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Remembering Bal Gangadhar Tilak on death anniversary

- Bal Gangadhar Tilak was an independence activist who was also a journalist, teacher, social reformer and lawyer.
- He was born on July 23, 1856, and died on August 1 in the year 1920.
- He is better known for the quote "Swarajya is my birthright and I shall have it!"
- Bal Gangadhar Tilak was the first leader of the Indian Independence Movement and led to the rise of Indian nationalism.
- The Britishers called Bal Gangadhar Tilak, 'The Father of the Indian unrest'.
- He was also given the honorary title of 'Lokmanya', which means admired (or accepted) by the people.

- Tilak is known as the 'Father of Swarajya' as he was one of the first independence activists to advocate 'Swaraj' and make it a part of the independence movement.
- He joined the Indian National Congress (INC) in the year 1890 and started the fight of self-rule.
- In 1880, he started his own newspaper, Kesari which is still published to this day.
- Bal Gangadhar Tilak started the Swadeshi movement in India.
- Tilak had a political regime with Bipin Chandra Pal and Lala Lajpat Rai and they were referred as the 'Lal-Bal-Pal triumvirate'.
- Bal Gangadhar Tilak was against the Age of Consent Act, 1891. He opposed and protested at every level so that the government would regulate the Act.
- In 2007, the Government of India released a coin to commemorate Tilak on his 150th birth anniversary.

Ayushman Bharat:

- Ayushman Bharat is the National Health Protection Scheme, which will cover over 10 crore poor vulnerable families (around 50 crore beneficiaries) providing coverage of up to ₹5 lakh (per family per year) for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation. **It will subsume the on-going centrally sponsored schemes –Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) and the Senior Citizen Health Insurance Scheme (SCHIS).**
- **Highlights of the scheme:** Coverage: The scheme has the benefit cover of Rs. 5 lakh per family per year. To ensure that nobody is left out (especially women, children and elderly) there will be no cap on family size and age in the scheme. The benefit cover will also include pre and post-hospitalisation expenses.
- **Target:** The target beneficiaries of the proposed scheme will be more than 10 crore families belonging to poor and vulnerable population based on SECC database. Benefits of the scheme are portable across the country and a beneficiary covered under the scheme will be allowed to take cashless benefits from any public/private empanelled hospitals across the country.

- **Role of state governments:** State Governments will be allowed to expand AB-NHPM both horizontally and vertically. States will be free to choose the modalities for implementation. They can implement through insurance company or directly through Trust/ Society or a mixed model.
- **Council:** For giving policy directions and fostering coordination between Centre and States, it is proposed to set up Ayushman Bharat National Health Protection Mission Council (AB-NHPMC) at apex level Chaired by Union Health and Family Welfare Minister.
- **Who is eligible? It will be an entitlement based scheme with entitlement decided on the basis of deprivation criteria in the SECC database.** The different categories in rural area include families having only one room with kucha walls and kucharroof; families having no adult member between age 16 to 59; female headed households with no adult male member between age 16 to 59; disabled member and no able bodied adult member in the family; SC/ST households; and landless households deriving major part of their income from manual casual labour. Also, automatically included families in rural areas having any one of the following: households without shelter, destitute, living on alms, manual scavenger families, primitive tribal groups, legally released bonded labour. For urban areas, 11 defined occupational categories are entitled under the scheme.

Homoeopathy Central Council (Amendment) Bill 2018

- **Supersession of the Central Council:** It amends the 1973 Act to provide for the supersession of the Central Council with effect from May 18, 2018. The Central Council will be reconstituted within one year from the date of its supersession. In the interim period, the central government will constitute a Board of Governors, which will exercise the powers of the Central Council.
- **The Board of Governors will consist of up to seven members including:** (i) persons of eminence in the field of homoeopathy education, and (ii) eminent administrators, appointed by the central government. The central government will select one of these members as the Chairperson of the Board. With regard to policy decisions, the directions of the central government will be final.
- **Permission for existing homoeopathy colleges: It states that:** (i) if any person has established a homoeopathy medical college, or (ii) if an established homoeopathy medical college has opened new courses or increased its admission capacity before the Ordinance was promulgated, it will have to seek permission from the central government within one year. If the person or homoeopathy medical college fails to seek such permission, then any medical qualification granted to a student from such medical college will not be recognised under the Act.

US gives India Strategic Trade Authorisation-1 status

- **What is Strategic Trade Authorisation (STA)?** STA allows for license exception with regards to exports from the US. This type of US government authorisation allows a certain item to be exported under defined conditions without a transaction-specific license. Items eligible for export to STA-1 nations include those under control for national security, chemical or biological weapons, nuclear non-proliferation, regional stability, crime control. The categories also include electronics, lasers and sensors, information security, computers and electronics, navigation, telecommunications, aerospace, etc.
- **Significance of this move:** The move means that India can get easy access to latest defence technologies, with the reduction of the number of licenses needed for exports from the US. It is also a boost for the foundational Communications, Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA). STA-1 provides India with greater supply chain efficiency, both for defence, and for other high-tech products. The status eases export controls for high technology product sales to India, granting it the same access as NATO allies — Australia, Japan and South Korea.
- **Background:** India and the United States share an interest in countering China's expanding economic and military weight and the United States has emerged as a top arms supplier to India, selling more than \$15 billion of weapons over the past decade as New Delhi modernizes its Soviet-era military. Looking at current exports from the US to India, 50% of those are eligible now under STA-1. This can free up \$2.1 billion in trade, make US exporters more competitive in the global marketplace, help provide India more advanced US technology.

Rajasthan first State to implement biofuel policy, National Policy on biofuels- salient features:

- **Categorization: The Policy categorises biofuels as “Basic Biofuels” viz.** First Generation (1G) bioethanol & biodiesel and “Advanced Biofuels” – Second Generation (2G) ethanol, Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) to drop-in fuels, Third Generation (3G) biofuels, bio-CNG etc. to enable extension of appropriate financial and fiscal incentives under each category.
- **Scope of raw materials:** The Policy expands the scope of raw material for ethanol production by allowing use of Sugarcane Juice, Sugar containing materials like Sugar Beet, Sweet Sorghum, Starch containing materials like Corn, Cassava, Damaged food grains like wheat, broken rice, Rotten Potatoes, unfit for human consumption for ethanol production.
- **Protection to farmers:** Farmers are at a risk of not getting appropriate price for their produce during the surplus production phase. Taking this into account, the Policy allows use of surplus food grains for production of ethanol for blending with petrol with the approval of National Biofuel Coordination Committee.

- **Viability gap funding:** With a thrust on Advanced Biofuels, the Policy indicates a viability gap funding scheme for 2G ethanol Bio refineries of Rs.5000 crore in 6 years in addition to additional tax incentives, higher purchase price as compared to 1G biofuels.
- **Boost to biodiesel production:** The Policy encourages setting up of supply chain mechanisms for biodiesel production from non-edible oilseeds, Used Cooking Oil, short gestation crops.
- **Import dependency:** The policy aims at reducing import dependency.
- **Cleaner environment:** By reducing crop burning & conversion of agricultural residues/wastes to biofuels there will be further reduction in Green House Gas emissions.
- **Health benefits:** Prolonged reuse of Cooking Oil for preparing food, particularly in deep-frying is a potential health hazard and can lead to many diseases. Used Cooking Oil is a potential feedstock for biodiesel and its use for making biodiesel will prevent diversion of used cooking oil in the food industry.
- **Employment Generation:** One 100klpd 2G bio refinery can contribute 1200 jobs in Plant Operations, Village Level Entrepreneurs and Supply Chain Management.
- **Additional Income to Farmers:** By adopting 2G technologies, agricultural residues/waste which otherwise are burnt by the farmers can be converted to ethanol and can fetch a price for these waste if a market is developed for the same.
- **Classification of Biofuels:**
 - **1st generation biofuels** are also called conventional biofuels. They are made from things like sugar, starch, or vegetable oil. Note that these are all food products. Any biofuel made from a feedstock that can also be consumed as a human food is considered a first generation biofuel.
 - **2nd generation biofuels** are produced from sustainable feedstock. The sustainability of a feedstock is defined by its availability, its impact on greenhouse gas emissions, its impact on land use, and by its potential to threaten the food supply. No second generation biofuel is also a food crop, though certain food products can become second generation fuels when they are no longer useful for consumption. Second generation biofuels are often called “advanced biofuels.”
 - **3rd generation biofuels** are biofuel derived from algae. These biofuels are given their own separate class because of their unique production mechanism and their potential to mitigate most of the drawbacks of 1st and 2nd generation biofuels.

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Inter State council

- Inter State council is a constitutional body under Article 263 of the constitution. It was established by Presidential Order dated 28th May, 1990 on recommendation of Sarkaria Commission. The purpose of the Interstate council is to facilitate coordination between states and the centre.
- **Composition of Inter State Council** The Council is headed by Prime Minister (Chairman). Besides, Chief Ministers of all states and UTs (having legislative Assembly) are its members. Six Union ministers of cabinet rank nominated by the Prime Minister are also members.

Seva Bhoj Yojna'

- Union Ministry of Culture has launched- 'Seva Bhoj Yojna'– a scheme to reimburse central share of CGST and IGST on food, prasad, langar or bhandara offered by religious and charitable institutions.
The 'Seva Bhoj Yojna' has a total outlay of Rs 325.00 crore for financial years 2018-19 and 2019-20.
- **About Seva Bhoj Yojana:**
The scheme seeks to reimburse the central government's share of Central Goods and Services Tax (CGST) and Integrated Goods and Service Tax (IGST) on purchase of raw items such as ghee, edible oil, atta, maida, rava, flour, rice pulses, sugar and jaggery, which go into preparation of food/prasad/langar/bhandara offered free of cost by religious institutions. The main objective of the scheme is to lessen the financial burden of such charitable religious institutions, which provide free of cost without any discrimination to the general public and devotees.
- **Eligibility:**
The charitable religious institutions including temples, gurudwara, mosque, church, dharmik ashram, dargah, monasteries, which fulfill the following criteria are eligible for the grant:
The institutions that have been in existence for at least five years before applying for financial assistance/grant.
The institutions that serve free food to at least 5000 people in a month.
The institutions covered under Section 10(23BBA) of the Income Tax Act or those registered as Society under Societies Registration Act (XXI of 1860) or as a Public Trust under any law for the time being in force of statutory religious bodies constituted under any Act or institutions registered under Section 12AA of Income Tax Act.

Policy Framework for exploration and exploitation of Unconventional Hydrocarbons

- **The Union Cabinet has approved the policy to permit exploration and exploitation of unconventional hydrocarbons** such as Shale oil/gas, Coal Bed Methane (CBM) etc. It will be carried out under the existing Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs), CBM contracts and Nomination fields to encourage the existing Contractors in the licensed/leased area to unlock the potential of unconventional hydrocarbons in the existing acreages.
- **Significance of the move:** With the approval of this policy, there will be complete shift from 'One hydrocarbon Resource Type' to 'Uniform Licensing Policy' which is presently applicable in Hydrocarbon Exploration & Licensing Policy (HELP) and Discovered Small Field (DSF) Policy.
- **Benefits:**
This policy will enable the realization of prospective hydrocarbon reserves in the existing Contract Areas which otherwise would remain unexplored and unexploited.
With this policy dispensation, new investment in Exploration and Production (E&P) activities and chances of finding new hydrocarbon discoveries and resultant increased domestic

production thereof is expected.

Exploration and exploitation of additional hydrocarbon resources is expected to spur new investment, impetus to economic activities, additional employment generation and thus benefitting various sections of society.

This will lead to induction of new, innovative and cutting-edge technology and forging new technological collaboration to exploit unconventional hydrocarbons.

- **Need for new framework:** As per existing contractual regime of PSCs, existing Contractors are not allowed to explore and exploit CBM or other unconventional hydrocarbons in already allotted licensed/leased area. Similarly, CBM Contractors are not allowed to exploit any other hydrocarbon except CBM. Acreages held at present by various Contractors in PSCs and CBM blocks and National Oil Companies (NOCs) in nomination regime constitute a significant part of India's sedimentary basin.
- **What is Coal Bed Methane?**
Coal Bed Methane (CBM) is an unconventional form of natural gas found in coal deposits or coal seams. CMB is formed during the process of coalification, the transformation of plant material into coal. It is considered a valuable energy resource with reserves and production having grown nearly every year since 1989. Varied methods of recovery make CBM a stable source of energy.
- **What is Shale Gas?** Shale gas is a natural gas formed from being trapped within shale formations. It is unconventional source of methane, like coal-bed gas (in coal seams) and tight gas (trapped in rock formations). It is colourless, odourless gas, lighter than air. It is cheaper than natural gas, releases 50% less CO₂, hence better source for generating electricity. It also provides feedstock for petrochemicals industry, which is turned into fertilizer, plastics and other useful stuff.

'State Energy Efficiency Preparedness Index'

- **'State Energy Efficiency Preparedness Index' has been released by Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) and Alliance for an Energy Efficient Economy (AEEE).**
- **About the index:**
The nationwide Index is a joint effort of the NITI Aayog and BEE. The index assesses state policies and programmes.
The Index will help in implementing national energy efficiency initiatives in states and meet both State as well as national goals on energy security, energy access and climate change. It has 63 indicators across Building, Industry, Municipality, Transport, Agriculture and DISCOM with 4 cross-cutting indicators.
The Index examines states' policies and regulations, financing mechanisms, institutional capacity, adoption of energy efficiency measures and energy savings achieved.

- Performance of states:** States are categorised based on their efforts and achievements towards energy efficiency implementation, as 'Front Runner', 'Achiever', 'Contender' and 'Aspirant'.
 The 'Front Runner' states in the inaugural edition of the Index are: Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab, and Rajasthan based on available data. Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Haryana have been categorised in the second best category of 'achiever' states.
- Significance of the Index:** Such an index assumes significance in a country that is now the biggest emitter of greenhouse gases after the US and China, and which is among the countries most vulnerable to climate change. India plans to reduce its carbon footprint by 33-35% from its 2005 levels by 2030, as part of its commitments to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change adopted by 195 countries in Paris in 2015.



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123rd Constitutional Amendment Bill

- **Highlights of the Bill:** The bill provides for the grant of constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) on par with the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes. Powers of the President: It states that the President may specify the socially and educationally backward classes in the various states and union territories. **He may do this in consultation with the Governor of the concerned state.**
- **The duties of the NCBC include investigating and monitoring** how safeguards provided to the backward classes under the Constitution and other laws are being implemented and probe specific complaints regarding violation of rights.
- **Report:** The NCBC will be required to present annual reports to the President on working of the safeguards for backward classes. These reports will be tabled in Parliament, and in the state legislative assemblies of the concerned states.
- **Powers of a civil court:** Under the Constitution Amendment Bill, the NCBC will have the powers of a civil court while investigating or inquiring into any complaints. These powers include: (i) summoning people and examining them on oath, (ii) requiring production of any document or public record, and (iii) receiving evidence.

- **Present status of NCBC:** The Supreme Court, in its final verdict in the Indira Sawhney (Mandal Commission) case, had directed the establishment of the NCBC as a statutory body. Based on this, a law was passed in 1993 to set up the commission. The NCBC has been examining cases for inclusion in the BC lists for the Central government since then.
- **Concerns:** A widely welcomed move to grant constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) has also brought with it a whiff of controversy over whether it amounts to encroaching on the domain of the States. Several Opposition parties, which in general welcome the grant of constitutional status to the BC Commission, have said the Bill, if enacted, would undermine federalism, as it amounts to usurping the power of State governments to prepare their own BC lists. The Centre has sought to allay these fears, saying the powers of the States would remain unaffected. In any case, the list for every State will be prepared only in consultation with the State government.

Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Act

- **What's the issue?** The Act provides that the Central government, in consultation with the Chief Justice of the respective High Courts, will establish special courts through notification. Such courts are to be constituted to ensure that the trials are conducted "as expeditiously as possible". However, the required special courts have not been set up yet. Therefore, despite the fact that investigations in almost 100 cases have been completed by the I-T Department in different States, including confirmation of attachment of properties by the Adjudicating Authority, the prosecution of accused persons has not started.
- **About the Benami Act:** The Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Amendment Act, 2016, designed to curb black money and passed by parliament in August, came into effect on November 1, 2016. The new law amends the 1988 Benami Transactions Act.
- **Highlights of the Act:** The law provides for up to seven years' imprisonment and fine for those indulging in such transactions. The law prohibits recovery of the property held benami from benamdar by the real owner. As per the Act, properties held benami are liable for confiscation by the government, without payment of compensation. An appellate mechanism has been provided under the act, in the form of an adjudicating authority and appellate tribunal. According to the government, the four authorities who will conduct inquiries or investigations are the Initiating Officer, Approving Authority, Administrator and Adjudicating Authority.
- **What is benami transaction?** A benami transaction is one where a property is held by one person and the amount for it is paid by another person. Therefore, in a benami transaction, the name of the person who paid the money is not mentioned. Directly or indirectly, the benami transaction is done to benefit the one who pays.

DRDO conducted the successful test of the Ballistic Missile Interceptor Advanced Area Defence (AAD) from Abdul Kalam Island, Odisha.

- **About Ballistic Missile Interceptor AAD:** It is an endo-atmospheric missile, capable of intercepting incoming targets at an altitude of 15 to 25 kms.
- Indigenously developed by DRDO, the AAD interceptor is a single-stage missile powered by solid propellants.
- It has been developed as part of indigenous efforts to have multi-layer ballistic missile defence system, **capable of destroying incoming hostile ballistic missiles**. It is 7.5 metres tall and weighs around 1.2 tonnes.
- The interceptor missile has its own mobile launcher, **secure data link for interception, independent tracking and homing capabilities and sophisticated radars**.

'Paryatan Parv' to be organized nationwide from 16th to 27th September, 2018

- The Ministry under the chairpersonship of Smt. Rashmi Verma, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism convened a 'Preparatory Meeting' with representatives from Central Ministries, States/UTs and other stakeholders to plan and formulate the Paryatan Parv in New Delhi today. The Parv is being organized with the objective of drawing focus on the benefits of tourism, showcasing the cultural diversity of the country and **reinforcing the principle of "Tourism for All"**.
- The Secretary while addressing the meeting, informed that the Paryatan Parv will have three main components as like last year, viz. Dekho Apna Desh, Tourism for All and Tourism & Governance. While stressing that this year also Paryatan Parv shall focus on domestic tourists especially to sensitize youth, the Secretary said that **India has a huge variety of destinations many of which are yet to be promoted**.
- The secretary therefore has asked the states to focus on prime tourist destinations to focus and promote such locations through this Paryatan Parv. Smt. Verma also added that the Tourism sector contributes in a big way to the country's economy with generation of employment to youth, women and also for the rural livelihood. Therefore, the programmes should have a festive look and encourage maximum possible participation of the people, she added.

- The Paryatan Parv will start with the India Tourism Mart 2018 (16th – 18th September 2018), which will further ensure wide participation from outside the country.
- The Paryatan Parv shall conclude with the World Tourism Day celebrations on 27th September 2018. **Partners in the events include the State Governments who will organize cultural** and other tourism related events, workshops and seminars at the identified sites as well at other destinations and locations in their States.



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SBM- Gramin

- **Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin (SBM-G)** will result in preventing more than three lakh deaths due to diarrhoea and protein-energy malnutrition between 2014-October 2019.
- India's rural sanitation coverage has escalated to 89.07% till August 2. Under the SBM-G, 19 States and Union Territories were declared Open Defecation Free (ODF) and 7.9 crore toilets were built, **while 421 districts were declared ODF. Also, more than 4.9 lakh villages in the country** were declared ODF.
- The WHO study showed that before the initiation of **SBM-G, unsafe sanitation caused 199 million cases of diarrhoea annually** and that by 2019, the initiative aims to achieve 100% sanitation coverage.
- **About SBM- Gramin:** Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) Gramin, launched on October 2, 2014 is the largest behaviour change campaign ever attempted in the field of sanitation in the world.
- **Aim:** It aims to build an **ODF (Open Defecation Free) and Swachh Bharat** by October 2, 2019 as a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi on his 150th birth anniversary.

- **Focus: SBM-Gramin mainly focuses on ensuring the use of toilets, besides their construction.** The States and their implementing agencies will be given incentives for meeting performance standards: reducing open defecation, sustaining their open defecation-free status and improving solid and liquid waste management in rural areas.

Vidyalakshmi Portal

- **Vidya Lakshmi is a first of its kind portal for students seeking Education Loan.**
- This portal has been developed under the guidance of Department of Financial Services, (Ministry of Finance), **Department of Higher Education (Ministry of Human Resource Development)** and Indian Banks Association (IBA).
- The portal has been developed and being maintained by NSDL **e-Governance Infrastructure Limited**.
- Students can view, apply and track the education loan applications to banks anytime, anywhere by accessing the portal.
- The portal also provides linkages to **National Scholarship Portal**.

National Sports University Bill, 2018

- Establishment of the University: The Bill establishes a National Sports University located in Manipur. It will promote sports education in the areas of: (i) sports sciences, (ii) sports technology, (iii) sports management, and (iv) sports coaching. It will function as a national training centre for select sports disciplines. **It may also establish campuses and study centres in other parts of the country. The University will be empowered to grant degrees, diplomas and certificates.**

- **Objectives:** The key objectives of the University are: (i) research, development and dissemination of knowledge in physical education and sports sciences, (ii) strengthening physical education and sports training programmes, (iii) generating knowledge capabilities, skills and competence at various levels, and (iv) training talented athletes to help them to evolve into international level athletes.
- **Authorities of the University:** The Bill provides for several authorities under the University. These include: Court, Executive Council, Academic and Activity Council, Board of Sports Studies etc.
- **Role the central government:** The central government will review and inspect the functioning of the University. The Executive Council may take action based on the inspection report. If it fails to take action to the satisfaction of the central government, it will have to comply with the directions issued by the central government. Further, the central government may annul any proceeding of the University which is not in line with the Act.
- **Funding:** The University will be required to maintain a fund which will be credited with the funds that it receives from the central government, state government, and fees and money received from any other sources (grants and gifts). All funds of the University will be invested as decided by the Board on the recommendation of the Finance Committee.

‘Ujjwala’ programme

- **The target:** Through PMUY, initially, 5 crore BPL households were targeted for providing deposit free LPG connections to BPL households by 31st March,2019. In a record time of 28 months for its launch, PMUY achieved the initial target of providing 5 crores LPG connection to BPL households.
- In the current year, considering the huge success of the Scheme, target was revised to 8 crores with budgetary allocation of Rs 12,800 crore.
- **About the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana:** Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana aims to provide LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) connections to poor households.
- **Who is eligible? Under the scheme, an adult woman member of a below poverty line family** identified through the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) is given a deposit-free LPG connection with financial assistance of Rs 1,600 per connection by the Centre. **Identification of households:** Eligible households will be identified in consultation with state governments and Union territories. The scheme is being implemented by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

- **Some of the objectives of the scheme are:** Empowering women and protecting their health. Reducing the serious health hazards associated with cooking based on fossil fuel. Reducing the number of deaths in India due to unclean cooking fuel. 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?** 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.
- **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.

Strategic Investment Fund under NIIF

- **About Strategic Fund:** The objective of National Investment and Infrastructure Fund II ('Strategic Fund') is to invest largely in equity and equity-linked instruments. The Strategic Fund will focus on green field and brown field investments in the core infrastructure sectors. It will focus on green field and brown field investments in the core infrastructure sectors.
- **About NIIF:** NIIF was set up in 2015 as an investment vehicle for funding commercially viable greenfield, brownfield and stalled projects in the infrastructure sector. NIIF will invest in areas such as energy, transportation, housing, water, waste management and other infrastructure-related sectors in India. The corpus of the fund is proposed to be around Rs40,000 crore, with the government investing 49% and the rest to be raised from third-party investors such as sovereign wealth funds, insurance and pension funds, endowments etc. NIIF's strategy includes anchoring equity, **quasi-equity and debt funds in partnership with investors** targeting investments across the relevant sectors in India.



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Jal Marg Vikas Project

- **The Jal Marg Vikas Project seeks to facilitate plying of vessels with capacity of 1,500-2,000 tonnes** in the Haldia- Varanasi stretch of the River Ganga. The major works being taken up under JMVP are development of fairway, Multi-Modal Terminals, strengthening of river navigation system, conservancy works, modern River Information System (RIS), Digital Global Positioning System (DGPS), night navigation facilities, modern methods of channel marking etc.
- **Implementation:** The JMVP, which is expected to be completed by March, 2023, is being implemented with the financial and technical support of the World Bank. The project will enable commercial navigation of vessels with the capacity of 1500-2,000 tons on NW-I.
- Benefits of this project: Alternative mode of transport that will be environment friendly and cost effective. The project will contribute in bringing down the logistics cost in the country. Mammoth Infrastructure development like multi-modal and inter-modal terminals, Roll on – Roll off (Ro-Ro) facilities, ferry services, navigation aids. Socio-economic impetus; huge employment generation.

- **Environmental challenges:** Though the project is ambitious in its intent, it does not account for the monetary value of the environmental costs that are imposed upon society. The river Ganga meanders across the landscape and spreads over its riverbed making pools and shallow areas. Fish and turtles lay eggs in these shallow areas. But thanks to dredging, which is already being done in the Ganga under the NW-1 project, the river is now channelised in one deep channel. The river no longer meanders and no longer has pools and shallow areas, destroying the habitat of fish and turtles. The stretch of the Ganga near Varanasi has been declared as a turtle sanctuary and studies in other countries indicate that large numbers get hit by fast-moving tourist boats because turtles move slowly.
- The stretch of the Ganga near Bhagalpur has been declared a wildlife sanctuary for the conservation of the Ganges Dolphin. This animal does not have eyes. It navigates and catches its prey by the sound made by the movement of other aquatic creatures. The plying of large barges will create a high level of sound and make it difficult for them to survive. The paint on ships and barges will also pollute the water. The carbon dioxide released by the ships will be absorbed more by the water because of its proximity and this too pollutes the river.
- **What can be done to minimize impacts in sensitive zones?** A ban on dredging in protected habitat areas. In other areas that are known to be the habitat of valued aquatic species, no dredging should be allowed in the breeding and spawning seasons. The speed of barges travelling along the protected areas of the sanctuaries should be restricted to 5km per hour. All vessels plying on the Ganga should be fitted with noise control and animal exclusion devices so that aquatic life is not unduly disturbed. All vessels will also have to comply with 'zero discharge' standards to prevent solid or liquid waste from flowing into the river and affecting its biodiversity.
- **Way forward:** It is time to ensure that the small direct benefits from cheaper transportation shall not have large environmental costs.
- **Know about IWAI:** Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) is the statutory authority in charge of the waterways in India. Its headquarters is located in Noida, UP. It does the function of building the necessary infrastructure in these waterways, surveying the economic feasibility of new projects and also administration.

Opening Ceremony Indo - Thailand Joint Exercise Maitree 2018

- **Exercise Maitree is a joint military exercise between Indian Army and Royal Thai Army** which will be conducted from 06 to 19 August 2018 in Thailand. It is a platoon level exercise which comprises of infantry component. The opening ceremony started with familiarization of organisation and display of weapons & equipment of both armies.
- **The exercise will emphasize to hone the tactical and technical skills** in joint counter insurgency and counter terrorist operations in rural and urban scenario under UN mandate. Due emphasis will be laid on increasing interoperability between forces from both countries which is crucial for success of any joint operation. Both sides will jointly train, plan and execute a series of well developed tactical drills for neutralization of likely threats that may be encountered in urban warfare scenario. Experts from both sides will also hold detailed discussions to share their experience on varied topics for mutual benefit.

- Exercise Maitree will contribute immensely in developing mutual understanding and bonhomie between the two armies in order to counter terrorism.

Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP)

- **A separate procedure for 'Make-II' sub-category** has been notified wherein a number of industry friendly provisions such as relaxation of eligibility criterion, minimal documentation, provision for considering 'suo-moto' proposals suggested by industry/individual etc., have been introduced.
- The Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for consideration of 'suo-moto' proposals under 'Make-II' sub/category of Capital Acquisition has been promulgated.
- **A Defence Investor Cell has been created in the Ministry** to provide all necessary information including addressing queries related to investment opportunities, procedures and regulatory requirements for investment in the sector.
- **The process for export clearance has been streamlined and made transparent & online.**
- The strengthening of defence-industrial base of the country is a continuous process and is undertaken by the Government periodically based on the requirements, viability, availability of resources etc. Recently, it has been decided to establish two defence industrial corridors to serve as an engine of economic development and growth of defence industrial base in the country. While one corridor spans Chennai, Hosur, Coimbatore, Salem and Tiruchirappalli in Tamil Nadu, the other extends across Aligarh, Agra, Jhansi, Kanpur, Chitrakoot and Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh (UP).
- An innovation ecosystem for Defence titled Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) has been launched on 12th April 2018 by the Hon'ble PM during Def-expo 2018. iDEX is aimed at creation of an ecosystem to foster innovation and technology development in Defence and Aerospace by engaging Industries including MSMEs, Start-ups, **Individual Innovators, R&D institutes and Academia and provide them grants / funding and other support to carryout R&D which has potential for future adoption for Indian defence and aerospace needs.** Offset guidelines have been made flexible by allowing change of Indian Offset Partners (IOPs) and offset components, even in signed contracts. Foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) are now not required to indicate the details of IOPs and products at the time of signing of contracts. 'Services' as an avenue of offset have been reinstated.
- To promote the participation of private sector, Outsourcing and Vendor Development Guidelines for DPSUs and OFB have been issued. The guidelines mandate each DPSU and OFB to have a short-term and long-term outsourcing and vendor development plan to gradually increase the outsourcing from private sector.

- Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) was revised in 2016. Specific provisions have been introduced for stimulating growth of the domestic defence industry.
- A new category of procurement 'Buy {Indian-IDDM (Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured)}' has been introduced in DPP-2016 to promote indigenous design and development of defence equipment. This Category has been accorded top most priority for procurement of capital equipment. Besides this, preference is being given to 'Buy (Indian)' and 'Buy and Make (Indian)' categories of capital acquisition over 'Buy (Global)' & 'Buy & Make (Global)' categories.
- **Government has notified the 'Strategic Partnership (SP)' Model** which envisages establishment of long-term strategic partnerships with Indian entities through a transparent and competitive process, wherein they would tie up with global Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) to seek technology transfers to set up domestic manufacturing infrastructure and supply chains.
- **The 'Make' Procedure has been simplified with provisions for funding of 90%** of development cost by the Government to Indian industry and reserving projects not exceeding development cost of Rs. 10 Crore (Government funded) and Rs. 3 Crore (Industry funded) for MSMEs.
- **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Policy** has been revised and under the revised policy, FDI is allowed under automatic route upto 49% and beyond 49% through Government route wherever it is likely to result in access to modern technology or for other reasons to be recorded.
- **The Defence Products List for the purpose of issuing Industrial Licenses (ILs)** under IDR Act has been revised and most of the components, parts, sub-systems, testing equipment and production equipment have been removed from the list, so as to reduce the entry barriers for the industry, particularly small & medium segment. The initial validity of the Industrial License granted under the IDR Act has been increased from 03 years to 15 years with a provision to further extend it by 03 years on a case-to-case basis.
- **Government has set up the Technology Development Fund (TDF)** to encourage participation of public/ private industries especially MSMEs, through provision of grants, so as to create an eco-system for enhancing cutting-edge technology capability for defence applications.

Project 'Mausam'

- **Project 'Mausam' is the initiative of Ministry of Culture to be implemented by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** as the nodal agency with research support of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) and National Museum as associate bodies.

- **This project aims to explore the multi-faceted Indian Ocean 'world'** – collating archaeological and historical research in order to document the diversity of cultural, commercial and religious interactions in the Indian Ocean.
- The main objective of the project is to inscribe places and sites identified under Project Mausam as trans-national nomination for inscription on UNESCO's World Heritage List.

Ishan Vikas and Ishan Uday schemes are being implemented for the students of North Eastern region.

- Ishan Vikas is coordinated by IIT, Guwahati and under the programme, selected school children from North Eastern States **are brought in close contact with the Indian Institute of Technology (IITs), Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research (IISERs)** and National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) during the vacation period to motivate them to pursue science, technology, engineering and mathematics and to facilitate internship opportunities for the engineering college students in various institutes of national importance.
- Annual target is to provide visit of 96 school children to premier institutes and summer internships to 250 engineering students. Rs. 605.45 lakhs has been approved for the programme.
- Since inception of the programme in 2014-15, 1637 school children and 372 Engineering students have benefited.
- Ishan Uday Scholarship Scheme is administered by University Grants Commission (UGC). Under the scheme, scholarship is provided to the economically backward students from the North East Region for pursuing **general degree courses, technical and professional degree courses**.
- It is envisaged to provide 10000 scholarships annually. **Since inception of the scheme in 2014-15, Rs. 224.82 Crore has been disbursed towards release of 47525 fresh and renewal scholarships.**

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What is Bhoomi Rashi?

- **Bhoomi Rashi, the portal developed by MoRTH and NIC**, comprises the entire revenue data of the country, right down to 6.4 lakh villages. The entire process flow, from submission of draft notification by the State Government to its approval by the Hon. Minister of State for RT&H and publication in e-Gazette, is online.
- The portal, created for expediting the process of publication of notifications for LA, is now being fully utilised for issuing the notifications. Bhoomi Rashi portal has been instrumental in reducing the time taken for approval and publication of notifications pertaining to land acquisition.
- **About PFMS:** The Public Financial Management System (PFMS) is an end-to- end solution for processing payments, tracking, monitoring, accounting, reconciliation and reporting.
- It is administered by the Department of Expenditure. It is implemented by the Controller General of Accounts.
- **Functions:** It provides scheme managers a unified platform for tracking releases and monitoring their last mile utilisation. It provides platform for efficient management of funds through tracking of funds and real time reporting of expenditure and receipts through treasury and bank interface.

