policy, the government is yet to draw up a roadmap to reduce subsidies on fossil fuels in a phased manner.

In short, more stringent laws and amendments should be made to achieve climate change targets.

### Performance of other countries:

- USA for the first time replaces Saudi Arabia as worst performing country.
- Sweden is ranked **first**, Denmark climbs up significantly in the ranking.
- Eight EU countries rated “high” – Poland and Bulgaria “very low”.
- China, the largest global emitter, once again slightly improves its ranking to 30th place (“medium”).
- While only two G20 countries, the UK (7th) and India (9th), are ranked in the “high” category, eight G20 countries are remaining in the worst category of the index (“very low”).



### Value addition for mains:

#### Key findings:

- Majority of countries show decline in emissions.
- Decreasing emissions in 31 out of 57 high emitting countries – global coal consumption falling.
- But more ambition and accelerated action needed.

## 72. IUCN Red List of Threatened Species

**Context:** The *International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)* has added about **1,840 new species to its updated “Red List of Threatened Species”**. The list now contains over 30,000 species under threat of disappearing.

**For Prelims:**

**What is IUCN red list of threatened species?**

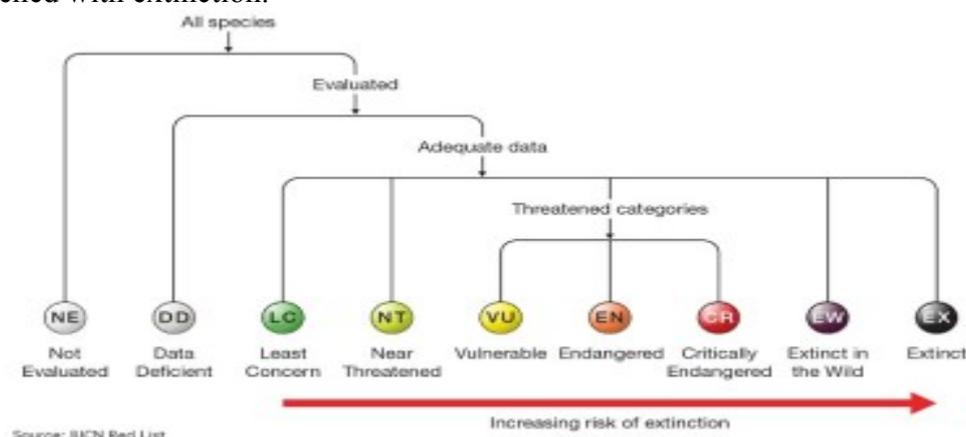
It is the world’s most comprehensive *inventory of the global conservation status of plant and animal species*.

**How are species categorised?** It uses a set of quantitative criteria to evaluate the extinction risk of thousands of species.

**The IUCN Red List Categories:**

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.



**The IUCN system uses a set of five quantitative criteria to assess the extinction risk of a given species. In general, these criteria consider:**

1. The rate of population decline.
2. The geographic range.
3. Whether the species already possesses a small population size.
4. Whether the species is very small or lives in a restricted area.
5. Whether the results of a quantitative analysis indicate a high probability of extinction in the wild.

**Value addition for Mains:**

**Utility of the red list:**

It brings into focus *the ongoing decline of Earth’s biodiversity and the influence humans have on life on the planet*. It provides a globally accepted standard with which to measure the conservation status of species over time.

- Scientists can analyze the percentage of species in a given category and how these percentages change over time; they can also analyze the threats and conservation measures that underpin the observed trends.

## 73. Global Carbon Project

**Observations made by the Global Carbon Project on India:**

- India’s emissions in 2019 was likely to be only 1.8 per cent higher than in 2018.
- Weak economic growth in India has led to slower growth in oil and natural gas use.

- With a weakening economy, growth in India's generation of electricity has slowed from 6 per cent per year to under 1 per cent in 2019, despite electrification of villages adding to potential demand.
- Moreover, the addition of a very wet monsoon led to very high hydropower generation and a decline in generation from coal.

#### ***About Global Carbon Project:***

Formed in **2001** to help the international science community to establish a common, mutually agreed knowledge base that supports policy debate and action to slow the rate of increase of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

It is a Global Research Project of **Future Earth** and a research partner of the **World Climate Research Programme**.

It works collaboratively with the **International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme**, the **World Climate Programme**, the **International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change and Diversity**, under the **Earth System Science Partnership**.

**Its projects include** global budgets for three dominant greenhouse gases — CO<sub>2</sub>, methane, and nitrous oxide — and complementary efforts in urban, regional, cumulative, and negative emissions.

## **74. COP25 Climate Summit**

### ***Why in News***

The **25<sup>th</sup>** edition of the **Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** or **COP25** has begun from December 2 in **Madrid (Spain)**.

- **Originally**, the Summit was scheduled to be held at **Chile (South America)** but violent mass movement across the country made Chile reluctant from hosting the event.
  - The location of this conference is **rotated every year in different regions** of the world. This year it was the **turn of South America** to host the event.

### ***Agenda for COP25***

- The **prime objective** of the conference is to **complete the rule-book to the 2015 Paris Agreement** that will become **effective in 2020** to **replace the 1997 Kyoto Protocol** (comes to an end in 2020).
  - The issues like the creation of new **carbon markets**, emission reduction targets, country's individual targets, etc. **remained unresolved** during **COP24 at Katowice (Poland) 2019**. Thus the rulebook under the Paris Agreement could not be finalized.

### ***Kyoto Protocol***

- The Kyoto Protocol is an **international agreement** linked to the UNFCCC, which commits its parties by setting **internationally binding** emission reduction targets.
- The Kyoto Protocol was adopted in **Kyoto, Japan** in **1997** and entered into force in **2005**.
- It recognized that developed countries are principally responsible for the current high levels of GHG emissions in the atmosphere as a result of more than 150 years of industrial activity.
- The **detailed rules** for the implementation of the Protocol were **adopted at COP-7 in Marrakesh, in 2001** and are referred to as the **Marrakesh Accords**.
- Kyoto Protocol **Phase-1 (2005-12)** gave the target of cutting down emissions by 5%.
  - **Phase- 2 (2013-20)** gave the target of reducing emissions by at least 18% by the industrialized countries.

- The summit will also discuss the functioning of international emissions trading systems, compensation for poor countries to deal with rising sea levels and other consequences of climate change.
- It will consider the **Annual Emissions Gap Report**, produced by the **UN Environment Programme (UNEP)** and a **series of reports** from the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)**.
  - Both the reports summarise that the goal of keeping average temperatures within 1.5°C from pre-industrial times is **“on the brink of becoming impossible.”** As the **overall emissions are still increasing** worldwide.
- The processes and methods of reporting information about climate change would be fixed during the summit. Specifically, the **developing countries** will try to ensure that there are greater **appreciation and recognition** of the **issue of loss and damage** due to climate change.
  - There is a demand to institute a mechanism to compensate countries that suffer major losses due to climate change-induced events like **cyclones** or floods.
- It puts into efforts for committing to a **long-term action plan to fight climate change**.
  - So far only 71 countries, most of them small emitters, have committed themselves to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

### **India's Agenda**

- India is **unlikely** to announce any **enhanced targets** during the summit.
- India's current efforts are already much more compared to even rich and developed countries. Thus, India will reiterate its stand for **“Common but Differentiated Responsibilities”**.
  - Developed countries are major contributors to climate change and they are doing proportionately less, especially when it comes to providing finance and technology to the less developed world.

### **Carbon Market**

- A carbon market allows countries, or industries, to earn carbon credits for emission reductions they make in excess of what is required of them.
- These credits can be traded to the highest bidder in exchange for money.
- The buyers of carbon credits can show the emission reductions as their own and use them to meet their own emission reduction targets.
- A carbon market already existed under the 1997 Kyoto Protocol but several countries walked out of the Kyoto Protocol and thus the demand for carbon credits had waned.
- As a result, developing countries like India, China and Brazil had accumulated huge amounts of carbon credits. These credits are now in danger of getting redundant.

## **Economy**

### **75. Bharat Bond ETF**

**Context:** The government has approved the launch of **Bharat Bond ETF, India's first corporate bond exchange traded fund**, comprising debt of state-run companies.

**Significance:**

- This move will **allow retail investors to buy government debt**.
- It will **provide retail investors easy and low-cost access to bond markets, with smaller amount as low as ₹1,000**.

- They will **provide tax efficiency as compared to bonds**, as coupons (interest) from the bonds are taxed depending on the investor's tax slab.

#### **Key features of Bharat Bond ETF:**

1. It is a basket of bonds issued by central public sector enterprises/undertakings or any other government organization bonds.
2. It will have a fixed maturity of three and ten years and will trade on the stock exchanges.
3. It will invest in a portfolio of bonds of state-run companies and other government entities.
4. It will track an underlying index on risk replication basis, matching credit quality and average maturity of the index.
5. The index will be constructed by an independent index provider, National Stock Exchange.

## **76. Guidelines for Licencing of Small Finance Banks**

### **Why in News**

Recently, the **Reserve Bank of India** has released final **Guidelines for 'on tap' Licencing for Small Finance Banks (SFBs)**.

- RBI had issued in-principle approval to ten applicants for SFB in 2015. It was mentioned that after gaining experience in dealing with these banks, RBI would grant 'on-tap' licencing.
  - An "on-tap" facility would mean the RBI will **accept applications and grant licences** for banks **throughout the year**.

### **Guidelines for 'on-tap' Licencing**

- **Capital requirement:** The minimum paid-up voting equity capital / net worth requirement shall be **₹ 200 crores**.
  - For **Primary (Urban) Co-operative Banks (UCBs)**, desirous of voluntarily transiting into SFBs initial requirement of net worth shall be at **₹ 100 crores**, which will have to be **increased to ₹ 200 crores** within **5 years** from the date of commencement of business.
- **Scheduled bank status to SFBs:** SFBs will be given scheduled bank status **immediately upon commencement of operations**. Also, SFBs will have general permission to **open banking outlets** from the date of commencement of operations.
- **Payments Banks conversion to SFBs:** The **payment banks** can apply for conversion into SFB after **5 years of operations** if they are otherwise eligible as per these guidelines.

	PAYMENTS BANKS	SMALL BANKS
WHO CAN PROMOTE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepaid card issuers, telecom companies, NBFCs, business correspondents, supermarket chains, corporates, realty sector co-ops &amp; PSUs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals/professionals with 10 years experience in finance, NBFCs, microfinance cos, local area banks</li> </ul>
WHAT THEY MUST DO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have a minimum capital of Rs 100cr</li> <li>Maintain 75% of deposits in govt bonds</li> <li>Maintain 25% of deposits in other banks</li> <li>Have at least 26% investment by Indians</li> <li>Get listed if net worth crosses Rs 500cr</li> <li>Have 25% of branches in unbanked areas</li> <li>Be fully networked and technology driven</li> <li>Have Rs 1 lakh cap for deposits in one a/c</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have a minimum capital of Rs 200cr</li> <li>Extend 75% of loans to priority sector</li> <li>Have 25% of branches in unbanked areas</li> <li>Maintain reserve requirements</li> <li>Cap loans to individuals and groups at 10% and 15% of net worth</li> <li>Have a business correspondent network</li> </ul>
WHAT THEY CAN DO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer internet banking</li> <li>Sell mutual funds, insurance, pensions</li> <li>Offer bill payment service for customers</li> <li>Have ATMs and business correspondents (BC)</li> <li>Can function as BC of another bank</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sell forex to customers</li> <li>Sell mutual funds, insurance, pensions</li> <li>Can convert into a full-fledged bank</li> <li>Expand across the country</li> </ul>
WHAT THEY CAN'T DO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer credit cards</li> <li>Extend loans</li> <li>Handle cross-border remittances</li> <li>Accept NRI Deposits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extend large loans</li> <li>Float subsidiaries</li> <li>Cannot deal in sophisticated financial products</li> </ul>

### Small Finance Bank

- The small finance bank will primarily undertake **basic banking activities of acceptance of deposits and lending** to unserved and underserved sections including small business units, small and marginal farmers, micro and small industries and unorganised sector entities.
  - It can also undertake other non-risk sharing simple financial services activities such as the distribution of mutual fund units, insurance products, pension products, etc. with the prior approval of the RBI
- Eligible candidates** for setting up SFB are:
  - Resident **individuals/professionals with 10 years of experience in banking and finance.**
  - The **companies and societies** owned and controlled by **residents.**
  - Existing** Non-Banking Finance Companies (NBFCs), Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs), Local Area Banks (LABs) and payment banks that are owned and controlled by residents.
- It needs to open at least **25% of its banking outlets in unbanked rural centres.**
- The bank will be required to extend **75% of its adjusted net bank credit to the Priority Sector Lending (PSL).**
- At least **50% of its loan portfolio** should constitute loans and advances of up to **₹ 25 lakhs.**
- The **maximum loan size and investment limit** exposure to a single and group would be restricted to **10% and 15% of its capital funds,** respectively. They **cannot extend large loans.**
- If the initial shareholding by promoters in the bank is in excess of **40% of paid-up voting equity capital,** it should be brought **down to 40% within a period of 5 years.**

- The small finance banks will be subject to **Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR)** and **Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR)**.
  - Banks are required to hold a certain proportion of their deposits in the form of cash is known as the **CRR**. This minimum ratio (that is the part of the total deposits to be held as cash) is stipulated by the RBI.
  - The share of Net Demand and Time Liabilities that a bank is required to maintain safe and liquid assets, such as government securities, cash, and gold is termed as **SLR**.