- The line ministries/departments utilise this platform to monitor the utilisation of funds provided to the implementing agencies and state governments. PFMS is also used for DBT payments under MGNREGA and other notified schemes of the Government of India.
- **Significance of PFMS:** Introduction of the PFMS resulted in effectiveness and economy in public finance management through better cash management for government transparency in public expenditure and real-time information on resource availability and utilisation across schemes.
- It also resulted in improved programme administration and management, reduction of float in the system, direct payment to beneficiaries and greater transparency and accountability in the use of public funds

Digital Literacy Library

- **About the Digital Literacy Library:** The Library aims to help young people build the skills they need to safely enjoy online technology.
- The library is a collection of lessons to help young people think critically and share thoughtfully online. Divided into themes such as privacy and reputation, identity exploration, security, safety and well-being, the lessons reflect the voices of young people from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicities, geographies, and educational levels. The lessons can be found on Facebook's Safety Center as well as on Berkman Klein's Digital Literacy Resource Platform.
- **Significance of the library:** There are 830 million young people online around the world, and this library is a resource for educators looking to address digital literacy and help these young people build the skills they need to safely enjoy digital technology.

About IMPRINT:

- **IMPacting Research, INnovation and Technology (IMPRINT)** is a national initiative of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) designed to address all major engineering challenges relevant to India through an inclusive and sustainable mode of translational research.
- **IMPRINT-2 has been approved by Government of India (GoI)** with a revised strategy under which, this national initiative will be jointly funded and steered by MHRD and Department of Science and Technology (DST).
- **While any faculty member from an MHRD funded Higher Education Institute (HEI)** including Centrally Funded Technical Institution (CFTI) may lead as the Principal Investigator (PI), single or multiple partners from stake holder ministry, institutions, PSUs, strategic agencies and industry are welcome as Co-PI, partner or collaborator.
- **Proposals under IMPRINT II Projects should** (a) address any declared theme (thrust area) under one of the 10 domains of IMPRINT, and (b) connect either with already identified or new research topics defined by the PI under the same 10 domains.
- Projects proposals should provide clear and convincing evidence of promise for translational research leading to viable technology (product, process or prototype) development.



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Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2018

- It provides for stringent punishment including **death penalty for those convicted of raping girls below the age of 12 years.**
- The minimum punishment in case of rape of women has been increased from rigorous imprisonment of seven years to 10 years, extendable to life imprisonment.
- In case of rape of a girl under 16 years, the minimum punishment has been increased from 10 years to 20 years, extendable to imprisonment for rest of life, which means jail term till the convicts' "natural life".
- The punishment for gang rape of a girl below 16 years will **invariably be imprisonment for the rest of life of the convict.**
- Stringent punishment for rape of a girl under 12 years has been provided with the minimum jail term being **20 years which may go up to life in prison or death sentence.**
- Gang rape of a girl under 12 years of age will invite punishment of jail term for the rest of life or death

Rashtriya Uchcharat Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)

- **Support by the Centre:** Under the scheme, central assistance is provided for opening of new Model Degree Colleges(MDCs) in these districts and in unserved & underserved districts in North Eastern and Himalayan States.
- **Kind of support:** The central support provided under the component of new MDCs is infrastructural in nature in which funds are released for creation of Colleges with requisite infrastructure such as appropriate number of class rooms, library, laboratory, faculty rooms, toilet blocks and other essential requirements for technologically advanced facilities.
- **States' role:** Under this component, a commitment is given by the State Governments that all recurring expenditure (including salaries) in respect of the MDC being established, will be borne by the respective State Government. Additionally, under a separate component of RUSA viz., Faculty Recruitment Support, central support is provided for creation of additional posts of Assistant Professors.
- **Rashtriya Uchcharat Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS), launched in 2013 aims at providing strategic funding to eligible state higher educational institutions.**
- The central funding (in the ratio of 60:40 for general category States, 90:10 for special category states and 100% for union territories) would be norm based and outcome dependent. The funding would flow from the central ministry through the state governments/union territories to the State Higher Education Councils before reaching the identified institutions. The funding to states would be made on the basis of critical appraisal of State Higher Education Plans, which would describe each state's strategy to address issues of equity, access and excellence in higher education.
- **Objectives:** The key objectives of RUSA are to improve access, equity and quality in higher education through planned development of higher education at the state level. Objectives include creating new academic institutions, expanding and upgrading the existing ones, developing institutions that are self-reliant in terms of quality education, professionally managed, and characterized by greater inclination towards research and provide students with education that is relevant to them as well the nation as a whole.
- **Components:** RUSA would create new universities through upgradation of existing autonomous colleges and conversion of colleges in a cluster. It would create new model degree colleges, new professional colleges and provide infrastructural support to universities and colleges. Faculty recruitment support, faculty improvements programmes and leadership development of educational administrators are also an important part of the scheme. In order to enhance skill development the existing central scheme of Polytechnics has been subsumed within RUSA. A separate component to synergise vocational education with higher education has also been included in RUSA. Besides these, RUSA also supports reforming, restructuring and building capacity of institutions in participating state.

RISECREEK

- **Key features:** These microprocessors can be adapted by others, as the design is open source. They optimise power use and compete with international units such as the Cortex A5 from Advanced RISC Machines (ARM). At a frequency of 350 MHz, RISECREEK can meet the demands of defence and strategic equipment such as NAVIC (Indian Regional Navigation Satellite) and Internet of Things (IoT) electronics.
- **Project Shakti:** The Shakti plan started in 2014 as an IIT-M initiative. Last year, the Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology funded a part of the project. The Shakti project is not aimed at only building processors. It also aims to build high speed interconnects for servers and supercomputers based on variants of the RapidIO and GenZ standards. These are key to build large clusters of processors to get Petaflop and Exaflop level supercomputers

Four-Year Achievements & Initiatives of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation

- **Base year revision for estimates of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Index of Industrial Production (IIP) and Consumer Price Index Number (CPI) were carried out.** Steps have been initiated for next revision of base years.
- **Government has recently constituted a Committee for Sub-National Accounts under the Chairmanship of Prof. Ravindra H. Dholakia**, ex-IIM, to upgrade existing norms and evolve new ones for computation of economic data at State and District levels for revision of the base year of GDP. The earlier such Committee was set up in the year 1972.
- **Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) is an autonomous body under the Ministry.** The R.C. Bose Centre for Cryptology and Security was set up in the Indian Statistical Institute for conducting research in the field of cryptology and security and organize training courses in the subject area. The ISI has also established Sampling and Official Statistical Unit (SOSU) at Kolkata for undertaking research in the theoretical, applied statistics and economics. Financial support was provided to ISI for development of infrastructure of Tezpur (Assam) Centre.

- **Government has declared 29th June, the birth anniversary of Late Prof. P. C. Mahalanobis, as Statistics Day.** A theme is announced on each Statistics Day for focusing attention by statistical agencies for a year. The 12th Statistics Day was celebrated on 29th June, 2018, which was the 125th birth anniversary of Late Prof. Mahalanobis. The theme "Quality Assurance in Official Statistics" was announced on this day. A commemorative coin of Rs 125 and circulation coin of Rs 5 denomination were released by Hon'ble Vice President of India.

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Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH)

- **The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH)** is a non-profit charitable organisation registered under the Societies' Registration Act, 1860.
- Aim: It was founded in 1984 with the vision to create a membership organisation to stimulate and spearhead heritage awareness and conservation in India.
- Contributions: Since 1984, INTACH has pioneered the conservation and protection of India's natural and cultural heritage and is today the largest membership organisation in the country dedicated to conservation.
- In 2007, the United Nations awarded INTACH a special consultative status with United Nations Economic and Social Council.

What is Restricted Area Permit (RAP) regime?

- **RAP regime was notified under the Foreigners (Restricted Areas) Order, 1963.**
- Under it, foreign nationals are not normally allowed to visit protected or restricted area unless Government is satisfied that there are extra-ordinary reasons to justify their visit.
- Every foreigner, except citizen of Bhutan, who desires to enter and stay in protected or restricted area, is required to obtain special permit from competent authority having power to issue such permits to foreigner, seeking it.
- Citizens of Afghanistan, China and Pakistan and **foreign nationals of Pakistani origin are exception and are not allowed to enter such areas.**

UMANG (Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance)

- TRAI MyCall App: TRAI MyCall is an intuitive and user friendly application for Crowdsourced Voice Call Quality Monitoring. The Application helps Mobile phone users to rate their experience about voice call quality in real time and help **TRAI gather consumer experience data along with Network data.**
- A pop up requests the user to rate the call after it ends. Callers simply select their rating in the form of stars and indicate if the calls were made in indoor, outdoor or while travelling. Callers can also provide additional details **such as noise or audio delay or mark a call-drop.**

DND 2.0 App:

- DND (Do Not Disturb) Services App enables smart phone users to register their mobile number under DND and report **spam messages or calls to avoid Unsolicited Commercial Communication (UCC)/Telemarketing Calls/SMS**.
- **About Umang app: What is it?** Umang is an initiative to promote Digital India program. The term — Umang stands for Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance and is envisaged to make e-governance. The application is developed by the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and National e-Governance Division (NeGD) in order to drive Mobile Governance in India**.
- The key goal of launching this application is to allow the citizens of India do everything online, at just a click – be it making a passport, Aadhaar or Pan, book a gas cylinder, know about your Provident fund account or resolving an Aadhaar related. Umang app basically provides a unified approach where you can install **one application to avail multiple government services — almost over 100 of them**.

Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)

- **About LTIF:** To cater to the large fund requirement and ensure completion of the projects, the Union Finance Minister, during his Budget speech 2016-17, announced creation of dedicated **Long Term Irrigation Fund (LTIF) in NABARD** with an initial corpus of Rs. 20,000 crore for funding of Central and State share for the identified ongoing projects under PMKSY (AIBP and CAD). Corpus would be raised by way of budgetary resources and market borrowings to fund fast tracking of implementation of incomplete major & medium irrigation projects.
- **About PMKSY:** PMKSY has been conceived amalgamating ongoing schemes viz. Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP) of the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation (MoWR, RD&GR), Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) of Department of Land Resources (DoLR) and the On Farm Water Management (OFWM) of **Department of Agriculture and Cooperation (DAC)**.
- The scheme will be implemented by Ministries of Agriculture, Water Resources and Rural Development. The major objective of PMKSY is to achieve convergence of investments in irrigation at the field level, expand cultivable area under assured irrigation, improve on-farm water use efficiency to reduce wastage of water and enhance the adoption of **precision-irrigation and other water saving technologies (More crop per drop)**.

National Energy Storage Mission

- In February 2018, an Expert Committee under the chairpersonship of Secretary, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, with representatives from relevant Ministries, industry associations, research institutions and experts was constituted by the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy to propose draft for setting up **National Energy Storage Mission (NESM) for India**.
- The Expert Committee referred has proposed a draft NESM with objective to strive for leadership in energy storage sector by creating an **enabling policy and regulatory framework that encourages manufacturing, deployment, innovation and further cost reduction**.
- NITI Aayog and Rocky Mountain Institute's joint report on India's Energy Storage Mission has proposed three stage solution approach i.e. creating an environment for battery manufacturing growth; scaling supply chain strategies; and scaling of battery cell manufacturing.
- Energy Storage is one of the most crucial & critical components of India's energy infrastructure strategy and also for supporting India's sustained thrust to renewables.
- **Key areas for energy storage application include:** integrating renewable energy with distribution and transmission grids; setting Rural micro grids with diversified loads or **stand-alone systems**; and developing **Storage component of electric mobility plans**.

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Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha

- **The Deputy Chairman is a constitutional position created under Article 89 of the Constitution**, which specifies that Rajya Sabha shall choose one of its MPs to be the Deputy Chairman as often as the position becomes vacant. The office becomes vacant either by resignation or removal from office or when the Rajya Sabha member's term gets over.
- **Election of Deputy Chairman:** The election of a Deputy Chairman shall be held on such date as the Chairman may fix and the Secretary-General shall send to every member notice of this date. At any time before noon on the day- preceding the date so fixed, any member may give notice in writing addressed to the Secretary-General of a motion that another member be chosen as the Deputy Chairman of the Council, and the notice shall be seconded by a third member and shall be accompanied by a statement by the member whose name is proposed in the notice that he is willing to serve as Deputy Chairman if elected: Provided that a member shall not propose or second more than one motion.
- **A member in whose name a motion stands in the list of business may**, when called, move the motion or not move the motion, in which case he shall confine himself to a mere statement to that effect.
- The motions which have been moved and duly seconded shall be put one by one in the order in which they have been moved and decided if necessary by division. If any motion is carried, the person presiding shall, without putting later motions, declare that the member proposed in the motion which has been carried, has been chosen as the Deputy Chairman of the Council.

Niryat Mitra mobile app

- **The app has been developed by the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO).** It provides wide range of information required to undertake international trade right from the policy provisions for export and import, applicable GST rate, available export incentives, tariff, preferential tariff, market access requirements – SPS and TBT measures. All the information is available at tariff line. The app works internally to map the ITC HS code of other countries with that of India and provides all the required data without the users bothering about the HS code of any country. **Presently the app comes with the data of 87 countries.**
- **Significance of the App:** The exports are showing good sign and registering increase at the rate of 20%. The government plans to further increase the ease of doing business. Therefore, the app will provide big opportunity to everybody and help promote export interests in the country. The Human Resource tool of the app enables candidates with interest in the international trade sector to register and apply against the vacancies arising in the sector. Companies can also search the profiles of the candidates and engage them.

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

- RCEP is proposed between the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Brunei, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, **Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam**) and the six states with which ASEAN has existing FTAs (**Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand**).
- RCEP negotiations were formally launched in November 2012 at the ASEAN Summit in Cambodia. RCEP aims to boost goods trade by eliminating most tariff and non-tariff barriers — a move that is expected to provide the region's consumers greater choice of quality products at affordable rates. **It also seeks to liberalise investment norms and do away with services trade restrictions.**
- **Why has it assumed so much significance in recent times?** When inked, it would become the world's biggest free trade pact. This is because the 16 nations account for a total GDP of about \$50 trillion and house close to 3.5 billion people. India (GDP-PPP worth \$9.5 trillion and population of 1.3 billion) and China (GDP-PPP of \$23.2 trillion and population of 1.4 billion) together comprise the RCEP's biggest component in terms of market size.

- **Why is China so much interested in this deal?** China, using its influence as the global leader in goods exports, has been deploying quiet diplomacy to ensure consistent focus on attempts to obtain commitments on elimination of tariffs on most traded goods. China is keen on an agreement on a 'high level' of tariff liberalisation — eliminating duties on as much as 92% of traded products. This deal helps China fulfil its objectives.
- China is also speeding up the RCEP negotiation process and striving for an early agreement, **so as to contribute to realising the greater common goal of building the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP)**. The FTAAP spans 21 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation countries, including the U.S. and China, but does not cover India. With the U.S. withdrawing from the Trans Pacific Partnership — a mega-regional FTA not involving India and China — that similarly aimed to help establish the FTAAP, the path is clear for China to push ahead with this strategic initiative to its advantage through the RCEP.

World Network of Biosphere Reserves

- **Biosphere reserves:** Launched in 1971, UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) is an Intergovernmental Scientific Programme that aims to establish a scientific basis for the improvement of relationships between people and their environments.
- MAB combines the natural and social sciences, economics and education to improve human livelihoods and the equitable sharing of benefits, and to safeguard natural and managed ecosystems, thus promoting innovative approaches to economic development that are socially and culturally appropriate, and environmentally sustainable.
- Its World Network of Biosphere Reserves currently counts more than 600 sites in 122 countries all over the world, including 20 transboundary sites. The first of India's reserves to make it to UNESCO's list was Tamil Nadu's Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve in 2000. Protection is granted not only to the flora and fauna of the protected region, **but also to the human communities who inhabit these regions, and their ways of life.**
- **Key facts on Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve:** Kanchenjunga Biosphere Reserve is a National Park and a Biosphere Reserve located in Sikkim, India. The park is named after the mountain Kangchenjunga, which with a height of 8,586 metres (28,169 ft), is the third-highest peak in the world. The Biosphere Reserve is one of the highest ecosystems in the world, reaching elevations of 1, 220 metres above sea-level. It includes a range of ecolines, varying from sub-tropic to Arctic, as well as natural forests in different biomes, which support an immensely rich diversity of forest types and habitats. The core zone – Khangchendzonga National Park was designated as a World Heritage Site in 2016 under the 'mixed' category.

BIOSPHERE RESERVES- DEFINITION:

- A Biosphere Reserve is a unique and representative ecosystem of terrestrial and coastal areas which are internationally recognized, within the framework of UNESCO's Man and Biosphere (MAB) programme. The biosphere reserve should fulfill the following three objectives:
- **In-situ conservation of biodiversity of natural and semi-natural ecosystems and landscapes.**
- **Contribution to sustainable economic development of the human population living within and around the Biosphere Reserve.**
- Provide facilities for long term ecological studies, environmental education and training and research and monitoring.
- In order to fulfill the above objectives, the Biosphere Reserves are classified into zones like the core area, buffer area. The system of functions is prescribed for each zone.

Global Innovation Index, GII- 2018 launched in India

- The event was organized by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) – one of the founding partners of GII along with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), in collaboration with the **Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP)**.
- India's rank on the Global Innovation Index (GII) has improved from 60 in 2017 to 57 in 2018. India has been consistently climbing the GII ranking for the past two years.
- Launching the index, Mr Watal said, "The culture of spending on research and development is growing in India and we are seeing the results in the form of improvements in rankings such as the GII."
- He further said that GII 2018 report served another purpose. It provided an opportunity to look at examples from similar economies from across the world and understand how they effected change in their countries. He also drew a distinction between Innovation and Invention and emphasized the role of pure science in building scientific temper in the country. Mr. Watal underlined the need to-

- **Transform India's Innovation Ecosystem by formulating a New Innovation Policy to attract R&D investment into cutting edge technologies and build appropriate infrastructure and institutions**
- Tap Global hotspots of Innovation in latest technologies like AI, Blockchain and Robotics etc.
- Connect Tinkering labs in schools with start-ups, business and high end educational institutions Target efficient, productive and outcome driven R&D in the Government Sector

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Quit India Movement

- **It was in 1942 when the world was going through the havoc caused by World War II.** India too was facing the heat and after the Cripps Mission had failed, and on 8 August 1942, Mahatma Gandhi made a Do or Die call through the Quit India movement.
- Large protests and demonstrations were held all over the country. **However, as the movement didn't get too much support from the outside**, it was crushed and the British refused to grant immediate Independence, saying that it could happen only after the war had ended.
- **Who started Quit India Movement?** The Quit India movement was started by Mahatma Gandhi in 1942 but drew protests from the All-India Congress Committee demanding what Gandhi called was "An Orderly British Withdrawal" from India. This forced the British to act immediately and soon all the senior INC leaders were imprisoned without trial within hours of Gandhi's speech.
- **Where was the Quit India Speech given?** On 14th July 1942, the Congress Working Committee at Wardha had passed a resolution demanding complete independence from the British government. On August 8, 1942, Mahatma Gandhi made a Do or Die call in his Quit India speech which was delivered in Bombay at the Gowalia Tank Maidan. Even though the speech caused some turmoil within the party and even leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Azad were apprehensive and critical of the call, but backed it and stuck with

Gandhi's leadership until the end.

- **Other key facts:** Several national leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Abdul Kalam Azad, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel were arrested.
- The Congress was declared an unlawful association, leaders were arrested and its offices all over the country were raided and their funds were frozen. The first half of the movement was peaceful with demonstrations and processions. The peaceful protest was carried till Mahatma Gandhi's release.
- The second half of the movement was violent with raids and setting fire at post offices, government buildings and railway stations. Lord Linlithgow adopted the policy of violence.
- **The Viceroy's Council of Muslims, Communist Party and Americans supported Britishers.**

One District One Product (Ek Zila – Ek Ut padan) Scheme

- **ODOP is aimed at giving a major push to traditional industries synonymous with the respective districts of the state.**
- The objective of the ODOP is to optimise production, productivity and income, preservation and development of local crafts, promotion of art, improvement in product quality and skill development.
- Under this, one product indigenous to every district would be showcased at the three-day UP Diwas event. **This will boost economic development of the state, and also help in generation of five lakh new jobs annually.**

World Bio-Fuel Day

- **Every year 10th August is observed as World Bio-Fuel Day** in a bid to create awareness about non fossil-fuels (Green Fuels). On this day in 1893, Sir Rudolph Diesel (inventor of the diesel engine) for the first time successfully ran mechanical engine with Peanut Oil.
- His research experiment **had predicted that vegetable oil** is going to replace the fossil fuels in the next century to fuel different mechanical engines. Thus to mark this extraordinary achievement, World Biofuel Day is observed every year on 10th August.
- **Government initiatives to promote the use of Biofuels:** Since 2014, the Government of India has taken a number of initiatives to increase blending of biofuels. The major interventions include administrative price mechanism for ethanol, simplifying the procurement procedures of OMCs, amending the provisions of Industries (Development & Regulation) Act, 1951 and enabling lignocellulosic route for ethanol procurement.
- **The Government approved the National Policy on Biofuels-2018 in June 2018.** The policy has the objective of reaching 20% ethanol-blending and 5% biodiesel-blending by the year 2030. Among other things, the policy expands the scope of feedstock for ethanol production and has provided for incentives for production of advanced biofuels.
- **Recently, the Government has increased the price of C-heavy molasses-based ethanol** to Rs. 43.70 from Rs. 40.85 to give a boost to EBP Programme. Price of B-heavy molasses-based ethanol and sugarcane juice-based ethanol has been fixed for the first time at Rs. 47.40. The Government has reduced GST on ethanol for blending in fuel from 18% to 5%.
- The Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas is making all efforts to increase ethanol supply for petrol and has taken several steps in this direction.
- **Outcomes:** These interventions of the Government of India have shown positive results. Ethanol blending in petrol has increased from 38 crore litres in the ethanol supply year 2013-14 to an estimated 141 crore litres in the ethanol supply year 2017-18.
- Bio-diesel blending in the country started from 10th August, 2015 and in the year 2018-19, Oil Marketing Companies have allocated 7.6 crore litres of biodiesel.
- **Oil PSUs are also planning to set up 12 Second Generation (2G) Bio-refineries** to augment ethanol supply and address environmental issues arising out of burning of agricultural biomass.

National Energy Storage Mission

- **The draft expects to kick-start grid-connected energy storage in India, set up a regulatory framework**, and encourage indigenous manufacture of batteries.
- The draft sets a “realistic target” of 15-20 gigawatt hours (GWh) of grid-connected storage within the next five years. Power grids do not currently use storage options that would help in smoothly integrating renewable energy sources.
- The mission will focus on seven verticals: indigenous manufacturing; an assessment of technology and cost trends; a policy and regulatory framework; financing, business models and market creation; research and development; standards and testing; and grid planning for energy storage.
- **Significance and the need for energy storage:** Energy Storage is one of the most crucial & critical components of India’s energy infrastructure strategy and also for supporting India’s sustained thrust to renewables.
- **Renewable energy sources now make up almost one-fifth of India’s total installed power capacity.** However, as power grids increase their share of solar and wind energy, the problem remains that the peak supply of renewable sources does not always meet peak demand.
- For instance, solar energy generation may be at its peak at noon, but unless stored, it will not be available when needed to light up homes at night. Moreover, renewable sources are inherently intermittent: there are days when the wind doesn’t blow or the sky is cloudy

New Pension Scheme (NPS)

- **National Pension System (NPS) has been designed giving utmost importance to the welfare of the subscribers.** Government has made a conscious move to shift from the defined benefit Pension Scheme to defined contribution pension scheme i.e. NPS, due to rising and unsustainable pension bill. There are a number of benefits available to the employees under NPS. Some of the benefits are enlisted below:
- **NPS is a well designed pension system managed through an unbundled architecture involving intermediaries** appointed by the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) viz. pension funds, custodian, central record keeping and accounting agency, National Pension System Trust, trustee bank, points of presence and Annuity service providers. It is prudently regulated by PFRDA which is a statutory regulatory body established to promote old age income security and to protect the interest of subscribers of NPS.

- **The pension wealth which accumulates over a period of time till retirement grows with a compounding effect.** The all-in-costs of the institutional architecture of NPS are among the lowest in the world.
- Contribution made to the NPS Tier-I account is eligible for tax deduction under the Income Tax Act, 1961. An additional tax rebate of Rs.50000 is also allowed for contributions made to NPS Tier-I under Section 80CCD (1B) of the Income Tax Act, 1961.
- Subscribers can withdraw up to 25% of their own contributions before attaining age of superannuation, subject to certain conditions. Further, PFRDA vide “PFRDA (Exits and Withdrawals under the NPS) (First Amendment) Regulations, 2017” dated 10.08.2017 has liberalized norms for partial withdrawals which also include reduction of requirement of minimum years of being enrolled under NPS from 10 years to 3 years from the date of joining.
- **PFRDA has increased the maximum age limit from 60 years to 65 years for joining NPS-All** Citizen Model and Corporate Sector Model, vide “PFRDA (Exits and Withdrawals under the NPS) (Second Amendment) Regulations, 2017” dated 06.10.2017.
- **PFRDA vide “PFRDA (Exits and Withdrawals under the NPS) (Third Amendment) Regulations, 2018”** dated 02.02.2018 has facilitated easy exit & withdrawal in case of disability and incapacitation of the subscriber covered under NPS.
- Transparency and Portability is ensured through online access of the pension account by the NPS subscribers, across all geographical locations and portability of employments.



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Indecent Representation of the Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986

- **The reformulated Bill proposes following amendments in the parent Act:** Amendment in definition of term advertisement to include digital form or electronic form or hoardings, or through SMS, MMS etc. Amendment in definition of distribution to include publication, license or uploading using computer resource, or communication device or in. Insertion of a new definition to define the term publish.
- **Amendment in section 4 to include that No person shall publish or distribute or cause to be published** or cause to be distributed by any means any material which contains indecent representation of women in any form. Penalty similar to that provided under the Information Technology Act, 2000
- **Creation of a Centralised Authority under the aegis of National Commission of Women (NCW).** This Authority will be headed by Member Secretary, NCW, having representatives from Advertising Standards Council of India, Press Council of India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and one member having experience of working on women issues.
- **Functions: This Centralised Authority will be authorized to receive complaints or grievances** regarding any programme or advertisement broadcasted or publication and investigate/ examine all matters relating to the indecent representation of women.

- **Need for revisiting the law:** The Government of India has enacted the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act (IRWA), 1986 to prohibit indecent representation of women through advertisements, publications, writings, paintings, figures or in any other manner.
- **Since the enactment of the Act, technological revolution has resulted in the development of new forms of communication**, such as internet, multi-media messaging, cable television, over-the-top (OTT) services and applications e.g. Skype, Viber, WhatsApp, Chat On, Snapchat, Instagram etc. Therefore, these technological advancements make it necessary to widen the scope of the law so as to cover such forms of media on one hand and to strengthen the existing safeguards to prevent indecent representation of women through any media form on the other.

Salient features of the Representation of People's Act.

- **The Bill seeks to amend Representation of People Act (RPA), 1950** and Representation of People Act (RPA), 1951 to allow for proxy voting and make certain provisions of these Acts gender-neutral.
- **Highlights of the Bill:** The Bill proposes to allow non-resident Indians (NRIs) to emerge as a decisive force in the country's electoral politics on their own terms. The amendment paves the way to remove an "unreasonable restriction" posed by Section 20A of the Representation of the People Act, which requires overseas electors to be physically present in their electoral constituencies to cast their votes.
- **What necessitated this move?** Section 20A of the Act provides for registration and inclusion of overseas electors in the electoral rolls. The Registration of Electors Rules, 1960 provide for overseas electors to register themselves in the electoral rolls of their respective constituencies on the basis of self-attested copies of their passport and valid visa, and exercise their franchise in person on production of the original passport at the time of voting at the specified polling booth.
- **Thus, the rules demand for the physical presence of overseas electors** in their respective polling stations in India on the day of polling. This causes hardship to the overseas electors. This amendment proposes facilitating an external mode of voting, that is, voting by proxy, whereby such electors can exercise their franchise from their places of residence abroad.
- **Significance of this move:** If the Bill is passed, overseas voters can appoint a proxy to cast their votes on their behalf, subject to certain conditions to be laid down in the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961. This would considerably mitigate the difficulties presently faced by overseas electors in exercising their franchise.

- **What is voting by proxy?** According to the provisions of 'Representation of the People Act (Amendment) Bill, 2017 overseas Indians, who are entitled to vote in India, can appoint a proxy voter to cast their votes on their behalf. Also, the overseas Indians would be allowed to use the option of proxy, which till now was only available to service personnel.

“PARIVESH”

- **What is it? It is an environmental single window hub for Environment, Forest, Wildlife and CRZ clearances launched recently.** This Single-Window Integrated Environmental Management System has been developed in pursuance of the spirit of 'Digital India' initiated by the Prime Minister and capturing the essence of Minimum Government and Maximum Governance. PARIVESH: Pro-Active and Responsive facilitation by Interactive, Virtuous and Environmental Single-window Hub.
- **Key features:** “PARIVESH” is a workflow based application, based on the concept of web architecture. It has been rolled out for online submission, monitoring and management of proposals submitted by Project Proponents to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MOEFCC), as well as to the State Level Environmental Impact Assessment Authorities (SEIAA).
- **It seeks to give various types of clearances (e.g. Environment, Forest, Wildlife and Coastal Regulation Zone Clearances)** from Central, State and district-level authorities. The system has been designed, developed and hosted by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, with technical support from National Informatics Centre, (NIC).
- **It provides single registration and single sign-in for all types of clearances (i.e. Environment, Forest, Wildlife and CRZ),** unique-ID for all types of clearances required for a particular project and a single Window interface for the proponent to submit applications for getting all types of clearances (i.e. Environment, Forests, Wildlife and CRZ clearances).
- **Significance and benefits of the platform:** PARIVESH offers a framework to generate economic growth and strengthens Sustainable Development through e- Governance. With automatic highlighting of non-compliance by the system, PARIVESH helps in improving the overall performance and efficiency of the whole appraisal process. It also helps the processing authorities, as it has a Single Window System for Central, State and District level clearances.
- **The facility of Geographic Information System (GIS) interface for the Appraisal Committee** will help them in analyzing the proposal efficiently, automatic alerts (via SMS and emails) at important stages to the concerned officers, committee members and higher authorities to check the delays, if any.
- **It also enables project proponents, citizens to view, track and interact with scrutiny officers,** generates online clearance letters, online mailers and alerts to state functionaries in case of delays beyond stipulated time for processing of applications.

Zero Budget Natural Farming

- **What is Zero Budget Natural Farming?** Zero Budget Natural Farming, as the name implies, is a method of farming where the cost of growing and harvesting plants is zero. This means that farmers need not purchase fertilizers and pesticides in order to ensure the healthy growth of crops.
- **It is, basically, a natural farming technique that uses biological pesticides** instead of chemical-based fertilizers. Farmers use earthworms, cow dung, urine, plants, human excreta and such biological fertilizers for crop protection. It reduces farmers' investment. It also protects the soil from degradation.
- **Government initiatives to support ZBNF:** Government of India has been promoting organic farming in the country through the dedicated schemes of Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) since 2015-16 and also through Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY).
- **In the revised guidelines of PKVY scheme during the year 2018**, various organic farming models like Natural Farming, Rishi Farming, Vedic Farming, Cow Farming, Homa Farming, Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) etc. have been included wherein flexibility is given to states to adopt any model of Organic Farming including ZBNF depending on farmer's choice.
- **Under the RKVY scheme, organic farming/ natural farming project** components are considered by the respective State Level Sanctioning Committee (SLSC) according to their priority/ choice.

Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana

- **It will help in connecting 38,412 habitations at estimated cost of Rs. 84,934 crore.** The centre's share will be Rs 54,900 crore and states' share is Rs 30,034 crore.

- **Background:** Initially the targets of PMGSY were to be achieved by March 2022, however, the sunset date of achievement of PMGSY-I was pre-poned to March, 2019, with enhanced fund allocation and changed funding pattern i.e. in the ratio of 60:40 between the Centre and State for all States except for 8 North Eastern and 3 Himalayan States (Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh & Uttarakhand) for which it is 90:10.
- **Under, PMGSY-II, against the target length of 50,000 km works of upgradation almost 32,100 km** road length have been sanctioned in 13 States, which have transited to PMGSY-II. Against the sanctions issued, 12,000 km road length has been completed up to March, 2018.
- **Achievements:** The Task of connecting 1,78,184 eligible unconnected habitations under PMGSY on its way towards completion by March, 2019. So far, 95 per cent habitations (1,69,415) have been sanctioned, of which 91 per cent habitations (1,54,257) have been connected including 16,380 habitations connected by the States from their own resources. Against the sanctioned length of 6,58,143 km, 5,50,601 km road length has been completed.
- **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY):** The scheme, launched in 2000, aims to provide single all-weather road connectivity to all eligible unconnected habitations in rural areas with population of 500 persons and above (in plain areas) and 250 persons and above (in hilly states, desert areas, tribal areas and selected tribal and backward districts). Union Ministry of Rural Development is nodal ministry for implementation of Scheme.