## 77. Tripura gets its first SEZ

**Context:** Recently, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has notified setting up of *Tripura's first ever Special Economic Zone (SEZ)*.

It will be developed by *Tripura Industrial Development Corporation (TIDC) Ltd.* for the *industries based on rubber, textile and apparel, bamboo and agri-food processing.*

**What are SEZs?**

Special Economic Zones (SEZs) are *geographically delineated 'enclaves' in which regulations and practices related to business and trade differ from the rest of the country and therefore all the units therein enjoy special privileges.*

The basic idea of SEZs emerges from the fact that, while it might be very difficult to dramatically improve infrastructure and business environment of the overall economy 'overnight', *SEZs can be built in a much shorter time, and they can work as efficient enclaves to solve these problems.*

**Facilities and incentives for SEZs:**

- Duty-free import/domestic procurement of goods for development, operation and maintenance of SEZ units.
- Income tax exemption on export income for SEZ units under the Income Tax Act for first 5 years, 50% for next 5 years thereafter and 50% of the ploughed back export profit for next 5 years.
- Exemption from Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT).
- Single window clearance for Central and State level approvals.

**Concerns with present SEZ:**

- SEZs in India have not been as successful as their counterparts in many other countries. Several Asian economies, particularly China, Korea, Malaysia, and Singapore, have greatly benefitted from these zones.
- Most of India's new generation SEZs came up not for exporting, but for avoiding taxes. Large fiscal sops, in the form of a bunch of reliefs from central and state taxes, lured developers into building SEZs.
- Most manufacturing SEZs in India have performed below par due to their poor linkages with the rest of the economy. Weak connections of coastal SEZs with their hinterlands inhibited these zones from utilising their full potential.
- States did not match the central SEZ Act with State-level legislation, which rendered the single window system ineffective.
- Lack of a robust policy design, efficient implementation and effective monitoring have seriously jeopardised India's effort to industrialise through SEZs.

## 78. Financial Stability Report: RBI

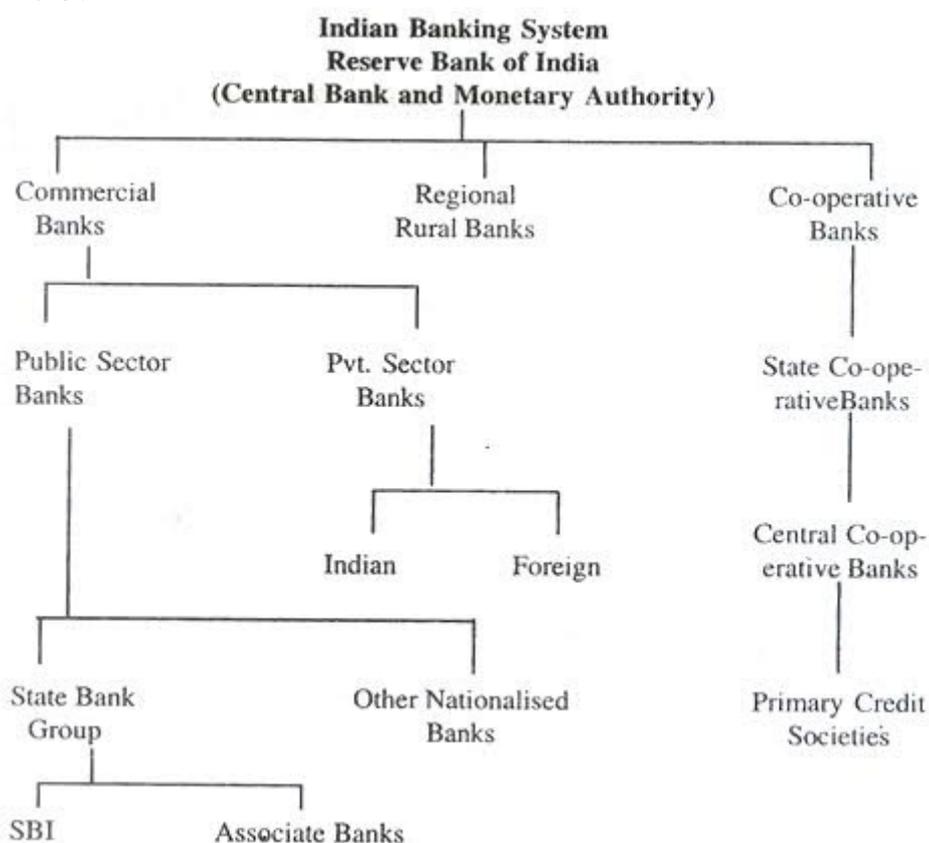
**Why in News**

The Reserve Bank of India has released the 20<sup>th</sup> issue of the Financial Stability Report (FSR).

- The FSR reflects the collective assessment of the **Sub-Committee of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC)** on risks to financial stability and the resilience of the financial system.
- The Report also discusses issues relating to development and regulation of the financial sector.

### Key Points

- **Credit Growth**
  - **Bank credit** is the total amount of funds a person or business can borrow from a bank.
  - Scheduled Commercial Banks' (SCBs) credit growth remained subdued at 8.7% year-on-year (y-o-y) in September 2019, down from 13.2% in March 2019.
  - Private Sector Banks (PVBs) registered double digit credit growth of 16.5% in September 2019.
- **Expected Increase in Gross Non-Performing Asset (GNPA) Ratio**
  - SCB's Gross Non-Performing Asset (GNPA) ratio of banks may increase to 9.9% by September 2020 from 9.3% in September 2019.
  - Public Sector Banks' (PSB) GNPA ratios may increase to 13.2% by September 2020 from 12.7% in September 2019.
  - For private banks, the ratio may climb to 4.2% from 3.9%, under the stress scenario.
  - Foreign banks' (FB) GNPA ratio may increase to 3.1% from 2.9% in September 2019.



- **Non-Performing Asset**
  - Non-Performing Assets (NPA) refer to a classification for loans or advances that are in default or are in arrears on scheduled payments of principal or interest.

- In most cases, debt is classified as non-performing, when the loan payments have not been made for a minimum period of 90 days.
- Gross non-performing assets are the sum of all the loans that have been defaulted by the individuals who have acquired loans from the financial institution.
- Net non-performing assets are the amount that is realized after provision amount has been deducted from the gross non-performing assets.
- All banks' **Capital to Risk-weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR)** improved to 15.1% in September 2019 from 14.3% in March 2019, following the recapitalisation of PSBs by the government.
  - **CRAR** is a measurement of a bank's available capital expressed as a percentage of a bank's risk-weighted credit exposures. It is **also known as the Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR)**.
  - $CAR = \frac{\text{Tier 1 Capital} + \text{Tier 2 Capital}}{\text{Risk weighted Assets}}$
  - **Tier-1 capital**, or core capital, consists of equity capital, ordinary share capital, intangible assets and audited revenue reserves. Tier-1 capital is the capital that is permanently and easily available to cushion losses suffered by a bank without it being required to stop operating.
  - **Tier-2 capital** comprises unaudited retained earnings, unaudited reserves and general loss reserves. This capital absorbs losses in the event of a company winding up or liquidating
- **Provision Coverage Ratio (PCR)** of all SCBs rose to 61.5% in September 2019 from 60.5% in March 2019 implying increased resilience of the banking sector.
  - Provisioning Coverage Ratio (PCR) refers to the prescribed percentage of funds to be set aside by the banks for covering the prospective losses due to bad loans.

### **Way Forward**

- The global economy confronted a number of uncertainties – a delay in the Brexit deal, trade tensions, oil-market disruptions and geopolitical risks – leading to significant deceleration in growth.
- As regards the domestic economy, aggregate demand slackened in second quarter of 2019-20 further extending the growth deceleration.
- Reviving the twin engines of consumption and investment while being vigilant about spillovers from global financial markets remains a critical challenge going forward.

## **79. Contraction in Index of Industrial Production**

### **Why in News**

According to the data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), the quick estimates of **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)** stands at 127.7 for October 2019, which is **3.8% lower** as compared to the level in the month of October 2018. This contraction is due to demand slump in economy and fall in activity across sectors such as manufacturing, electricity, infrastructure etc.

- **Retail inflation** (measured by the Consumer Price Index) surged to a **40-month high of 5.54%** in November 2019, owing to rising food inflation.
- The combination of contraction in industrial activity and rising inflation has led experts to fear that India is entering a phase of **stagflation**.

### **Stagflation**

- Stagflation means a situation characterized by **simultaneous increase in prices and stagnation of economic growth**.

- It is described as a situation in the economy where the growth rate slows down, the level of unemployment remains steadily high and yet the inflation or price level remains high at the same time.
- **Dangerous for the economy**
  - In a usual low growth situation, central banks and government try to stimulate the economy through higher public spending and low interest rates to create demand.
  - These measures also tend to elevate prices and cause inflation. So, these tools cannot be adopted when inflation is already running high, which makes it difficult to break out of low growth-high inflation trap.
- The **solution** lies in increasing productivity, this enables higher growth without inflation.

### ***Index of Industrial Production***

- The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) maps the **change in the volume of production in Indian industries**.
- It is estimated and published on a monthly basis by the **Central Statistical Organisation (CSO)** under MoSPI.
- It is currently calculated using **2011-2012 as the base year**.
- The IIP is basically divided into three sectors, though a use-based classification is also provided by the CSO.
  - The **three sectors** include: Mining, Manufacturing and Electricity.
- Electricity, crude oil, coal, cement, steel, refinery products, natural gas, and fertilisers are the **eight core industries** that comprise about 40% of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production.
  - **Use based classification include:** Primary Goods, Capital Goods, Intermediate Goods, Infrastructure/ Construction goods, Consumer durables and Consumer nondurables.
- **Calculation**
  - The index is created by giving different weights to each sector and every month, production is tracked.
  - Finally, the index value is compared to the value it had in the same month last year to figure out the economy's industrial health.

### ***Consumer Price Index***

- **Inflation** refers to the rise in the prices of most goods and services of daily or common use, such as food, clothing, housing, recreation, transport, consumer staples, etc.
  - It measures the average price change in a basket of commodities and services over time. The opposite and rare fall in the price index of this basket of items is called 'deflation'.
  - It is indicative of the decrease in the purchasing power of a unit of a country's currency. This is measured in percentage.
- In India, inflation is primarily measured by two main indices — **WPI (Wholesale Price Index)** and **CPI (Consumer Price Index)**, which measures wholesale and retail-level price changes, respectively.
  - The goods or services sold by businesses to smaller businesses for selling further is captured by the WPI.
  - The CPI is an index measuring retail inflation in the economy by collecting the change in prices of most common goods and services used by consumers.