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Rashtriya Gokul Mission

- **Objective:** To conserve and develop indigenous bovine breeds for enhancing milk production and productivity.
- **Rs. 190 crores** allotted during 2017-18
- **20 Gokul Grams** are being established and 41 Bull Mother Farms modernized.
- **1404 High Genetic Merit Artificial Inseminator Bulls** have been inducted for natural service.

Soil Health Card Scheme

- **Objective:** To help farmers improve productivity by issuing them soil health card completely free of cost, this can be renewed every two years. Soil Health Cards to be issued to all farmers by 2019.
- **Under Soil Health Management Scheme**, Rs. 243.82 crores released to the States during 2014-17 against Rs.27.76 crores during 2011-14
- **9243 Soil Testing Laboratories** including 8752 Mini Labs sanctioned to the States between 2014-17 against 15 during 2011-14.
- **Funds amounting to** 925.36 lakh have been released to ICAR under RKVY Scheme, for setting up 1076 new Mini labs and 100% coverage of all 648 KVKs.
- **Scheme for setting up village level** soil testing labs Labs by local entrepreneurs approved by EFC on 29.11.2017. and 95 labs approved by finance (Rs.108 lakh), funds not to be released.

Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana

- **To achieve convergence of investments** in irrigation at the field level.
- **To Enhance the physical access of water** on the farm and expand cultivable area under assured irrigation (Har Khet ko pani)
- **To enhance the adoption of precision** - irrigation and other water saving technologies and Improve on - farm water use efficiency to reduce wastage and increase availability both in duration and extent. (Per Drop More Crop).
- **Rs. 50,000 crores** to be invested in five years to achieve 'Water to Every Field / HarKhetKoPaani'
- **Long Term Irrigation Fund** with Rs 40,000 Crore (Budget 2016-17 and 2017-18) established for completion of 99 priority projects.

- **Dedicated Micro Irrigation fund** with a sum of Rs. 5000 crores is being set up for enhancing coverage of micro irrigation.
- **Under 'Per Drop More Crop'** for micro irrigation 26.87 lakh hectares brought under micro irrigation from 2014-18(as on 25.03.2018)
- **Under Har Khet ko Pani**, 96 deprived irrigation districts will be taken up with an allocation of Rs 2600 crore.
- **Centre will work with the state governments** to facilitate farmers for installing solar water pumps to irrigate their fields.

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana

- **To provide comprehensive insurance coverage** to farmers in the event of failure of any of the notified crop as a result of natural calamities, pests & diseases
- **To encourage adoption of innovative practices**
- **To increase the number of insured** farmers gross cropped area (GCA) from present 20% to 50% by 2018-19.
- **Biggest financial support till date** by the Central Government in crop insurance. Plan to increase crop insurance coverage from 20% to 50% by 2018-19.

E-National Agriculture Market

- **Objective:** To create a unified national market for agricultural commodities by integrating 585 regulated markets (APMCs) with the common e-market platform 'e-NAM' by March 2018. Farmers will be able to get better price of their crop through E-Nam. Rs 80 lakhs allotted for every mandi,
- **Achievements:** 585 Mandis across 16 states & 2UTs are live on e-NAM portal as on 28.03.2018. More than 87.5 Lakh farmers and sellers are registered on this platform. 164.53 lakh Tonnes of farm commodities worth Rs. 41591 thousand crores has been transacted on e-NAM platform (As on 27.03.2018).

Target to double farmers' income by 2022

- **1. Special focus on irrigation** with sufficient budget, with the aim of "Per Drop More Crop".
- **2. Provision of quality seeds** and nutrients based on soil health of each field.
- **3. Large investments in Warehousing** and Cold Chains to prevent post-harvest crop losses.
- **4. Promotion of value addition** through food processing.
- **5. Creation of a National Farm Market**, removing distortions and e-platform across 585 Stations.
- **6. Introduction of a New Crop Insurance Scheme** to mitigate risks at an affordable cost.
- **7. Promotion of ancillary activities** like poultry, beekeeping, and fisheries.

ENHANCED CROP YIELD (2017-18 Estimates)

- **A record production of more than 275 million** tonnes of food grains and about 305.4 million tonnes of horticultural produce.
- **Launch of Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana**” to modernise supply chain infrastructure in the agricultural sector.
- **Budget allocation doubled under the Krishi Sampada Yojana** to push the Food processing industry
- **FERTILIZER SUBSIDIES** · Fertilizer subsidies: Urea and Nutrient bases subsidies up by almost 8 percent to Rs 70000 crore
- **PARAMPARAGAT KRISHI VIKAS YOJANA** Promoting organic farming; Scheme launched in 2015-16 with an allocation of Rs. 300 Crore and Rs. 297 crores in 2016-17 10,000 clusters covering 2 lakhs hectare area under Organic Farming being covered during 2015-18; 10,000 clusters developed by state governments till now Organic value chain for North Eastern States: Rs. 400 crores allocated for 2015-18; Rs. 225.96 crores released during 2015-18.

Dept of Animal Husbandry Dairy & Fisheries : BLUE REVOLUTION

- **A revolution” in the fisheries sector**; Restructured the scheme by merging all the ongoing schemes under an umbrella of Blue Revolution
- **Integration of all fisheries projects**, Blue Revolution Scheme gets approval
- **Integrated Development and Management of Fisheries**’ with an outlay of Rs. 3000 crore for 5 years Average 48.35 lakh fishermen insured annually
- **Budget provision amounting to Rs. 402.83 crores** in 2017-18 from Rs. 523.99 crores in 2016-17 Fish production increased from 272.85 lakh tonnes during 2011-14 to 324.31 tonnes during 2014-17
- **Annual insurance premium of fishermen** reduced from Rs. 20.34 to Rs. 12 as a result of which majority of the fishermen have got insurance done Insurance cover increased to Rs. 2 lakh from Rs. 1 lakh for accidental death and permanent disability

- **ANIMAL REARING AND DAIRY:**
- **Budgetary provision for White Revolution** increased by 43.8% to Rs. 1632.97 crores in 2017-18 from Rs.1136 crore in 2016-17.
- **During the 3 financial years of 2011-14 the annual average milk production** was 146.3 million tonnes which enhanced as 163.7 million tonnes in 3 financial years of 2014-17 which shows almost 12% enhancement. Similarly in 3 financial year of 2011-14 annual per capita milk productivity was 298 gram which enhanced as 336 gram per day in 2014-17 which shows an enhancement of almost 12.7%.
- **'Dairy Processing Infrastructure Development Fund'** with a corpus of Rs. 10,881 crore is being set up. National Kamdhenu Breeding centre being established in MP & Andhra Pradesh to conserve all Bovine Breeds.

BUDGET 2018: INFRASTRUCTURE IN FISHERY, AQUACULTURE AND ANIMAL HUSBANDRY SECTORS

- **A corpus of Rs 10,000 crore** to create infrastructure in fishery, aquaculture and animal husbandry sectors
- **A corpus of Rs. 2,000 crore** as Agri-market infrastructure fund
- **Rs 1,290 crore announced** for the National Bamboo Mission to help setting up of small industries and create new employments opportunities in bamboo sector.
- **Tax incentives to promote post-harvest** agricultural activities.
- **Launch of Operation Greens on the lines of Operation Flood** with budgetary outlay of Rs. 500 crores. To address the challenge of price volatility of perishable commodities like tomato, onion and potato with the satisfaction of both the farmers and consumers.
- **To develop and upgrade existing 22,000 rural haats** into Gramin Agricultural Markets (GrAMs) to take care of the interests of more than 86% small and marginal farmers. These GrAMs, electronically linked to e-NAM will provide farmers facility to make direct sale to consumers and bulk purchasers

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Triple talaq bill

- **One: provision for bail:** While the proposed law will remain “non-bailable” offence, the accused can approach a magistrate even before the trial to seek bail. Under a non-bailable offence, bail cannot be granted by police at the police station. A provision has been added to allow the magistrate to grant bail ‘after hearing the wife’. “But the offence of instant triple talaq under the proposed law remains non-bailable. The magistrate would ensure that bail is granted only after the husband agrees to grant compensation to the wife as provided in the bill. The quantum of compensation will be decided by the magistrate, as per the bill.
- **Two- check misuse:** Another amendment makes it clear that the police would lodge FIR only if approached by the victim (wife), her blood relations or people who become her relatives by virtue of her marriage. This would settle fears that even a neighbour can file FIR as is the cases in any cognisable offence. This would check misuse.
- **Third- A compoundable offence:** The third amendment makes the offence of instant triple talaq “compoundable”. Now, a magistrate can use his powers to settle the dispute between a husband and his wife. Under a compoundable offence, both parties have the liberty of withdrawing the case. However, the jail term for a Muslim man who resorts to triple talaq remains three years and only a magistrate, and not a local police officer, can release the accused on bail.

- **What did the original Bill include?** If a Muslim man resorts to triple talaq then he will face a jail term of three years, as instant triple talaq will now be considered a non-bailable, cognisable offence. Opting for triple talaq could also attract fine and the amount would be the magistrate's call who would be hearing the case. A Muslim wife can also approach a magistrate and ask for subsistence allowance for herself and her minor children. A victim of triple talaq can seek the custody of her minor children from the magistrate who will take the final decision on the issue. Only Jammu and Kashmir will be out of the ambit of the proposed law.
- **What is instant triple talaq?** There are three forms of talaq (divorce) in Islam: Ahsan, Hasan and Talaq-e-Biddat (triple or instant talaq). Ahsan and Hasan are revocable but Biddat is irrevocable. Biddat is considered sinful but is permissible in Islamic law. It has been banned in more than 20 Muslim countries, including Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Arbitration & Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, 2018

- **Key features of the Bill are:** Arbitration Council of India: The Bill seeks to establish an independent body called the Arbitration Council of India (ACI) for the promotion of arbitration, mediation, conciliation and other alternative dispute redressal mechanisms.
- **Its functions include:** (i) framing policies for grading arbitral institutions and accrediting arbitrators, (ii) making policies for the establishment, operation and maintenance of uniform professional standards for all alternate dispute redressal matters, and (iii) maintaining a depository of arbitral awards (judgments) made in India and abroad.
- **Composition of the ACI:** The ACI will consist of a Chairperson who is either: (i) a Judge of the Supreme Court; or (ii) a Judge of a High Court; or (iii) Chief Justice of a High Court; or (iv) an eminent person with expert knowledge in conduct of arbitration. Other members will include an eminent arbitration practitioner, an academician with experience in arbitration, and government appointees.
- **Appointment of arbitrators:** Under the 1996 Act, parties were free to appoint arbitrators. In case of disagreement on an appointment, the parties could request the Supreme Court, or the concerned High Court, or any person or institution designated by such Court, to appoint an arbitrator.
- **Role of courts: Under the Bill, the Supreme Court** and High Courts may now designate arbitral institutions, which parties can approach for the appointment of arbitrators. For international commercial arbitration, appointments will be made by the institution designated by the Supreme Court. For domestic arbitration, appointments will be made by the institution designated by the concerned High Court. In case there are no arbitral institutions available, the Chief Justice of the concerned High Court may maintain a panel of arbitrators to perform the functions of the arbitral institutions. An application for appointment of an arbitrator is required to be disposed of within 30 days.
- **Relaxation of time limits:** Under the 1996 Act, arbitral tribunals are required to make their award within a period of 12 months for all arbitration proceedings. The Bill proposed to remove this time restriction for international commercial arbitrations.

- **Completion of written submissions:** Currently, there is no time limit to file written submissions before an arbitral tribunal. The Bill requires that the written claim and the defence to the claim in an arbitration proceeding, should be completed within six months of the appointment of the arbitrators.
- **Confidentiality of proceedings:** The Bill provides that all details of arbitration proceedings will be kept confidential except for the details of the arbitral award in certain circumstances. Disclosure of the arbitral award will only be made where it is necessary for implementing or enforcing the award.
- **What is Arbitration?** Arbitration is a settlement of dispute between two parties to a contract by a neutral third party i.e. the arbitrator without resorting to court action. The process can be tailored to suit parties' particular needs.
- **Arbitrators can be chosen for their expertise.** It is confidential and can be speedier and cheaper than court. There are limited grounds of appeal. Arbitral awards are binding and enforceable through courts.
- **Significance of ADR:** It is felt that a reliable and responsive alternative dispute resolution system is essential for rapidly developing countries like India. While business disputes need speedy resolution, litigation is the least favoured method for that. The Indian judicial system is marred by delays because of which businesses suffer as disputes are not resolved in a reasonable time period. Therefore, need for alternative dispute resolution processes like negotiation, mediation conciliation and arbitration is felt from time to time.

Why is China concerned about the Uighurs?

- **What is Beijing accused of?** Human rights groups including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have submitted reports to the UN committee documenting claims of mass imprisonment, in camps where inmates are forced to swear loyalty to China's President Xi Jinping. The World Uyghur Congress said in its report that detainees are held indefinitely without charge, and forced to shout Communist Party slogans. It said they are poorly fed, and reports of torture are widespread. Most inmates have never been charged with a crime, it is claimed, and do not receive legal representation. China is said to carry out the detentions under the guise of combating religious extremism.
- **Reasons for unrest:** Over the decades, waves of Han Chinese migrants arrived in the region, displacing Uighurs from their traditional lands and fueling tensions. Xinjiang is now home to more than eight million Han Chinese, up from 220,000 in 1949, and 10 million Uighurs. The newcomers take most of the new jobs, and unemployment among Uighurs is high. They complain of discrimination and harsh treatment by security forces, despite official promises of equal rights and ethnic harmony.
- **Why is China concerned about the Uighurs?** Beijing says Uighur groups want to establish an independent state and, because of the Uighurs' cultural ties to their neighbours, leaders fear that elements in places like Pakistan may back a separatist movement in Xinjiang.

Axis Bank has become the first bank in the country to introduce Iris Scan Authentication feature for Aadhaar-based transactions through its micro ATM tablets.

- **How it works?** The bank has deployed highly secure iris powered micro ATM tablets which are STQC certified and UIDAI compliant registered devices with completely integrated iris sensors. Micro ATMs completely eliminate the requirement of debit cards, passwords, PINs, and user IDs, and empower consumers to avail banking services using only their Aadhaar numbers and biometrics (iris scan/fingerprint scan).
- **Significance:** This service, which requires a customer to scan their iris on a tablet, will boost the bank's financial inclusion efforts by making Aadhaar authentication process hassle-free and offering easier access to digital banking for consumers especially in the rural parts of the country.
- **Significance of iris technology:** Iris scan technology is completely contactless and provides up to 98.2% authentication success rate (as per study conducted by the International Centre for Biometric Research) and offers an edge over other prevalent biometric modes.

Astronomers have used an Indian telescope to discover the most distant radio galaxy ever known

- **What are radio galaxies?** Radio galaxies are very rare objects in the universe. They are colossal galaxies with a supermassive black hole in their centre that actively accretes gas and dust from its surroundings. This activity initiates the launch of high-energy jet streams, which are capable of accelerating charged particles around the supermassive black hole to almost the speed of light. The discovery of such galaxies at extremely large distances is important for our understanding of the formation and evolution of galaxies.
- **About GMRT:** The Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT), located near Pune in India, is an array of thirty fully steerable parabolic radio telescopes of 45 metre diameter, observing at metre wavelengths. It is operated by the National Centre for Radio Astrophysics, a part of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai.

- **At the time it was built, it was the world's largest interferometric array** offering a baseline of up to 25 kilometres (16 mi). One of the aims for the telescope during its development was to search for the highly redshifted 21-cm line radiation from primordial neutral hydrogen clouds in order to determine the epoch of galaxy formation in the universe.

First project under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme the 'North East Circuit: Imphal & Khongjom' in Manipur will be inaugurated tomorrow;

- **Swadesh Darshan scheme** is one of the flagship scheme of Ministry of tourism for development of thematic circuits in the country in a planned and prioritised manner.
- **The project under inauguration was sanctioned by the Ministry** of Tourism in September 2015 for Rs.72.30 Crores.
- The project covers two sites i.e. Kangla Fort and Khongjom. **Kangla Fort is one of the most important historic** and archaeological site of Manipur located in the heart of the Imphal city.
- It served as the seat of Manipur's power till 1891. Kangla has a special place in the hearts and minds of the people of Manipur.
- The old Govindajee Temple, outer and inner moat and other relics are perfect reflections of the rich art and **architectural heritage of Manipur**.
- **Development of Tourism in North Eastern Region** is prime area of focus for the Ministry of Tourism. The Ministry is carrying out an array of activities for development and promotion of tourism in the region.

Mobile Applications and Websites Launched to Ensure Accountability and Transparency

- **Grameen Vidyutikaran (GARV) app to help citizens track rural electrification under Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY))**
- **'Saubhagya' Web-Portal** – a Platform for transparently monitoring Universal Household Electrification – was launched on 16th Nov, 2017.
- **GARV – II App**, launched on 20th December 2016, hosts the data in respect of about 6 lakh villages, with more than 15 lakh habitations having 17 crore people, that has been mapped for tracking progress on household electrification in each of the habitations of these villages.
- **UDAY portal** gives current status of implementation of the Ujjwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana(UDAY) scheme in the country i.e. State wise Financial and Operational performance parameters including bonds issued, reduction in AT&C losses, tariff revision, smart metering, feeder segregation and other energy efficiency initiatives.
- **VIDYUT PRAVAH app** created to provide real time information of electricity price and availability (<http://www.vidyutpravah.in/>)
- **Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All (UJALA)** app to keep track of LED distribution under the Domestic Efficient Lighting Program (DELP)
- **URJA (Urban Jyoti Abhiyaan) MobileApp** - the Consumer Dashboard of the URJA App, launched on 16.06.16, provides for Urban Power Distribution Sector to enhance Consumer Connect, Project Monitoring of Urban Distribution Sector projects and providing information on the monthly performance on parameters like Consumer complaints redressal, Release of New service connection, Average number of interruptions faced by consumer, Number of consumers making e-payments, Energy lost / power theft i.e. AT&C loss.
- **HELPLINE NUMBER: 1912** to enable consumers to lodge complaints regarding power outages .
- **URJA MITRA App**: power consumers across the nation would have prior intimation of expected duration and cause of scheduled power outages and post fault intimation of unscheduled power outages duration in real time.
- **E-Tarang app** is for monitoring the real time status of Transmission System.
- **E-Trans app** is a platform for better price discovery in respect of Inter State Transmission projects to be awarded through tariff based competitive bidding (TBCB) process.
- **'DEEP (Discovery of Efficient Electricity Price) e-Bidding' portal** - the Portal will provide a common e-bidding platform with e-reverse auction facility to facilitate nation-wide power procurement through a wider network so as to bring uniformity and transparency in the process of power procurement.
- **BEE Star Label** – BEE has developed a mobile app for Standards and Labeling Program (S&L) for consumers, which is linked with S&L database of BEE and provides a platform to receive real-time feedback from consumers and other stakeholders. On this portal, manufacturers can file online application to obtain star rating of their products.

Laboratory for the Conservation of Endangered Species (LaCONES)

- **It is located in Hyderabad at the Laboratory for the Conservation of Endangered Species (LaCONES)**, a research wing of the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB).
- **Key facts:** The state-of-the-art bank is equipped with sophisticated equipment to preserve the genetic resources that could be utilised to virtually resurrect an animal species in case it goes extinct. The bank that contains genetic resources of about 250 wildlife species. The Genetic Resource Bank will store genetic material of Indian species. It will also help in protecting India's biodiversity and environment.
- **Achievements of Laboratory for the Conservation of Endangered Species (LaCONES):** It is India's only research facility engaged in conservation and preservation of wildlife and its resources. It was established in 1998 with the help of Central Zoo Authority of India, CSIR and the government of Andhra Pradesh.
- **LaCONES has helped the Mouse Deer Conservation Breeding Centre** at Nehru Zoological Park to increase the population of mouse deer in Telangana forests. Amrabad forest, for instance, ran out of mouse deer and through the efforts of LaCONES, the animal is now reintroduced in Amrabad Tiger Reserve. Earlier, LaCONES has developed universal DNA based marker for identification of wild animals from parts and remains. It has a DNA banking of more than 250 species of mammals, birds and reptiles.

NASA has launched the Parker Solar Probe – the space agency's first mission to the sun

- **About the mission:** What is it? NASA's historic Parker Solar Probe mission will revolutionize our understanding of the sun, where changing conditions can propagate out into the solar system, affecting Earth and other worlds. Parker Solar Probe will travel through the sun's atmosphere, closer to the surface than any spacecraft before it, facing brutal heat and radiation conditions — and ultimately providing humanity with the closest-ever observations of a star.

- **Journey: In order to unlock the mysteries of the sun's atmosphere**, Parker Solar Probe will use Venus' gravity during seven flybys over nearly seven years to gradually bring its orbit closer to the sun. The spacecraft will fly through the sun's atmosphere as close as 3.9 million miles to our star's surface, well within the orbit of Mercury and more than seven times closer than any spacecraft has come before.
- **Goals: The primary science goals for the mission are to trace how energy** and heat move through the solar corona and to explore what accelerates the solar wind as well as solar energetic particles.
- **Parker Solar Probe has three detailed science objectives:** Trace the flow of energy that heats and accelerates the solar corona and solar wind. Determine the structure and dynamics of the plasma and magnetic fields at the sources of the solar wind. Explore mechanisms that accelerate and transport energetic particles.
- **Why study corona?** The corona is hotter than the surface of the sun. The corona gives rise to the solar wind, a continuous flow of charged particles that permeates the solar system. Unpredictable solar winds cause disturbances in our planet's magnetic field and can play havoc with communications technology on Earth. Nasa hopes the findings will enable scientists to forecast changes in Earth's space environment.
- **Why do we study the sun and the solar wind?** The sun is the only star we can study up close. By studying this star we live with, we learn more about stars throughout the universe. The sun is a source of light and heat for life on Earth. The more we know about it, the more we can understand how life on Earth developed. The sun also affects Earth in less familiar ways.
- It is the source of the solar wind; a flow of ionized gases from the sun that streams past Earth at speeds of more than 500 km per second (a million miles per hour). Disturbances in the solar wind shake Earth's magnetic field and pump energy into the radiation belts, part of a set of changes in near-Earth space known as space weather.
- **Space weather can change the orbits of satellites**, shorten their lifetimes, or interfere with onboard electronics. The more we learn about what causes space weather – and how to predict it – the more we can protect the satellites we depend on. The solar wind also fills up much of the solar system, dominating the space environment far past Earth. As we send spacecraft and astronauts further and further from home, we must understand this space environment just as early seafarers needed to understand the ocean.

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Journey of a Thousand Miles begins with One Click!!!

Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act

- **Significance of the move:** This is a major step towards making the workplace safe for the women in the private sector. This will cast as ever higher responsibility on the Directors of the Companies for implementation of the Act.
- **THE SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF WOMEN AT WORKPLACE (PREVENTION, PROHIBITION AND REDRESSAL) ACT 2013:** The Act seeks to cover all women, irrespective of their age or employment status and protect them against sexual harassment at all workplaces both in public and private sector, whether organized or unorganized. It came into force on December 9, 2013.
- **Some important provisions of the Act:** The Act defines sexual harassment at the work place and creates a mechanism for redressal of complaints. It also provides safeguards against false or malicious charges. The definition of “aggrieved woman”, who will get protection under the Act is extremely wide to cover all women, irrespective of her age or employment status, whether in the organized or unorganized sectors, public or private and covers clients, customers and domestic workers as well.

- **Definition of workplace:** While the “workplace” in the Vishaka Guidelines is confined to the traditional office set-up where there is a clear employer-employee relationship, the Act goes much further to include organisations, department, office, branch unit etc. in the public and private sector, organized and unorganized, hospitals, nursing homes, educational institutions, sports institutes, stadiums, sports complex and any place visited by the employee during the course of employment including the transportation.
- **Every employer is required to constitute an Internal Complaints Committee** at each office or branch with 10 or more employees. The District Officer is required to constitute a Local Complaints Committee at each district, and if required at the block level.
- **Functions of the committee:** The Committee is required to complete the inquiry within a time period of 90 days. On completion of the inquiry, the report will be sent to the employer or the District Officer, as the case may be, they are mandated to take action on the report within 60 days.
- **Powers:** The Complaints Committees have the powers of civil courts for gathering evidence. The Complaints Committees are required to provide for conciliation before initiating an inquiry, if requested by the complainant.
- **Penalties have been prescribed for employers.** Non-compliance with the provisions of the Act shall be punishable with a fine of up to 50,000. Repeated violations may lead to higher penalties and cancellation of licence or registration to conduct business.

Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has released Ease of Living Index.

- **The index has been developed to allow city managers** to get a grip on the city’s baseline and compare its performance across key indicators. The index covers 111 cities that are smart city contenders, capital cities, and cities with population of 1 million plus. The index captures the quality of life based on the data collected from the urban local bodies on four parameters, which were further broken down into 15 categories.
- **The four parameters include institutional (governance)**, social (identity, education, health, security), economic (economy, employment) and physical factors (waste water and solid waste management, pollution, housing/ inclusiveness, mixed land use, power and water supply, transport, public open spaces). Institutional and social parameters carry 25 points each, physical factors have a weightage of 45 points and economic factors five points totalling to a 100 mark scale on which cities were evaluated.
- **Performance of states:** Pune has ranked first while two more Maharashtra cities — Navi Mumbai and Greater Mumbai — figure in the second and third spots. Tirupati, Chandigarh, Thane, Raipur, Indore, Vijaywada and Bhopal also figure in the top 10 list in that order. Among other major cities, Chennai holds 14th rank, Ahmedabad 23rd, Hyderabad 27th, and Bengaluru 58th.

- **Rampur in Uttar Pradesh has ranked the worst** on the scale with Kohima and Patna on the bottom two and three ranks while Varanasi stands at 33. Kolkata is excluded from the index.

Appellate Tribunal for Electricity (ATE)

- **Appellate Tribunal for Electricity (APTEL):** Appellate Tribunal for Electricity is a statutory body constituted for the purpose of hearing cases against the orders of the Regulatory Commissions and the Adjudicating officer.
- **By virtue of Section 110 of The Electricity Act, 2003**, an Appellate Tribunal for Electricity having jurisdiction through out India has been set up to hear appeals or original petitions against the orders of the Adjudicating officer or The Central Regulatory Commission or State Regulatory Commission or Joint Commission. The Tribunal is conferred with original jurisdiction to hear petitions under Section 121 of the Act and issue directions to all Commissions for the performance of its statutory functions.
- **Composition: The Appellate Tribunal** shall consist of a Chairperson and three other Members. Every Bench constituted by the Chairperson shall consist of at least one Judicial Member and one Technical Member.

Achievements of the Ministry of Finance

- **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana** - A National Mission to bring comprehensive financial inclusion of all the households to ensure access of all households to financial services.

1. **Launched** by the Prime Minister on 28 August 2014 for financial inclusion.

2. **60% bank accounts** opened in rural areas (As on 25.4.2018)

3. **31.52 crore** Jan Dhan accounts opened (As on 25.4.2018)
 4. **Total balance** in Jan Dhan accounts = Rs. 80871.67 crores (As on 25.4.2018)
 5. **Over 23.71** Crore Rupay Cards issued (As on 25.4.2018)
 6. **Share** of zero-balance Jan Dhan accounts dropped to 24% in December 2016 from 73% in December 2014.
 7. **Over 1.26 lakh** bank-mitras appointed by banks
 8. **2.5 lakh** Gram-Dak-Sewaks will function as banking correspondents
- **Pradhan Mantri Sukanya Samridhi Yojana** A small deposit savings scheme to promote the welfare of girl child and ensure them a secure future.
 1. · More than 1.26 crore accounts have been opened
 2. · Amount of over Rs. 19,183 crores deposited till November 2017
 - **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana** To provide financial support for growth (development and refinancing) of micro enterprises sector.
 1. Easy, loans without guarantee under three categories – Shishu, Kishore and Tarun by the banks. Loan of up to Rs. 50000 is given under sub-scheme 'Shishu' between Rs. 50,000 to 5.0 Lakhs under sub-scheme 'Kishore' and between 5.0 Lakhs to 10.0 Lakhs under sub-scheme 'Tarun'.
 2. Number of PMMY loans sanctioned in 2017-18: 4535109
 3. Loans disbursed in 2017-18; Rs. 220596.05 crore
 4. Loans disbursed in 2016-17: Rs. 175312.13 crore
 5. Loans disbursed in 2015-16: Rs.132954.73 crore
 6. Budget allocation for 2018-19 raised to Rs. 3lakh crore, a hike of 20% over the previous year which was Rs.2.44 lakh crores against Rs. 1.22 lakh crores in 2016-17

- **Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana** : To provide a very affordable insurance scheme for the poor and underprivileged people in the age group of 18 to 70 years with a bank account at a premium of Rs.12 per annum; risk coverage of Rs.2 lakhs for accidental death and full disability and Rs.1 lakh for partial disability. As on Feb 2018, 13 crore 25 lakh persons have been insured with personal accident cover of Rs.2 lakh on payment of a premium of only Rs.12 per annum.
- **Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana** Objective: To create a social security system for the poor and underprivileged in the age group of 18-50 years by providing a renewable life insurance cover of Rs.2 lakhs with just a premium of Rs.330 Achievements: · As on February 2018, Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Beema Yojana (PMJJBY) has benefitted 5.22 crore families with a life insurance cover of Rs. 2 lakh on payment of a premium of only Rs.330/- per annum.
- **Atal Pension Yojana** To provide financial security in old age through guaranteed minimum monthly pension for those working in informal sector or daily wagers in the age group of 18 to 40 years. Government contribution - 50 percent of beneficiaries' premium (up to Rs. 1000) for 5 years in new accounts opened before December 31, 2015. Achievements: · As on 5 January, 2018 about 80 lakh subscribers have been enrolled under APY.

- **PRADHAN MANTRI VAYA VANDAN YOJANA**

1. · Announced by PM on New Year eve of 2017& launched by the Finance Minister on 21.7.2017
 2. · To provide social security and protect elderly.
 3. · For citizens aged 60 years and above, it was opened for subscription from May 4, 2017 to May 3, 2018
 4. · Now PMVVY Pension Investment Limit has been Doubled from Rs. 7.5 lakh to 15 lakh
 5. · Now Senior Citizens can get up to Rs. 10,000 pension per month.
 6. · Scheme has been extended by two years from May 4, 2018 to March 31, 2020.
 7. · The scheme provides an assured pension based on a guaranteed rate of return of 8 per cent per annum for ten years.
 8. · As of March, 2018, 2.23 lakh senior citizens have subscribed to PMVVY
- **Gold Monetization Scheme, Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme, and India Gold Coins** Objective: To reduce the country's reliance on the imports of gold to meet the domestic demand and to reduce the demand for physical gold Achievements: · As on Mar 10, 2017 As much as 6,410 kg gold has been mobilized under the Gold Monetization Scheme so far, according to the reports received till February 18 this year.

- **SOVEREIGN GOLD BONDS** To provide a new financial instrument of investment to public at large and reduce the demand for physical gold. Achievements: · The target mobilization under the scheme at Rs. 15,000 crore in 2015-16 and at Rs.10,000 crore in 2016-17. · Revision of guidelines of Sovereign Gold Bonds Scheme approved by Cabinet on 26th July 2017.

- **Stand- Up India** To support entrepreneurship among women and SC & ST communities by facilitating bank loans between 10 lakh and 1 Crore to them. To benefit at least 2.5 lakh entrepreneurs.
 1. · The number of loans given by Public Sector, Private and Regional Banks under the Stand-up India Scheme are 51,888, 2,445, and 1,009 respectively up to 07.03.2018 since inception of the Scheme.
 2. · Regional Rural Banks sanctioned 180 loans to borrowers of Scheduled Castes (SC) category as on 07.03.2018 since inception of the Scheme.
 3. · 56260 Self Unemployment Insurance, SUI applications sanctioned for 12194 crores
 4. · 44460 SUI applications disbursed for 6641 crores
 5. · 7424 online SUI loan applications submitted of which 2641 SUI online loans have been sanctioned

- **Demonetization and fight against black money** Objective: A major war against black money was unleashed on 8th November with demonetization of Rs 500 and 1000 currency notes as the first step.
 1. · There is a major fillip in digital transactions and unearthing of substantial amounts of black money.
 2. · 50 lakh new bank accounts opened to enable cashless transaction of wages.
 3. · 26.6% increase in number of taxpayers added from FY 2015-16 to FY 2016-17
 4. · 27.95% increase in number of e>Returns filed.
 5. · Value of IMPS transactions increased almost 59% from August 2016 to August 2017, 2.24 Lakh shell companies were struck off, undisclosed income worth Rs. 29,213 crores was detected and admitted and revenues of the ULBs across the country increased.
 6. · Income Tax Department (ITD) launched Operation Clean Money (OCM) on 31st January 2017 to leverage technology for e-verification of cash deposits made during the demonetization period i.e. 9th November to 30th December 2016.

Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act

- **As per the new rules:** 13 activities are permitted for funding. They include plantation, assisted natural regeneration of forests, forest fire prevention, pest and disease control in forests, soil and moisture conservation works and improvement of wildlife habitat.
- **Usage of funds: 80% of the compensatory afforestation amount** will be utilised by states for plantations, assisted natural regeneration of forests, forest fire prevention, pest and disease control in forest, soil and moisture conservation works and improvement of wildlife habitat, among others, in the list of 13 permissible activities. The remaining 20% will be used for 11 listed works to strengthen forest and wildlife protection related infrastructure.
- **Role of gram sabhas:** Besides enlisting the 24 activities which are to be taken up using the fund, the rules also specify that the working plan will be taken up “in consultation with the gram sabha or village forest management committee”.
- **Significance of the move:** The move will help India re-green its forest and non-forest areas which have lost trees due to forest diversions — amounting to more than 1.3 million hectares after the Forest (Conservation) Act of 1980 kicked in — for allowing various developmental activities.
- **Background:** Over the last ten years, the fund had accumulated the amount as compensations by user agencies for diverting forest land for industries and infrastructure projects. The CAMPA was created as per a Supreme Court ruling in 2009.
- **Much of the funds collected under the legislation** had been left unspent with an ad hoc Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) in absence of enabling rules.
- **Until now, the funds were disbursed to states** under a temporary and time consuming mechanism. With the relevant rules now in place, the implementation of the act is expected to gather pace.
- **Way ahead:** Since the rules for utilisation of the fund have been notified, the unspent amount will now be transferred to the National Compensatory Afforestation Fund at the Centre and the respective State Compensatory Afforestation Funds in a phased manner, depending on its utilisation. The national and state funds — both non-lapsable — can be utilised for only the activities listed under the CAF Act.

- **Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act 2016:** This act provides for setting up Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) at both central and state level to ensure expeditious and transparent utilization of amounts realized in lieu of forest land diverted for non-forest purpose. The act also seeks to establish the National Compensatory Afforestation Fund under the Public Account of India, and a State Compensatory Afforestation Fund under the Public Account of each state. The payments into the funds include compensatory afforestation, NPV, and any project-specific payments.

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Journey of a Thousand Miles begins with One Click!!!

Uttarakhand high court appoints itself legal guardian of cows in state

- **Significance of the judgment:** This is the first time in India that a court has had invoked the 'parens patriae' doctrine for cow protection. Parens patriae: The court did this by invoking the 'parens patriae' doctrine. Parens patriae in Latin means 'parent of the country' and is a doctrine that grants the court inherent power and authority to act as guardian for those who are unable to take care for themselves.
- **Implications of the judgment:** The court can now act as the legal guardian of the cows in the state and keep a tab on all issues related to cows especially its directions with regard to their protection. If there are any violations in laws and rules regarding cows, the court can take suo moto cognisance and issue directions to the state.
- **Background:** The judgment came as a response to a public interest litigation claiming that stray cattle were being slaughtered and waste from a slaughter house was flowing into water bodies , posing a health threat to the villagers. The court cited animal welfare law, national and international documents and Hindu religious texts to say that animal welfare was part of "moral development of humanity".

- **Important Directions issued by the Court:** All civic bodies in the state shall construct “gaushalas/gausadans” or shelters/homes for housing cows and other stray cattle within one year. No commercial charges shall be levied for supplying the electricity and water connections to gaushalas/shelters. The state government shall register cases against people who abandon cows and owners of cattle found on the streets, roads and public places under the Indian Penal Code, Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 and Uttarakhand Protection of Cow Progeny Act, 2007.
- **The state government shall also set up a special squad** to be headed by an officer not below the rank of deputy superintendent of police in both the Kumaon and Garhwal regions with one veterinary doctor to protect cows. The court banned slaughter of cows, bulls, bullocks, heifers or calves in the state and ruled that no person shall sell beef or beef products in any form in Uttarakhand.

Mahadayi verdict

- **The final verdict:** The tribunal has allowed Karnataka access to 13.4 tmc of water for its consumptive use (5.4 tmc) and power generation (8.02 tmc). The share of Goa was pegged at 24 tmc with the Tribunal allowing it for the state’s municipal water needs, irrigation water requirements and industrial water demands.
- **Maharashtra got the lowest share of 1.33 tmc** for meeting its in-basin needs with respect to five projects. The tribunal also directed the Centre to set up the Mahadayi Water Management Authority to implement its report and final decision.
- **What’s the dispute?** The Mahadayi river basin drains an area of 2032 square kilometres of which 375 square km lies in Karnataka, 77 sq km in Maharashtra and the remaining in Goa.
- **The dispute arose since Goa was opposed to Karnataka’s plans** to divert waters from the tributaries of the river, which Karnataka justified was for drinking water purposes. The tribunal was constituted in November 2010.

NITI Aayog launches “Pitch to MOVE”

- **About “Pitch to MOVE”:** “Pitch to MOVE” is organised by NITI Aayog in collaboration with Invest India and Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM).
- **Aim: The competition aims to identify** and reward the start-ups offering innovative solutions for shared, connected, and environment friendly mobility. It also aims to incentivise the startups, which will help the Government realize its vision of Shared, Connected, Intermodal and Environment Friendly Mobility for India. The objective is to harness the latest disruption for generating employment and growth in our country.
- **The Startups can be from the domain of Public Mobility,** Electric Vehicles, Shared Transport, Last Mile Connectivity, Passenger Transportation, Battery Technology, Automotive IoT, Freight & Logistics, Powertrain/Drivetrain, Experiential, Travel, Mobility Infrastructure and Automotive Electronics etc.

Australia recommences its adoption programme with India

- **Significance:** The recommencement of the adoption programmes will now enable large number of prospective adoptive parents including those of Indian origin settled in Australia in fulfilling their desire of adopting a child from India.
- **Safety measures put in place by India:** The regulation of Inter-country adoptions have been made strict by the Government of India with the enactment of Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 and notification of Adoption Regulations, 2017. The Ministry of Women & Child Development along with Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) have been constantly monitoring the implementation of these laws.
- **What is the Hague Convention?** The Hague Convention protects children and their families against the risks of illegal, irregular, premature or ill-prepared adoptions abroad.
- **To do this, the Hague Convention puts:** Safeguards in place to make sure that all intercountry adoptions are in the best interests of the child and respects their human rights, A system in place of cooperation among countries to guarantee that these safeguards are respected, and to prevent the abduction of, sale of, or traffic in children.
- **Implementation:** For Hague adoptions, the authorities in both countries must agree to go ahead with the adoption. For non-Hague adoptions, requirements may vary from one country to another. The Hague Convention does not allow private adoptions in the child’s home country. Adoption is a handled by the provinces and territories, and they all have and follow laws implementing the Hague Convention.

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

Australia recommences its adoption programme with India

- **Scheduled Tribe Component:** Tribal Affairs Ministry has now been mandated to monitor Scheduled Tribe Component of funds of Central Ministries by NITI Aayog. An online monitoring system has been put in place with web address stcmis.gov.in.. The allocation under Scheduled Tribe Component (STC) was increased from Rs. 21,811 crore in 2016-17 to Rs. 32,508 crore in RE 2017-18. In the BE of 2018-19, Rs. 39,135 crore has been allocated under STC for the welfare of Scheduled Tribes.
- **Minimum Support Price (MSP) to Minor Forest Produce (MFP):** Minimum Support Price for Minor Forest Produce scheme (MSP for MFP Scheme) has now been expanded to 24 Minor Forest Produces in all States from the initial 10 MFPs in 9 States in 2013-14.
- **Skill Development:** An amount of Rs. 1019.27 Crore has been released to various states under the scheme Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub-Scheme (SCA to TSS) and Grants under Article 275(1) during 2014-15 to 2017-18 for skill development of more than 3,37,000 (Three Lakh Thirty Seven Thousand) male and female tribal beneficiaries in a wide gamut of trades.
- **Forest Rights Act:** Under the Forest Rights Act, 2006 (FRA), until 30th, January, 2018 as much as 1 lakh 39,266 Community Forests Rights (CFR) claims have been received from 20 states. Out of this 64,328 (46.19%) claims have been recognised.
- **Aadi Mahotsav: Showcasing Tribal Culture, Commerce & Cuisine:** Ministry of Tribal Affairs in association with TRIFED organized a National Tribal Festival Aadi Mahotsav from 16th November, 2017 to 30th November, 2017. The total sale of tribal artisans during the Mahotsav was Rs. 4.10 Crores. This Mahotsav also organised at Jaipur, Bhopal, Ranchi, Chandigarh and Guwahati during November - December, 2017 and has become a continuous process now.
- **Museums for Tribal Freedom Fighters:** A state-of-the-art Tribal Museum of national importance in Gujarat State is being constructed. The Ministry has also approved proposals for setting up of museums in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Kerala to highlight struggle & sacrifices of tribals during freedom struggle.
- **New Tribal Research Institute and Tribal Repository:** During the year 2017-18, based on the proposals received from the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Sikkim, funds have been provided for establishment of new tribal research institutions at Itanagar, Kohima and Assam Lingzey, near Gangtok. Ministry has developed a web page for use as tribal repository (www.tribal.nic.in/repository) in which documents, folks songs, photos, videos regarding their evolution, place of origin, lifestyle, eating habits, architecture, education

level, traditional art, folk dances and other anthropological details

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Kanyashree scheme

- **The state government** would also be coming up with a “Kanyashree University” for girls soon.
- **About Kanyashree scheme:** What is it? Kanyashree is a conditional cash transfer scheme aiming at improving the status and well being of the girl child by incentivising schooling of teenage girls and delaying their marriages until the age of 18. It received the United Nations Public Service Award last year.
- **Performance of the scheme:** Through the initiative, cash was deposited into the bank account of girls for every year they remained in school and were unmarried. This initiative led to a “drastic reduction in child marriage, increase in female education and female empowerment.”
- **UN Public Service Awards:** The UN Public Service Awards are given by the world body to institutions from across the world for their innovation and excellence in providing public services.

- **It highlights the pivotal role** of public services in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Awards aim at discovering innovations in governance; reward excellence in the public sector; motivate public servants to further promote innovation; enhance professionalism in the public service; raise the image of public service; enhance trust in government; and collect and disseminate successful practices for possible replication.

Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana

- **Highlights of the scheme:** will provide Rs. 5 lakh per family per annum for all Secondary and Tertiary Cashless Health Care Assistance. Women beneficiaries can get health cover upto Rs. 7 lakh. This scheme will benefit 3.5 crore people (70 lakh families) at any govt. and private empanelled hospitals. All beneficiaries currently enrolled under the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY), as well as other low-income families, are covered under the BSKY.
- **Challenges in implementation:** Trust model: Odisha purposes to form a Trust to implement the scheme, which will reimburse the hospitalisation cost and will not pay premiums to insurance companies. Though the Trust model saves money, the major constraints are weak in-house capacity, poor governance structure and susceptibility to outside interference.
- **Governance structure:** Another uphill task for the Trust is to improve the governance structure. Riddled with weak IT system and poor administration, the uptake of the ongoing health insurance programmes is far from satisfactory.
- **Procedural challenges:** The Odisha State Treatment Fund has several procedural challenges, which, increases the predicament of patients. The same issues will have a major bearing on the BSKY implementation, unless the Trust carefully introduces measures to lessen these problems.
- **The financial implication** of such a humongous scheme needs deliberation. The current resource absorption for RSBY, BSKY and OSTF is not hefty. The claims ratio for RSBY is 65-68 per cent. This is unlikely to rise significantly, unless architectural correction is made.
- **The most important question is: Can BSKY improve the persistent health financing problem?** Currently, Odisha spends around 4.5% GDP on healthcare, of which only 1.05% is by the government. Out of pocket (OOP) expenditure constitutes 76% of total health expenditure, which is unexpectedly high. On the contrary, the utilisation from the public healthcare facilities is quite high, the proportion being 72.55% for outpatient visits.
- **Furthermore, a significant proportion of OOP** is due to outpatient care, mainly due to drugs and diagnostics services (58% and 12%, respectively). Dubbed as a step towards achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC), BSKY may provide breathing space to millions of households burdened by costly health care.

- **However, a large part of OOP**, which occurs due to outpatient visits (71%), will not be alleviated by any insurance mechanism, as it is meant only for hospitalisation.
- **Way ahead:** For effective implementation of the scheme, the state needs to design the Trust structure by hiring experts to suggest packages, costs and criteria for empanelment of private hospitals.

Postal Highway

- **Background:** The amount has been released towards 25% of the tendered cost (including 10% mobilization advance) of the two road packages of Birgunj-Thori Road being implemented under Postal Highway Project in Nepal with Government of India's grant assistance.
- **With this payment**, the Government of India has released a total of Rs 117.63 Crores to the Government of Nepal for implementing 14 packages of the Postal Highway Projects.
- **About the Postal Highway project:** Postal Highway also called Hulaki Rajmarg runs across the Terai region of Nepal, from Bhadrapur in the east to Dodhara in the west, cutting across the entire width of the country.
- **It is the Oldest highway** in Nepal constructed by Juddha Shumsher Jung Bahadur Rana & Padma Shumsher Jung Bahadur Rana to aid transportation and facilitate postal services throughout the nation.

Human space flight Programme

- **Indian Human Space Flight Programme:** India plans to build a crew vehicle that can accommodate 2 or 3 astronauts and human rate its GLSV Mk-III launcher. In 2004, ISRO prepared a document with the road-map for developing technologies relevant to human spaceflight.

- **Initially, a manned space flight** was proposed before 2017, at a budget of Rs 12.4 billion (\$242 million), using a fully autonomous orbital vehicle carrying two or three crew members to 400-km (250 miles) low Earth orbit for up to 7 days and back. The planning commission approved the mission and the government sanctioned Rs 95 crore to study all aspects of the manned space mission.
- **ISRO has initiated pre-project** Research and Development activities focusing on critical technologies for Human Space Flight Program.
- **Technological Challenges:** Three major areas that ISRO needs to master are, environmental control and life support (ECLS) system, crew escape system and flight suite and it's currently working on them, under pre-project studies for which the Government sanctioned Rs 145 crore.
- **Recent technological advancements:** In what appears to be a preparation for the Gaganyaan mission, ISRO last month conducted its first 'pad abort' test that was successful. The 'pad abort' test or Crew Escape System is an emergency escape measure that helps pull the crew away from the launch vehicle when a mission has to be aborted. The test was conducted at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota. The Pad Abort Test demonstrated the safe recovery of the crew module in case of any exigency at the launch pad.
- **Way ahead:** A manned space mission is very different from all other missions that ISRO has so far completed. In terms of complexity and ambition, even the missions to the Moon (Chandrayaan) and Mars (Mangalyaan) are nowhere in comparison.
- **For a manned mission,** the key distinguishing capabilities that ISRO has had to develop include the ability to bring the spacecraft back to Earth after flight, and to build a spacecraft in which astronauts can live in Earth-like conditions in space.

RUCO (Repurpose Used Cooking Oil) initiative

- **Under this initiative,** 64 companies at 101 locations have been identified to enable collection of used cooking oil. For instance: McDonald's has already started converting used cooking oil to biodiesel from 100 outlets in Mumbai and Pune. FSSAI wants businesses using more than 100 litres of oil for frying, to maintain a stock register and ensure that UCO is handed over to only registered collecting agencies.
- **Significance of the initiative:** FSSAI believes India has the potential to recover 220 crore litres of used cooking oil for the production of biodiesel by 2022 through a co-ordinated action. While biodiesel produced from used cooking oil is currently very small, but a robust ecosystem for conversion and collection is rapidly growing in India and will soon reach a sizable scale.

- **Background:** The initiative has been launched nearly a month after the food safety regulator notified standards for used cooking oil. According to FSSAI regulations, the maximum permissible limits for Total Polar Compounds (TPC) have been set at 25%, beyond which the cooking oil is unsafe for consumption.
- **What is Total Polar Compounds (TPC)?** In many countries, TPC is used to measure the quality of oil. The level of TPC increases every time oil is re-heated. Some of the studies show that TPC accumulation in oil without food is slower than that in oil frying with food. Higher level of TPC in cooking oil leads to health issues like hypertension, atherosclerosis, Alzheimer's disease and liver disease. One of the studies also noticed high levels of glucose, creatinine and cholesterol with declined levels of protein and albumin in cooking oil.
- **Need for regulation:** Currently, used cooking oil is either not discarded or disposed of in such a manner that it chokes drains and sewerage systems. Apart from setting quality standards, the new regulation addresses the way this oil is discarded. As used cooking oil is considered the most reasonable feedstock for biodiesel production, the FSSAI is planning to redirect the used cooking oil from the food business operators. It has already started collecting used oil in small quantities either through a barter arrangement or at cost.
- **About FSSAI:** The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has been established under Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 which consolidates various acts & orders that have hitherto handled food related issues in various Ministries and Departments.
- **It was created for laying down science based standards for articles of food and to regulate their manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food for human consumption.** Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India is the Administrative Ministry for the implementation of FSSAI.
- **Composition: The Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer** of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) are appointed by Government of India. The Chairperson is in the rank of Secretary to Government of India.

National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)

- **What's the issue?** Hackers transferred over ₹90 crore out on August 11 and 13 through the malware attack on the bank's server by cloning debit cards of the bank's customers. The transactions were carried through automated teller machines (ATMs) in 28 countries, including Canada, Hong Kong and India. Visa and Rupay debit cards were cloned.
- **What's the Difference Between Malware, Trojan, Virus, and Worm?** Malware is defined as a software designed to perform an unwanted illegal act via the computer network. It could be also defined as software with malicious intent. Malware can be classified based on how they get executed, how they spread, and/or what they do. Some of them are discussed below.

- **a) Virus:** A virus is a program that can infect other programs by modifying them to include a possible evolved copy of itself. A virus can spread throughout a computer or network using the authorization of every user using it to infect their program. Every program so infected may also act as a virus and thus the infection grows. Viruses normally affect program files, but in some cases they also affect data files disrupting the use of data and destroying them completely.
- **b) Worms:** Worms are also disseminated through computer networks, unlike viruses, computer worms are malicious programs that copy themselves from system to system, rather than infiltrating legitimate files. For example, a mass mailing e-mail worm is a worm that sends copies of itself via e-mail. A network worm, on the other hand makes copies of itself throughout a network, thus disrupting an entire network.
- **c) Trojans:** Trojan is another form of Malware, trojans do things other than what is expected by the user. Trojan or trojan horse is a program that generally impairs the security of a system. Trojans are used to create back-doors (a program that allows outside access into a secure network) on computers belonging to a secure network so that a hacker can have access to the secure network.
- **Unlike viruses,** Trojan horses do not replicate themselves but they can be just as destructive. One of the most insidious types of Trojan horse is a program that claims to rid your computer of viruses but instead introduces viruses onto your computer.
- **d) Hoax:** Hoax is an e-mail that warns the user of a certain system that is harming the computer. The message thereafter instructs the user to run a procedure (most often in the form of a download) to correct the harming system. When this program is run, it invades the system and deletes an important file.
- **e) Spyware:** Spyware invades a computer and, as its name implies, monitors a user's activities without consent. Spywares are usually forwarded through unsuspecting e-mails with bonafide e-mail i.ds. Spyware continues to infect millions of computers globally.
- **NPCI:** National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) is an umbrella organization for all retail payments system in India. It was set up with the guidance and support of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Indian Banks' Association (IBA). NPCI has ten promoter banks. Its recent work of developing Unified Payments Interface aims to move India to a cashless society with only digital transactions. It has successfully completed the development of a domestic card payment network called RuPay, reducing the dependency on international card schemes.

Maharshi Badrayan Vyas Samman Award:

- **The Maharshi Badrayan Vyas Samman** distinction is conferred on persons once a year on the Independence Day in recognition of their substantial contribution in the field of Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, Pali, Prakrit, Classical Oriya, Classical Kannada, Classical Telugu and Classical Malayalam.
- **The award introduced in the year 2002**, is given to selected young scholars in the age group of 30 to 45 years. It carries a certificate of honour and a one time cash prize of Rs.1 lakh.
- **World Congress of Philosophy:** Context: 24th World Congress of Philosophy will be held in Beijing, China. What is it? The World Congress of Philosophy is organized every five years by the International Federation of Philosophical Societies (FISP) in collaboration with one of its member societies. It was first organized in 1900.
- **Aims of the 2018 Congress** include an emphasis on exploring dimensions of the human and inquiring into the challenges facing humanity: To globalize philosophical investigations to encompass the diverse forms of philosophizing by past and present thinkers across cultures, with special attention to critical reflections on philosophy itself and the tasks and functions of philosophy in the contemporary world.
- **To open the philosophical area** to enable philosophers to address emerging global issues through fruitful interactions with other disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, with other activities in economic, social, political, and religious spheres, as well as with diverse cultures and traditions.
- **To encourage philosophical reflections** to become public discourses on recurrent human concerns, such as ecology, justice, and peace.

Ministry of Tribal Affairs

- **Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs):** EMRSs are being set up by the Government to give best quality education to tribal children in their own environment. As on 31.03.2018, 271 EMRSs are sanctioned and 190 are functional in various States. During the last four years, 106 new EMRSs with total capacity of 50,880 students have been sanctioned (30 in 2014-15, 32 in 2015-16, 30 in 2016-17 and 14 in 2017-18). Further, 51 EMRSs were made functional during last four years.
- **Hostels for Tribal Girls and Boys:** There are a total of 1545 hostels, sanctioned by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, for tribal girls and boys in the country at present. Out of this, the number of hostels for boys is 544 hostels and 1001 hostels are for girls.
- **Scholarship Scheme:** During 2014-15 to 2017-18, a total of Rs. 5404.97 crore were distributed as pre-matric and post-matric scholarship to about one crore ST students.

- **Institutional Support for Development & Marketing of Tribal Products/Produce (Central Sector Scheme):** The total grants released under this scheme have increased from Rs. 4190 lakh in 2014-15 to Rs. 4495 lakh in 2017-18.
- **Launch of e-commerce portal of TRIFED and M-commerce android app and 'Tribes India' banner:** In a path breaking initiative, the Minister of Tribal Affairs, in the month of March 2018, launched the Tribes India banner on Snapdeal, Amazon, Paytm and GeM for marketing of Tribal Products through these e-commerce portals. With this, more than 55 thousand tribal artisans connected to TRIFED will get access to local as well as international markets. Also, the e-commerce portal of TRIFED i.e. www.tribesindia.com and M-commerce android app 'Tribes India' was also launched.

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Destruction of Public and Private Properties vs Government of Andhra Pradesh, laid down the following guidelines:

- **Wherever a mass destruction to property takes place due to protests or thereof**, the High court may issue suo motu action and set up a machinery to investigate the damage caused and to award compensation related thereto.
- **Where there is more than one state involved, such action may be taken by the Supreme Court**; In each case, the high court or Supreme Court, as the case may be, appoint a sitting or retired high court judge or a sitting or retired District Judge as a Claims Commissioner to estimate the damages and investigate liability.
- **An Assessor may be appointed to assist the Claims Commissioner**; The Claims Commissioner and the Assessor may seek instructions from the high court or Supreme Court as the case may be, to summon the existing video or other recordings from private and public sources to pinpoint the damage and establish nexus with the perpetrators of the damage.
- **The principles of absolute liability** shall apply once the nexus with the event that precipitated the damage is established. The liability will be borne by the actual perpetrators of the crime as well as organisers of the event giving rise to the liability – to be shared, as finally determined by the high court or Supreme Court, as the case may be.

- **Exemplary damages** may be awarded to an extent not greater than twice the amount of the damages liable to be paid. Damages shall be assessed for damages to public and private property, those causing injury or death to a person or persons; and cost of the preventive and other actions by the authorities and police.
- **The Claims Commissioner** will make a report to the high court or Supreme Court which will determine the liability after hearing the parties

What is social sin? Is there any standard definition? How can we abstain from social sin? And if we fail what would be the consequence ?

- **Social sin is any action** or norm which is unacceptable as per societal normative standards. For e.g. blasphemy is a social sin in several societies (Satanic verses by Salman Rushdie is banned in India) or even clothing pattern such as not wearing Burkha may be a social sin.
- **There is no standard definition of social sin** as the contours of this word may extend to politics, social life, technology, economics etc. Moreover what may be social sin in one society may not be sin in other for e.g. polyandry may be widely practiced in TRIBAL WORLD (such as TODA) but not in modern urban life.
- **We can abstain from social sin through increasing Social awareness** through friends, neighbours, media, history etc. and self-regulation by weighing choices against social standards.
- **If we perform social sin then we run the risk of getting socially ostracized**, discriminated, harassed or even victimized For e.g. Khap Panchayats have declared people out caste for practicing socially forbidden practices.
- **However, every social sin may not be unethical.** At times, what is considered socially sin may be morally and legally justified for e.g. opening temples for low caste people may be a social sin but totally tenable.

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)

- **The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)** has released the Global Liveability Index 2018. The index ranks 140 global cities based on their living conditions. The liveability index quantifies the challenges that might be presented to an individual's lifestyle in 140 cities worldwide, and assesses which locations provide the best living conditions.
- **PARAMETERS OF THE GLOBAL LIVEABILITY INDEX:**
The list ranks 140 cities on a range of factors, including:
Political and social stability.
Crime
Education
Access to healthcare.
- **The survey rates cities worldwide based on 30 qualitative and quantitative criteria, which fall into five general categories:**
Stability
Health care
Culture and environment.
Education
Infrastructure

Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Observatory (LIGO) project

- **The LIGO (Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatory)** is a massive observatory for detecting cosmic gravitational waves and for carrying out experiments. The objective is to use gravitational-wave observations in astronomical studies.
- **The project operates three gravitational-wave (GW) detectors.** Two are at Hanford in the state of Washington, north-western US, and one is at Livingston in Louisiana, south-eastern US. The proposed LIGO India project aims to move one advanced LIGO detector from Hanford to India.
- **About LIGO- India project:** Known as the LIGO-India project, it is piloted by Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and Department of Science and Technology (DST).

- **The LIGO-India project will be jointly coordinated** and executed by three Indian research institutions: the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA), Pune and Department of Atomic Energy organisations: Institute for Plasma Research (IPR), Gandhinagar and the Raja Ramanna Centre for Advanced Technology (RRCAT), Indore.
- **Benefits for India:** The project will bring unprecedented opportunities for scientists and engineers to dig deeper into the realm of gravitational wave and take global leadership in this new astronomical frontier. The LIGO-India project will also bring considerable opportunities in cutting-edge technology for the Indian industry which will be engaged in the construction of the eight-km long beam tube at ultra-high vacuum on a levelled terrain.
- **With its establishment, India will join the global network of gravitational wave detectors.** Establishing an observatory in India also assumes importance because the further the distance between the observatories, the greater will be the accuracy in locating gravity waves.
- **What are Gravitational Waves?** Gravitational waves are the ripples in the pond of spacetime. The gravity of large objects warps space and time, or “spacetime” as physicists call it, the way a bowling ball changes the shape of a trampoline as it rolls around on it. Smaller objects will move differently as a result – like marbles spiraling toward a bowling-ball-sized dent in a trampoline instead of sitting on a flat surface.

Issues in Indian Judicial System + Reform

- **Pendency-3.3 crore pending cases at all levels.** Huge vacancies in the High Courts and lower courts -Low judge to population ratio (In India it is 18 per ten lakh population)
 - Overburdened judiciary - 70 hearings per day with 2 minutes per hearing, on an average No fixed time in which cases have to be disposed
- **2-Delay and denial of Justice** Judicial procedure is very complex, costly and dilatory - low conviction rates (25% as per NCRB data) jail as they cannot afford bail or guarantors to stand surety 3-Lack of transparency in appointments □ collegium system □ under Article 124 + 214 of the Constitution has come under severe criticism owing to its opacity, denting its credibility
- **4-Lack of Coherent Database** no scientific maintenance of data to analyse the problem meaningfully (245th law commission). 5-Malpractices by lawyers □ The rich and powerful hire lawyers who stall court proceedings by taking advantage of archaic regulations and loopholes in law 6-Bogus filled PILs
- **7-low infrastructure** there will not be enough court halls, chambers, or staff, if all the vacancies are filled. No use of ICT. Way forwards 1-Increasing Judge population ratio to by 5 folds (by Law Commission recommendation) Setting up of fast track courts, Gram Nyayalayas, local courts, family courts (1 per district), 'morning' and 'evening' courts - Promoting alternate dispute redressal mechanism EG. Lok Adalats, Mediation Cells 2-Fixed timelines for various stages of trial - Guidelines to avoid unwanted adjournments 3-Brining Judiciary under the ambit of RTI

- **4-Minimum tenure to Chief Justice of India** 5-Transparent complaint redressal mechanism against judicial malpractices 6-Constitution of All India Judicial Service may also be a welcome step 7-Infrastructure Need for upgrading and building judicial infrastructure in mission mode
- **8-Building up a judicial database** to assess the performance of the courts as an institution. 9-Digital technology with new packages like database, ERP tools, court management practices which will help in increasing the productivity of courts
- **10-Evidence recording through video-conferencing** for speedier trials Training and orientation of the judiciary, especially in frontier areas of knowledge, like bio-genetics, IPR and cyber laws, need attention

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11th World Hindi Conference

- **About the conference:** The event, held once in three years, is dedicated to Hindi language. It sees participation from Hindi scholars, writers and laureates from different parts of the world who contribute to the language.
- **Key facts for Prelims:** The decision to organize the 11th edition of the Conference in Mauritius was taken at the 10th World Hindi Conference held in Bhopal, India in September 2015. The first World Hindi Conference was held in 1975 in Nagpur, India. Since then, ten such Conferences have been held in different parts of the world.
- **The MEA has also set up the World Hindi Secretariat** in Mauritius. The main objective of the WHS is to promote Hindi as an international language and further its cause for recognition at the United Nations as an Official Language.

Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework

- What is PCA? PCA norms allow the regulator to place certain restrictions such as halting branch expansion and stopping dividend payment. It can even cap a bank's lending limit to one entity or sector. Other corrective action that can be imposed on banks include special audit, restructuring operations and activation of recovery plan. Banks' promoters can be asked to bring in new management, too. The RBI can also supersede the bank's board, under PCA.
- **When is PCA invoked?** The PCA is invoked when certain risk thresholds are breached. There are three risk thresholds which are based on certain levels of asset quality, profitability, capital and the like. The third such threshold, which is maximum tolerance limit, sets net NPA at over 12% and negative return on assets for four consecutive years.
- **What are the types of sanctions?** There are two type of restrictions, mandatory and discretionary. Restrictions on dividend, branch expansion, directors compensation, are mandatory while discretionary restrictions could include curbs on lending and deposit. In the cases of two banks where PCA was invoked after the revised guidelines were issued — IDBI Bank and UCO Bank — only mandatory restrictions were imposed. Both the banks breached risk threshold 2.
- **What will a bank do if PCA is triggered?** Banks are not allowed to re new or access costly deposits or take steps to increase their fee-based income. Banks will also have to launch a special drive to reduce the stock of NPAs and contain generation of fresh NPAs. They will also not be allowed to enter into new lines of business. RBI will also impose restrictions on the bank on borrowings from interbank market.

Asian Games:

- For the first time, eSports, a form of competition using video games, and canoe polo will be contested as demonstration sports. This will be the second time that Indonesia hosts the Asian Games. This will be the first time that the Asian Games will be held in two cities – Jakarta and Palembang.
- **About Asian Games:** The Asian Games, also known as Asiad, is a continental multi-sport event held every four years between athletes from all over Asia. Since 1982, the Games have been organised by the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA).
- **Prior to that,** the Games were regulated by the Asian Games Federation (AGF). The Games are the second largest multi-sport event after the Olympic Games.

- **The last edition of the Games** was hosted by Incheon, South Korea in October 2014.

URJA GANGA:

- To promote Gas based economy and development of eastern India, 2650 km long Jagdishpur – Haldia & Bokaro – Dhamra Natural Gas Pipeline Project, popularly known as Pradhan Mantri Urja Ganga, is being executed
- **A capital grant of Rs. 5,176 Crore** (40 per cent of the estimated capital cost of Rs. 12,940 Crore) approved.
- **Will cater to energy requirements** of five states, covering 40 districts and 2,600 villages
- **Will revive three large fertilizer** plants-Sindri, Gorakhpur & Sindri, enable industrialization of over 20 cities and development of city gas network in 7 cities, thereby generating large numbers of jobs.
- **Strategic Crude Oil Reserves**
- **To strengthen our Energy Reserves**
- **In the first phase of Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) programme**, Government has built SPR facilities with a total capacity of 5.33 MMT at three locations viz. Vishakhapatnam (1.33 MMT), Mangalore (1.5 MMT) and Padur (2.5 MMT) through the Special Purpose Vehicle i.e. Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserve Ltd (ISPRL). The total reserve of Phase-I of SPR is currently estimated to supply approximately 10 days of India's crude requirement according to the consumption during 2016-17 (194.2 MMT).
- **Under 2nd phase, feasibility** creating two additional SPRs at Chandikhol in Odisha (4 MMT) and Padur in Karnataka (2.5 MMT) on PPP mode is being explored.

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Mahila e-Haat

- **Objective:** To enable an online digital marketing platform for women entrepreneurs, SHGs and NGOs and provide them direct access to markets to sell their products.
- **Launched in March 2016**
- **Women entrepreneurs/SHGs/NGOs** from 24 states are showcasing over 2000 products/services across 18 categories.
- **26000 Self Help Groups** and 3.5 lakh women benefitted
- **Registered women** have already managed to sell goods worth Rs 30 lakhs

Mahila Shakti Kendras

- **Objective:** To provide one stop convergent support services for empowering rural women with opportunities for skill development, employment, digital literacy, health and nutrition.
- **MSK scheme has an institutional mechanism** at the National level (MWCD), State level –State Resource Centre for Women (SRCW), District level- District level Centre for Women (DLCW) that will serve as repository of information to provide technical assistance towards implementing programmes, laws and schemes meant for women through effective coordination.
- **At the village level, community services** will be provided through engagement of Student Volunteers in 115 most backward districts over a period of 3 years with maximum of 8 blocks per district under the supervision and guidance of Block level Committee (BLC) constituted at the block level.
- **At the district level, New District Level** Centre for Women (DLCW) has also been envisaged for 640 districts to be covered in phased manner. These centres will serve as a link between village, block and state level in facilitating women centric schemes

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)

- **Objective:** To provide partial compensation for the wage loss in terms of cash incentive so that the woman can take adequate rest before and after delivery of the first child. The cash incentive provided would lead to improved health seeking behavior amongst the Pregnant Women & Lactating Mothers (PW&LM).
- **The program is being implemented Pan-India** to cover all the Districts of the country. It is expected that approximately 51.70 lakhs beneficiaries per annum would benefit from the scheme.
- **PMMVY is a DBT compliant scheme** and maternity benefits are directly transferred to the bank/post office account of the beneficiary.

- **The programme is being implemented through a robust web-based MIS Software**, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana-Common Application Software (PMMVY-CAS).

The National Policy for Women

- **The National Policy for Women, 2017 is currently under consideration by the cabinet.**
- **Draft National Policy for Women, 2017** has been prepared keeping in view the socio economic changes that have occurred since the last policy formulation in 2001. The policy envisions a society in which, women attain their full potential and are able to participate as equal partners in all spheres of life.
- **It also emphasises the role of an effective framework** to enable the process of developing policies, programmes and practices which will ensure equal rights and opportunities for women.
- **These changes have brought forth fresh opportunities** and possibilities for women's empowerment. While many progressive laws, policies, programmes and schemes have been implemented for women since then, persisting socio-economic problems continue to hinder gender equality. The policy also prescribes the operational strategies for implementation of the policy.
- **It has taken into consideration multi-stakeholder feedback.** Over 15,000 crowd-sourced ideas have been considered as part of the policy formulation process.

Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao Yojana

- **The goal of the BBBP scheme is to celebrate the girl child** and enable her education. The specific objectives of the scheme include preventing gender biased sex selective elimination; ensuring survival and protection of the girl child and ensuring education and participation of the girl child.

- **This a tri-ministerial, convergent effort** of Ministries of Women and Child Development, Health & Family Welfare and Human Resource Development with focus on Awareness and Advocacy Campaign with focus on multi-sectoral action, effective enforcement of Pre-Conception and Pre Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PC&PNDT) Act and Enabling girl child's education.

Nirbhaya Fund

- **Government of India** has set up a dedicated and non-lapsable fund called Nirbhaya Fund in 2013, for the implementation of initiatives aimed at enhancing the safety and security for women in the country. Ministry of Women and Child Development is the nodal authority for appraisal of the schemes/ proposals received under Nirbhaya Fund. Under the Nirbhaya Fund an amount of Rs. 3600 has been allocated, out of which 5731.95 Crore has been appraised so far.
- **Under the 'Safe City Project'**, the Ministry of Women and Child Development has recently appraised projects worth Rs. 2,919.55 Cr. under the Nirbhaya Fund for eight major cities, namely Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Lucknow and Chennai. The plans have been prepared in coordination with Municipal Corporations and Police Commissionerates of these cities. The objective of the project is to make the cities safer for women.
- **A project for Integrated Emergency Response Management** under Nirbhaya is run by Railways. CCTVs and monitoring rooms are being installed at 983 major Railway Stations to provide 24x7 security to women passengers at stations and in trains.
- **Central Victim Compensation Fund has been created under Nirbhaya**, which is a corpus fund to support States/UTs for their Victim Compensation Scheme. This is helping ensure adequate and timely support for women survivors of crime and violence. Under the CVCF scheme, financial assistance of Rs. 200 Crore, as a component of Nirbhaya Fund, has been released by the Ministry of Home Affairs to all States/UTs as one time grant in 2016-17 to support their respective Victim Compensation Scheme.

Bharatmala Pariyojana: Phase-I

- **This is a new umbrella program for the highways sector** that aims to optimize the efficiency of road traffic movement across the country by bridging critical infrastructure gaps. Special attention has been paid to fulfilling the connectivity needs of areas of economic activity, places of religious and tourist interest, border areas, backward and tribal areas, coastal areas and trade routes with neighbouring countries under the programme. Multi-modal integration is one of the key focuses of this programme.
- **A total of around 53,000 kms of NHs have been identified** to improve National Corridor efficiency, of which 24,800 kms are to be taken up in Phase-I, which will be implemented over a period of five years i.e. 2017-18 to 2021-22 in a phased manner.
- **This includes 5,000 kms of the National Corridors**, 9000 kms of Economic Corridors, 6000 km of Feeder Corridors and Inter-Corridors, 2000 kms of Border Roads, 2,000 kms of Coastal Roads and Port Connectivity Roads and 800 kms of Green-field Expressways.
- **Total likely fund provision for Bharatmala Phase-I is Rs. 5,35,000 cr.**
- **Bharatmala will be a major driver for economic growth in the country.** It is estimated that more than 35 crore man-days of employment will be generated under Phase-I of the programme.

Setu Bharatam

- **A programme aims to ensure road safety by making** all National Highways free of railway level crossings, by 2019, by building Railway Over Bridges/ Under Passes. 1500 old and worn down bridges to be improved by replacement/widening/strengthening. 208 Railway Over bridges/Under Bridges to be constructed with an outlay of Rs 20 800 Crore.
- **Detailed Project Reports for 127 ROBs** have been received in the Ministry, out of which 78 ROBs with an estimated cost of ₹ 6,428.57 crore have been sanctioned till 31.03.2017 of which 35 works have been awarded so far.
- **09 ROBs with an estimated cost of ₹ 576.58 crore** have been sanctioned till date during FY 2017-18.
- **Indian Bridge Management System (IBMS)** has been set up to inventories bridges and rate their structural condition so that timely repair and rehabilitation work can be carried out based on the criticality of the structure.

- **Over 1,15,000 bridges have been inventorized so far.**

Chardham Mahamarg Vikas Pariyojna

- **To improve connectivity to the Char Dham pilgrimage** centres in the Himalayas and make journey to these centres safer, faster and more convenient by developing around 900 km of national highways at an approximate cost of Rs 12,000 crore.
- **So far, 24 works have been sanctioned traversing a length of 395 kilometres.** 22 works covering a length of 340 kilometre have been awarded. The projects are being taken up on EPC mode and the program is targeted for completion by March, 2020

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Increasing fiscal deficit of states is a cause of worry and there is a considerable need to focus on state government finances. Analyze

- **The consolidated fiscal deficit** of the states as share in GDP has risen from 18% in FY12 to 44% in FY2018. The rise impacts macroeconomic stability of the nation.
- **Reasons**
 1. The GST has reduced fiscal space for the states to consolidate their revenues.
 2. Lack of financial discipline on expenditure e.g. Loan waiver
 3. Populism in policy making such as rising subsidy burden
 4. Burden of Central Govt. schemes such as UDAY.
 5. Non adherence to FRBM targets while policy making as state's consolidated expenditure has increased to 1.44 times of centre.
- **Impact**
 1. Monetary policy transmission is reduced.
 2. Long term capital investment reduces such as infrastructure, telecom, roads etc.

3. Exposes india to external vulnerabilitites such as decrease in sovereign rating by credit rating agencies thereby threatening current account deficit, balance of payment problem, external borrowing rates etc.
4. Inflation targeting becomes difficult.

- **Way forward.**

N.K.Singh committee has recommended for establishment of fiscal council to insulate populism in financial management.

Decrease in debt to GDP ratio by 60% (curently at 68%)

Instituting exception clause in case of extraordinary situation.

The crisis in India's higher education system has only deepened with time. Analyse in the light of various ills plaguing our higher education system.

- **As per Yashpal report** , India's higher education sector is largest in the world with 2nd highest enrolment of 3.5 crore students. To tap the demographic dividend a robust higher education sector is must.

- **Challenges**

1. Accessibility - gross enrolment ration is 25% which is too less in comparison to countries like south korea (95%). Also, drop out rates are very high.
2. Equity - female , minority, ST/SC, disabled participation is low.
3. Quality - NITI action agenda says more focus is on outputs than outcomes as 80% engineers are unemployable
4. Autonomy - lack of financial and academic autonomy to institutes such as IIM, IITs etc. over the years have curbed research potentials.
5. Regulation - Over regulation regulatory bodies are involved in funding, policy making and regulation such as UGC which increase conflict of interest.
6. Poor infrstruture such as VLSI labs, fabrication facilities etc.

- **Government initiatives**

1. Constitution of HEFA and RISE scheme
2. Declaration of institute of eminence
3. Scrapping UGC and giving autonomy to 60 institutes of higher education
4. Vajra scheme to attract foreign faculty
5. National Testing agency - to secure uniformity in exam and increase oportunities

- **Way forward (Gopalan committee)**
 1. Social Impact assessment of all Research and Development
 2. Improve faculty teacher ratio
 3. Collaboration with foreign higher institutions
 4. Reputed colleges should be converted into deemed universities such as presidential college to improve brand value
- **Thus more need based approach** than supply side approach can go a long way in overhauling higher education sector.

What does Data Localization mean?

- **Data localization** is the act of storing data on any device that is physically present within the borders of a specific country where the data was generated. Free flow of digital data, especially data which could impact government operations or operations in a region, is restricted by some governments. Many attempt to protect and promote security across borders, and therefore encourage data localization.
- **Policy goals:** Goals set in the Draft National Digital Communications Policy 2018, along with various government notifications and guidelines such as Reserve Bank of India's notification on Payment Data Storage 2018, and the Guidelines for Government Departments for Contractual Terms related to Cloud Storage 2017, show signs of data localisation.
- **The rationale behind such mandates** has been attributed to various factors, such as: securing citizen's data, data privacy, data sovereignty, national security, and economic development of the country. The extensive data collection by technology companies, due to their unfettered access and control of user data, has allowed them to freely process and monetise Indian users' data outside the country.
- **Why technology firms are worried?** Stricter localisation norms would help India get easier access to data when conducting investigations, but critics say it could lead to increased government demands for data access. Technology firms worry the mandate would hurt their planned investments by raising costs related to setting up new local data centres.
- **Why government is in favour of data localisation?** Greater use of digital platforms in India for shopping or social networking have made it a lucrative market for technology companies, but a rising number of data breaches have pushed New Delhi to develop strong data protection rules.
- **Also, minimal or deregulated governance** on critical data, due to absence of localisation requirements, could be detrimental to India's national security as data would be outside the purview of existing data protection legislation. The ineffectiveness of Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties (MLATs) in this realm aggravates such government fears.

- **In addition to these**, India also aspires to become a global hub for, among others, cloud computing, data hosting and international data centres, all of which are prompting the government to enact data localisation requirements for accelerating the nation's economic growth, especially in the sphere of digital technologies.
- **Is data localisation** the solution to physical data access and decryption of enciphered data? Can data localisation be conflated with access?
- **The proposed law by Srikrishna Committee** cannot be a knee-jerk reaction to some events; it has to be in line with the SC judgement, which supports the march of technology, innovations, growth of knowledge, and big data analytics for the growth of economies, and for better services to citizens. It recognizes the role of data driven innovation (DDI) for the growth of economies, and for job creation. But it emphasises that the data so collected be utilised for legitimate purposes

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Interlinking of Rivers

- **Developments so far:** Steps have been taken for early implementation of five interlinking projects and Memorandum of Agreement for implementation of these projects is being finalised in consultation with the concerned state governments.
- **These five projects include Ken-Betwa link project,** Damanganga-Pinjal link project, Par-Tapi-Narmada link project, Godavari-Cauvery (Grand Anicut) link project and Parvati-Kali Sindhu-Chambal link.
- **Need for interlinking of rivers:** The interlinking project aims to link India's rivers by a network of reservoirs and canals that will allow for their water capacities to be shared and redistributed. According to some experts, this is an engineered panacea that will reduce persistent floods in some parts and water shortages in other parts besides facilitating the generation of hydroelectricity for an increasingly power hungry country.
- **Benefits and significance of interlinking:** Enhances water and food security of the country and it is essential for providing water to drought prone and water deficit areas.

- **Proper utilization:** River interlinking projects envisage that the surplus water available in Himalayan Rivers is transferred to the areas where water supply is not adequate in the Peninsular India. Also, huge quantities of water from several Peninsular rivers drain unutilized into the sea, and river interlinking projects help transfer this water to water deficit areas of Peninsular India.
- **Boost to agriculture:** The main occupation of rural India is agriculture and if monsoon fails in a year, then agricultural activities come to a standstill and this will aggravate rural poverty. Interlinking of rivers will be a practical solution for this problem, because the water can be stored or water can be transferred from water surplus area to deficit.
- **Disaster mitigation:** The Ganga Basin, Brahmaputra basin sees floods almost every year. In order to avoid this, the water from these areas has to be diverted to other areas where there is scarcity of water. This can be achieved by linking the rivers. There is a two way advantage with this – floods will be controlled and scarcity of water will be reduced.
- **Transportation:** Interlinking of rivers will also have commercial importance on a longer run. This can be used as inland waterways and which helps in faster movement of goods from one place to other.
- **Employment generation:** Interlinking also creates a new occupation for people living in and around these canals and it can be the main areas of fishing in India.

Chandrayaan- 1

- **What is Moon Mineralogy Mapper (M3) instrument?** M3, aboard the Chandrayaan-1 spacecraft, launched in 2008 by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), was uniquely equipped to confirm the presence of solid ice on the Moon.
- **It collected data that not only picked up** the reflective properties we would expect from ice, but was able to directly measure the distinctive way its molecules absorb infrared light, so it can differentiate between liquid water or vapour and solid ice.
- **Highlights of the findings:** With enough ice sitting at the surface — within the top few millimetres — water would possibly be accessible as a resource for future expeditions to explore and even stay on the Moon, and potentially easier to access than the water detected beneath the Moon's surface. The ice deposits are patchily distributed and could possibly be ancient. At the southern pole, most of the ice is concentrated at lunar craters, while the northern pole's ice is more widely, but sparsely spread.
- **Most of the new-found water** ice lies in the shadows of craters near the poles, where the warmest temperatures never reach above minus 156 degrees Celsius. Due to the very small tilt of the Moon's rotation axis, sunlight never reaches these regions.

- **Way ahead:** Learning more about this ice, how it got there, and how it interacts with the larger lunar environment will be a key mission focus for NASA and commercial partners, as humans endeavour to return to and explore the Moon.
- **About Chandrayaan-1:** Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) lost communication with Chandrayaan-1 on August 29, 2009, barely a year after it was launched on October 22, 2008. The Chandrayaan-1 mission performed high-resolution remote sensing of the moon in visible, near infrared (NIR), low energy X-rays and high-energy X-ray regions. One of the objectives was to prepare a three-dimensional atlas (with high spatial and altitude resolution) of both near and far side of the moon.
- **It aimed at conducting chemical and mineralogical mapping** of the entire lunar surface for distribution of mineral and chemical elements such as Magnesium, Aluminium, Silicon, Calcium, Iron and Titanium as well as high atomic number elements such as Radon, Uranium and Thorium with high spatial resolution.

Interior Exploration using Seismic Investigations, Geodesy and Heat Transport (InSight)

- **InSight is part of NASA's Discovery Program**, managed by the agency's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama. It will be the first mission to peer deep beneath the Martian surface, studying the planet's interior by measuring its heat output and listening for marsquakes, which are seismic events similar to earthquakes on Earth.
- **It will use the seismic waves** generated by marsquakes to develop a map of the planet's deep interior.
- **Significance of the mission:** The findings of Mars' formation will help better understand how other rocky planets, including Earth, were and are created. But InSight is more than a Mars mission – it is a terrestrial planet explorer that would address one of the most fundamental issues of planetary and solar system science – understanding the processes that shaped the rocky planets of the inner solar system (including Earth) more than four billion years ago.
- **By using sophisticated geophysical instruments**, InSight would delve deep beneath the surface of Mars, detecting the fingerprints of the processes of terrestrial planet formation, as well as measuring the planet's "vital signs": Its "pulse" (seismology), "temperature" (heat flow probe), and "reflexes" (precision tracking). InSight seeks to answer one of science's most fundamental questions: How did the terrestrial planets form?

OSIRIS-REx spacecraft

- **OSIRIS-REx will spend two years** travelling towards Bennu, arriving at the asteroid in August 2018. The probe will orbit the asteroid for 3 years, conducting several scientific experiments, before returning to Earth, with the sample capsule expected to land in Utah, USA in September 2023.
- **Scientific Mission Goals:** During its three year orbit of Bennu, OSIRIS-REx will be conducting a range of scientific experiments in order to better understand the asteroid. As part of this, the asteroid will be mapped using instruments on the probe, in order to select a suitable site for samples to be collected from. The aim of the mission is to collect a sample of regolith- the loose, soil-like material which covers the surface of the asteroid.
- **In July 2020**, the probe will move to within a few metres of Bennu, extending its robotic arm to touch the asteroid's surface. The arm will make contact with the surface for just 5 seconds, during which a blast of nitrogen gas will be used to stir up the regolith, allowing it to be sucked into the sample collector. OSIRIS-REx has enough nitrogen on board for 3 sample collection attempts, and NASA are hoping to collect between 60 and 2000g of regolith material to bring back to Earth.
- **Why was Bennu chosen?** Bennu was selected for a the OSIRIS-REx mission from over 500,000 known asteroids, due to it fitting a number of key criteria. These include:
 - **Proximity to Earth:** In order for OSIRIS-REx to reach its destination in a reasonable timeframe, NASA needed to find an asteroid which had a similar orbit to Earth. Around 7000 asteroids are 'Near-Earth Objects' (NEOs), meaning they travel within around ~30million miles of the Earth. Out of these, just under 200 have orbits similar to Earth, with Bennu being one of these.
 - **Size:** Small asteroids, those less than 200m in diameter, typically spin much faster than larger asteroids, meaning the regolith material can be ejected into space. Bennu is around 500m in diameter, so rotates slowly enough to ensure that the regolith stays on its surface.
 - **Composition:** Bennu is a primitive asteroid, meaning it hasn't significantly changed since the beginning of the Solar System (over 4 billion years ago). It is also very carbon-rich, meaning it may contain organic molecules, which could have been precursors to life on Earth.
 - **Additionally**, Bennu is of interest as it is a Potentially Hazardous Asteroid (PHA). Every 6 years, Bennu's orbit brings it within 200,000 miles of the Earth, which means it has a high probability of impacting Earth in the late 22nd Century.

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BBIN motor pact

- **Context:** Pending ratification from Bhutan, India plans to operationalise BBIN motor vehicle agreement (MVA) with Bangladesh and Nepal for seamless movement of passenger and cargo vehicles.
- **Background:** Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) had signed a framework MVA in June 2015 to enable movement of passenger and cargo vehicles across borders among the four countries. Bhutan has not yet ratified the pact for its entry to come into force. However, Bhutan has given its consent for the BBIN MVA to enter into force amongst the other 3 countries i.e. Bangladesh, India and Nepal, who have already ratified it.
- **About BBIN agreement:** The agreement encapsulates the spirit of economic integration emphasised in the SAARC Charter. The main objective of the agreement is to provide seamless people-to-people contact and enhance economic interaction by facilitating cross border movement of people and goods.
- **It would permit unhindered movement** of passenger and cargo vehicles among the four countries. Cargo vehicles do not have to be changed at the border, a practice that has prevailed until now. As per the agreement, member countries would allow vehicles registered in the other countries to enter their territory under certain terms and conditions.

- **Customs and tariffs** will be decided by the respective countries and these would be finalised at bilateral and trilateral forums. The BBIN agreement will promote safe, economical efficient and environmentally sound road transport in the sub-region and will further help each country in creating an institutional mechanism for regional integration

Thanks to Chinese expansionism, the South China Sea has become Asean's Achilles heel

- **Asean regional forum**, provides a setting for annual ministerial discussions on peace and security issues across the Asia-Pacific region. Established in 1994, it draws together 27 member states, including key players like the US, China, India, Japan, Russia, Australia and the two Koreas.
- **The regional forum's most recent discussions** were held along with three other meetings this month – the 18-nation East Asia Summit (whose membership extends from the US and New Zealand to India and Russia), the Asean Plus Three (China, Japan and South Korea) and Asean's own annual ministerial discussions. These meetings, all at foreign minister level and held in quick succession in Singapore, advertised Asean's esteemed centrality.
- **However, the Asean-centred extra-regional initiatives**, characterised by minimal institutionalisation and consensual decision-making, serve primarily as “talking shops” for confidence building and improved co-operation. Like in Asean itself, the politics of lowest common denominator tends to prevail.
- **These forums have yet to move to a strategy** of preventive diplomacy or conflict resolution. They have also not been able to tangibly contribute to building a rules-based order, including by reining in aggressive unilateralism by their own members, like China, Russia and the US.
- **Despite their limitations**, the forums are seen by members as offering good value for promoting their foreign policy objectives.
- **The highlight of the Singapore meetings**, however, was the announcement by China and Asean that they have agreed on a draft document that would serve as a basis for further negotiations for a code of conduct, or COC, in the South China Sea, one of the world's busiest waterways.
- **A COC was mandated by the 2002 Declaration** on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, which exhorted all parties “to exercise self-restraint” with regard to “activities that would complicate or escalate disputes”. But that appeal was essentially ignored by China, which has fundamentally changed the status quo in the South China Sea in its favour, without incurring any international costs.

- **Sixteen years after that declaration**, just an intention to negotiate a COC has been announced. By the time the actual COC emerges, China will have fully consolidated its control in the South China Sea, with the code only serving to reinforce the new reality. This explains why Beijing has delayed a COC while it presses ahead in the South China Sea with frenzied construction and militarisation.
- **Today, the South China Sea has emerged as Asean's Achilles heel**, with its failure to take a unified stance aiding Beijing's divide-and-rule strategy.
- **The rift in Asean between pro-China members** and the rest has now become difficult to set right. By conveying disunity and weakness, Asean has emboldened China's territorial and maritime revisionism, which, in turn, has made the South China Sea the world's most critical hotspot.
- **Against this backdrop, the much-hyped announcement** of a single draft document for future negotiations, with Singaporean Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan hailing it as "yet another milestone in the COC process", was just the latest example of how Asean has been playing right into China's hands.
- **In fact, that announcement came soon after the second anniversary** of the landmark ruling of an international arbitral tribunal, which knocked the bottom out of China's expansive claims in the South China Sea. Since that ruling, which is now part of international law, China has only accelerated its expansionism, as if to make the verdict meaningless.
- **This is a reminder that international law** by itself is no answer to China's expansionism. If southeast Asia, a region of nearly 640 million people, is coerced into accepting Chinese hegemony, it will have a cascading geopolitical impact across the Indo-Pacific.

What is the 50% rule?

- **In Indra Sawhney vs Union Of India, 1992**, the court capped caste-based reservation, ruling that "no provision of reservation or preference can be so vigorously pursued as to destroy the very concept of equality".
- **"Since this Court has consistently held** that the reservation under Articles 15(4) and 16(4) should not exceed 50% and the States and the Union have by and large accepted this as correct it should be held as constitutional prohibition and any reservation beyond 50% would liable to be struck down."
- **How did the rule come about?** In 1979, the Janata Party government constituted the Second Backward Classes Commission – popularly known as the Mandal Commission after its chairman, the Bihar MP Bindheshwar Mandal – with the mandate to identify India's socially or educationally backward classes.

- **At the time, India already had reservation** for Dalits and Adivasis. The Mandal Commission's report, submitted in 1980, called for giving reservation to the Other Backward Classes, a vast conglomeration of castes that broadly fit the "shudra" category of the caste system. Soon after the report was submitted, however, the Congress returned to power and it was put in cold storage.
- **It took a decade and another non-Congress government**, this time led by VP Singh, to implement the Mandal Commission's recommendations, sparking a storm of protests and a petition to the Supreme Court which came to be known as the Indra Sawhney case.
- **Ruling on the petition**, the court partially accepted the government's new policy, allowing for 27% reservation for the Other Backward Classes, but put in a crucial rider: socially and economically advanced individuals among the Other Backward Classes will not be covered. The court also held that the share of jobs, or educational or legislative seats reserved for different communities cannot together exceed 50%.
- **Why 50%?** The Other Backward Classes, as identified by the Mandal Commission, make up about 52% of India's population according to the 1931 Census, the last enumeration of castes in the country. The court, however, did not deal with the question of population while ruling that although reservation was fine, it must be capped.
- **"Just as every power must be exercised reasonably and fairly**, the power conferred by Clause (4) of Article 16 should also be exercised in a fair manner and within reasonable limits – and what is more reasonable than to say that reservation under Clause (4) shall not exceed 50% of the appointments or posts, barring certain extra-ordinary situations as explained hereinafter."
- **The court has never explained why 50% is "reasonable"** when the Other Backward Classes alone are at least 52% of the population. In any case, the 50% ceiling meant the Other Backward Classes received 27% share in the reservation pie while Dalits and Adivasis together got 22.5%, bring the total to 49.5%.
- **Why does Tamil Nadu have 69% reservation?** If the lack of clarity on why 50% was a "reasonable limit" was not enough, Tamil Nadu added to the confusion by ensuring the Supreme Court's judgement did not weaken its reservation system, which was more extensive than anywhere else in India. The state's Assembly passed the Tamil Nadu Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Reservation of Seats in Educational Institutions and Appointments or Posts in the Services under the State) Act, 1993 to keep its reservation limit intact at 69%. The law was subsequently included into the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution through the 76th Constitution Amendment passed by Parliament in 1994.

What is a 'national disaster'?

- **As per the Disaster Management Act, 2005**, “disaster” means a catastrophe, mishap, calamity or grave occurrence in any area, arising from natural or man-made causes, or by accident or negligence which results in substantial loss of life or human suffering or damage to, and destruction of, property, or damage to, or degradation of, environment, and is of such a nature or magnitude as to be beyond the coping capacity of the community of the affected area.
- **A natural disaster** includes earthquake, flood, landslide, cyclone, tsunami, urban flood, heatwave; a man-made disaster can be nuclear, biological and chemical.
- **There is no provision, executive or legal**, to declare a natural calamity as a national calamity.
- **The 10th Finance Commission (1995-2000)** examined a proposal that a disaster be termed “a national calamity of rarest severity” if it affects one-third of the population of a state.
- **The panel did not define a “calamity of rare severity”** but stated that a calamity of rare severity would necessarily have to be adjudged on a case-to-case basis taking into account, inter-alia, the intensity and magnitude of the calamity, level of assistance needed, the capacity of the state to tackle the problem, the alternatives and flexibility available within the plans to provide succour and relief, etc.
- **The flash floods in Uttarakhand and Cyclone Hudhud were later classified as calamities of “severe nature”**.
- **When a calamity is declared to be of “rare severity”/“severe nature”**, support to the state government is provided at the national level. The Centre also considers additional assistance from the NDRF. A Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) is set up, with the corpus shared 3:1 between Centre and state.
- **When resources in the CRF are inadequate, additional assistance is considered** from the National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF), funded 100% by the Centre. Relief in repayment of loans or for grant of fresh loans to the persons affected on concessional terms, too, are considered once a calamity is declared “severe”.
- **As per the National Policy on Disaster Management, 2009**, the National Crisis Management Committee headed by the Cabinet Secretary deals with major crises that have serious or national ramifications.
- **For calamities of severe nature, inter-ministerial central teams** are deputed to the affected states for assessment of damage and relief assistance required. An inter-ministerial group, headed by the Union Home Secretary, studies the assessment and recommends the quantum of assistance from the NDRF/National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF).
- **Based on this, a high-level committee comprising** the Finance Minister as chairman and the Home Minister, Agriculture Minister, and Planning Commission Deputy Chairman as members approves the central assistance.

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Indian honey sector

- **Bees wax is obtained from the honeycombs of bees of Apidae family after the honey has been removed by draining or centrifuging.** Beeswax consists of a mixture of esters of fatty acids and fatty alcohols, hydrocarbons and free fatty acids. Minor amounts of free fatty alcohols are also present.
- **The combs are melted with hot water**, steam or solar heat and the melted product is filtered and cast into cakes of yellow bees wax.
- **White bees wax** is obtained by bleaching the yellow bees wax with oxidising agents.
- **Royal jelly** is the mixture of secretions from hypopharyngeal and mandibular glands of worker bees, free from any additive. It is the food of larval and adult queens.
- **It is a raw and natural food**, unprocessed except for filtration which does not undergo addition of substances. The colour, taste and the chemical composition of royal jelly are determined by absorption and transformation by the bees fed with the following two types of foods during the royal jelly production time.

- **Significance of the sector:** About 90,000 tonnes of honey of all varieties is produced annually in the country. There are about 30 lakh honey bee colonies and five lakh people are engaged in the business.
- **The government is promoting honey production** through the mission for integrated development of horticulture (MIDH) and the National Bee Board has been formed for implementing various activities for development of scientific beekeeping under MIDH.

Quad grouping

- **Maintain the momentum** of high-level consultations among the Quad countries with the aim of “free and open Indo-Pacific region” and progressively move it to a political level.
- **Australia, Japan, India and the US** should work with countries in the IOR to help maintain independent security and economic policies by supporting high-quality alternatives to unilateral Chinese investments and political alignment with Chinese regional objectives.
- **The four countries** should work to oppose the establishment of permanent Chinese military bases in the IOR. This should include demonstrating to China that its security needs can be met through cooperation and consultation with other nations and without the recourse to a “disruptive unilateral military presence.”
- **Naval fleets should evolve increasingly** long range operations. This may require consideration in Japan of new options such as nuclear propulsion for its submarines.
- **The Quad:** Regional coalition known as the ‘Quad’, the quadrilateral formation includes Japan, India, United States and Australia.
- **All four nations** find a common ground of being the democratic nations and common interests of unhindered maritime trade and security. The idea was first mooted by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2007. However, the idea couldn’t move ahead with Australia pulling out of it.
- **China’s concerns:** The coming together of India, the US, Japan and Australia is being seen as building a strategic partnership to deal with China’s rise and its implications.

ICOMOS

- **About ICOMOS:** The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) is a prestigious non-government organisation.
- **It promotes** the application of theory, methodology and scientific techniques for conservation of architectural and archaeological heritage across the world.
- **ICOMOS** is also an advisory body to the UNESCO for cultural heritage, in particular for implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

TReDS platform

- **This makes HAL the first PSU** (public sector unit) to transact on TReDS across platforms.
- **RXIL, India's first TReDS platform**, enables MSMEs to gain control of their receivables with enhanced visibility and timeliness.
- **What is TReDS?** TReDS is an online electronic institutional mechanism for facilitating the financing of trade receivables of MSMEs through multiple financiers.
- **The TReDS Platform** will enable discounting of invoices/bills of exchange of MSME Sellers against large Corporates including Govt.
- **Departments and PSUs**, through an auction mechanism, to ensure prompt realization of trade receivables at competitive market rates.
- **Salient Features of TReDS:**
 - Unified platform for Sellers, Buyers and Financiers.
 - Eliminates Paper.
 - Easy Access to Funds.
 - Transact Online.

Competitive Discount Rates.
Seamless Data Flow.
Standardised Practices.

- **How does the system work?** A seller has to upload the invoice on the platform. It then goes to the buyer for acceptance. Once the buyer accepts, the invoice becomes a factoring unit. The factoring unit then goes to auction. The financiers then enter their discounting (finance) rate
- **The seller or buyer**, whoever is bearing the interest (financing) cost, gets to accept the final bid. TReDs then settle the trade by debiting the financier and paying the seller.
- **The amount gets credited** the next working day into the seller's designated bank account through an electronic payment mode.
- **The second leg of the settlement** is when the financier makes the repayment and the amount is repaid to the financier.

China continues to “intrude” Indian cyberspace in a “significant” way

- **It has been observed that China** continues to “intrude” Indian cyberspace in a “significant” way. The cyber attacks from China made up 35% of the total number of cyber attacks on official Indian websites, followed by US (17%), Russia (15%), Pakistan (9%), Canada (7%) and Germany (5%).
- **There is also the possibility of** “malicious actors from Pakistan using German and Canadian cyberspace for intruding into Indian cyberspace and carrying out malicious activities”.
- **They are targeting by sending spear phishing emails** with malware attachments. Phishing attacks are usually in the form of an email from a trusted source where they ask for personal details such as bank details personal details, passwords.
- **Institutions affected:** Many of the institutions impacted by the malicious activities have been identified, and they have been advised to take appropriate preventive action.
- **These include Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC)**, National Informatics Centre (NIC), Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), Railways, Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS) and some banks like Punjab National Bank among others.

- **About CERT-In: What is it?** CERT-In (the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team) is a government-mandated information technology (IT) security organization. CERT-In was created by the Indian Department of Information Technology in 2004 and operates under the auspices of that department.
- **It's purpose:** The purpose of CERT-In is to respond to computer security incidents, report on vulnerabilities and promote effective IT security practices throughout the country. According to the provisions of the Information Technology Amendment Act 2008, CERT-In is responsible for overseeing administration of the Act.

Pradhan Mantri Yuva Yojana (MSDE)

- **In order to encourage entrepreneurship** among youth the scheme was launched on 9th November 2016.
- **The scheme aims** at creating a culture of Entrepreneurship amongst youth by motivating, educating and equipping them with basics skills of entrepreneurship.
- **The scheme** will be launched in 2200 Institutes of Higher Learning (colleges/universities/polytechnics), 300 schools, 500 ITI's and 50 Entrepreneurship Development Centres (EDCs).
- **The entrepreneurship education** will be provided to interested students through Facilitated Blended Model, which is a combination of e-Learning and Class room teaching.
- **The course curriculum** is based on experiential learning and emphasises on Learning by Doing.
- **E Cell is an essential** component of the scheme, which will help students develop their entrepreneurial capabilities by virtue of exposing them to the real-life situations.
- **Participating institutes** and students will be provided handholding support through a network of 55 Regional/Nodal Hubs, spread across the country.