## ***80. Forex Reserves***

### *Why in News*

**India's Foreign Exchange (Forex) reserves have crossed the \$450-billion mark** for the first time ever on the back of strong investment inflows which enabled the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to buy dollars from the market.

- India's forex reserves were at \$451.7 billion on 3rd December 2019, an increase of \$38.8 billion over end-March 2019.
  - The rise in forex reserves will give the central bank the leeway to act against any sharp depreciation of the rupee.
  - At \$451.7 billion, the country's import cover is now over 11 months.
- India's forex reserves fell to \$274.8 billion in September of 2013, prompting the Centre and RBI to unleash measures to attract inflows. It has been a steady rise for the reserves since then, with \$175 billion added in the last six years.

### *Foreign Exchange Reserves*

- Foreign exchange reserves are **assets held on reserve by a central bank in foreign currencies**, which can include bonds, treasury bills and other government securities.
  - It needs to be noted that most foreign exchange reserves are held in U.S. dollars.
- These assets serve many purposes but are most significantly held to ensure that the **central bank has backup funds if the national currency rapidly devalues** or becomes altogether insolvent.
- **India's Forex Reserve include:**
  - Foreign Currency Assets (such as dollar)
  - Gold
  - Special Drawing Rights
- Special drawing rights, or SDR, are an **artificial currency instrument created by the International Monetary Fund**, which uses them for internal accounting purposes.
- The value of the SDR is calculated from a weighted basket of major currencies, including the U.S. dollar, the euro, Japanese yen, Chinese yuan, and British pound.
- The SDR interest rate (SDRi) provides the basis for calculating the interest rate charged to member countries when they borrow from the IMF and paid to members for their remunerated creditor positions in the IMF.
  - Reserve Position in the International Monetary Fund
- A reserve tranche position implies a **portion of the required quota of currency each member country must provide to the International Monetary Fund (IMF)** that can be utilized for its own purposes.
- The reserve tranche is basically an **emergency account** that IMF members can access at any time without agreeing to conditions or paying a service fee.

## **81. National Electronic Fund Transfer (NEFT)**

### *Why in News*

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has operationalised **round-the-clock (24 X 7) availability of the National Electronic Fund Transfer (NEFT)**.

- The RBI has also asked banks not to levy any charges from savings bank account holders for funds transfers done through NEFT system which are initiated online (internet banking and/ or mobile apps of the banks).

### **Key Points**

- Through this move, the **RBI has joined an elite club of countries** having payment systems which enable round-the-clock fund transfer and settlement of any value.
- **Benefit to Customers:** Customers can now transfer money through NEFT without paying any charges any time of the day whereas banks charge a fee for fund transfer through cheques and Demand Draft (DD).

### **Background**

- The NEFT system, **introduced in 2005**, has seen exponential growth in recent years reflecting its popularity as well as increasing customer acceptance. Despite such growth, many banks continued to levy the maximum permissible charges to their customers.
- It was desirable that the benefits accruing on account of increasing volume of transactions are passed on to the customers so as to **incentivise greater use of the electronic payment system** in place of cumbersome paper-based mechanism like cheques/DDs.

### **National Electronic Fund Transfer**

- **National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT)** is a nation-wide payment system facilitating one-to-one funds transfer. Under this Scheme, individuals, firms and corporates can electronically transfer funds from any bank branch to any individual, firm or corporate having an account with any other bank branch in the country participating in the Scheme.
- NEFT is **different from Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS)**. RTGS can be explained as a system where there is continuous and real-time settlement of fund-transfers, individually on a transaction by transaction basis.
  - NEFT settlements happen in batches, so there might be a slight delay for the actual transfer to take place RTGS transactions, on the other hand, happen in real time.
  - There is no limit – either minimum or maximum – on the amount of funds that could be transferred using NEFT. However, the maximum amount per transaction is limited to ₹ 50,000/- for cash-based remittances within India and also for remittances to Nepal under the Indo-Nepal Remittance Facility Scheme.
  - The minimum amount to be remitted through RTGS is ₹ 2,00,000/- with no upper or maximum ceiling.

## **82. Operation Twist**

### **Why in News**

The **Reserve Bank of India** has announced that it will carry out **US-style 'Operation Twist'** to bring down interest rates.

### **Key Points**

- RBI will conduct **simultaneous purchase and sale of government securities** under **Open Market Operations (OMO)** for ₹10,000 crore each.
- It will purchase the longer-term maturities (i.e government bonds maturing in 2029), and simultaneously sell the shorter duration ones (i.e. short-term bonds maturing in 2020).
- The eligible participants can bid or submit offers in electronic format on **RBI's Core Banking Solution (E-Kuber)**.

### **'Operation Twist'**

- ‘Operation Twist’ is when the **central bank uses the proceeds from the sale of short-term securities to buy long-term government debt papers**, leading to **easing of interest rates on the long term papers**.
- Operation Twist first appeared in 1961 as a way to strengthen the U.S. dollar and stimulate cash flow into the economy.
- In June 2012, Operation Twist was so effective that the yield on the 10-year U.S. Treasury dropped to a 200-year low.

### **Open Market Operations**

- Open Market Operations (OMO) is one of the **quantitative (to regulate or control the total volume of money) monetary policy tools** which is employed by the central bank of a country to **control the money supply in the economy**.
- OMOs are conducted by the RBI by way of **sale or purchase of government securities (g-secs)** to adjust money supply conditions.
- The central bank sells g-secs to remove liquidity from the system and buys back g-secs to infuse liquidity into the system.
- These operations are often conducted on a **day-to-day basis** in a manner that balances inflation while helping banks continue to lend.
- RBI carries out the OMO **through commercial banks** and **does not directly deal** with the public.
- The RBI uses OMO along with other monetary policy tools such as repo rate, cash reserve ratio and statutory liquidity ratio to adjust the quantum and price of money in the system.

### **Benefits**

- This simultaneous purchase and sale will bring down interest on long term loans which can lead to **increase in economic spending**.
- OMOs are primarily done to maintain ample liquidity in the system, which reflects that the **RBI is keen that banks should transmit lower rates to borrowers**.
- The action of Operation Twist by the RBI is **encouraging for the market**. This step may become a **driving factor for long-term economic activity** and the addition of new investment stock.

## **83. What is deposit insurance?**

**Context:** FinMin, IRDAI seek **insurance for bank deposits above Rs 1 lakh**.

The request comes in the aftermath of the Punjab and Maharashtra Cooperative (PMC) Bank scam.

**What is deposit insurance? How is it regulated in India?**

Deposit insurance is providing **insurance protection to the depositor’s money by receiving a premium**.

- The government has set up Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) under RBI to protect depositors if a bank fails.
- Every insured bank pays premium amounting to 0.001% of its deposits to DICGC every year.

**What happens to depositors’ money when a bank fails?**

- When a bank is liquidated, depositors are entitled to receive an insurance amount of ₹1 lakh per individual from the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation of India (DICGC).
- The ₹1 lakh insurance limit includes both principal and interest dues across your savings bank accounts, current accounts, fixed deposits and recurring deposits held with the bank.

### ***What is the procedure for depositors to claim the money from a failed bank?***

The DICGC does not deal directly with depositors.

- The RBI (or the Registrar), on directing that a bank be liquidated, appoints an official liquidator to oversee the winding up process.
- Under the DICGC Act, the liquidator is supposed to hand over a list of all the insured depositors (with their dues) to the DICGC within three months of taking charge.
- The DICGC is supposed to pay these dues within two months of receiving this list.

### ***Who are insured by the DICGC?***

The corporation covers all commercial and co-operative banks, ***except in Meghalaya, Chandigarh, Lakshadweep and Dadra and Nagar Haveli. Besides, Only primary cooperative societies are not insured by the DICGC.***

***The DICGC does not include the following types of deposits:***

1. Deposits of foreign governments.
2. Deposits of central/state governments.
3. Inter-bank deposits.
4. Deposits of the state land development banks with the state co-operative bank.
5. Any amount due on account of any deposit received outside India.
6. Any amount specifically exempted by the DICGC with previous approval of RBI.

### ***Reforms necessary?***

1. Enhance the insurance cover and the insured amount.
2. Allow private players to provide insurance cover.
3. Reduce the time delay in settling claims.

## **84. Consumer Expenditure Survey**

### ***Why in News***

The Government has decided **not to release the results of the all-India household Consumer Expenditure Survey (CES)**, conducted during 2017-18, due to data quality issues.

- The Government is now examining the feasibility of conducting the next Consumer Expenditure Survey (CES) in 2020-2021 and 2021-22 after incorporating all data quality refinements in the survey process.
- According to a leaked version of the 2017-18 survey, the country has witnessed the first such drop in the **Monthly Per Capita Consumer Expenditure (MPCE)** since 1972-73.
- Previous survey on consumer expenditure was conducted during the period : July 2011 to June 2012.

### ***Consumer Expenditure Survey***

- **Time Interval:** Traditionally, a **quinquennial (recurring every five years)** survey conducted by the **National Sample Survey Office - NSSO** (comes under the National Statistical Office), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
- **Scope:** Collects information on the **consumption spending patterns of households** across the country, both **urban and rural**.
- **Information Generated**
  - Reveals the average expenditure on **goods (food and non-food) and services**.
  - Helps generate estimates of household **Monthly Per Capita Consumer Expenditure (MPCE)** as well as the distribution of households and persons over the MPCE classes.
- **Significance in General**
  - Helps in calculating the **demand dynamics** of the economy.

- Helps in understanding the shifting priorities in terms of baskets of goods and services, thus provides **pointers to the producers of goods and providers of services.**
- To **assess living standards** and growth trends across multiple strata.
- **Significance for Policymakers**
  - The CES is an analytical as well as a forecasting tool which helps the Government in **planning required interventions and policies.**
  - To spot and address possible structural anomalies that may cause demand to shift in a particular manner in a specific socio-economic or regional division of the population.
  - To **rebase the Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** and other macro-economic indicators.

### ***Findings of CES (2011-12)***

- **Urban and Rural Expenditure**
  - Average urban MPCE (at ₹2,630) was about 84% higher than average rural MPCE (₹1,430) for the country as a whole.
  - The most noticeable rural-urban differences in the 2011-12 survey related to spending on cereals (urban share: 6.7%, rural share: 10.8%), rent (urban: 6.2%, rural: 0.5%) and education (urban: 7%, rural: 3.5%).
- **Expenditure on Food**
  - Food accounted for about 53% of the value of the average rural Indian household's consumption during 2011-12.
  - In the case of urban households, it accounted for 42.6% of the average consumption budget.
- **Inequalities**
  - Sharp variations between States with better socio-economic indices and those still aiming to improve.
  - The urban-rural divide.
  - The gap between the highest spending and lowest spending groups.

### ***Consequences of Not Releasing the Data***

- Instead of a six-year gap, the next survey's findings — depending on when the Ministry decides to actually undertake it, 2020-21 or 2021-22 — would end up coming after 9 or 10 years after the 2011-12 round.
- As the survey forms the basis of the estimation of inequality in India, and is used for adjusting the consumer price index as well as the GDP data, scrapping the survey means further **delays in updating these key statistics.**
- **Against IMF's Obligations**
  - India is a subscriber to the International Monetary Fund's Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS).
  - Thus, India is obliged to follow good practices in **four areas in disseminating macroeconomic statistics** to the public. These comprise:
    - The coverage, periodicity, and timeliness of data;
    - Public access to those data;
    - Data integrity;
    - Data quality.
  - IMF's '**Annual Observance Report**' for 2018 has already flagged concerns about India's delays in releasing economic data. By not releasing the CES data, the country risks contravening its SDDS obligations.

### Way Forward

- The Government can release the data while acknowledging its limitations. Suppressing data will only further erode its credibility.
- The Government should realise that reliable and timely availability of data form the bedrock of sound policy-making and any doubts over official data weaken the credibility of the entire institutional set-up.