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Article 35A

- **Article 35A is a provision incorporated in the Constitution** giving the Jammu and Kashmir Legislature a carte blanche to decide who all are 'permanent residents' of the State and confer on them special rights and privileges in public sector jobs, acquisition of property in the State, scholarships and other public aid and welfare.
- **The provision mandates** that no act of the legislature coming under it can be challenged for violating the Constitution or any other law of the land.
- **How did it come about?** Article 35A was incorporated into the Constitution in 1954 by an order of the then President Rajendra Prasad on the advice of the Jawaharlal Nehru Cabinet.
- **The controversial Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order** of 1954 followed the 1952 Delhi Agreement entered into between Nehru and the then Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir Sheikh Abdullah, which extended Indian citizenship to the 'State subjects' of Jammu and Kashmir.

- **The Presidential Order** was issued under Article 370 (1) (d) of the Constitution. This provision allows the President to make certain “exceptions and modifications” to the Constitution for the benefit of ‘State subjects’ of Jammu and Kashmir.
- **So Article 35A was added to the Constitution** as a testimony of the special consideration the Indian government accorded to the ‘permanent residents’ of Jammu and Kashmir.

Poshan Maah (National Nutrition Month)

- **About Poshan Maah (National Nutrition Month):** The primary objective of the celebration of Poshan Maah is to take the messages of POSHAN to the grass root level. The programme- an initiative of WCD Ministry and NITI Aayog is supported by 18 line Ministries/Departments/Government Organizations.
- **It seeks to synergise all efforts by leveraging technology** and intends to take nutrition awareness to the level of Jan Andolan or People’s Movement. The programme focuses on 8 themes – Antenatal Care, Optimal Breastfeeding (Early & Exclusive), Complementary Feeding, Anemia, Growth Monitoring, Girls-education, diet, right age of Marriage, Hygiene & Sanitation, Food Fortification.
- **About POSHAN Abhiyan:** POSHAN Abhiyaan (National Nutrition Mission) was launched on 8th March, 2018. Objectives: The programme through use of technology, a targeted approach and convergence strives to reduce the level of Stunting, Under-nutrition, Anemia and Low Birth Weight in Children, as also, focus on Adolescent Girls, Pregnant Women & Lactating Mothers, thus holistically addressing malnutrition.
- **Aims: POSHAN Abhiyaan** aims to ensure service delivery and interventions by use of technology, behavioural change through convergence and lays-down specific targets to be achieved across different monitoring parameters over the next few years.
- **Coverage: To ensure a holistic approach**, all 36 States/UTs and 718 districts will be covered in a phased manner by the year 2020.

National Logistics Portal

- **The portal will be implemented in phases** and will fulfil the commitment of the Government of India to enhance trade competitiveness, create jobs, boost India's performance in global rankings and pave the way for India to become a logistics hub.
- **India's logistics sector:** India's logistics sector is highly defragmented and the aim is to reduce the logistics cost from the present 14% of GDP to less than 10% by 2022. India's logistics sector is very complex with more than 20 government agencies, 40 partnering government agencies (PGAs), 37 export promotion councils, 500 certifications, 10000 commodities, 160 billion market size.
- **It also involves 12 million employment base**, 200 shipping agencies, 36 logistic services, 129 ICDs, 168 CFSs, 50 IT ecosystems and banks & insurance agencies. Further, 81 authorities and 500 certificates are required for EXIM.
- **Significance of the sector:** As per the Economic Survey 2017-18, the Indian logistics sector provides livelihood to more than 22 million people and improving the sector will facilitate 10 % decrease in indirect logistics cost leading to the growth of 5 to 8% in exports. Further, the Survey estimates that the worth of Indian logistics market would be around USD 215 billion in next two years compared to about USD 160 billion currently.

Sustainable Development in Indian Himalayan Region

- **Important recommendations made:** Spring Mapping and Revival, using 8 steps protocol be taken up across Himalayan States in phased manner. Apply carrying capacity concept to all major tourist destinations; implement and monitor tourism sector Standards and apply performance based incentives for States faring well on the standards.
- **Assessment of nature & extent of Shifting Cultivation area**, improved policy coherence, strengthened tenurial security & improved access to related programs/schemes are other key recommendations to transform shifting cultivation.
- **Strengthening of skill & entrepreneurship will require focus** on identified priority sectors where mountains have advantage, investment in trainers, assessors and training centers in industry partnership.
- **Having a Central Data Management Agency for Himalayas** to provide data with high fidelity scenario while addressing data sharing, access, authenticity and comparability issues will go a long way in addressing data related issues.

- **The call for actions include:** Setting up of a Himalayan Authority for coordinated and holistic development of entire Himalayan region. Launching of “Himalaya Calling”: An Awareness to Action Campaign as people's movement.
- **Setting up of Mission on Spring Water Management** in Himalayas, National Mission/Program on Transforming Shifting Cultivation in North Eastern States, demand driven network of skill and entrepreneurship development Centers in Himalayan States among others.

Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission

- **Objective:** The mission aims to create **300 such Rurban growth clusters** over the next 3 years, across the country. The funding for Rurban Clusters will be through various schemes of the Government converged into the cluster.
- **Achievement:** · Against the allocation of 300 clusters, 267 clusters have already been identified.
- **The emphasis is to develop the thematic economic strengths** of the clusters, provide required amenities to support this, apart from saturating basic, social and digital infrastructure in the clusters within a period of 3 years.
- **153 Integrated Cluster Action Plans (ICAPs)**, which are the blue prints of investment for each cluster, have been approved for 29 States and one UT of Dadra & Nagar Haveli.
- **At the end of the Mission period**, the country will have 300 Rurban clusters which will be ODF, green, agro based and thematic clusters based on skilled manpower and access to economic opportunities.

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VILLAGE ROADS- PRADAHAN MANTRI GRAM SADAK YOJANA

- **Objective: To provide road connectivity to every village by 2019.**
- **Achievements:** • **As compared to 2014 when only 56 per cent** of the villages had road connectivity, now more than 82 per cent villages mostly in far flung and inaccessible areas have been connected by roads.
- **Target of connecting the remaining 14,141** habitations advanced from 2022 to 2019
- **Construction of 73,727 km of roads** to be done. 4,113 kms of roads constructed in 2016-17 using “Green Technologies” in 2016-17, 2634 kms during 2014-16 and 807 kms giving 2000-14.
- **“Meri Sadak” mobile app bringing** in transparency and citizen engagement in registering of complaints regarding quality of construction and pace of construction.

- **Out of 1,78,184 eligible habitations**, 1,64,547 habitations have been sanctioned (92.34%) till 30.11.2017
- **A total of 1,45,158 eligible** unconnected habitations have been connected.
- **Road length of over 25,000 km** has been constructed by covering 6400 habitations as on 15.01.2018
- **Habitations in LWE** affected blocks have also been undertaken in 9 states with a target of constructing 5,382 km.

DEENDAYAL ANTYODAYA YOJANA

- **Objective:** Aims at reaching out to all rural poor households estimated at about 9 crores and link them to sustainable livelihood opportunities through organizing all the rural poor into self-managed institutions, build their skills and capacities and enable them to access finance, livelihood services, entitlements and services from both the public and private sectors, till they come out of poverty.
- **Achievements: 2017-18** · During 2017-18 (as on October 2017), 683 additional blocks have been covered under “Intensive” implementation strategy of DAY-NRLM bringing the cumulative total to 4330 blocks.
- **During the year 2017-18** so far, over 56 lakh households have been mobilized into 4.84 lakh SHGs.
- **About 14.2 lakh SHGs** have accessed credit of Rs. 18000 crore up to October, 2017.
- **More than 33 lakh Mahila Kisans** have been covered under Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP) in 17 States, to empower women in agriculture and enhance their participation and productivity in agriculture based livelihoods.
- **“Aajeevika Grameen Express Yojana (AGEY)”** initiated for members of Self Help Groups (SHGs) to operate public transport services in backward rural areas and to provide safe, affordable and community monitored rural transport services (e-rickshaws, 3 and 4 wheeler motorised transport vehicles) to connect remote villages with key services and amenities (including access to markets, education and health) for the overall economic development of the area.

- **Promotion of rural enterprises:** Start Up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP) to support rural youth to take up local entrepreneurship. As on date, 7800 enterprises have been promoted across 17 States. DEENDAYAL UPADHYAYA GRAMEEN KAUSHALYA YOJANA (DDU-GKY)
- **Against a target** of skilling 2 lakh candidates during the current financial year, over 83,745 candidates have already been trained, of which over 46,654 candidates have been placed in jobs

PRADHAN MANTRI AWAS YOJANA (PMAY) - APNA GHAR APNI CHHAT

- **To meet the objective of Housing for All by 2022** - 75 years of Independence As against the initial scheme which provided loans of up to Rs 6 lakh at a subsidized rate of 6.5 per cent, now, housing loans of up to Rs 9 lakh and Rs 12 lakh now get interest subvention of 4 per cent and 3 per cent, respectively Over the last three and a half years, more than 93 lakh houses have been constructed by the Government in rural and urban areas.
- **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Gramin Objective:** To provide a home to every rural poor which will mandatorily have a toilet along with other facilities; 1 crore houses to be built by 2019. Beneficiaries identified based on SECC-2011
- **Achievements:** *A record number of one crore new houses under PMAY(G) are to be completed by March, 2019. As on 26.12.2017, 15.57 lakh rural houses have been completed in 2017-18.
- ***Nearly 85 percent of the eligible habitations** (population of 500 in plain areas and 250 in hill areas) have already been connected by all- weather road. This was at 57 percent three and a half years ago.
- ***The target of 100 percent connectivity** by March, 2019 is likely to be nearly achieved.

BUDGET 2018-19

- ***Government to spend Rs 14.34 lakh crore in rural areas:** Besides generating employment, this investment will lead to a construction of 3.17 lakh km of roads, 51 lakh new houses, 1.88 crore toilets, and will provide electricity connections to 1.75 crore new households.
- ***Budget allocation for the Rural Development Ministry** increased to Rs 1.124 lakh crore. ***Allocation for the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)** increased to Rs 5,750 crore in 2018-19 from Rs 4,500 crore.
- **Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY)** Objective: Social, cultural, economic, infrastructure developments in the villages by development of model villages called “Adarsh Gram”
- **Achievements: I. 1241 Gram Panchayats** adopted by MPs under SAGY (As on 18th December 2017)
- **II. Out of these, 857 Gram Panchayats** have uploaded their Village Development Plans on the SAGY website
- **III. GPs identified under SAGY** have completed 19951 projects and 7152 (15.3%) projects are in progress

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Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)

- **Context:** The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), one of India's premier avian research institutes, has started operating its first regional centre on the campus of Wetland Research and Training Centre near Chilika Lake.
- **Key facts:** With opening up its branch in Odisha, the BNHS would be engaged in identifying the air route of the foreign birds flocking the Chilika lake during winter, sample collection, training related to bird census, publishing bird migration atlas books, examining various diseases among the birds and to review the condition of the Nalabana bird sanctuary along with counting the birds.
- **About Chilika Lagoon:** It is the largest coastal lagoon in India and the second largest lagoon in the world after The New Caledonian barrier reef in New Caledonia. It is the largest wintering ground for migratory waterfowl found anywhere on the Indian sub-continent. It is one of the hotspot of biodiversity in the country, and some rare, vulnerable and endangered species listed in the IUCN Red List of threatened Animals inhabit in the lagoon for atleast part of their life cycle.
- **On account of its rich bio-diversity** and ecological significance, Chilika was designated as the 1st "Ramsar Site" of India. The Nalaban Island within the lagoon is notified as a Bird Sanctuary under Wildlife (Protection) Act, the National Wetlands, mangroves and coral reefs Committee of Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India, have also identified the lagoon as a priority site for conservation and management.

- **Chilika Lagoon** lies in the districts of Puri, Khurda and Ganjam of Odisha State along the eastern coast of India. It is well connected to the Chennai and Kolkata through National Highway No 5, and the Chennai Kolkata rail line passes along the western bank of the Lagoon Balugaon, with Balugaon, Chilika and Rambha being the main stations along the Western shoreline of the lagoon.
- **About BNHS:** The Bombay Natural History Society, founded on 15 September 1883, is one of the largest non-governmental organisations in India engaged in conservation and biodiversity research. BNHS is the partner of BirdLife International in India. It has been designated as a 'Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation' by the Department of Science and Technology.
- **Logo: The BNHS logo is the great hornbill.** Internet of Birds: IT consultancy firm Accenture and the Bombay Natural History Society have developed Internet of Birds platform that identifies bird species found in India using Artificial Intelligence technology, including machine learning and computer vision, from digital photos that are uploaded by the public.

Strategic Partnership (SP) model

- This is the first project under the MoD's prestigious Strategic Partnership (SP) Model that aims at providing significant fillip to the Government's 'Make in India' programme.
- **What is Strategic Partnership (SP) model?** The strategic partner model is intended to enhance competition, increase efficiencies, facilitate faster and more significant absorption of technology, create a tiered industrial ecosystem, ensure development of a wider skill base, trigger innovation and enable participation in global value chains as well as promote exports.
- **Under the model**, the government intends to boost private sector participation and create domestic expertise in four key areas, namely, fighter aircraft, helicopters, submarines, and armoured vehicles and main battle tanks. One company would be selected for each area based on its competence, which would then tie up with the foreign Original Equipment Manufacturer selected through the procurement process, to build the platform in India with significant technology transfer.
- **Significance:** The SP model, if implemented well, is likely to have a number of benefits for both the private sector and the larger Indian defence industry.
- **From the private sector's** point of view, the biggest benefit would be the opportunity to participate in some big ticket contracts – estimated to be worth over two lakh crore rupees in the initial phase of execution – which were hitherto reserved for the DPSUs and OFs. Bridging the trust gap: At the same time, the model would also go a long way in bridging the long-standing trust gap between the Indian private sector and MoD, with the latter perceived to be friendlier toward public sector entities.

- **Strategic Partners**, being private sector companies, are expected to exploit their dynamism, competitiveness, profit orientation, and exposure to the civilian sector for efficient utilisation of the technology, manpower and infrastructure developed in the process. The model has a long-term vision of promoting India as a manufacturing hub for defence equipment thus enhancing self-sufficiency and establishing an industrial and R&D ecosystem, capable of meeting the future requirements of the Armed Forces.
- **Concerns:** Despite potential benefits, there are two concerns which need to be addressed to make SPs contribute in a meaningful and time-bound manner. The first and foremost concern is the lack of institutional capacity and ability to guide the new process to its logical conclusion. There is also a concern regarding the long-term viability of SPs largely due to the privileged position enjoyed by public sector entities.
- **Way ahead:** Time and again, the MoD has deviated from its own promise of fair play in award of contracts and handed over large orders to DPSUs and OFs on nomination. It would be futile to expect SPs to make major investments if the government does not provide a level-playing field to the private sector.

G20 Digital Economy Ministerial Meeting

- **Context:** In the framework of the Argentinian presidency of G20, the 2018 edition of Digital Economy ministerial meeting is being held in Salta, Argentina. The ministerial meeting was preceded by the second meeting of the G20 Digital Economy Task Force.
- **Argentina has selected the theme**, 'Building consensus for fair and sustainable development,' for the 2018 G20 Leaders' Summit, and has identified three key issues for the agenda: the future of work, infrastructure for development, and a sustainable food future.
- **Digital Economy Task Force:** The Digital Economy Task Force (DETF) was established under the 2017 German presidency, based on the decision adopted in Hangzhou in 2016 under the Chinese Presidency.
- **In Antalya**, under the Turkish presidency in 2015, G20 leaders recognized the modern period as a critical era of digital transformation, influenced by the advent of new technologies as key elements for economic development.
- **What is Digital economy?** The digital economy refers to a broad range of activities which include: the use of knowledge and information as factors in production, information networks as a platform for action, and how the information and communication technology (ICT) sector spurs economic growth.

- **Challenges to digital economy:** Important challenges include providing high-speed internet for all by 2025, creating inclusive growth and new jobs through digital trade, promoting lifelong digital learning, and closing the gender gap.
- **About G20:** The G20 is made up of 19 countries and the European Union. The 19 countries are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, France, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States.
- **Origin:** The G20 was born out of a meeting of G7 finance ministers and central bank governors in 1999 who saw a need for a more inclusive body with broader representation to have a stronger impact on addressing the world's financial challenges. The G7 invited leading markets – both developed and emerging – to form a new ministerial-level forum: the G20.
- **Significance:** In 2008, amidst the global financial crisis, the world saw a need for new consensus-building at the highest political level. Since then, the G20 summits have been attended by heads of state or government, and the G20 was instrumental in stabilizing the world economy. Since then, its agenda has expanded to include additional issues affecting financial markets, trade, and development.
- **Global Impact:** Collectively, G20 members represent all inhabited continents, 85% of global economic output, two-thirds of the world's population, and 75% of international trade. G20 policy-making is enriched by the participation of key international organizations regularly invited to G20 meetings, guest countries invited at the president's discretion, and engagement groups composed of different sectors civil society.
- **The work of the G20 is generally divided into two tracks:** The Finance track comprises all meetings with G20 finance ministers and central bank governors and their deputies. Convening several times throughout the year, they focus on financial and economic issues, such as monetary, fiscal and exchange rate policies, infrastructure investment, financial regulation, financial inclusion and international taxation.
- **The Sherpa track** focuses on broader issues such as political engagement, anti-corruption, development, trade, energy and climate change, gender equality, among others. Each G20 country is represented at these meetings by its relevant minister, and by its designated sherpa, or emissary. The sherpa engages in planning, negotiation and implementation tasks on behalf of the leader of their respective country. Each sherpa orients their minister and head of state or government accordingly on the progress of the G20, and delegates the dialogue and topics to relevant working groups.

Indian Ocean Conference

- **Context: The third edition of Indian Ocean Conference is being held at Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam.** This year, the Indian Ocean Conference will emphasise on better cooperation, strategic collaboration and governance architectures. This conference will serve a platform to the countries to come closer and exchange better views on the economic and strategic importance of the region and neighbourhood.
- **Theme: “Building Regional Architectures”.**
- **About Indian Ocean Conference:** The Indian Ocean Conference initiated by India Foundation along with its partners from Singapore, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh is an annual effort to bring together Heads of States/Governments, Ministers, Thought Leaders, scholars, diplomats, bureaucrats and practitioners from across the region.
- **Two successful editions** of the Conference have been hosted so far in 2016 and 2017 in Singapore and Sri Lanka respectively. Both the Conferences were supported by the Ministry of External Affairs of India and had participation from over 35 countries with a global media coverage.

BIS to set standards for the services sector

- In this regard, BIS had recently called for a meeting of industry bodies to “persuade them to be part of the process and give their inputs.”
- **Significance of the Service Sector and need for standards:** Service sector is one of the key sectors of the Indian economy with a huge potential to grow into one of the largest markets of the world. Standards can play a major facilitative role in this regard. It is important that the standardisation needs and priorities of the sector are determined. The process was initiated after concerns over lack of standardisation, particularly with regards to after-sales service, in their feedback to the Ministry of Consumer Affairs.
- **Background:** An online survey had found that in the absence of defined customer service standards in the country, a majority of consumers were not happy with after-sales services. As per the poll, 43% feel that mobile handset and computer manufacturers are the worst in after-sales services, followed by white goods firms (38%) and automobile companies (11%). About 93% of respondents said brands should at least acknowledge complaints from users within 72 hours. Many consumers complained that customer service numbers of many companies do not work.
- **About BIS:** The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) is the national Standards Body of India working under the aegis of Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution.
- **It is established** by the Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 1986.

- **The Minister in charge of the Ministry** or Department having administrative control of the BIS is the ex-officio President of the BIS.
- **Composition:** As a corporate body, it has 25 members drawn from Central or State Governments, industry, scientific and research institutions, and consumer organisations.
- **It also works as WTO-TBT enquiry point for India.**

Cheetah reintroduction project

- **Facts:** The cheetah, *Acinonyx jubatus*, is one of the oldest of the big cat species, with ancestors that can be traced back more than five million years to the Miocene era. The cheetah is also the world's fastest land mammal, an icon of nature. With great speed and dexterity, the cheetah is known for being an excellent hunter, its kills feeding many other animals in its ecosystem—ensuring that multiple species survive. The country's last spotted feline died in Chhattisgarh in 1947. Later, the cheetah — which is the fastest land animal — was declared extinct in India in 1952.
- **Cheetah reintroduction programme in India:** The Wildlife Institute of India at Dehradun had prepared a ₹260-crore cheetah re-introduction project six years ago. It was estimated that an amount of ₹25 crore to ₹30 crore would be needed to build an enclosure in an area of 150 sq km for the cheetahs in Nauradehi. The proposal was to put the felines in the enclosure with huge boundary walls before being released in the wild, he said.
- **Nauradehi** was found to be the most suitable area for the cheetahs as its forests are not very dense to restrict the fast movement of the spotted cat. Besides, the prey base for cheetahs is also in abundance at the sanctuary. According to the earlier action plan, around 20 cheetahs were to be translocated to Nauradehi from Namibia in Africa. The Namibia Cheetah Conservation Fund had then showed its willingness to donate the felines to India. However, the State was not ready to finance the plan contending that it was the Centre's project.
- **Background:** The reasons for extinction can all be traced to man's interference. Problems like human-wildlife conflict, loss of habitat and loss of prey, and illegal trafficking, have decimated their numbers. The advent of climate change and growing human populations have only made these problems worse. With less available land for wildlife, species that require vast home range like the cheetah are placed in competition with other animals and humans, all fighting over less space.
- **Significance of reintroduction:** The reintroduction of cheetahs will help restore India's open forests and grassland ecosystems, which have been suffering. Having cheetahs will result in greater biodiversity, and biodiversity is the hallmark of healthy ecosystems. India is also home to the world's largest free-roaming populations of livestock. Bringing back the cheetah will focus attention on pastoralism, and in doing so, help restore India's natural heritage.

- **About NTCA:** The National Tiger Conservation Authority is a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change constituted under enabling provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, as amended in 2006, for strengthening tiger conservation, as per powers and functions assigned to it under the said Act.
- **The National Tiger Conservation Authority** has been fulfilling its mandate within the ambit of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 for strengthening tiger conservation in the country by retaining an oversight through advisories/normative guidelines, based on appraisal of tiger status, ongoing conservation initiatives and recommendations of specially constituted Committees.

India's first biofuel-powered plane:

- What? India has now joined the small league of nations with the US and Australia to have flown a biofuel-powered aircraft.
- **Who? SpiceJet flew the Bombardier Q400 (VT-SUI) on biofuel from Dehradun to Delhi.**
- **Significance:** Biofuel flights could make air travel cleaner and more efficient, thus drastically reducing the cost of airline operations by reducing the dependency on aviation turbine fuel. The biofuel is made partially from renewable resources such as agricultural residues, non-edible oils and bio-degradable fractions of industrial and municipal wastes.

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Mission Indradhanush

- **To achieve full immunization** of at least 90% children by 2020, preponed now for 2018. Full immunization coverage to missed out and left out children and pregnant women during routine immunization rounds, against 7 life threatening diseases.
- **Achievements:** Mission Indradhanush has completed four phases covering 528 districts wherein:
- **Intensified Mission Indradhanush** launched by PM on 8th October 2017 at Vadnagar, Gujarat to cover 121 districts, 17 urban areas and 52 districts of NE states (total 190 districts/urban areas across 24 states) for intensified immunization campaign. Maternal & Neonatal Tetanus Elimination
- **India has validated Elimination** of Maternal & Neonatal tetanus from the country in May 2015, well before the global target date of December 2015.

Inactivated Polio Vaccine (IPV):

- **In concurrence with the World Polio End Game strategy**, IPV was introduced in November 2015 in six states and expanded throughout the country by June 2016. Till December'17, nearly 3.87 crore doses of IPV have been administered to children across the country since its introduction.
- **Rotavirus Vaccine**: Launched in March 2016 in 4 states- Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Odisha, to reduce the burden of diarrhea caused by Rotavirus.
- **Measles Rubella (MR) vaccine**: MR vaccination campaign targeting children from 9 months up to 15 years of age, was launched on 5th February 2017 in 5 states -Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Goa, Lakshadweep & Puducherry.
- **Japanese Encephalitis vaccination in India**: Japanese Encephalitis vaccination in children introduced in Routine Immunization in 230 JE endemic districts subsequent to the completion of JE campaign in these districts in 2015.
- **Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV)**: To reduce child deaths due to pneumonia, a major cause of child mortality.
- **It has been launched on 13th May, 2017** in 3 states i.e. Himachal Pradesh , Uttar Pradesh (6 districts) and Bihar (17 districts). Subsequent expansion of the vaccine to entire state of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, and parts of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh over a period of three years has been planned.

JANANI SURAKSHA YOJANA

- **Institutional delivery in the country has risen to 78.9%(NFHS-4, 2015-16) from 47%(DLHS-3, 2007-08).**
- **PRADHAN MANTRI SURAKSHIT MATRITVA ABHIYAN-PMSMA** To provide assured, comprehensive and quality antenatal care, free of cost, universally to all pregnant women on the 9th of every month. PMSMA guarantees a minimum package of antenatal care services to women in their 2nd / 3rd trimesters of pregnancy at designated government health facilities.
- **Achievements**: More than 1.16 crore antenatal check-ups conducted. Conducted at over 12900 health facilities across all State/UTs Over 4900 volunteers registered on PMSMA portal across all State/UTs More than 6 lakh high risk pregnancies have been identified Six Months Maternity Leave Maternity Benefit Act amended to enhance maternity leave period for working women from 12 weeks to 26 weeks

Elimination of Diseases

- **Elimination of Communicable diseases** – Action plans to eliminate Leprosy by 2018, Measles by 2020 and Tuberculosis by 2025 being implemented.
- **'Affordable & Quality HealthCare for All' - Availability of Cheaper Medicines**
- **1054 essential medicines**, including lifesaving drugs, brought under Price Control regime after May 2014, giving the consumer total benefit Rs. 9113 crores (As on 29th September, 2017).
- **Affordable & Accessible Healthcare for Cardiac Patients** · Cardiac Stents to cost 85% lesser · Knee Implants to cost 69% lesser
- **Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP)** Total of 2734 Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras opened as on 02.11.2017 from 99 in May 2014 Scheme's product basket has been expanded to cover more than 600 medicines and 154 surgical aids and consumables covering all therapeutic categories

Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri National Health Protection Mission (AB-PMNHPM)

- **Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri National Health Protection Mission (AB-PMNHPM)**
- **April 14,2018: Launch of First Health and Wellness Centre at Bijapur, Chattisgarh by PM Objective:** To provide comprehensive Health Coverage to 10 crore poor and vulnerable families (approx. 50 crore beneficiaries) upto Rs. 5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary hospitalization. After the launch of AB-PMNHPM, RSBY/SCHIS will be subsumed in it.

- **Features:** Cashless and paperless access to services for the beneficiary at the point of service in any (both public and private) empanelled hospitals across India. The benefit coverage of PM-RSSM will be Rs. 5,00,000/- covering over 10 Crore beneficiary families (identified through SECC database). No Family Size, ensuring all members of designated families specifically girl child and senior citizens get coverage. Every family figuring in defined SECC Database will be entitled to claim benefit under the scheme. No person will be denied benefits under the scheme in the absence of Aadhaar. Flexible Implementation Arrangement –States would have the option to use an existing Trust/ Society/ Not for Profit Company [SNA] or set up a new Trust/ Society/ Not for Profit Company [State Health Protection Mission Agency] to implement the scheme.
- **Health & Wellness Centres (HWC)** 5 lakh Health Sub Centres will be transformed into Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs). The proposal is to strengthen Sub Centres and PHCs as HWCs. HWC to provide Comprehensive Primary Health Care package which includes in addition to primary health care, geriatric health care, palliative care and rehabilitative care services 2/3rd of the budget be used for primary health care
- **Swachh Swasth Sarvatra** A joint initiative with Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation to leverage achievements of complementary program-Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) and Kayakalp
- **Pradhan Mantri National Dialysis Program (PM-NDP)** Provision of free dialysis services for poor and subsidized services to all patients under NHM. The scheme started with 219 districts in 2016 across the country, which has been expanded to cover 356 Districts. 6 Dialysis machines in every facility - will be extended up-to 10 machines 497 dialysis operational units/centers and 3330 total operational dialysis machines 2,37,139 patients availed service and 22,84,353 dialysis session held so far

Kayakalp

- **Kayakalp** Kayakalp awards launched to promote cleanliness, hygiene and infection control practices in public health facilities. Implemented in District Hospitals in 2015-16, extended to CHCs and PHCs in 2016-17 and to urban areas in 2017-18.
- **International Yoga Day** Promoting Yoga worldwide and at home. Observed every year on 21st June In Chandigarh in 2016, Lucknow in 2017 . Inscribed in the list of intangible cultural heritage of Humanity in the UNESCO Included in sports infrastructure and equipment of universities & colleges and also included as part of physical activity in all the schools

NATIONAL HEALTH POLICY

- **NATIONAL HEALTH POLICY** Health Ministry formulated the National Health Policy 2017, after a gap of 15 years, to address the current and emerging challenges necessitated by the changing socio-economic and epidemiological landscapes since the last National Health Policy was framed in 2002.
- **Focus is on preventive and promotive health care** while the Primary healthcare is to be comprehensive and universal. Patient centric approach listening to the voice of patients, quality care, inter sectoral convergence, access, affordability and use of technology are among its salient features. **MENTAL HEALTHCARE ACT, 2017** · The Act adopts a rights-based statutory framework for mental health in India and strengthens equality and equity in provision of mental healthcare services to protect the rights of people with mental health problem to ensure that they are able to receive optimum care and are able to live a life of dignity and respect.
- **HIV & AIDS (PREVENTION & CONTROL) ACT, 2017** · It aims to end the epidemic by 2030 in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations. · A person living with AIDS cannot be treated unfairly at employment, educational establishments, renting a property, standing for public or private office or providing healthcare and insurance services
- **Affordable Medicines And Reliable Implants For Treatment (AMRIT)** The AMRIT pharmacies provide drugs for cancer and cardiovascular diseases along with cardiac implants at a 60 to 90 per cent discount on prevailing market rates. As of now 124 stores have been opened so far across 22 states selling over 5200 drugs (including cardiovascular, cancer, diabetes, stents, etc), implants, surgical disposables and other consumables at significant discount of up to 50 % on market rates.

PRADHAN MANTRI SWASTHYA SURAKSHA YOJANA (PMSSY)

- **PRADHAN MANTRI SWASTHYA SURAKSHA YOJANA (PMSSY) Objective:** It aims at correcting regional imbalances in the availability of affordable/reliable tertiary healthcare services and also augmenting facilities for quality medical education in the country.
- **Components:** PMSSY has two components 1.Setting up of new AIIMS like institutes in underserved regions of the country: and 2.Up-gradation of existing Govt Medical Colleges (GMCs).
- **Progress:** 20 News Super Speciality AIIMS –like Hospitals being set up 73 Government Medical Colleges being upgraded

- Details:** The detailed contractual arrangements for six new AIIMS (AIIMS-Patna, AIIMS-Rishikesh, AIIMS-Jodhpur, AIIMS-Bhopal, AIIMS-Bhubaneswar and AIIMS-Raipur) put back on track and construction expedited. Since July 2014, 1675 hospital beds added in the six functional AIIMS (including 850 beds added in the last one year). 2 new AIIMS announced for Jharkhand and Gujarat in 2017-18. Basket of services in six AIIMS expanded and presently, on an average, about 1663 major surgeries are getting performed every month. Construction of Super Specialty Block in four GMCs completed, adding up to 902 hospital beds, six Super Specialty Departments and three Trauma Centres. Tender for upgradation work awarded for one GMC under Phase-I and 38 GMCs (out of 39) under Phase-III of PMSY and funds amounting to Rs.767 cr released to executing agencies for carrying out construction. Sites finalized and sanction of Cabinet obtained for AIIMS in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, W.Bengal, Punjab and Poorvanchal in UP. Cabinet approval obtained for 13 more GMC upgradation projects.
- MEDICAL EDUCATION:** Total 92 Medical College (46 Govt. and 46 Pvt.) have been set up in last four years, which resulted increasing of 15354 MBBS seats (6519 in Govt. Colleges and 8835 in Pvt. Colleges). 600 MBBS seats were increased in Centrally Sponsored Scheme "Establishment of new Medical Colleges attached with district/referral hospitals" Total 12646 PG Seats (Broad & Super Specialty Course) have been increased in last four years. 1500 PG Seats Centrally Sponsored Scheme "Strengthening and Upgradation of State Government Medical Colleges for increase in Post Graduate seats"
- NATIONAL Program for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases & Stroke (NPCDCS)** 435 Districts Non Communicable Diseases (NCD) Clinics and 2145 NCD Clinics at CHC Setup. More than 3 crore persons screened at NCD Clinics till 15th March 2018 Population based initiative taken for Prevention, Screening and Control for common NCDs in more than 150 districts. More than 70 lakh people have been screened under this initiative. 34 State Cancer Institute/Tertiary Care Cancer Centers approved to monitor all Cancer related activities of their respective areas. National Cancer Institute being setup at Jhajjar at Haryana.
- NATIONAL Organ Transplant Program** Apex level National Organ & Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO) has been set-up for establishing country-wide network of transplant and retrieval hospitals and tissue banks. Five Regional Organ and Tissue Transplant Organizations (ROTTO) have been established in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Assam, West Bengal and Chandigarh UT. National Registry to provide online system for procurement and distribution of organs and tissues has been established under NOTTO. 24x7 Toll free Helpline No. 1800114770 has been made operational. Organ Donation Rate (number of deceased organ donors per million population) has increased by four times since 2012-13.
- REVISED NATIONAL TUBERCULOSIS CONTROL PROGRAM** Treatment for drug sensitive TB is provided through a network of more than 400,000 DOT Centres Diagnosis of Drug Resistant TB drug susceptibility testing at 74 culture & drug susceptibility testing (C-DST) laboratories, of which 55 laboratories are also equipped with rapid molecular test namely Line Probe Assay (LPA). House to house screening of TB symptoms covering 5.5 crore population under Active Case Finding. Rs. 500 per month for nutritional support to all TB patients for the duration of TB treatment through DBT
- NATIONAL AIDS CONTROL PROGRAM:** Test and Treat' Policy launched for covering all patients with Anti Retro Viral (ARV) irrespective of CD count or clinical stage. More than 1 lakh additional HIV infected people brought under the ambit of ARV treatment in 8 months since launch of "Test and Treat" policy More than 11.75 lakh people infected with HIV are on ARV treatment; 54% higher than the March'14 More than 2 Crores pregnant women are being tested for HIV in a year with a goal to achieve elimination of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV by 2020

DRUG REGULATION:

- **DRUG REGULATION:** Medical Device Rules 2017 notified. These provide for risk-based classification, licensing and regulation of medical devices. 344 irrational fixed dose combinations (FDCs) prohibited. New National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM, 2015) finalized. It now includes 376 medicines. Coronary stents added in NLEM, 2015 and their ceiling prices fixed to provide relief to patients.
- **NATIONAL Tobacco Control Program** Packaging and Labelling Rules: Size of specified health warnings on tobacco products enhanced w.e.f. 1st April, 2016 to 85% of the principal display area of tobacco product packs. Quitline number has been included in new specified health warnings which will come into effect on 1st September, 2018. Inclusion of Bidi in Tax Net: Bidi has been covered in the tax net and kept along with all tobacco products in the slab of 28% under the Goods and Service Tax (GST).
- **Reduction in prevalence of tobacco use:** As per findings of Global Adult Tobacco Survey (2016-17), the prevalence of tobacco use has reduced by six percentage points from 34.6% to 28.6% during the period from 2009-10 to 2016-17. The number of tobacco users has reduced by about 81 lakh (8.1 million). National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP) has been expanded to all the States/UTs covering about 405 districts against 21 States covering 42 districts in 2013-14.