## Security, Science and Technology

### 85.Space Force by USA

#### Why in News

Recently, the US President signed the **National Defense Authorization Act, 2020** directing the establishment of the **U.S. Space Force (USSF)** as the **sixth branch of the armed forces**.

- The establishment of USSF comes after the launch of a new Pentagon Command named **Spacecom** earlier in September, 2019.

#### Key Points

- The USSF will be the **sixth formal force** of the U.S. military, after the Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard and will be headquartered at the **Pentagon**.
- It will comprise of about 16,000 air force and civilian personnel.
- **Objectives:**
  - Maintaining and enhancing the competitive edge of the **Department of Defense (DOD)** in space.
  - Developing **military space** professionals, acquiring military space systems, maturing the military doctrine for space power and organizing space forces, etc.
  - Effectively organizing the defence for US interests in space, especially related to satellites used for navigation and communication.
- **Concerns: China and Russia** have apprehensions regarding this development. It is being perceived as increasing **weaponization of outer space** and turning cosmos into a battlefield.

### 86.Chief of Defence Staff

**Context:** The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) has approved the creation of **a chief of defence staff (CDS)**.

#### About CDS:

He will be **the single-point military adviser to the government** as suggested by **the Kargil Review Committee in 1999**.

**CDS oversees and coordinates the working of the three Services.**

#### Conditions:

He will be a Four-star General.

- Not eligible to hold any Government office after demitting the office of CDS.
- No private employment without prior approval for a period of five years after demitting the office of CDS.

#### Roles and functions:

- CDS will provide **“single-point military advice”** to the government, inject synergy in planning, procurements and logistics in the armed forces.

- It will *ensure integration of land-air-sea operations through the eventual setting up of theatre commands*.
- The CDS will also function as *the military advisor to the PM-led Nuclear Command Authority*, as also have direct command of *tri-Service organizations* to handle the new warfare domains of space and cyberspace.

**Practice so far:**

India has had a feeble equivalent known as *the Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee (CoSC)*; but this is a toothless office, given the manner in which it is structured.

*The senior-most among the three Service Chiefs is appointed to head the CoSC*, an office that lapses with the incumbent's retirement.

- However, CoSC arrangement is seen as “unsatisfactory”, and its Chairman as a “figurehead”.
- The post did not further tri-service integration, resulting in inefficiency and an expensive duplication of assets.
- The CoSC system is a leftover from the colonial era, with only minor changes being carried out over the years.

**What is the case for having a CDS?**

The first proposal for a CDS came from *the 2000 Kargil Review Committee (KRC)*.

Although the KRC did not directly recommend a CDS — that came from the GoM — *it underlined the need for more coordination among the three Services*, which was poor in the initial weeks of the Kargil conflict.

**Present 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 broadbased.
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.

**Significance:**

The charter of the CDS, if implemented properly, will prepare the 15-lakh strong armed forces for the wars of the future. The CDS is mandated to ensure the Army, Navy and IAF, which often pull in different directions, truly integrate to slash wasteful expenditure amidst the ongoing severe fund crunch for military modernization because of the ballooning pay and pension bills.

## 87. Biosimilar medicine

**Context:** WHO prequalifies *first biosimilar medicine– trastuzumab-* to increase worldwide access to life-saving breast cancer treatment.

- *Trastuzumab – a monoclonal antibody* – was included in *the WHO Essential Medicines List* in 2015 as an essential treatment for about 20% of breast cancers.

**Background:**

Breast cancer is the most common form of cancer in women. 2.1 million women contracted breast cancer in 2018. 630 000 of them died from the disease, many because of late diagnosis and lack of access to affordable treatment.

### **For Prelims:**

#### **What are Biosimilars?**

- It is a biologic medical product that is almost an identical copy of an original product that is manufactured by a different company.
- They are officially approved versions of original “innovator” products and can be manufactured when the original product’s patent expires.
- Reference to the innovator product is an integral component of the approval.

#### **Characteristics:**

- Biological medicines contain active substances from a biological source, such as living cells or organisms.
- Most biological medicines in current clinical use contain active substances made of proteins.

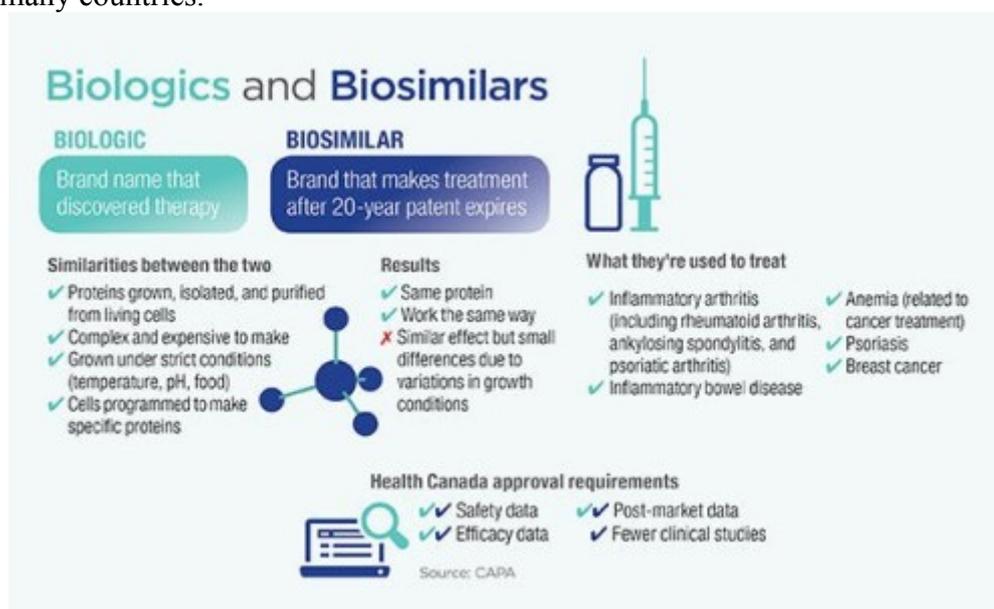
#### **Difference between biosimilars and generics:**

- Biosimilars involve developing equivalent of biological entity while generics involve developing equivalent of a chemical entity-the Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient.
- Cost: Generic drugs are chemically identical to the original branded drug and, as such, cost significantly less because they don’t require much testing. Because biosimilars are made from living organisms, though, and don’t contain identical ingredients to their name-brand counterparts, they still require some testing. So, they cost more than generics, but less than the branded biologic.

#### **Value addition for Mains:**

#### **Need of the hour:**

- Biosimilars industry can act as a springboard for the pharma cos to innovate, excel and earn profit and the same needs to be promoted at the earliest.
- we need to increase access through affordable pricing and some of the drugs need to be under price control.
- Governments can support growth in production of complex generics and biosimilars by clarifying the regulatory framework for them, which is still evolving in many countries.



### 88. New definition of kilogram

**Context:** The prototype of one kilogram (NPK-57) is now available in India and placed at the National Physical Laboratory, New Delhi.

**Background:**

Scientists, last year, have changed the way the kilogram is defined. The decision was made at *the General Conference on Weights and Measures*. The new definitions came into force on 20 May 2019.

**How does the new system work?**

Electromagnets generate a force. Scrap-yards use them on cranes to lift and move large metal objects, such as old cars. The pull of the electromagnet, the force it exerts, is directly related to the amount of electrical current going through its coils. There is, therefore, a direct relationship between electricity and weight.

So, in principle, scientists can define a kilogram, or any other weight, in terms of *the amount of electricity needed to counteract the weight (gravitational force acting on a mass)*.

**What is Planck's constant?**

There is *a quantity that relates weight to electrical current*, called Planck's constant – named after the German physicist Max Planck and denoted by the symbol  $h$ .

But  $h$  is an incredibly small number and to measure it, the research scientist Dr Bryan Kibble built *a super-accurate set of scales. The Kibble balance*, as it has become known, has an electromagnet that pulls down on one side of the scales and a weight – say, a kilogram – on the other. The electrical current going through the electromagnet is increased until the two sides are perfectly balanced.

By measuring the current running through the electromagnet to incredible precision, the researchers are able to calculate  $h$  to an accuracy of 0.000001%. *This breakthrough has paved the way for Le Grand K to be deposed by "die kleine h"*.

### 89. What are Microdots?

**Context:** Govt notifies rules for fixation of *microdots identifiers on vehicles*.

**What are microdots?**

- Microdot technology involves *spraying the body and parts of the vehicle or any other machine with microscopic dots*, which give a unique identification.
- These microdot *can be read physically with a microscope and identified with ultra violet light source*.
- The microdots and adhesive will become *permanent fixtures/affixation which cannot be removed without damaging the asset, that is the vehicle itself*.
- **Benefits:** Use of this technology will help check theft of vehicles and also use of fake spare parts.

### 90. UN backs Russia on internet convention

**Context:** The United Nations has approved *a Russian-led bid that aims to create a new convention on cybercrime*, alarming rights groups and Western powers that fear a bid to restrict online freedom.

The General Assembly approved *the resolution sponsored by Russia and backed by China, which would set up a committee of international experts in 2020*.

**Why the US is worried about this?**

A new UN treaty on cybercrime could render *the Budapest Convention* obsolete, further alarming rights groups.

**The Budapest Convention** was drafted by the Council of Europe, but other countries have joined, including the United States and Japan.

**Russia has opposed the Budapest Convention**, arguing that giving investigators access to computer data across borders violates national sovereignty.

**What is Budapest convention?**

**Also known as the Convention on Cybercrime**, it is **the first international treaty seeking to address Internet and computer crime by harmonizing national laws, improving investigative techniques, and increasing cooperation among nations.**

- It was **drawn up by** the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, France, with the active participation of the Council of Europe's observer states Canada, Japan, South Africa and the United States.
- It is **open for ratification even to states that are not members of the Council of Europe.**

As of September 2019, 64 states have ratified the convention.

**What it does?**

The Budapest Convention provides for the criminalisation of conduct, ranging from illegal access, data and systems interference to computer-related fraud and child pornography, procedural law tools to make investigation of cybercrime and securing of e-evidence in relation to any crime more effective, and international police and judicial cooperation on cybercrime and e-evidence.

**India's concerns over signing of this agreement:**

- India did not participate in the negotiation of the Convention and thus is worried about it.
- The Convention — through its Article 32b — allows for transborder access to data and thus infringes on national sovereignty.
- The regime of the Convention is not effective, “the promise of cooperation not firm enough,” or that there are grounds for refusal to cooperate.

## 91. Rare Earth Elements

**Context:** The US Army plans to fund the construction of a **Rare Earths processing facility** to secure the domestic supply of minerals that are used to make military weapons and electronics.

This will be **the first financial investment by the US military into commercial-scale Rare Earths production** since the Manhattan Project to build the first atomic bomb during World War II.

**What necessitated this?**

- The decision comes after China threatened to stop exporting Rare Earth materials to the US amid the ongoing trade war between the countries.
- At present, China refines approximately 80%-90% of the world's Rare Earths, thereby having substantial control over their supply.

**For Prelims and Mains:**

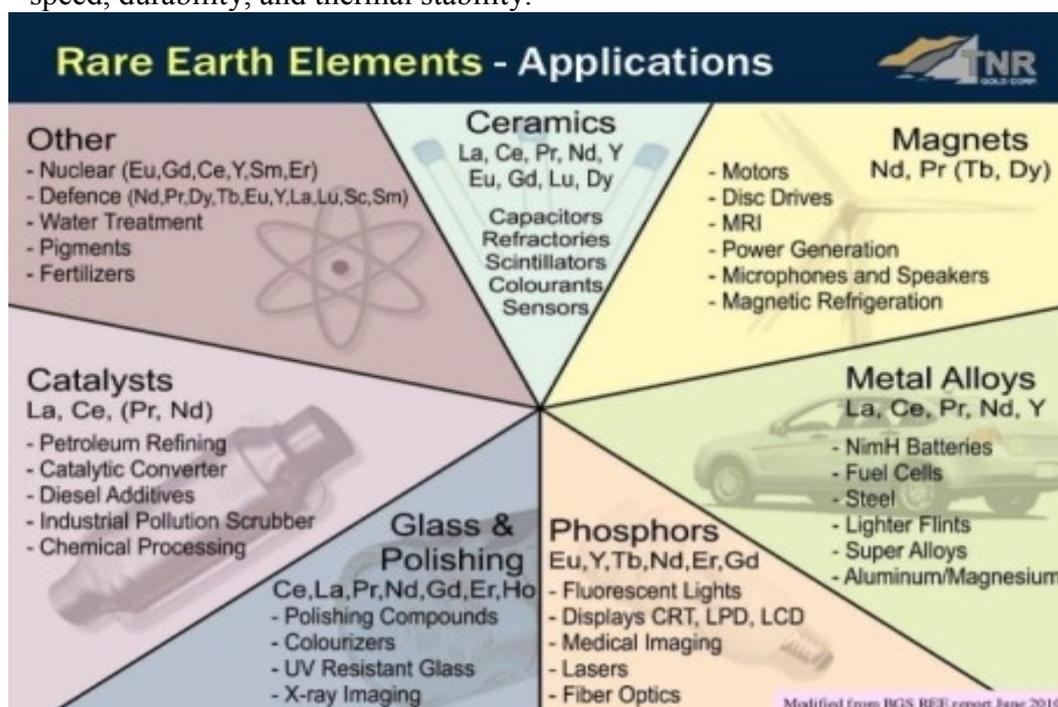
**What are REMs?**

- The rare earths minerals (REM) are a set of seventeen metallic elements. These include the fifteen lanthanides on the periodic table in addition to scandium and yttrium that show similar physical and chemical properties to the lanthanides.
- The REMs have unique catalytic, metallurgical, nuclear, electrical, magnetic and luminescent properties. While named ‘rare earth’, they are in fact not that rare and are relatively abundant in the Earth's crust.

**Strategic importance of REMs:**

They have distinctive electrical, metallurgical, catalytic, nuclear, magnetic and luminescent properties.

- Its usage range from daily use (e.g., lighter flints, glass polishing mediums, car alternators) to high-end technology (lasers, magnets, batteries, fibre-optic telecommunication cables).
- Even futuristic technologies need these REMs (For example high-temperature superconductivity, safe storage and transport of hydrogen for a post-hydrocarbon economy, environmental global warming and energy efficiency issues).
- Due to their unique magnetic, luminescent, and electrochemical properties, they help in technologies perform with reduced weight, reduced emissions, and energy consumption; therefore give them greater efficiency, performance, miniaturization, speed, durability, and thermal stability.



## 92. RISAT-2BR1

**Context:** India's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle, in its fiftieth flight (PSLV-C48), has successfully launched RISAT-2BR1 along with nine commercial satellites from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) SHAR, Sriharikota.

This is PSLV's 50th successful mission and the 75th launch vehicle mission from SDSC SHAR, Sriharikota.

**What is RISAT-2BR1?**

It is a radar imaging earth observation satellite.

It provides services in the field of agriculture, forestry and disaster management.

Its mission life is 5 years.

**Other satellites on board:**

The nine customer satellites were from Israel, Italy, Japan and the USA.

These satellites were launched under a commercial arrangement with New Space India Limited (NSIL).

**Background:**

The RISAT, which was first deployed in orbit on April 20, 2009 as the RISAT-2, uses synthetic aperture radars (SAR) to provide Indian forces with all-weather surveillance

and observation, which are crucial to notice any potential threat or malicious activity around the nation's borders.

Following the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, the launch of RISAT-2 was prioritised over RISAT- 1, as its C-band SAR radar was not yet ready and RISAT -2 carried an Israeli-built X-band radar.



### What is PSLV?

Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle is *an indigenously-developed expendable launch system of the ISRO.*

- It comes in the category of medium-lift launchers with a reach up to various orbits, including the Geo Synchronous Transfer Orbit, Lower Earth Orbit, and Polar Sun Synchronous Orbit.

### Difference between PSLV and GSLV:

*India has two operational launchers- Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) and Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV).*

*GSLV was developed to launch the heavier INSAT class of geosynchronous satellites into orbit.*

### Different orbits:

There are *three main types of Earth orbits- high Earth orbit, medium Earth orbit and low Earth orbit.* Which orbit a particular satellite is placed in depends on its function.

1. When satellites are about 36,000 km from the Earth's surface, they enter what is called *the high Earth orbit.* Here, it orbits in sync with the Earth's rotation, creating the impression that the satellite is stationary over a single longitude. Such a satellite is said to be *geosynchronous.*
2. Just as the geosynchronous satellites have a sweet spot over the equator that allows them to stay over one spot on Earth, polar-orbiting satellites have a sweet spot that allows them to stay in one time. This orbit is *a Sun-synchronous orbit,* which means that whenever and wherever the satellite crosses the equator, the local solar time on the ground is always the same.

## 93.SnowEx

**Context:** NASA has launched a seasonal campaign — part of a five-year programme called *SnowEx*, initiated in 2016-17.

### ***What is SnowEx?***

It is ***a five year program initiated and funded by NASA.***

***Objective:*** To address the most important gaps in snow remote sensing knowledge and thus lay the groundwork for a future snow satellite mission.

***It focuses on*** airborne campaigns and field work, and on comparing the various sensing technologies, from the mature to the more experimental, in globally-representative types of snow.

The mission will utilize ***a suite of airborne instruments such as Lidar, SAR, Passive Microwave, Multi-spectral/hyperspectral VIS/IR, and others, as well as ground measurements, to study Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) in forested areas.***

#### ***Objectives:***

- develop/test algorithms for measurement of SWE in forested and non-forested areas by providing multi-sensor observations of seasonally snow-covered landscapes.
- develop/test energy balance models and snow distribution models of beneath-canopy snowpack using appropriate field measurements.
- explore how best to combine sensing technologies with modeling and data assimilation methods to produce the most accurate products.

### ***What are the SnowEx outcomes and International Engagement?***

SnowEx will provide key insights into optimal strategies for mapping global SWE with remote sensing and models, which will enable a competitive proposal for ***a Decadal Survey “Earth System Explorer” mission.***

The systematic assessment of methods for mapping water and energy components of seasonal snow in SnowEx is fully aligned with the objectives of ***the NASA Terrestrial Hydrology Program and the Earth Science Division as well as the ESDS.***

#### ***Why have this campaign?***

- More than one-sixth of the world’s population (~1.2 billion people) relies on seasonal snowpack and glaciers for their water supply.
- Snowmelt-generated water supply is likely to decrease this century. Snow is also a critical component of Earth’s cold regions ecosystems where wildlife, vegetation and snow have strongly interconnected fates.
- Besides, to understand the time and space variation in the snow’s energy and mass balances along with the extensive feedbacks with the Earth’s climate, water cycle, and carbon cycle, it is critical to accurately measure snowpack.

## **94. Navic**

***Context:*** US Congress has consented to designate India’s ***Navigation in Indian Constellation (NavIC) as its “allied” navigational satellite system along with the Galileo of the European Union and QZSS of Japan.***

### ***What is NAVIC?***

Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC) is an independent regional navigation satellite system designed to provide position information in the Indian region and 1500 km around the Indian mainland.

#### ***Services provided:***

IRNSS would provide two types of services, namely Standard Positioning Services available to all users and Restricted Services provided to authorised users.

#### ***Its applications include:***

1. Terrestrial, Aerial and Marine Navigation.
2. Disaster Management.
3. Vehicle tracking and fleet management.

4. Integration with mobile phones.
5. Precise Timing.
6. Mapping and Geodetic data capture.
7. Terrestrial navigation aid for hikers and travellers.
8. Visual and voice navigation for drivers.

#### ***How many satellites does NAVIC consist of?***

It is a regional system and so its constellation will **consist of seven satellites**. **Three of these will be geostationary** over the Indian Ocean, i.e., they will appear to be stationary in the sky over the region, and **four will be geosynchronous** – appearing at the same point in the sky at the same time every day.

This **configuration ensures each satellite is being tracked by at least one of fourteen ground stations at any given point of time, with a high chance of most of them being visible from any point in India.**

#### ***Why it is necessary to have indigenous global navigation system?***

Having a global navigation system bolsters the ability of a nation to serve as **a net security provider**, especially through the guarantee of such assurance policies. It can also play a significant role in relief efforts post disasters such as the tsunami in the Indian Ocean region in 2004 and the Pakistan-India earthquake in 2005.



### ***95. Government Instant Messaging System (GIMS)***

**Context:** Government testing **GIMS**, its secure messaging App.

**For Prelims:**

**About Government Instant Messaging System (GIMS):**

Designed and developed by **National Informatics Centre (NIC)**.

It is being packaged **for employees of Central and state government departments and organisations for intra and inter organisation communications.**

It is **an Indian equivalent of popular messaging platforms**, such as WhatsApp and Telegram, for secure internal use.

It is being developed as **a secure Indian alternative without the security concerns attached with apps hosted abroad or those owned by foreign entities.**

Like WhatsApp, GIMS employs **end-to-end encryption for one-to-one messaging.**

**Value addition for Mains:**

**Need for and significance:**

The launch of the new app comes amid the recent controversy over the WhatsApp breach. Some Indian users' mobile devices were targeted through a spyware called **Pegasus** recently. GIMS is being touted as **a safer bet as the platform has been developed in India, the server hosting it is installed within the country and the information stored would be in**

**government-based cloud** — NIC-operated data centres that are only meant for captive use by the government and its departments.

## 96. StrandHogg

**What is StrandHogg?**

It is a *Malware* which *allows real-time malware applications to pose as genuine applications and access user data of all kinds.*

**Threats:** It can listen to the conversations, access photo album, read/send messages, make calls, record conversations, get login credentials to various accounts, access private images, files, contact details, call logs and location information without being apparent to the affected users.

**Why in News?** The Union Home Ministry has alerted States, warning them about the vulnerability of the Android operating system to a *bug called 'StrandHogg'*.

## 97. Fuel Cell Electric Vehicle

**Why in News**

Recently, the **Supreme Court** of India has directed the government to look into the feasibility of **Fuel Cell Electric Vehicle (FCEV)** to deal with air pollution.

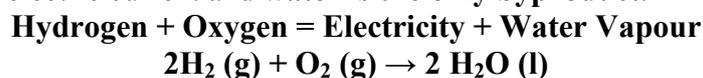
- Research is ongoing at the **International Research Center for Hydrogen Energy at Kyushu University, Japan** on FCEVs based on **hydrogen cell technology**, also known as '**fuel cells**'.
- In this context the Indian government is the The research is being studied closely by the as it readies a hydrogen-fuelled blueprint.

**Fuel Cell**

- Fuel cells and batteries convert chemical energy into electrical energy and are very useful forms of galvanic cell.
  - A galvanic or voltaic cell is an electrochemical cell that converts chemical energy into electrical energy through the redox reactions that occur within the cell.
- Galvanic cells that are designed to convert the energy of combustion of fuels like hydrogen, methane, methanol, etc. directly into electrical energy are called fuel cells. One of the most successful fuel cells uses the reaction of hydrogen with oxygen to form water.

**Key Points**

- **Mechanism:** The **Fuel Cell Electric Vehicle (FCEV)** combines hydrogen and oxygen to generate an electric current and **water is the only byproduct.**



- **Fuel Cell Electric Vehicle (FCEV)** engines are **similar to the conventional internal combustion engines** because they also **rely on a constant supply** of fuel (hydrogen) and oxygen.
  - However, there are **no moving parts** in the fuel cell, so they are **more efficient and reliable.**
- **Stationary fuel cells** are the **largest and most powerful** fuel cells. These are being designed to provide a cleaner, reliable source of on-site power to hospitals, banks, airports and homes.
- The successful development of the technology would **provide energy for transportation and electric power.**
- **Hydrogen fuel tanks** are made from **highly durable carbon fibre**. Some FCEVs have a triple-layer hydrogen tank made of woven carbon fibre.