NATIONAL VECTOR BORNE DISEASE CONTROL PROGRAMME

- **Malaria:** Reduction of 28% in reported positive cases of Malaria 840838 in 2017 (provisional) as compared 1169261 in 2015. Reported deaths due to malaria reduced by 73 % in 2017 to as compared in 2015. National Strategic Plan for Malaria Elimination (2017-22) launched, 2017.
- **Dengue & Chikungunya:** Upscaled diagnostic facilities from 394 in 2013 to 618 in 2018 The Case Fatality Rate (CFR) for Dengue (deaths per 100 cases) was sustained at 0.2% in last 3 years
- **Japanese Encephalitis (JE)/ Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES):** JE vaccination campaign in children (1-15 yrs) completed in 229 out of 231 JE endemic districts. Adult vaccination Completed in all 31 districts identified in Assam, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.
- **Kala-azar (KA):** Reduction of 37.7% in cases of Kala-azar: from 9241 in 2014 to 5758 in 2017 Reported deaths due to Kala-azar reduced to 100% 11 in 2014 to Nil deaths in 2017.

- **Lymphatic Filariasis (LF)** LF is targeted for elimination. Out of 21 endemic states/UTs, 5 state/UTs achieved LF elimination target.

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Heritage Circuit and North East Circuit

- **Context:** The Ministry of Tourism has sanctioned two new projects under Heritage and North East Circuits of Swadesh Dashan Scheme for Rs. 164.95 Crores in Punjab and Tripura.
- **Heritage Circuit:** Under Heritage Circuit in the state of Punjab, the project covers sites of Anandpur Sahib – Fatehgarh Sahib – Chamkaur Sahib – Ferozpur – Amritsar – Khatkar Kalan – Kalanour – Patiala at the cost of Rs. 99.95 crores.
- **The project includes development** of Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar for Rs. 8 Crores, development of Tourist Infrastructure and Heritage Path at Anandpur Sahib for Rs. 28.99 crores, development of Tourist Infrastructure at Fatehgarh Sahib among others. The facilities being developed include Virtual Reality Shows (Jallianwala and Hussainiwala Border), beautification and landscaping, interpretation centres, façade development, wayside amenities, parking, CCTV and Wi-Fi facilities, Cafeterias, Open Air Theatre, drinking water facility etc.
- **North East Circuit:** Under North East Circuit in Tripura, the sites of Surma Cherra- Unakoti- Jampui Hills- Gunabati-Bhunaneshwari- Matabari- Neermahal- Boxanagar- Chotta khola- Pilak- Avangchaarra are covered with total project cost of Rs. 65 Crores.
- **The project envisaged** infrastructural development of the sites with special emphasis on developing an Interpretation Centre, Tourist Visitor Centres, Cafeteria, Last Mile Connectivity, Illumination of sites and monuments, Wayside Amenities, Floating Jetties, Camping Grounds, Parking Facilities, Adventure Activities, Ghat Development at above sites.

- **About Swadesh Darshan Scheme:** The Tourism Ministry had launched 'Swadesh Darshan' scheme with an 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.
- **Features of Swadesh Darshan Scheme:** The scheme is 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).
- **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. PMC will be a national level consultant to be appointed by the Mission Directorate.

China may scrap limit on number of children

- **Context:** China is planning to scrap the limit on the number of children couples can have. A draft civil code that would end decades of controversial family planning policies has been prepared.
- **Highlights:** The code would get rid of a policy that has been enforced through fines but was also notorious for cases of forced abortions and sterilisation in the world's most populous country. The code omits any reference to "family planning" — the current policy which limits couples to having no more than two children. Other proposed changes include a one-month cooling off period before a divorce, during which either party can withdraw their application.
- **The long history of limits on the number of children a couple can have:** The Communist Party began enforcing a one-child policy in 1979 to slow population growth. The limit was raised to two children in 2016 as the nation scrambled to rejuvenate its greying population of some 1.4 billion.
- **The need for removal of restrictions:** Concerns are mounting that an ageing and shrinking workforce could slow down its economy, while gender imbalances could lead to social problems. Also, childbirths have not increased as much as forecast since the two-child policy came into force.
- **Why One Child Policy was adopted by China?** One child policy was adopted by China in 1979 out of the Malthusian fears that unchecked population growth would lead to economic and environmental catastrophe. It was also a response to concerns about food shortages.

- **What is Malthusian theory all about?** Thomas Robert Malthus was the first economist to propose a systematic theory of population. He articulated his views regarding population in his famous book, *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798), for which he collected empirical data to support his thesis. He argued that if left unchecked, a population will outgrow its resources, leading to a host of problems.
- **Why China changed its policy?** China has a population of over 1.4 billion, 30% of which is over the age of 50. There is also huge gender imbalance. Now, China needs more people for joining workforce. The working population in China is coming down and elderly population is going up. So Communist Party of China has changed one-child policy to a two-child policy as the country is looking further ahead that China to have larger families.
- **What's good about One Child Policy?** Helps to ease the over population problems. It is seen as practical by some families. Lowers the poverty rate.
- **Why it isn't a good idea?** The enforcement is unequal. It is a human rights violation. Shrinking work population. Gender imbalance due to the strong cultural preference of boys for labor and work. Increase in abortions and female infanticide. Extra babies end up being illegal and never becoming a citizen, due to fines. Intrudes on people's personal values and opinions.
- **Why such policies are not suitable for India?** The implications of such a policy being enforced in India would surely have been more disastrous than it did in China. India is way behind China in basic development indicators like life expectancy, IMR and maternal mortality rate. The preference of a male child, the regional disparities in development, and the growing intolerance against minorities in the present milieu would be further magnified with the state entering homes and enforcing such strict norms.
- **The fact that women** are at the receiving end of such policies in a patriarchal society is another story in itself. The burden of limiting family size falls on the woman, and most often female sterilisations are promoted rather than giving the couple the choice of contraception. Limiting family size cannot be an end in itself at the neglect of basic needs and services like food security, housing, education, and health.
- **It is important** for a state to universalise these basic services than to impose a diktat of population control. When China imposed a one-child policy, it had already created a strong base for its population, despite which the consequences were severe. Therefore, it would be disastrous for India to even walk that path.

Odisha to come up with single revenue code

- **Context:** The Odisha government has proposed to come up with a single revenue act by merging various revenue laws enacted at different point in times. In this regard, the state government has prepared the draft 'Odisha Land and Revenue Code' by taking into consideration the Odisha Survey and Settlement Act, 1958, the Odisha Special Survey and the Settlement Act 2012, the Odisha Government Land Settlement Act, 1962, the Odisha Prevention of Land Encroachment Act, 1972, the Odisha Land Reforms Act, 1960, the Odisha Consolidation of Holdings and Prevention of Fragmentation of Land Act 1972 and the Odisha Estates Abolition Act, 1951.
- **Need for a uniform revenue code:** The need for a single Revenue Code arises out of the fact that there are many revenue Acts in vogue in Odisha governing the land revenue administration which were enacted years back and are unable to meet the changing needs.
- **Existence of so many revenue Acts** and Rules often create confusion among the field-level revenue functionaries in interpretation of such laws which ultimately leads to delay in disposal of cases and sufferings for the public.
- **The main purpose** is to end the numerous laws and introduction of a single code having simplified procedures and enabling provisions for speedy disposal of the revenue cases which will benefit the public.
- **What next?** The code will be published inviting suggestions and objections from all sections and after scrutiny of feedbacks, necessary changes will be effected and steps will be taken for enactment of the code.

North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)

- **Context:** The United States and Mexico have agreed to overhaul the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), putting pressure on Canada to agree to new terms on auto trade and dispute settlement rules to remain part of the three-nation pact. If talks with Canada are not wrapped up by the end of this week, Trump plans to notify Congress that he has reached a deal with Mexico, but would be open to Canada joining.
- **Highlights of the new deal:** The deal would require 75% of auto content to be made in the NAFTA region, up from the current level of 62.5%. A fact sheet describing the bilateral agreement specified the content would be made in the United States and Mexico. The deal improves labour provisions, in part by requiring 40% to 45% of auto content to be made by workers earning at least \$16 per hour. That measure could move some production back to the United States from Mexico and should lift Mexican wages.
- **The United States** relented on its demand for an automatic expiration for the deal, known as a "sunset clause." Instead, the United States and Mexico agreed to a 16-year lifespan for the deal, with a review every six years that can extend the pact for 16 years. Mexico agreed to eliminate dispute settlement panels for certain anti-dumping cases, a move that could complicate talks with Canada, which had insisted on the panels.

- **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?** 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. 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.
- **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).

Aeolus Satellite

- **Context:** The European Space Agency (ESA) has successfully launched Aeolus satellite that will measure winds around the globe and help improve weather forecasting. The Earth Explorer Aeolus satellite was launched into polar orbit on a Vega rocket from Europe's Spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana.
- **Aeolus satellite:** Aeolus is the first satellite mission to acquire profiles of Earth's wind on a global scale. These near-realtime observations will improve the accuracy of numerical weather and climate prediction and advance our understanding of tropical dynamics and processes relevant to climate variability. Aeolus is the fifth in the family of ESA's Earth Explorer missions, which address key scientific challenges identified by the science community and demonstrate breakthrough technology in observing techniques.

- **Named after Aeolus**, who in Greek mythology was appointed 'keeper of the winds' by the Gods, this novel mission will not only provide much-needed data to improve the quality of weather forecasts, but also contribute to long-term climate research. The Aeolus satellite carries just one large instrument – a Doppler wind lidar called Aladin that will probe the lowermost 30 km of the atmosphere to measure the winds sweeping around our planet.
- **Significance and need for information on wind:** Many aspects of our lives are influenced by the weather. It goes without saying that accurate forecasts are important for commercial undertakings such as farming, fishing, construction and transport – and in general make it easier to plan the days ahead. In extreme circumstances, knowing what the weather will bring can also help save lives and protect property.
- **Although weather forecasts have advanced considerably** in recent years, meteorologists urgently need reliable wind-profile data to improve accuracy further. Aeolus wind mission will demonstrate that measuring global wind-profiles from space, using laser technology, can meet this requirement.

Government announces Regulations for Drones

- **Context:** The government has announced the Drone Regulations 1.0. These regulations will enable the safe, commercial usage of drones starting December 1, 2018. They are intended to enable visual line-of-sight daytime-only and a maximum of 400 ft altitude operations.
- **Categories:** As per the regulation, there are 5 categories of RPAS categorized by weight, namely nano, micro, small, medium and large.
- **Operational/ Procedural Requirements:** All RPAS except nano and those owned by NTRO, ARC and Central Intelligence Agencies are to be registered and issued with Unique Identification Number (UIN). Unmanned Aircraft Operator Permit (UAOP) shall be required for RPA operators except for nano RPAS operating below 50 ft., micro RPAS operating below 200 ft., and those owned by NTRO, ARC and Central Intelligence Agencies.
- **The mandatory equipment** required for operation of RPAS except nano category are (a) GNSS (GPS), (b) Return-To-Home (RTH), (c) Anti-collision light, (d) ID-Plate, (e) Flight controller with flight data logging capability, and (f) RF ID and SIM/ No-Permission No Take off (NPNT).
- **For flying in controlled Airspace**, filing of flight plan and obtaining Air Defence Clearance (ADC) /Flight Information Centre (FIC) number shall be necessary. Minimum manufacturing standards and training requirements of Remote Pilots of small and above categories of RPAS have been specified in the regulation.

- **Other highlights: No Drone Zones:** The regulation defines “No Drone Zones” around airports; near international border, Vijay Chowk in Delhi; State Secretariat Complex in State Capitals, strategic locations/vital and military installations; etc.
- **Operations through Digital Platform:** Operations of Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS) to be enabled through Digital Sky Platform. The RPAS operations will be based on NPNT (No Permission, No Take off).
- **There will be different colour zones** visible to the applicant while applying in the digital sky platform, viz, Red Zone: flying not permitted, Yellow Zone (controlled airspace): permission required before flying, and Green Zone (uncontrolled airspace): automatic permission.
- **Enforcement Actions:** The enforcement actions are, (a) suspension/ cancellation of UIN/ UAOP in case of violation of regulatory provisions, (b) actions as per relevant Sections of the Aircraft Act 1934, or Aircraft Rules, or any statutory provisions, and (c) penalties as per applicable IPCs (such as 287, 336, 337, 338, or any relevant section of IPC).
- **What next? Going forward, the Drone Task Force** will provide draft recommendations for Drone Regulations 2.0. These regulations will examine, inter alia, the following issues: Certification of safe and controlled operation of drone hardware and software. Air space management through automated operations linked into overall airspace management framework. Beyond visual-line-of-sight operations.
- **Contribution to establishing global standards.** Suggestions for modifications of existing CARs and/or new CARs.
- **Way ahead: Close watch on climate change** Flying drones safely in India will require research and development to understand how they can be best used in India's unique landscape. Such R&D occurs best in a market-oriented environment, which will not happen unless civilian drone use is permitted. Building profitable companies around drone use can be complicated when the core business model is illegal.

Close watch on climate change

- **Context: The Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) is considering a Rs. 79-crore proposal to study the impact of climate change on Kerala. Proposed by:** The project has been proposed by the National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources (NISCAIR) under the Council of Scientific Industrial Research (CSIR).
- **Highlights of the project: Objectives:** The Kerala project will analyse the trends in climatic elements, their spatial pattern and its relationship with extreme events such as El Nino, cyclones etc. The objective of the project is to develop a framework and decision support tool to assess the climate change impact on livelihood and developmental processes.

- **Focus areas:** The ambitious project, spread over a period of three years, will assess the impact of climate change on agriculture (including plantation crops and spices); fisheries (marine and inland); industries; health; transport — vehicular and inland water transports; tourism; biodiversity; forestry; and landslips. The project involves experts from various scientific institutions across the country. It consists of 25 work packages and covers all the aspects of climate change adaptations for Kerala.
- **The experts will study the spatial** and temporal changes in water resources (surface and groundwater — quantity and quality). Researchers will also assess the monsoonal variations and its impact, besides looking at the climate change scenario on the islets of Kerala.
- **Significance:** It assumes significance in the wake of devastating floods that ravaged many parts of the State as the research initiative will specifically assess the dynamics of riverine discharge and saline water incursion under the climate change scenario.

Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT)

- **Objective :** To ensure water taps to over 2 cr urban households in mission cities by 2019 besides expanding sewerage and drainage networks, Non-motorised transport and providing open and green spaces
 - **Achievement** Service Level Improvement Plans (SLIPS) for all 500 mission cities approved three years ahead of the mission period with a project investment of Rs.77,678 cr. Execution of projects worth over Rs.14,000 cr has begun and rest under tendering and DPR preparation
 - **About 22 cr urban population** will benefit from this mission
-

- **Smart City Mission** Objective: To ensure core infrastructure to improve quality of living through area based development in and around 100 cities based on inclusive and sustainable urban planning and development .
- **Achievements:** § 98 cities identified through competition § 60 of 98 cities selected for financing through competition
- **§ Investment** of Rs.1,33,368 cr approved for these 60 cities § Total Urban Population Impacted - 7.2 Cr
- **§ Projects worth Rs.35,000** would be completed/under execution/awarded by June 25, 2017

Swachh Bharat Urban:

- **Objective:** To make 4,041 cities and towns Open Defecation Free and clean by October, 2019
- **Achievements:** 31 lakhs individual household toilets constructed so far; 18.50 lakh more under construction 1.25 lakh Community and Public Toilet seats constructed
- **39,995 out of total 81,015** urban wards covered under 100% Door to Door collection of solid waste Waste processing increased to 21.51% from 18% in 2014
- **Waste to Compost conversion** increased to 13.13 lakh tons/year from 1.50 lakh tons per year in 2014 614 cities have been so far declared Open Defecation Free after due verification All cities of Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat declared ODF

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Ministry for Minority Affairs

- **Haj without Mehram** · Muslim women can go for Haj Pilgrimage without male guardian, if their school of thought permits. · Keeping in mind the objective of womens' empowerment, the restriction on women above 45 years of age to perform Haj pilgrimage unaccompanied by their male relatives has been removed. · This year, more than 1300 women are going on Haj pilgrimage without Mehram.
- **Educational Empowerment** · Scholarship Schemes · Maulana Azad National Fellowship · Padho Pardes · Free Coaching and Allied scheme · Nai Udaan
- **Haj Subsidy abolished** Government in January 2016 abolished Haj subsidy. Savings worth Rs. 700 crores from this head to be used to finance the education of Muslim girls.
- **Economic Empowerment** · Learn and Earn- Seekho aur Kaam Karo · USTAAD · Nai Manzil · Maulana Azad National Academy of Skills- MANAS
- **USTTAD (Upgrading the Skills and Training in Traditional Arts/ Crafts for Development)**
 1. **Objective:** To preserve the rich heritage of traditional arts/crafts of minorities. The scheme aims at capacity building and updating the traditional skills of master craftsmen/artisans; documentation of identified traditional arts/crafts of minorities; set standards for traditional skills; training of minority youths in various identified traditional arts/crafts through master craftsmen; and develop national and international market linkages.

2. **Achievements:** · Ministry has selected 38 Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs) for training of 16200 trainees in 11 States during 2016-17. Accordingly, Rs. 19.77 Crore has been released to 38 PIAs. · Rs. 21.80 Crore has been released to PIAs during 2017-18 for the 2nd Instalment of 2016-17. · Total 3504 trainees have been allocated to the 216 PIAs during 2017-18.

- **MANAS** Maulana Azad National Academy for Skills set up to address skill development needs of minority communities.

- **Hamari Dharohar** Aims at preservation of rich heritage and culture of minorities, by supporting curation of iconic exhibitions, calligraphy, preservation of old documents, research and development, etc.

- **Nai Manzil**

1. **Objective:** · To benefit the minority youths in the age group of 17 to 35 years who are school-dropouts or those educated in the community education institutions like Madarsas, by providing formal education and skill training along with certification.

2. **Achievements:** · 69,840 trainees have been allocated for education and skill training in 22 States in 2016-17. · 30,160 trainees have been allocated during 2017-18.

- **Garib Nawaz Skill Development Centres:**

1. **Objective:** · Maulana Azad Education Foundation (MAEF) under “Gharib Nawaz Skill Development Training for Minority” scheme has started training programmes to meet skill development/ skill up-gradation needs of minority communities viz; Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis and Jains in the country to achieve Government’s goal of “Skilling India” by providing meaningful and sustainable livelihood options, in terms of wage employment/ self-employment opportunities to all minority youths.

2. · **The objective of the scheme** is to enable a large number of minority youths of India to take-up relevant skill sets which are in demand. Under the scheme MAEF will use the cutting-edge of information technology to ensure quality, transparency and credibility to its skill training programmes. All training programmes will be covered by real time CCTV footage for the purpose of monitoring and GPRS enabled bio-metric attendance machines will be used for capturing attendance of trainers and trainees.

3. **Achievement:** · Under this flagship scheme, Maulana Azad Education Foundation (MAEF) has allocated 1,06,600 beneficiaries to 108 Program Implementing Agencies (PIAs). 212 centres have already commenced training programmes.

- **GST Facilitator**

1. · **Union Minister for Minority Affairs**, Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi announced that a certificate course for GST Facilitator was launched in Hyderabad. The course is being run at the Gharib Nawaz Kaushal Vikas Kendra, Vijay Nagar, Hyderabad through empanelled PIAs of MAEF.

2. • **Apart from this**, a similar course “Accounts Assistant using Tally with GST” is also being run at the various Centres established by PIAs under the Gharib Nawaz Skill Development Training Programme of MAEF.

• **Other Initiatives**

1. • **The allocation for Minority Affairs** has been increased to ₹. 4700 Crore in 2018-19 from ₹4,195 crore in 2017-18.
2. • **Ministry of Minority Affairs** received more than 1.16 crore applications for various scholarships during 2017-18.
3. • **During 2017-18, 04 (four) “Hunar Haats”**, were held at (i) Puducherry from 24th to 30th September, 2017, wherein about 54 artisans and 14 culinary experts participated (ii) India International Trade Fair (IITF) from November 14-27, 2017, wherein 136 artisans participated (iii) Mumbai from 3rd to 10th January, 2018, wherein 117 artisans participated and (iv) Baba Kharak Singh Marg from 10th to 18th February, 2018, wherein 160 artisans participated.
4. • **Qaumi Waqf Board Taraqqiati Scheme (QWBTS)** has been launched this year after merging and modifying two ongoing schemes namely, Computerization of Records of State Waqf Boards and Strengthening of State Waqf Boards. Central Waqf Council is the Implementing Agency. In this scheme 100% Central Grant is provided for deployment of manpower for doing data entry in WAMSI Modules, GIS Mapping of waqf property, maintenance of Centralized Computing Facility (CCF), ERP Solution for better administration of SWBs, setting up of Video Conferencing facility in SWBs, Cash Award to Muttawalli/Management Committee, to strengthen their legal & accounting section as well as for training & administrative cost of SWBs. Under the scheme, GIA is also provided for appointment of Survey Assistant, Accountant and Legal Assistant, setting up of Zonal Office in those Waqf Boards having more number of Waqf Properties and Financial Assistance @ Rs.3.00 lakh per SWB having more than 6000 Waqf Properties and Rs.2.00 lakh per SWB having less than 6000 Waqf Property to be provided for capacity building of Muttawalli/Management Committee.
5. • **Erstwhile scheme of Grants in Aid to Waqf** has been modified and continued for another 3 years and renamed as Shahari Waqf Sampatti Vikas Yojana with a view to protect vacant urban Waqf land from encroachers and to develop it on commercial lines for generating more income in order to widen welfare activities. Central Waqf Council is implementing Agency of the scheme. GIA under the scheme is provided to CWC for further disbursement of interest free loan to Waqf Institutions/Waqf Boards. Under the Scheme interest free loan is extended to various Waqf Institutions in the country for taking up economically viable buildings on the urban Waqf land for development such as commercial complexes, marriage halls, hospitals, cold storages etc.

Centre asks states to ban e-cigarettes

- **Context:** In a move to protect health risks to children, adolescents and women of reproductive age, the health ministry has asked states to ban Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) including e-cigarettes, Vape, e-Sheesha, e-Hookah etc.
- **States are asked to ensure** that devices that enable nicotine delivery are not sold (including online sale), manufactured, distributed, traded, imported and advertised in their jurisdictions, except for the purpose & in the manner and to the extent, as may be approved under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Rules made thereunder.
- **Background:** The move comes in the wake of the Delhi HC recently taking strong exception to the Centre for delay in coming up with regulatory measures to tackle the “new emerging threat” of e-cigarettes in the country.
- **What are e-cigarettes?** An electronic cigarette (or e-cig) is a battery-powered vaporizer that mimics tobacco smoking. It works by heating up a nicotine liquid, called “juice.” Nicotine juice (or e-juice) comes in various flavors and nicotine levels. e-liquid is composed of five ingredients: vegetable glycerin (a material used in all types of food and personal care products, like toothpaste) and propylene glycol (a solvent most commonly used in fog machines.) propylene glycol is the ingredient that produces thicker clouds of vapor.
- **Proponents of e-cigs** argue that the practice is healthier than traditional cigarettes because users are only inhaling water vapor and nicotine.
- **Why its hard to regulate them?** As e-cigarettes contain nicotine and not tobacco, they do not fall within the ambit of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003 (COTPA), which mandates stringent health warnings on the packaging and advertisements of tobacco products.
- **Need for regulation:** The current unregulated sale of e-cigarettes is dangerous for a country like India where the number of smokers is on the decline (WHO Global Report, 2015) as it increases the possibility of e-cigarettes becoming a gateway for smoking by inducing nicotine addiction and perpetuating smoking by making it more attractive, thereby encouraging persons to become users of tobacco as well as e-cigarettes.
- **WHO report on e- cigarettes and effects:** As per the report, Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) (also known as e-cigarettes) emits nicotine, the addictive component of tobacco products. In addition to dependence, nicotine can have adverse effects on the development of the foetus during pregnancy and may contribute to cardiovascular disease. The WHO report further says that although nicotine itself is not a carcinogen, it may function as a “tumour promoter” and seems to be involved in the biology of malignant disease, as well as of neurodegeneration. Foetal and adolescent nicotine exposure may have long-term consequences for brain development, potentially leading to learning and anxiety disorders. The evidence is sufficient to warn children and adolescents, pregnant women, and women of reproductive age against ENDS use and nicotine.
- **Why ban them?** Studies say ENDS have cancer-causing properties, are highly addictive and do not offer a safer alternative to tobacco-based products. Experts say e-cigarettes are just a mechanism to deliver nicotine in an attractive format.
- **Way ahead:** The government should also impose appropriate restrictions on the sale and advertisement, online and otherwise, of e-cigarettes, including proper health warnings, in order to plug the existing regulatory vacuum. This should be done with immediate effect, and simultaneously the government should also commission independent scientific research on the benefits and risks posed by these products in the Indian context.

Venezuela crisis

- **Context:** Venezuela, once a rich oil reserve country, is now battering an unprecedented economic crisis. Hyperinflation, mass migration, food shortage, increasing number of crimes and grinding poverty has pushed the nation into a deep turmoil.
- **What is the Venezuela crisis?** Hyperinflation is the biggest problem faced by Venezuela. The inflation rate there is expected to reach a stunning one million per cent this year, putting it on par with the crises of Zimbabwe in the 2000s and Germany in the 1920s, according to the International Monetary Fund. The government claims that the country is the victim of an “economic war” and that the major issues are due to opposition “plots” and American sanctions.
- **What caused this increase?** The plummeting oil prices since 2014 is one of the main reasons why Venezuela’s currency has weakened sharply. The country, which has rich oil reserves largely depended on it for its revenue. But when the oil price dropped drastically in 2014, Venezuela which received 96 per cent of its revenue from the oil exports, suffered a shortage of foreign currency. This made import of basic essentials like food and medicines difficult.
- **Impacts:** Venezuela’s imports are down 50% from a year ago. Venezuela’s minimum wage is now about the equivalent of \$1 a month, making basics unaffordable for many. With a shortage of the import goods, the black market has got a free hand in the country. Prices have been doubling every 26 days on average.
- **A survey from February** this year found that almost 90% of Venezuelans live in poverty and more than 60% surveyed said that they had woken up hungry because they did not have enough money to buy food, reported Reuters. Apart from food, the country is also facing medicine shortage. The economic crisis has also hit the public health system, making medicine and equipment inaccessible to its people.
- **As the country slips into poverty**, many are turning towards crime to make money. A recent Gallup study placed Venezuela at the bottom of its 2018 Law and Order index, with 42 per cent of surveyed Venezuelans reporting they had been robbed the previous year and one-quarter saying they had been assaulted.
- **Mass migration:** Angered by the economic crisis in the country, many Venezuelans have started leaving the country. Of the 2.3 million Venezuelans living abroad, more than 1.6 million have fled the country since the crisis began in 2015, according to the UN. The pace of departures has accelerated in recent days, sparking a warning from the UN. The majority have crossed into neighbouring Colombia and then to Ecuador, Peru and Chile. Others have gone south to Brazil.

Asian Electoral Stakeholder Forum

- **Context:** The fourth edition of Asian electoral stakeholders forum (AESF-IV) was held in Sri Lanka to discuss the state of elections and democracy in the region. It was jointly organised by Election Commission of Sri Lanka and Asian network for free elections (ANFREL).
- **Key facts:** This was for first time AESF was held in South Asia. Theme: 'Advancing Election Transparency and Integrity: Promoting and Defending Democracy Together'. The key objectives of AESF-IV are: To provide a venue for Election Management Bodies (EMBs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and other stakeholders to share and learn about the present electoral challenges as well as best practices in the region. To develop and endorse the "Colombo Strategy to Promote and Defend Electoral Democracy in Asia".
- **To institutionalize capacity building** efforts in making elections more meaningful and credible through cooperation among stakeholders. To promote inclusiveness in elections by paying special attention to sectoral cooperation.
- **About AESF:** The AESF is the largest gathering of its kind, and is sustained through a strong cooperation between the civil society and election commissions. The Forum will cover a wide array of crucial election issues like the current state of democracy in Asia, the common electoral challenges in the region, and various good practices employed to make elections better.
- **It provides opportunity** for Asian election commissions, election observers, non-government organizations (NGOs) and interstate bodies to gather and discuss state of elections and democracy in the region. It also provides platform for institutionalizing capacity building efforts to pave the way for more meaningful and credible election through cooperation among stakeholders.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

- **Context:** Satya S Tripathi, an Indian development economist and lawyer, has been appointed assistant secretary general of the United Nations and will head the New York office of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
- **About UNEP:** The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is an agency of United Nations and coordinates its environmental activities, assisting developing countries in implementing environmentally sound policies and practices.

- **It was founded by Maurice Strong**, its first director, as a result of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Conference) in June 1972 and has its headquarters in the Gigiri neighborhood of Nairobi, Kenya.
- **UNEP** has overall responsibility for environmental problems among United Nations agencies but talks on addressing global warming are overseen by the Bonn-based Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Its activities cover a wide range of issues regarding the atmosphere, marine and terrestrial ecosystems, environmental governance and green economy.
- **UNEP** has also been active in funding and implementing environment related development projects. IPCC: The World Meteorological Organization and UNEP established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988. UNEP is also one of several Implementing Agencies for the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol, and it is also a member of the United Nations Development Group.
- **The International Cyanide Management Code**, a program of best practice for the chemical's use at gold mining operations, was developed under UNEP's aegis.

Higgs boson

- **Context:** Six years after its discovery, the Higgs boson has at last been observed decaying into fundamental particles known as bottom quarks.
- **Significance:** The finding, presented by the ATLAS and CMS collaborations at the Large Hadron Collider (LHC), is consistent with the hypothesis that the all-pervading quantum field behind the Higgs boson also gives mass to the bottom quark.
- **The Standard Model** of particle physics predicts that about 60% of the time a Higgs boson will decay to a pair of bottom quarks, the second-heaviest of the six flavours of quarks. Testing this prediction is crucial because the result would either lend support to the Standard Model – which is built upon the idea that the Higgs field endows quarks and other fundamental particles with mass – or rock its foundations and point to new physics.
- **What is Higgs Boson?** The Higgs boson is an elementary particle in the Standard Model of particle physics, produced by the quantum excitation of the Higgs field, one of the fields in particle physics theory. It is named after physicist Peter Higgs, who in 1964, along with six other scientists, proposed the mechanism, which suggested the existence of such a particle. Its existence was confirmed by the ATLAS and CMS collaborations based on collisions in the LHC at CERN.

- **What is the Standard model?** In the world of particle physics, subatomic particles are difficult to observe because of their size. They are smaller than an atom and the wavelength of visible light, so the only way we can detect and observe their behavior is by smashing the atomic nucleus of particles together at intense speeds (close to the speed of light), which generates vast amounts of exotic particles that are only created at high energies. These collisions resemble the conditions physicists believe existed during the time of the big bang.
- **Thanks to particle accelerators** like the Large Hadron Collider, the Relativistic Heavy Ion Collider and the (now defunct) Tevatron circular particle accelerator, physicists have made a lot of progress in designing a “theory of everything.” This theory postulates how all the subatomic particles in the universe operate and how they interact to comprise the Universe as we know it.
- **One of the most** complete models that comes anywhere near producing a “theory of everything,” is the Standard Model of Fundamental Particles and Interactions, which describes how particles and forces interact. The standard model also includes an explanation for 3 of the 4 fundamental forces of nature on a subatomic scale.
- **About Large Hadron Collider (LHC):** LHC is the world’s largest and most powerful particle accelerator situated in a tunnel beneath the France Switzerland border near Geneva.
- **Built by: European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN)** Aim: to allow physicists to test the predictions of different theories of particle physics and high-energy physics, and particularly prove or disprove the existence of the theorized Higgs boson and of the large family of new particles predicted by supersymmetric theories.
- **The LHC consists of a 27-kilometre ring of superconducting magnets with a number of accelerating structures to boost the energy of the particles along the way. How it operates?** Inside the accelerator, two high-energy particle beams travel at close to the speed of light before they are made to collide. The beams travel in opposite directions in separate beam pipes – two tubes kept at ultrahigh vacuum. They are guided around the accelerator ring by a strong magnetic field maintained by superconducting electromagnets.
- **The electromagnets** are built from coils of special electric cable that operates in a superconducting state, efficiently conducting electricity without resistance or loss of energy. This requires chilling the magnets to -3°C – a temperature colder than outer space. For this reason, much of the accelerator is connected to a distribution system of liquid helium, which cools the magnets, as well as to other supply services.
- **Just prior to collision**, another type of magnet is used to “squeeze” the particles closer together to increase the chances of collisions. The particles are so tiny that the task of making them collide is akin to firing two needles 10 kilometres apart with such precision that they meet halfway.

‘Horizon 2020’

- **Context:** The European Union and India will collaborate in research and innovation for developing a next generation influenza vaccine to protect people worldwide. The EU is funding is under its programme for research and innovation 'Horizon 2020'.
- **Key facts:** The EU and the Indian government's Department of Biotechnology have committed 15 million Euros each to fund this joint project. The aim is to advance the efficacy, safety, duration of immunity, and reactivity against an increased breadth of influenza strains. The joint effort also aims to develop cost-effective and affordable influenza vaccine rapidly without compromising quality. There will be multi-disciplinary approach involving stakeholders who can represent any part of the chain from lab to market.
- **Eligibility:** The projects require minimum three applicants from Europe (three different EU member states) or countries associated to the EU programme Horizon 2020) and minimum three applicants from India. The projects are also 'Open to the World' and thus applicants from other countries can join the EU-India consortia.
- **Significance:** Improved influenza vaccines would help the international community to better prepare in the event of an influenza pandemic.
- **The outcome of the project** is expected to contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 3 to ensure health and well-being for all and boost the Indian National Health Mission. This joint call is another demonstration of the increased cooperation between the EU and India as committed by the leaders during the Summit in October 2017. In engaging jointly on this topic, India and the EU are contributing to an important global public health challenge.
- **What is Horizon 2020?** Horizon 2020 is the biggest EU Research and Innovation programme ever with nearly €80 billion of funding available over 7 years (2014 to 2020) – in addition to the private investment that this money will attract. It promises more breakthroughs, discoveries and world-firsts by taking great ideas from the lab to the market.
- **The goal is to ensure Europe** produces world-class science, removes barriers to innovation and makes it easier for the public and private sectors to work together in delivering innovation. Horizon 2020 is open to everyone, with a simple structure that reduces red tape and time so participants can focus on what is really important.

Spitzer telescope

- **Key achievements:** Launched into solar orbit on August 25, 2003, Spitzer was initially scheduled for a minimum 2.5-year primary mission. But the space telescope has lasted far beyond its expected lifetime.
- **Spitzer's discoveries** extend from our own planetary backyard, to planets around other stars, to the far reaches of the universe. And by working in collaboration with NASA's other Great Observatories, Spitzer has helped scientists gain a more complete picture of many cosmic phenomena.

- **Spitzer has logged** over 106,000 hours of observation time in the past 15 years. It has illuminated some of the oldest galaxies in the universe, revealed a new ring around Saturn, and peered through shrouds of dust to study newborn stars and black holes.
- **The space telescope** also assisted in the discovery of planets beyond our solar system, including the detection of seven Earth-size planets orbiting the star TRAPPIST-1, among other accomplishments.
- **About Spitzer:** NASA's Spitzer Space Telescope was launched in 2003 to study the universe in the infrared. It is the last mission of the NASA Great Observatories program, which saw four specialized telescopes (including the Hubble Space Telescope) launched between 1990 and 2003.
- **The goal of the Great Observatories** is to observe the universe in distinct wavelengths of light. Spitzer focuses on the infrared band, which normally represents heat radiation from objects. The other observatories looked at visible light (Hubble, still operational), gamma-rays (Compton Gamma-Ray Observatory, no longer operational) and X-rays (the Chandra X-Ray Observatory, still operational.)
- **Spitzer's highly sensitive** instruments allow scientists to peer into cosmic regions that are hidden from optical telescopes, including dusty stellar nurseries, the centers of galaxies, and newly forming planetary systems.
- **Spitzer's infrared eyes** also allows astronomers see cooler objects in space, like failed stars (brown dwarfs), extrasolar planets, giant molecular clouds, and organic molecules that may hold the secret to life on other planets.

NTCA to take over Corbett Tiger Reserve

- **Context:** Pointing to an “alarming trend” of tiger deaths, the Uttarakhand High Court has asked if the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) could take over the management of the Corbett Tiger Reserve “as an interim measure”. The court also asked the NTCA if the tigers could be relocated “to save them from poaching”.
- **Why?** The court expressed dissatisfaction with the state government's inaction in dealing with tiger poaching incidents. It said the state government had failed to constitute a Special Tiger Protection Force despite the court's order.

- **What next?** As a last/ extreme measure, the court has sought the response of the NTCA, being the expert body, to take over the management of Corbett Tiger Reserve, as an interim measure, till the state government becomes alive to its duties and starts taking concrete decisions. The court has also asked NTCA to suggest “whether few tigers can be relocated/ shifted to save them from poaching/ killing to other well-managed national parks/sanctuaries”.
- **About Corbett tiger reserve:** Corbett National Park is situated in the foothills of the Sub- Himalayan belt in Nainital districts of Uttarakhand state in India. Established in the year 1936 as Hailey National Park, Corbett has the glory of being India’s oldest and most prestigious National Park. It is also being honored as the place where Project Tiger was first launched in 1973. This unique tiger territory is best known as the father who gave birth of the Project Tiger in India to protect the most endangered species and the Royal of India called Tigers. Corbett National Park covers an area of 521 sq. km and together with the neighboring Sonanadi Wildlife Sanctuary and Reserve Forest areas, forms the Corbett Tiger Reserve. Corbett is one of the richest bird regions of the Country and has been declared as an ‘Important Bird Area’ (IBA) by Birdlife International.
- **About NTCA:** The National Tiger Conservation Authority is a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change constituted under enabling provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, as amended in 2006, for strengthening tiger conservation, as per powers and functions assigned to it under the said Act.
- **The National Tiger Conservation Authority** has been fulfilling its mandate within the ambit of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 for strengthening tiger conservation in the country by retaining an oversight through advisories/normative guidelines, based on appraisal of tiger status, ongoing conservation initiatives and recommendations of specially constituted Committees.

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SWACHH BHARAT ABHIYAN-GRAMIN

- Objective: To fulfil Mahatma Gandhi's dream of a clean and hygienic India.
- **Achievements:** Over 6.26 crore household toilets constructed since the launch of the Mission (as on 21 March 2018) 3,23,560 villages, 314 districts and 11 States(9States+2UTs) declared ODF (as on 21st March, 2018) 4,464 open defecation free villages under Namami Ganga. Sanitation Coverage increased from 38.70% in 2014 to 78.98 % as on 21.03.2018. Incentive for individual toilet increased to Rs. 12,000.
- **SWACHH BHARAT KOSH** · To improve the cleanliness levels in rural and urban areas, priority to girl toilets in schools. · Rs 365 crore; used for school toilets & renovation of defunct toilets.
- **SWACHH BHARAT CESS** Contribution to the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan in the form of Swachh Bharat Cess
- **RURAL DRINKING WATER SUPPLY** Rural drinking water supply coverage - No. of fully covered habitations increased from 73.66% as on 1.4.14 to more than 78% in 2017 About 2,70,000 habitations covered from 2014-2017. More than 56 percent of the rural population have access to piped water supply. 17% Households have piped water connections. Clean Water to Arsenic and Fluoride affected 28000 habitations by 2020 SUB MISSION OF THE NATIONAL RURAL DRINKING WATER PROGRAM (NRDWP):

- **Objective:** · To provide safe drinking water to over 28,000 arsenic and fluoride affected habitations in the next four years. · Focus on Arsenic/Fluoride affected habitations under the National Water Quality Sub-Mission of NRDWP.

Project Navlekha

- What? Google has unveiled Project Navlekha to make online content relevant for more Indian users especially in local languages.
- **About Project Navlekha:** Navlekha in Sanskrit means “a new way to write.”
- **Google** is using its expertise in artificial intelligence for Project Navlekha, using which, it will quickly render any PDF with Indian language content into editable text, overcoming issues that usually occur when you try to copy text in Indian languages from a PDF.
- **The project aims** to bring 135,000 local language publishers online by making web hosting smooth and simple.
- **It will allow local publishers** who do not have websites to make their offline content fit for online publishing in less than a minute. It also comprises tool that uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) to allow publishers to simply scan documents or PDFs and create instant web pages on the platform. The project will provide a handy online publishing tool for local language newspapers and content companies—90% of which do not have a website.
- **The registered publishers** on Navlekha will also be provided with free web hosting, along with a branded domain for three years. They'll also have AdSense support to begin monetising their content. Under Navlekha project, Google will help these publishers to receive training and support and a branded page domain for the first three years.
- **Significance of the project:** At present, amount of online content in Indian languages is only 1% of what is available in English. India is important market for Google as it has second largest population of internet users in the world. Hence, with the new project the amount of resources available for Indians in local languages will increase.

Marriage certificate must for official work in Meghalaya

- **What?** The State government in matrilineal Meghalaya has made it mandatory for married people to produce marriage certificates for all official purposes. The government has also decided to deny government jobs and benefits to men who have abandoned their families and are not providing for maintenance of their children. Some of these men live with other women.
- **What necessitated this?** The step has been taken in view of increasing cases of broken marriages and women being forced to fend for themselves and their children. The abandonment of families by men lead to a spike in school dropouts and juvenile crimes. Also, most marriages in the Khasi society are not registered, and this makes it difficult for abandoned women to fight for the maintenance of their children.
- **Significance of the move:** The government's order cannot stop divorce, but marriage certificates will help abandoned women fight for the maintenance of their children after their husbands abandon them.

Anti-lynching measures

- **Context:** A panel headed by Union Home Secretary Rajiv Gauba, which deliberated on measures to check incidents of lynching, submitted its report to a Group of Ministers headed by Home Minister Rajnath Singh.
- **The proposal:** As per the suggestion made, media platforms — Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube and Twitter — would be made accountable for not blocking such malicious posts/videos when brought to their notice and “FIR could be lodged against their country heads” for non-compliance of government orders and they could be prosecuted under law.
- **Background:** From May-June, more than 20 people were lynched based on fake posts or rumours floating on various social media platforms. Last month, the Home Ministry issued advisories to States and Union Territories following Supreme Court's directives to check incidents of lynching.
- **The Centre asked** them to appoint an officer in each district at the level of Superintendent of Police, set up a special task force to gather intelligence, and closely monitor social media contents to prevent mob attacks on suspicion of being child-lifters or cattle smugglers.

- **Need for coordination between the centre and states on this matter:** The Union Government is highly concerned about the incidents of mob violence in some parts of the country. Government has already condemned such incidents and made its stand clear in the Parliament that, as per the Constitutional scheme, 'Police' and 'Public Order' are State subjects.
- **State Governments** are responsible for controlling crime, maintaining law and order, and protecting the life and property of the citizens. They are empowered to enact and enforce laws to curb crime in their jurisdiction.
- **Recent directions of the Supreme Court on the issue of mob violence:** Condemning mob lynching incidents across the country and the Supreme Court had urged the Parliament to enact a new law to deal with the crime. The court passed a slew of directions in this regard to deal with the mob lynching. Here are the directions: There shall be a "separate offence" for lynching and the trial courts must ordinarily award maximum sentence upon conviction of the accused person to set a stern example in cases of mob violence.
- **The state governments** will have to designate a senior police officer in each district for taking measures to prevent incidents of mob violence and lynching. The state governments need to identify districts, sub-divisions and villages where instances of lynching and mob violence have been reported in the recent past. The nodal officers shall bring to the notice of the DGP about any inter-district co-ordination issues for devising a strategy to tackle lynching and mob violence related issues.
- **Every police officer** shall ensure to disperse the mob that has a tendency to cause violence in the disguise of vigilantism or otherwise. Central and the state governments shall broadcast on radio, television and other media platforms about the serious consequences of mob lynching and mob violence. Despite the measures taken by the State Police, if it comes to the notice of the local police that an incident of lynching or mob violence has taken place, the jurisdictional police station shall immediately lodge an FIR.
- **The State Governments** shall prepare a lynching/mob violence victim compensation scheme in the light of the provisions of Section 357A of CrPC within one month from the date of this judgment. If a police officer or an officer of the district administration fails to fulfill his duty, it will be considered an act of deliberate negligence.
- **Need for an anti-lynching law:** At present there is no law that criminalises mob killings. The Indian Penal Code has provisions for unlawful assembly, rioting, and murder but nothing that takes cognisance of a group of people coming together to kill (a lynch mob).
- **Under Section 223** (a) of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), to prosecute together two or more people accused of the same offence committed in the course of the "same transaction". But the provision falls far short of an adequate legal framework for prosecuting lynch mobs.

Barriers to cashless economy

- **Context:** The Reserve Bank of India's second annual report shows that since demonetisation cash transactions have increased. Nearly two years after demonetization, about 99.3% of the notes sucked out of circulation has been returned. Besides, the value of bank notes in circulation has increased by 37.7% over the year, reaching Rs 18,037 lakh crore by the end of March 2018.
- **Outcomes of demonetization:** Over the last two years, at least three of major claims of demonetization have collapsed. First, it was supposed to flush out black money and end corruption. The government predicted that Rs 3 lakh crore in currency would not return to the banks. This has proved to be false, as most of the cash has returned.
- **Second, demonetisation** was to help detect fake currency, which apparently funded terror and distorted the economy. The government claimed that at any point of time, there was Rs 400 crore in fake currency notes floating in the economy. Nine months after demonetisation, it was claimed that Rs 11.23 crore in fake currency had been detected. Now, the Reserve Bank reports a huge jump in fake Rs 2,000 notes, which were introduced after demonetisation.
- **Third, demonetisation** was to pave the way to a cashless economy and the gleaming new world of digital India. Two years later, the amount of cash with the public has reached a record high, the bank has claimed.
- **Background:** On November 8, 2016, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that all Rs 500 and Rs 1000 notes, comprising 86% of the total value of the currency in circulation at that time, would no longer be recognised as legal tender.
- **What is a cashless economy?** It is a situation in which the flow of cash within an economy is non-existent and all transactions have to be through electronic channels such as direct debit, credit and debit cards, electronic clearing, payment systems such as Immediate Payment Service (IMPS), National Electronic Funds Transfer and Real Time Gross Settlement.
- **Benefits of a cashless economy:** Usage of cashless mechanisms would ensure that loopholes in public systems get plugged, and the intended beneficiaries are able to avail the benefits due to them. It also leads to increased efficiency in welfare programmes as money is wired directly into the accounts of recipients. Efficiency gains can also be seen as transaction costs across the economy come down. It also provides an on-ramp to financial inclusion and enables e-commerce growth. Reducing use of cash would also strangulate the grey economy, prevent money laundering and even increase tax compliance, which will ultimately benefit the customers at large.
- **Benefits for individuals:** No need for queues outside ATMs. No cashout during long holidays. No waiting for a deposited cheque to be credited. No risk of carrying currency notes in the wallet.
- **What perpetuates use of cash in India?** A high propensity to save in and use cash. Cash intensive supply chains require many merchants to transact in cash. A large shadow and remittance based economy is also to be blamed for the situation. Gender imbalance in use of digital payments has further aggravated the problem. This is due to insufficient focus on financial literacy. Also, costs of point-of-sale terminals and operating costs are still high in India.

O-SMART scheme

- **Context:** The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its approval for the umbrella scheme “Ocean Services, Technology, Observations, Resources Modelling and Science (O-SMART)”, for implementation during the period from 2017-18 to 2019-20 at an overall cost of Rs.1623 crore.
- **Highlights of the scheme:** The scheme encompasses a total of 16 sub-projects addressing ocean development activities such as Services, Technology, Resources, Observations and Science. The services rendered under the O-SMART will provide economic benefits to a number of user communities in the coastal and ocean sectors, namely, fisheries, offshore industry, coastal states, Defence, Shipping, Ports etc.
- **Significance and benefits of the scheme:** Currently, five lakhs fishermen community are receiving the related information daily through mobile which includes allocation of fish potential and local weather conditions in the coastal waters. The scheme will help in reducing the search time for fishermen resulting savings in the fuel cost. Implementation of O-SMART will help in addressing issues relating to Sustainable Development Goal-14, which aims to conserve use of oceans, marine resources for sustainable development. This scheme (O-SMART) also provide necessary scientific and technological background required for implementation of various aspects of Blue Economy.
- **The ocean advisory services and technologies** being rendered and developed under the scheme play a pivotal role in the development activities over dozen sectors, working in the marine environment including the coastal states of India, contributing significantly to the GDP. The State of Art Early Warning Systems established under the O-SMART Scheme will help in effectively dealing with ocean disasters like Tsunami, storm surges. The technologies being developed under this Scheme will help in harnessing the vast ocean resources of both living and non-living resources from the seas around India.
- **Significance of the Blue Economy:** As the resources on land are not adequate enough to meet the future demands, India is also embarking on blue economy for effective and efficient use of the vast ocean resources in a sustainable way, which would require a great deal of information on ocean science, development of technology and providing services. Further, the coastal research and marine biodiversity activities are important to be continued also in the context of achieving United Nations Sustainable Development Goal-14 to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

Prime Minister’s Science, Technology and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC):

- **What?** Union Government has constituted a new 21-member advisory panel on science, technology and innovation called Prime Minister’s Science, Technology and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC). It will replace earlier Scientific Advisory Committee to Prime Minister and to Cabinet.

- **Composition:** It will be headed by Principal Scientific Advisor to the government of India. It has nine members, including Chairperson. Apart from nine members, it will also have twelve special invitees — eleven ex officio secretaries 10 central ministries, related to science, technology, energy and education, are special invitees to the panel.
- **Roles and functions:** Advise PM on science, technology, as well as innovation. Coordinate implementation of PMs scientific vision. Aid in formulation and timely implementation of major science and technology missions and evolve interdisciplinary technology development programmes.
- **Advise government on developing 'Clusters of Excellence'** in science including city-based R&D clusters. Bring together all science and technology partners from academia and institutes to industries near such centres or cities.

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Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation

- SWACHH BHARAT ABHIYAN-GRAMIN
- **Objective:** To fulfil Mahatma Gandhi's dream of a clean and hygienic India.
- **Achievements:** Over 6.26 crore household toilets constructed since the launch of the Mission (as on 21 March 2018) 3,23,560 villages, 314 districts and 11 States(9States+2UTs) declared ODF (as on 21st March, 2018) 4,464 open defecation free villages under Namami Ganga. Sanitation Coverage increased from 38.70% in 2014 to 78.98 % as on 21.03.2018. Incentive for individual toilet increased to Rs. 12,000.
- **SWACHH BHARAT KOSH** · To improve the cleanliness levels in rural and urban areas, priority to girl toilets in schools. · Rs 365 crore; used for school toilets & renovation of defunct toilets.
- **SWACHH BHARAT CESS** Contribution to the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan in the form of Swachh Bharat Cess
- **RURAL DRINKING WATER SUPPLY** Rural drinking water supply coverage - No. of fully covered habitations increased from 73.66% as on 1.4.14 to more than 78% in 2017 About 2,70,000 habitations covered from 2014-2017. More than 56 percent of the rural population have access to piped water supply. 17% Households have piped water connections. Clean Water to Arsenic and Fluoride affected 28000 habitations by 2020 SUB MISSION OF THE NATIONAL RURAL DRINKING WATER PROGRAM (NRDWP):

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Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)

- **Context:** The 21st All India Review Meeting on Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) was recently held under the Chairmanship of Union Minister of Statistics & Program Implementation.
- **Nodal Secretaries** from States/UTs overseeing the implementation of MPLADS scheme took part in the deliberations. The focus was on issues related to the implementation of MPLADS with the States/UTs so that the Ministry can take steps to address these for further improvements in its implementation.
- **Challenges:** The major problems being faced in the implementation of the Scheme at the District level include: Non submission of requisite documents in time to the Ministry such as Audit Certificate, Utilization Certificate, Provisional Utilization Certificate, Monthly Progress Report, Bank Statement and Online Monthly Progress Report.
- **Performance of the scheme:** Since April, 2014 out of 4,67,144 works recommended by the MPs (Both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha), 4,11,612 works have been sanctioned and 3,84,260 works have been completed upto 31st July, 2018. Since inception, till 31.07.2018, Rs 47,922.75 Crores have been released under the Scheme and works of Rs 49,065.58. Crores have been sanctioned by the District Authorities. Of the total release since inception, Rs 45604.94 Crore have been utilized. This is more than ninety-five percent of the release.
- **About MPLAD scheme:** What is it? It was launched in December, 1993, to provide a mechanism for the Members of Parliament to recommend works of developmental nature for creation of durable community assets and for provision of basic facilities including community infrastructure, based on locally felt needs.
- **Works under the scheme:** Works, developmental in nature, based on locally felt needs and always available for the use of the public at large, are eligible under the scheme. Preference under the scheme is given to works relating to national priorities, such as provision of drinking water, public health, education, sanitation, roads, etc. Funds: Funds are released in the form of grants in-aid directly to the district authorities. The funds released under the scheme are non-lapsable. The liability of funds not released in a particular year is carried forward to the subsequent years, subject to eligibility.

- **Execution of works:** The MPs have a recommendatory role under the scheme. They recommend their choice of works to the concerned district authorities who implement these works by following the established procedures of the concerned state government. The district authority is empowered to examine the eligibility of works sanction funds and select the implementing agencies, prioritise works, supervise overall execution, and monitor the scheme at the ground level. Recommendation of works: The Lok Sabha Members can recommend works in their respective constituencies. The elected members of the Rajya Sabha can recommend works anywhere in the state from which they are elected. Nominated members of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha may select works for implementation anywhere in the country.

Report on “Wrongful Prosecution

- **Context:** The Law Commission of India has submitted its Report titled ‘Wrongful Prosecution (Miscarriage of Justice): Legal Remedies’ to the Government of India.
- **Background:** The High Court of Delhi in the case of Babloo Chauhan had expressed grave concern about the state of innocent persons being wrongfully prosecuted, incarcerated for crimes that they did not commit. The Court highlighted the urgent need for a legislative framework for provided relief and rehabilitation to victims of wrongful prosecution, incarceration and asked the Law Commission to undertake a comprehensive examination of the aforesaid issued and make a recommendation thereon to the Government of India.
- **What is wrongful prosecution?** Internationally, the issue of wrongful prosecution, incarceration, and conviction of innocent persons is identified as ‘miscarriage of justice’ that takes place after a person has been wrongfully convicted but is later found to be factually innocent basis a new fact / proof coming to light.
- **As per the law commission,** ‘Wrongful prosecution’ would include cases where the accused and not guilty of the offence, and the police and / or the prosecution engaged in some form of misconduct in investigating and / or prosecuting the person. It would include both the cases where the person spent time in prison as well as where he did not; and cases where the accused was found not guilty by the trial court or where the accused was convicted by one or more courts but was ultimately found to be not guilty by the Higher Court.
- **Highlights of the report:** This report looks at the issue from the context of Indian Criminal Justice system and recommends ‘wrongful prosecution’ to be the standards of miscarriage of justice, as against ‘wrongful conviction’ and ‘wrongful incarceration’. The Report gives an overview of the remedies available under the existing laws and discusses their inadequacies (also noted by the High Court in the aforementioned Order).
- **The Commission** recommends enactment of a specific legal provision for redressal of cases of wrongful prosecution – to provide relief to the victims of wrongful prosecution in terms of monetary and non-monetary compensation (such as counselling, mental health services, vocational / employment skills development etc.) within a statutory framework.

- **The Report enumerates** the core principles of the recommended framework- defining 'wrongful prosecution' i.e., cases in which claim for compensation can be filed, designation of a Special Court to decide these claims of compensation, nature of proceedings – timeline for deciding the claim, etc., financial and other factors to be considered while determining the compensation, provisions for interim compensation in certain cases, removal of disqualification on account of wrongful prosecution / conviction etc. A draft Bill is also annexed with the Report as the Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill, 2018.
- **Facts for Prelims:** The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ('ICCPR', ratified by India) also creates an obligation on the State parties to enact a law to compensate the victims of such miscarriage of justice.

Innovation Cell

- **Context:** Innovation Cell has been launched by the Ministry of HRD.
- **MHRD Innovation Cell (MIC):** Innovation cell is MHRD's initiative established at AICTE with a purpose to systematically foster the culture of Innovation in all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the country.
- **The primary mandate of Innovation Cell** is to encourage, inspire and nurture young students by exposing them to new ideas and processes resulting in innovative activities in their formative years fostered through Network of Innovation clubs in Higher Educational Institutions.
- **Significance and the need for innovation:** Without innovation no country can achieve sustainable development and prosperity. 21st century is century of Innovation, and the Prime Minister of India has called the decade 2010-20 as the 'Decade of Innovation', to unleash the creative potential of every Indian. India has already been improving on global stage in terms of Innovation ranking from 86th place, 5 years ago, to 57th place this year.

Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA)

- **Context:** Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has launched 'Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA)' to systematically rank education institutions and universities primarily on innovation related indicators.
- **About ARIIA:** ARIIA considers all major indicators which are commonly used globally to rank most innovative education institutions/ universities in the world. More than quantity, ARIIA will focus on quality of innovations and will try to measure the real impact created by these innovations nationally and internationally.
- **Significance of ARIIA:** ARIIA ranking will certainly inspire Indian institutions to reorient their mind-set and build ecosystems to encourage high quality research, innovation and entrepreneurship. Moreover, ARIIA will set tone and direction for institutions for future development for making them globally competitive and in forefront of innovation.
- **Need for such a tool:** For India to emerge as a global innovation hub, the youth of our country, especially in higher education institutions (HEIs) need to play a crucial role to create a sustainable innovation ecosystem. Hence, ideally all HEIs should have a comprehensive and functional mechanism to convert research into innovations. This ecosystem will encourage, inspire and nurture young students by exposing them to new ideas and processes resulting in innovative activities in their formative years.
- **To ensure that Innovation** is primary fulcrum of all HEIs, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Govt. of India is introducing 'Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA)' to systematically rank education institutions and universities primarily on innovation related indicators.

International Energy Agency (IEA)

- **Context:** The Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science and Technology, and the International Energy Agency (IEA) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Enhancing Innovation for Clean Energy Transition.
- **Highlights of the MoU:** The MoU seeks to deepen co-operation in support of clean energy innovations to accelerate the research, development, and demonstration (RD&D) of clean energy technologies in India and will help support the generation of data for policymaking and improve knowledge of good policy practices for innovation in India and around the world. The MoU will ensure cooperation for sharing of energy policies on RD&D and sharing of best practices on data collection and analysis. This MoU also has a provision for activities such as training and capacity building and accelerating energy innovation by identifying sources of finance.
- **About International Energy Agency:** Founded in 1974, the IEA was initially designed to help countries co-ordinate a collective response to major disruptions in the supply of oil, such as the crisis of 1973/4. While this remains a key aspect of its work, the IEA has evolved and expanded significantly.

- **Important functions performed by IEA:** The IEA examines the full spectrum of energy issues including oil, gas and coal supply and demand, renewable energy technologies, electricity markets, energy efficiency, access to energy, demand side management and much more. Through its work, the IEA advocates policies that will enhance the reliability, affordability and sustainability of energy in its member countries and beyond.
- **Publications:** Its publications include the flagship World Energy Outlook and the IEA Market Reports; data and statistics, such as Key World Energy Statistics and the Monthly Oil Data Service; and a series of training and capacity building workshops, presentations, and resources.
- **The four main areas of IEA focus are:** Energy Security: Promoting diversity, efficiency, flexibility and reliability for all fuels and energy sources; Economic Development: Supporting free markets to foster economic growth and eliminate energy poverty;
- **Environmental Awareness:** Analysing policy options to offset the impact of energy production and use on the environment, especially for tackling climate change and air pollution; and Engagement Worldwide: Working closely with partner countries, especially major emerging economies, to find solutions to shared energy and environmental concerns.

RCEP Ministerial Meeting

- **Context:** 6th RCEP Trade Ministers' Meeting is being held at Singapore.
- **Background:** India has been constructively engaged in the RCEP negotiations with an aim to work towards a high quality, balanced and inclusive outcomes that take into consideration sensitivities and interests of member countries.
- **What you need to know about RCEP?** RCEP is proposed between the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Brunei, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam) and the six states with which ASEAN has existing FTAs (Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand). RCEP negotiations were formally launched in November 2012 at the ASEAN Summit in Cambodia. RCEP aims to boost goods trade by eliminating most tariff and non-tariff barriers — a move that is expected to provide the region's consumers greater choice of quality products at affordable rates. It also seeks to liberalise investment norms and do away with services trade restrictions.
- **India's Concerns with member countries:** Greater access to Chinese goods may have impact on the Indian manufacturing sector. India has already got massive trade deficit with China. There are demands by other RCEP countries for lowering customs duties on a number of products and greater access to the market than India has been willing to provide.

- **Challenges ahead for India:** More developed countries such as Australia and Singapore are unwilling to accommodate India's demands to liberalise their services regime and allow freer mobility of Indian workers.
- **Way ahead:** The negotiations on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, among 16 Asian and Pacific Ocean countries, have entered a decisive phase. Most potential member-countries of the grouping would like to see a "substantive agreement" on the trade deal by the end of this year. At a meeting in Singapore countries which still have issues with the outline of the agreements reached so far may be told politely to step aside and allow a smaller group to go ahead with finalising the RCEP.

SAARC Agri Cooperative Business Forum

- **Context:** The first South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Agri Cooperative Business Forum was held recently in Kathmandu, Nepal. Theme: 'Organizing and Strengthening Family Farmers' Cooperatives to attain the Sustainable-Development-Goals-1 and 2 in South Asia'.
- **About SAARC Agri Cooperative Business Forum:** Organized by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of United Nations and Asian Farmers' Association with the support from International Fund for Agricultural Development. Aim: To provide platform to bring together representatives both from government and non-governmental entities from member states of SAARC as well as from regional and international organizations.
- **WHAT IS SAARC?** SAARC stands for South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. It is a geopolitical cooperation maintained for mutual benefits between eight south Asian nations: India, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Maldives.
- **Other key facts:** SAARC Summits are held annually. There have been, however, times when the summits skipped a year. The diplomatic summits can only take place when all the members of SAARC are present. SAARC Secretariat is based in Kathmandu. It is responsible for monitoring the activities of the cooperation. The body was founded in Dhaka in 1985.
- **SAFTA:** In a landmark move, SAARC nations unanimously decided to form South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA). Although the agreement was reached at the 12th SAARC summit in 2004, it came into force on 1 January 2006. The agreement not only created a free trade area of 1.8 billion people in SAARC nations (except Afghanistan), but also removed trade barriers to increase the level of economic cooperation.

India's National Redd+ Strategy

- **Context:** Complying with the UNFCCC decisions on REDD+, India has prepared its National REDD+ Strategy. The Strategy builds upon existing national circumstances which have been updated in line with India's National Action Plan on Climate Change, Green India Mission and India's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to UNFCCC. The strategy report has been prepared by Indian Council of Forestry Research & Education (ICFRE), Dehradun.
- **Background:** Paris agreement on climate change recognises role of forests in climate change mitigation and calls upon participating nations to take action to implement and support REDD+. Complying with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) decisions on REDD+, India has prepared its national REDD+ strategy and soon it will be communicated to UNFCCC."
- **About REDD+:** In simple terms, REDD+ means "Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation", conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries.
- **REDD+ is a mechanism developed** by Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It creates a financial value for the carbon stored in forests by offering incentives for developing countries to reduce emissions from forested lands and invest in low-carbon paths to sustainable development. Developing countries would receive results-based payments for results-based actions. REDD+ goes beyond simply deforestation and forest degradation and includes the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

Nilgiri tahr:

- **Context:** In a heartening development for conservationists, a recent census has revealed that the population of the Nilgiri tahr (an endangered mountain goat) at the Mukurthi National Park has grown by an impressive 18% in the last two years, from 480 to 568. Threats: The population also faces several threats. Researchers point to the continuing spread of invasive species of flora, such as wattle and pine, and exotic weeds like scotch broom (*Cystisus scoparius*) and gorse, which end up diminishing grazing land.
- **Nilgiri Tahr- Key facts:** IUCN status- Endangered. It is listed in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972. Endemic to the Nilgiri Hills and the southern portion of the Western Ghats in the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala in Southern India. It is the State animal of Tamil Nadu.

- **'Call for Code' initiative:** What is it? It is an initiative launched by Global IT giant IBM in partnership with Indian IT companies. Aim: The aim is to build global solutions for disaster management. It also aims to bring startup, academic and enterprise developers together to respond to and recover from natural disasters.

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