### *Advantages*

- FCEVs produce much **smaller quantities of** greenhouse gases and none of the air pollutants that cause health problems.
- Fuel cells **emit only heat and water as a byproduct** and are **far more energy-efficient** than traditional combustion technologies.
- FCEVs **do not need to be plugged in for charging**, like battery-powered EVs.
- There is a **wide availability of resources for producing hydrogen**.

### *Disadvantages*

- The **process of making hydrogen needs energy**, often from **fossil fuel** sources, which raises questions over hydrogen's green credentials.
- Handling of hydrogen is a safety concern because it is **more explosive** than petrol.
- These vehicles are expensive and fuel dispensing pumps are scarce.

### *Status in India*

- In India, so far, the definition of **Electric Vehicles only covers Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs)**.
  - BEVs have **no internal combustion engine or fuel tank** and run on a **fully electric drivetrain powered by rechargeable batteries**.
- The Government of India has launched **FAME India Scheme** with the objective to support hybrid/electric vehicles market development and manufacturing ecosystem. It also covers Hybrid & Electric technologies like Mild Hybrid, Strong Hybrid, Plug in Hybrid & BEVs.
- The **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy**, under its **Research, Development and Demonstration (RD&D) Programme**, has been supporting various projects on hydrogen and fuel cells.
- The **Ministry of Science and Technology** has supported two networked centres on **hydrogen storage** led by IIT Bombay and Nonferrous Materials Technology Development Centre, Hyderabad.

## **98. White Dwarfs System**

### *Why in News*

- For the first time ever, astronomers have found an indirect evidence of a giant planet orbiting a **white dwarf star (WDJ0914+1914)**. The system was found in the Cancer constellation.
- The planet was **not seen directly** but evidence of its presence was in the form of a disc of gas (hydrogen, oxygen and sulphur) formed due to its evaporating atmosphere.
  - Spikes of gas were detected by the Very Large Telescope of the European Southern Observatory in Chile.

### *Significance*

- This is the **first evidence of an actual planet revolving around a white dwarf star**. Prior to this discovery, only smaller objects such as asteroids had been detected.
- WDJ0914+1914 is providing us with a glimpse into the very distant future of our own solar system. In about 4.5 billion years from now, the Sun will become a white dwarf evaporating all the planets.

### *White Dwarfs*

- Stars like our sun **fuse hydrogen in their cores into helium** through nuclear fusion reactions. White dwarfs are stars that have **burned up all of the hydrogen** they once used as nuclear fuel. Such stars have very high density.

- Fusion in a star's core produces **heat and outward pressure** (they bloat up as enormous **red giants**), but this pressure is kept in balance by the inward push of gravity generated by a star's mass.
- When the hydrogen, used as fuel, vanishes and fusion slows, gravity causes the star to **collapse in on itself into white dwarfs**.
- **Black Dwarf:** Eventually—over tens or even hundreds of billions of years—a white dwarf cools until it becomes a **black dwarf, which emits no energy**. Because the universe's oldest stars are only 10 billion to 20 billion years old there are no known black dwarfs.
- It must be noted that not all white dwarfs cool and transform into black dwarfs. Those white dwarfs which have enough mass reach a level called the **Chandrasekhar Limit**. At this point the pressure at its center becomes so great that the star will detonate in a **thermonuclear supernova**.

### Chandrasekhar Limit

- **Chandrasekhar Limit** is the maximum mass theoretically possible for a stable white dwarf star. A limit which mandates that no white dwarf (a collapsed, degenerate star) can be more massive than about **1.4 times the mass of the Sun**. Any degenerate object more massive must inevitably collapse into a neutron star or black hole.
- The limit is named after the **Nobel laureate Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar**, who first proposed the idea in 1931. He was awarded the **Nobel Prize in Physics in 1983 for his work on the physical processes involved in the structure and evolution of stars**.

## Indian History, Culture, Art & Architecture

### 99. South India's earliest Sanskrit Inscription found in AP

**Context:** The *Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)* has discovered *the earliest Sanskrit inscription in South India*.

- This is also an earliest epigraphic evidence (Epigraphy is the study of ancient inscriptions) for the Saptamatrika cult.
- The discovery was made in Chebrolu village in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh.

#### *About the inscriptions found:*

- It is in Sanskrit and in Brahmi characters.
- It was issued by Satavahana king Vijaya in 207 A.D.
- The inscription records construction of a prasada (temple), a mandapa (a pavilion for public rituals) and consecration of images on southern side of temple by a person named Kartika for merit of king at temple of Bhagavathi (Goddess) Saktimatruka (Saptamatrika) at Tambrape (which is the ancient name of Chebrolou).
- Chebrolu inscription of Satavahana king Vijaya issued in his 5th regnal year (207 A.D.) is also the earliest datable Sanskrit inscription from South India so far. Until now the Nagarjunakonda inscription of Ikshavaku king Ehavala Chantamula issued in his 11th regnal year (4th century A.D.) was considered the earliest Sanskrit inscription in South India.

The place also yielded *another inscription which is in Prakrit language and of Brahmi characters and belongs to 1st century A.D.*

- This is thus the earliest epigraphic reference to Mutts and records gift of a cloister mandapa and chaitya to bhavatho (Lord) of the Gadasa Mutt by a person hailing from Tabaava.

### ***Who are Saptamatrikas?***

They are **a group of seven female deities** worshipped in Hinduism as personifying the energy of their respective consorts.

**They are** Brahmani (wife of Brahma), Maheshvari (wife of Shiva), Kaumari (wife of Kumara), Vaishnavi (wife of Vishnu), Varahi (wife of Varaha, or the boar, an avatar [incarnation] of Vishnu), Indrani (wife of Indra), and Chamunda, or Yami (wife of Yama).

There are references of Saptamatrika worship in early **Kadamba copper plates as well as early Chalukyas and Eastern Chalukya copper plates.**

### ***Satavahanas:***

- They are an ancient Indian dynasty based In the Deccan.
- They established their independent rule after the decline of the Mauryas.
- Their rule lasted for about 450 years.
- They were also known as the **Andhras**.
- The **Puranas and the Nasik and Nanaghad inscriptions** remain important sources for the history of Satavahanas.
- **The Satavahana kingdom mainly comprised the present-day** Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. At different times, their rule extended to parts of modern Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Karnataka. The dynasty had different capital cities at different times, including Pratishtana (Paithan) and Amaravati (Dharanikota).
- The **founder** of the Satavahana dynasty was Simuka.
- The greatest ruler of the Satavahana dynasty was **Gautamiputra Satakarni**.
- They **patronized Buddhism and Brahmanism**.

## **100. Jangubai Cave Temple and Kaplai Caves**

The Jangubai Cave Temple and the Kaplai Caves are considered as a **pilgrimage site** by aboriginal tribes like **Gond, Pradhan and Kolam**.

- These caves are located at **Maharashtra -Telangana border**.

### ***Kolam Tribe***

- The Kolam tribe (or in their own language, Kolavar) is a **scheduled tribe of Maharashtra**. They also live in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh.
- They have a language of their own (Kolami) which belongs, like Gondi, to the intermediate group of **Dravidian languages**.
- They are **monogamous** and follow Hinduism.
- Recently in 2018, the Government has identified Katkaria (Kathodia), Kolam and Maria Gond as **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)**.
  - The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is administering the scheme “Development of PVTGs” for the overall development of PVTGs. This scheme is flexible and enables the States to focus on areas that they consider is relevant to PVTGs and their socio-cultural environment.

### ***Gond Tribe***

- The Gonds tribe is spread over Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Bihar, and West Bengal.
- Their main concentration is in forest and hilly areas between the Vidhyans and Satpura.

### ***Pradhan Tribe***

- The Pradhan is a **subgroup** of the tribal Gond people who live in central India.

- The large majority of the Pardhan live in the **Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh**.
- The primary language of the Pardhan people is their **own Pardhan language**. Some Pardhan also speak Hindi, Marathi and Gondi.
- The traditional occupation of the Pardhan is that of being singers and musicians at festivals and important life ceremonies.

### **101. Maharaja Surajmal and the third battle of panipat**

**Context:** Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has urged the Censor Board to take note of allegations that Ashutosh Gowariker's film, *Panipat*, had wrongly portrayed *Maharaja Surajmal*.

**What's the issue?**

In the film, Maharaja Surajmal of Bharatpur is reportedly shown as having denied help to the Maratha army, one of the factors leading to the Marathas' eventual defeat. The film is based on *the Third Battle of Panipat*.

Members of the Jat community have protested against the film and several theatres in Rajasthan have decided not to screen the film.

**Who is Maharaja Surajmal?**

Born in **1707 in the kingdom of Bharatpur, Rajasthan**, he ruled in the 18th century and was the son of *the Jat chieftain Badan Singh*.

He is described as "a strong leader who harried the Mughal empire in the anarchic period of its decline, consolidated the kingdom with its capital at Bharatpur and used the resources gained to build forts and palaces.

Some of the important monuments include *the palace at Deeg and the Bharatpur Fort*".

**The third battle of panipat- what, why and how?**

- Fought between Maratha forces and invading armies of Afghan general Ahmed Shah Abdali of Durrani Empire in 1761.
- Abdali was supported by two Indian allies—the Rohillas Najib-ud-daulah, Afghans of the Doab region and Shuja-ud-Daula-the Nawab of Awadh.

**How it started?**

After the death of Mughal Emperor *Aurangzeb*, there was a sudden rise of the Marathas and all his territorial gains in the Deccan were reversed and a considerable part of India was conquered by Marathas.

*Abdali* planned to attack the Marathas when his son was driven out of Lahore.

Finally, *the Marathas were defeated in the battle*, with 40,000 of their troops killed, while Abdali's army is estimated to have suffered around 20,000 casualties.

**Impact and outcomes:**

It marked a loss of prestige for the Marathas, who lost their preeminent position in north India after this war, paving the way for British colonial power to expand here.

The Marathas lost some of their most important generals and administrators, including *Sadashivrao and heir-apparent Vishwasrao of the Peshwa household, Ibrahim Khan Gardi, Jankojirao Scindia, and Yashwantrao Puar*.

**Additional facts- Other major battles fought at Panipat:**

**1. The First Battle of Panipat, in 1526:**

Fought between Babur and Ibrahim Lodhi. It laid the foundation of the Mughal Empire in India.

**2. The Second Battle of Panipat, in 1556:**

Fought between Hemu 'Vikramaditya' and Akbar. It cemented Mughal rule.

### **102. Sattriya Dance**

## Why in News

Dance historian Dr. Sunil Kothari has recently been bestowed with the Madhabdev Award by the Government of Assam for popularising Sattriya dance.

Sattriya

- **Origin**
  - Sattriya originated in **Sattra, monastery**, as a part of **neo-Vaishnavite movement** started by **Srimanta Sankardev in Assam**, in the **15<sup>th</sup> Century**. He propagated the “ek sharan naama dharma” (chanting the name of one God devotedly).
- **Classical Dance:** Sattriya was given the status of a classical dance in the year **2000 by the Sangeet Natak Akademi**. Other classical dances of India are : Bharatnatyam (Tamil Nadu), Kathakali (Kerala), Kuchipudi (Andhra Pradesh), Kathak (North India), Mohiniyattam (Kerala), Manipuri (Manipur) and Odissi (Odisha).
- **Features**
  - Sattriya dances differ from other dance forms in **its basic stance**. For male it is known as **Purush Pak** while for female, **Prakriti Pak**. The dance is based on **mythological themes**.
  - They have special mnemonic bols, typical **Assamese music known as Borgeet**, musical instruments like large cymbals, drums, colourful costumes, besides complicated choreographic patterns using various talas for each stanza sung by the vocalist.
  - Corpus of Sattriya dances consists of ankiya **bhaona** and also Ojapali dances in which the main singer sings and enacts abhinaya, telling stories and a group of dancers dance as back up dancers playing small cymbals.
- **Two Separate Streams**
  - One, the **Bhaona-related repertoire** starting from the Gayan-Bhayanar Nach to the Kharmanar Nach.
  - Second, the dance numbers which are independent, such as Chali, Rajagharia Chali, Jhumura, Nadu Bhangi etc.
- **Popular Artists**
  - Guru Jatin Goswami and Sharodi Saikia among others.

## 103. Paika Rebellion

**Context:** President Ram Nath Kovind recently laid the foundation of a memorial dedicated to **the 1817 Paika Rebellion**.

**Who are Paikas?**

Recruited since the 16th century by **kings in Odisha** from a variety of social groups **to render martial services in return for rent-free land (nish-kar jagirs) and titles**.

They were the traditional **land-owning militia of Odisha and served as warriors**.

**How the rebellion began?**

When armies of the East India Company overran most of Odisha in 1803, the Raja of Khurda lost his primacy and the power and prestige of the Paikas went on a decline. So, they rebelled back.

- The British were not comfortable with these aggressive, warlike new subjects and set up a **commission under Walter Ewer** to look into the issue.
- The commission recommended that the hereditary rent-free lands granted to the Paikas be taken over by the British administration and this recommendation was zealously adhered to. **They revolted against the British**.

- **Bakshi Jagabandhu Bidyadhar Mohapatra Bharamarbar Rai**, the highest-ranking military general of **King of Khorda Mukund Dev II**, led the Paikas to join the uprising.
- However, the rebellion also had several other underlying causes – like the rise in the price of salt, abolition of the cowrie currency for payment of taxes and an overtly extortionist land revenue policy.

#### **Outcome:**

Although initially the Company struggled to respond they managed to put down the rebellion by May 1817. Many of the Paik leaders were hung or deported. Jagabandhu surrendered in 1825.

#### **Nationalist movement or a peasant rebellion?**

The Paika Rebellion is one among the peasant rebellions that took place in India when the British East India Company was expanding its military enterprise. Because these uprisings violently clashed with European colonialists and missionaries on many occasions, their resistance is sometimes seen as the first expression of resistance against colonial rule — and therefore considered to be “nationalist” in nature.

### **104. DSC Prize for South Asian Literature 2019**

#### **Why in News**

**Author Amitabha Bagchi** has won the **DSC Prize for South Asian Literature 2019** for his fiction novel - *Half The Night Is Gone*.

- The DSC Prize for South Asian Literature celebrates the rich and varied world of **literature of the South Asian region**. Authors could belong to this region through birth or be of any ethnicity but the writing should pertain to the South Asian region in terms of content and theme.
  - The South Asian region includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
- The DSC Prize for South Asian Literature was **instituted in 2010** by its founders, Surina Narula and Manhad Narula. The prize is now **administered by the South Asian Literature Prize & Events Trust** which is focused on improving the quality of life in South Asian society.
- The DSC Prize carries an **award of US \$25,000** and over the last eight years, the prize has generated tremendous response in international literary forums.
- **DSC Prize Secretariat** is located in **New Delhi**.

### **105. Natyashastra**

#### **Why in News**

Recently, a three-day festival on Natyashastra was organised in Chennai (Tamil Nadu).

#### **Natyashastra**

- **Natyashastra**, in full **Bharata Natyashastra**, is a detailed treatise and handbook on **dramatic art** that deals with all aspects of classical Sanskrit theatre.
- It is believed to have been **written by the mythic Brahman sage and priest Bharata (200 BC – 200 AD)**.
- Its many chapters contain detailed treatments of all the diverse arts that are embodied in the classical Indian concept of the drama, including dance, music, poetics, and general aesthetics.

- It is **also known as the fifth veda** as it has been evolved by taking words from the Rigveda, music from the Samaveda, gestures from the Yajurveda and emotions from the Atharvaveda.

## Important Days, Reports, Events and Miscellaneous

### 106. India's first maritime museum in Gujarat

A **National Maritime Heritage Museum** will be established at **Lothal in Gujarat**.

- The museum will act as an **independent research center for archaeology of boat building, reconstruction of maritime history and materials traded**.
- It will hold display of salvaged materials from shipwreck sites in Indian Ocean waters.

### 107. "Top 100 City Destination" ranking

Released by **Euromonitor International**, a UK-based global market research company.

The Euromonitor report **highlights top 100 cities based on 2018 international arrivals**. Arrivals encompasses all purposes of visit such as business, leisure and visiting friends and relatives.

#### Key findings:

- India has emerged as the strongest emerging destination with **seven cities in the top 100 popular cities this year**.
- Delhi is forecast to be hold **the 8th place in 2019**.
- Despite political unrest and protests in the last few months, **Hong Kong remained No.1 destination this year**. However, the number of visitors arriving to Hong Kong declined in 2019.
- **Asia posted fastest growth in the number of international arrivals globally**.
- Developed infrastructure, government's focus on tourism and digitisation of travel facilities like e-visa are some of the reasons behind Asian countries' popularity among global tourists.

### 108. World Soil Day

**Context:** *World Soil Day is celebrated every year on 5th of December by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of United Nations.*

**Aim:** To communicate messages on importance of soil quality for food security, healthy ecosystems and human well-being.

**Theme 2019:** 'Stop Soil Erosion, Save Our Future'.

#### Why December 5 was chosen?

It corresponds with **the official birthday of H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the King of Thailand**, who officially sanctioned the event.

#### Soil pollution- concerns:

Soil pollution is a hidden danger that lurks beneath our feet.

1. 1/3 of our global soils are already degraded. Yet we risk losing more due to this hidden danger. Soil pollution can be invisible and seems far away but everyone, everywhere is affected.

2. With a growing population expected to reach 9 billion by 2050, soil pollution is a worldwide problem which degrades our soils, poisons the food we eat, the water we drink and the air we breathe.
3. Most of the pollutants originate from human activities, such as unsustainable farming practices, industrial activities and mining, untreated urban waste and other non-environmental friendly practices.
4. Technology improvements may also lead to new contaminants being released into the environment.

#### **SDGs:**

In the Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030, *the Sustainable Development Goals 2, 3, 12, and 15* have targets which commend direct consideration of soil resources, especially soil pollution and degradation in relation to food security.

#### **Need for conservation and protection of soil:**

1. Soil holds three times as much carbon as the atmosphere and can help us meet the challenges of a changing climate.
2. 815 million people are food insecure and 2 billion people are nutritionally insecure, but we can mitigate this through soil.
3. 95% of our food comes from soil.
4. 33% of our global soils are already degraded.

#### **Way ahead:**

According to the FAO, it is vital to tackle soil pollution to reduce the risk of food security and human health. By preventing soil pollution, we can also address soil degradation, adapt to climate change and stem rural migration.

## **109. Zero FIR**

### **Why in News**

In Kanchikacherla of Andhra Pradesh, a 'Zero FIR' was registered for a missing boy and he was found within 24 hours after the investigation was taken up.

- Zero FIR's were registered earlier as well but this was the **first case in which it was done for "quick action"**.
- It means that an FIR can be filed in any police station, **irrespective of the jurisdictional limitations and location of the incident**.
- The respective police station takes in the FIR and **marks it as a zero FIR by giving it serial number zero** and immediately transfer the documents over to the concerned jurisdiction.
- It was initially **highlighted after the Nirbhaya Case, 2012**.
  - Zero FIRs may be registered on the basis of a woman's statement at any police station irrespective of jurisdiction. This means women can file an FIR at any police station and the complaint is required to be registered on the basis of the woman's complaint verbatim.
- The police officers who **fail to comply** with the registration of Zero FIR may **invite prosecution under Section 166A of IPC** and also departmental action.

## **110. Human Development Index**

### **Why in News**

India was ranked **129** out of 189 countries on the **2019 Human Development Index (HDI)** improving from the **130<sup>th</sup>** position in **2018**.

- HDI is part of the **Human Development Report** that is **published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**.

- The **other indices** that form the part of the 2019 Report are:
  - Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI),
  - Gender Development Index (GDI),
  - Gender Inequality Index (GII) and
  - Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI).
- The **focus** of the 2019 Report is on **‘Inequality in Human Development’**.

### **Human Development Index**

- HDI emphasizes that **people and their capabilities** should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country, not economic growth alone.
- HDI measures average achievement of a country in **three basic dimensions** of human development:
  - A long and healthy life,
  - Access to knowledge, and
  - A decent standard of living.
- **Top Performers in 2019**
  - **Norway, Switzerland, Ireland** occupied the top three positions in that order.
  - Germany is placed fourth along with Hong Kong, and Australia secured the fifth rank on the global ranking.

## **Ups and downs**

Among India's neighbours Sri Lanka moved up five rungs on the HDI ladder while Maldives fell three ranks. While Pakistan slipped two spots, Bangladesh moved up one

<b>Country</b>	<b>2017 Rank</b>	<b>2018 Rank</b>
<b>India</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>129</b>
Brazil	79	79
China	86	85
Russia	49	49
South Africa	113	113
Pakistan	150	152
Afghanistan	168	170
Sri Lanka	76	71
Bhutan	134	134
Nepal	149	147
Bangladesh	136	135
Maldives	101	104

- **India's Neighbours**
  - Sri Lanka (71) and China (85) were higher up the rank scale.
  - Bhutan (134), Bangladesh (135), Myanmar (145), Nepal (147), Pakistan (152) and Afghanistan (170) were ranked lower on the list.
- **Region Wise Performance**

- South Asia was the fastest growing region in human development progress witnessing a 46% growth over 1990-2018, followed by East Asia and the Pacific at 43%.
- **India's Performance**
  - India's HDI value increased by 50% (from 0.431 to 0.647), which places it above the average for other South Asian countries (0.642).
  - In India, between 1990 and 2018, life expectancy at birth increased by 11.6 years, mean years of schooling increased by 3.5 years and expected years of schooling increased by 4.7 years. Per capita incomes rose by over 250%.

#### ***Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index***

- The IHDI indicates **percentage loss in HDI due to inequality**.
- India's position worsened by one position to 130 (as compared to the HDI Index 2019- 129) with a score of 0.477. Although, the IHDI score has improved from 0.468 in 2018.

#### ***Gender Development Index***

- GDI measures **disparities on the HDI by gender**.
- India is only marginally better than the South Asian average on the Gender Development Index (0.829 vs 0.828).

#### ***Gender Inequality Index***

- GII presents a composite measure of gender inequality using **three dimensions**:
  - Reproductive health,
  - Empowerment and
  - The labour market.
- In GII, **India is at 122 out of 162 countries**. Neighbours China (39), Sri Lanka (86), Bhutan (99), Myanmar (106) were placed above India.
- The report noted that group-based inequalities persist, especially affecting women and girls and no place in the world has gender equality.
- The report notes that the world is not on track to achieve **gender equality** by 2030 as per the **UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG -5)**. It forecasts that it may take 202 years to close the gender gap in economic opportunity.
- The report presents a new "**social norms index**" indicating how prejudices and social beliefs obstruct gender equality, which shows that only 14% of women and 10% of men worldwide have no gender bias.
- The report highlights that **new forms of inequalities** will manifest in future through **climate change and technological transformation** which have the potential to deepen existing social and economic fault lines.

#### ***Multidimensional Poverty Index***

- MPI captures the multiple **deprivations that people in developing countries** face in their **health, education and standard of living**.
- India accounts for 28% of the 1.3 billion multidimensional poor.

## **111. International Human Rights Day**

### ***Why in News***

The International Human Rights Day is **observed every year on 10<sup>th</sup> December**. The day marks the adoption of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** by the **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** in 1948.

- The **theme for 2019** is "**Youth Standing up for Human Rights**".

- The campaign, **#StandUp4HumanRights** has also been launched by the **Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)**, to encourage, galvanise, and showcase how **youth** all over the world stand up for rights.
- Human rights are at the heart of the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, as in the absence of human dignity, sustainable development cannot be achieved.
  - Human Rights are driven by progress on all SDGs, and the SDGs are driven by advancements on human rights.
- India has enacted the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 to ensure the protection of human rights. Recently, **several amendments were made to the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 through Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Bill, 2019**. These are:
  - **Eligibility:** Not only a person who has been Chief Justice of India but also a person who has been a **judge of the Supreme Court is also made eligible to be appointed** as Chairperson of the Commission in addition to the person who has been the Chief Justice of India.
  - **Strength:** It increases the members of the Commission from **two to three of which, one shall be a woman**.
  - **Members of National Commission:** Apart from Chairperson of **four National Commissions (Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Women and Minorities)**, it also intends to **include** Chairperson of the National Commission for Backward Classes, Chairperson of the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights and the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities as deemed members of the Commission.
  - **Tenure:** The amendment **reduces the term** of the Chairperson and Members of the Commission and the State Commissions **from five to three years and shall be eligible for re-appointment**.

#### ***Universal Declaration of Human Rights***

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights was proclaimed under UNGA resolution 217 A in Paris. It set out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected.
- It states that ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.’
- It entitles everyone to all the rights and freedoms and prohibits slavery and slave trade in all forms.
- Other rights recognized under the declaration are right to a nationality, right against arbitrary arrest, detention or exile, the right to seek asylum from prosecution, the right to freedom of movement and residence, etc.
- The Universal Declaration is **not a treaty**, so it does not directly create legal obligations for countries. However, it is an expression of the fundamental values which are shared by all members of the International community.
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights holds the **Guinness World Record** as the **most translated document**.

#### ***Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)***

- The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (**UN Human Rights**) is the leading **UN entity** on human rights.
- It was established in **1993** and is a **part of the United Nations Secretariat**.
- OHCHR is **headquartered in Geneva**.

- UN Human Rights plays a crucial role in safeguarding the integrity of the **three interconnected pillars of the United Nations** – peace and security, human rights and development.
- It also provides assistance in the form of technical expertise and capacity development in order to support the implementation of international human rights standards on the ground.

## 112. RailWire Wi-Fi

**Context:** The Railways has successfully completed the work of providing free public Wi-Fi at 5500 stations across the country.

**What is RailWire?**

RailWire is *a retail Broadband initiative of the RailTel.*

- It envisages extending broadband and application services to the public.
- The Wi-Fi at stations has been provided in association with **Google as the technology partner.**

**RailTel Corporation** is a “Mini Ratna(Category-I)” PSU of Ministry of Railways. It is the largest neutral telecom services providers in the country.

**Green good deeds:**

- The campaign has been **launched by the Environment Ministry.**
- **Aim:** To sensitise the people and students, in particular, about climate change and global warming. The objective of the campaign is to restore and return the clean and green environment to the next generation.
- The Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change had drawn up a list of over 500 Green Good Deeds and asked people to alter their behaviour to Green Good Behaviour to fulfil their Green Social Responsibility.
- These small positive actions to be performed by individuals or organisations to strengthen the cause of environmental protection, were put on a mobile application named “Dr Harsh Vardhan App”.

## 113. National Energy Conservation Day

**Why in News**

The National Energy Conservation Day is organized every year on 14<sup>th</sup> December by the **Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE).**

- It **aims** to showcase India’s achievements in energy efficiency and conservation while working for its ambition of holistic development as part of the nation’s overall effort towards climate change mitigation.
- BEE is observing **National Energy Conservation Week** from 9<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> December 2019 in order to drive mass awareness about the importance of energy efficiency and conservation.
- In order to realize the development goals, **India’s energy demand is expected to double between 2013 and 2030, to approximately 1500 million tons** of oil equivalent.
- The **mission of BEE** is to assist in developing policies and strategies that will help reduce this energy demand by promoting widespread adoption of energy efficiency measures.

**National Energy Conservation Awards Programme**

- It recognizes the **energy efficiency achievements in 56 sub-sectors** across industry, establishments and institutions.

- Ministry of Power is implementing various policies and schemes viz The Perform, Achieve and Trade (PAT) Scheme, Standard and Labelling and Demand Side Management. These programmes are helpful in achieving significant energy savings and also, in promotion of the efficient use of energy across society.
- Furthermore, the development of Energy Conservation Guidelines and State Energy Efficiency Preparedness Index are complemented within different sectors of Industries and States for implementing energy efficiency programmes more effectively. Energy Conservation Building Codes for the residential sector is also being developed for curtailing the rising energy demand of the country.

#### ***Perform, Achieve and Trade Scheme***

- It is a market-based mechanism to further accelerate as well as incentivize energy efficiency in the large energy-intensive industries.
- The scheme provides the option to trade any additional certified energy savings with other designated consumers to comply with the Specific Energy Consumption reduction targets.
- The Energy Savings Certificates (ESCerts) so issued will be tradable on special trading platforms to be created in the two power exchanges -- Indian Energy Exchange and Power Exchange India.
- The scheme is unique in many ways, particularly from a developing country's perspective since it creates a market for energy efficiency through tradable certificates ESCerts, by allowing them to be used for meeting energy reduction targets.

#### ***114. Crystal award***

- Awarded by the World Economic Forum (WEF)
- Hosted by World Economic Forum's World Arts Forum.
- The Award recognises as well as celebrates the achievements of leading artists and cultural figures whose leadership inspires inclusive and sustainable change.

#### ***Why in News?***

26th Annual Crystal Award for the year 2020 have been announced.

#### ***115. Gender gap index***

**Context:** *Global Gender Gap Report 2020* has been released by *the World Economic Forum*.

**For Prelims and Mains:**

**About Global gender gap report:**

It is *published annually by the world economic forum since 2006*.

*Global gender gap index* is a part of this which measures gender equality across *four pillars— they are economic opportunity, political empowerment, educational attainment and health and survival*.

**Significance:**

The Report aims to serve “*as a compass to track progress on relative gaps between women and men on health, education, economy and politics*”. Through this annual yardstick, the Report says, “stakeholders within each country are able to set priorities relevant in each specific economic, political and cultural context”.

**Performance of India:**

- India has been ranked 112th among 153 countries this year. In 2018, it ranked 108.

**Performance of other countries:**

- Iceland, Norway, and Finland occupy the top three spots.

**Key findings:**

- Globally, the average (population-weighted) distance completed to gender parity is at 68.6%, which is an improvement since last edition.
- The largest gender disparity is in political empowerment. Only 25% of the 35,127 seats in parliaments around the world are occupied by women, and only 21% of the 3,343 ministers are women.
- Projecting current trends into the future, the overall global gender gap will close in 99.5 years, on average, across the 107 countries covered continuously since the first edition of the Report.

#### ***Challenges and concerns for India:***

India has closed *two-thirds of its overall gender gap (score of 66.8%)*. However, *the condition of women in large fringes of India's society is precarious*.

- It has lost four positions since the previous edition, despite a small score improvement, as some countries ranked lower than India have improved more.
- ***The economic gender gap runs particularly deep in India.*** Only one-third of the gap has been bridged. Since 2006, the gap has gotten significantly wider. Among the 153 countries studied, India is the only country where the economic gender gap is larger than the political gender gap.

### ***116. Gandhi Citizenship Education Prize***

***Context:*** Portugal announces Gandhi Citizenship Education Prize.

- It will be dedicated to social welfare.
- This would be an award given annually and the first edition will be dedicated to animal welfare.

### ***117. 2019 Pollution and Health Metrics: Global, Regional and Country Analysis Report***

#### ***Why in News***

The **2019 Pollution and Health Metrics: Global, Regional and Country Analysis report** from the **Global Alliance on Health and Pollution (GAHP)** provides a ranking of pollution deaths on global, regional and country levels.

- In 2017, pollution was responsible for 15% of all deaths globally and 275 million Disability-Adjusted Life Years.
- The report includes **three lists** on pollution-induced deaths. **India is the only country that features in the top 10 in all three lists.**
  - India saw the most pollution deaths of about 2.3 million.

**ANNUAL PREMATURE AIR POLLUTION-RELATED DEATHS**

1	China	12,42,987
2	India	12,40,529
3	Pakistan	1,28,005
4	Indonesia	1,23,753
5	Bangladesh	1,22,734
6	Nigeria	1,14,115
7	USA	1,07,507
8	Russian Federation	99,392
9	Brazil	66,245
10	Philippines	64,386

**POLLUTION DEATHS PER 1,00,000 PEOPLE**

1	Chad	287
2	Central African Republic	251
3	North Korea	202
4	Niger	192
5	Madagascar	183
6	Papua New Guinea	183
7	South Sudan	180
8	Somalia	179
9	Serbia	175
10	India	174

**ANNUAL PREMATURE POLLUTION-RELATED DEATHS**

1	India	23,26,771
2	China	18,65,566
3	Nigeria	2,79,318
4	Indonesia	2,32,974
5	Pakistan	2,23,836
6	Bangladesh	2,07,922
7	USA	1,96,930
8	Russian Federation	1,18,687
9	Ethiopia	1,10,787
10	Brazil	1,09,438

### Key Points

- The top 10 countries with the **most pollution deaths** include both the world's largest and wealthiest nations and some of the poorer ones.
- In the list of top 10 countries with the **most pollution-related deaths in proportion to their population**, there are many **smaller countries** where the impact of pollution in relation to population size is **more intense**.
- The list of top 10 countries with the **most deaths related to air pollution corresponds closely** to the list of top 10 countries with the **most pollution-related deaths**.
  - **Air pollution, both ambient and indoor, is one of the largest and most obvious types of pollution affecting global health.**

### Global Alliance on Health and Pollution

- It is a **collaborative body** made up of more than 60 members and dozens of observers.
- Few prominent members are **Pure Earth** (non-profit organisation), **World Bank**, **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**, **United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)**, **Asian Development Bank (ADB)**, the **European Commission**, the Ministries of Environment and Health of many low and middle-income countries etc.
- Its **goal is to reduce death and illness** caused by all forms of toxic pollution, including air, water, soil and chemical wastes especially in low and middle-income countries.

## 118. Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP)

- **Why in News?**
- The **Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP)** has been recognised formally by the National Department of Regulation of Medicines and Health Products of the Ministry of Public Health of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.
- It will also be used based on **the requirement as reputable pharmacopoeia in the laboratory of medicines and health products quality**.
- **What is IP?**
- IP is an **officially recognized book of standards as per the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Rules 1945 thereunder**.
- The IP **specifies the standards of drugs manufactured and marketed in India in terms of their identity, purity and strength**.

### 119. **West African Nations Rename Common Currency- eco**

- *Eight West African countries* have agreed to change the name of their *common currency to Eco*.
- *CFA franc* was their currency so far. The *CFA franc was initially pegged to French franc and has been linked to euro for about two decades*.
- *The 8 West African countries namely- Ivory Coast, Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin, Niger, Senegal, Togo and Guinea-Bissau* currently use CFA France as their currency. *All these countries, except Guinea-Bissau, are former French colonies*.

### 120. **Tunnel Under Rohtang Pass To Be Named After Atal Bihari Vajpayee**

The government will name the strategic tunnel under Rohtang Pass after former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his birth anniversary on December 25<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Key facts:**

- The 8.8-km-long tunnel is *the world's longest above an altitude of 3,000 metres*.
- The tunnel will cut through *Pir Panjal range*.
- The tunnel provides *a temporary winter link to the outside world not only to residents of Lahaul and Spiti but also to those living in Zaskar Valley of Ladakh*.
- *The Seri nullah default zonelies* inside the tunnel.

### 121. **Drake Passage**

- It is *the body of water between South America's Cape Horn and the South Shetland Islands of Antarctica*.
- It connects the southwestern part of the Atlantic Ocean (*Scotia Sea*) with the southeastern part of the Pacific Ocean and extends into the Southern Ocean.
- It is *the shortest crossing from Antarctica to any other landmass*. There is *no significant land anywhere around the world at the latitudes of Drake Passage*, which is important to the unimpeded flow of *the Antarctic Circumpolar Current* which carries a huge volume of water through the Passage and around Antarctica.
- The passage is named after *Sir Francis Drake*, who was *the first Englishman to circumnavigate the globe*.

### 122. **Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR)**

- The government has launched a web portal, '*Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR)*', to facilitate *blocking and tracing of stolen/lost mobile phones in Delhi*.
- The web portal was *first launched in Mumbai*.

**Services provided:** The launch of the project in Delhi will facilitate – request for blocking of stolen or lost mobile phone by customers; blocking of such mobile phones across mobile networks; sharing of traceability data with the Police; and unblocking of recovered/ found stolen or lost mobile phones.