



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

## INCLUSIVE INDIA- PRO POOR Samaveshi Bharat-Samekit Bharat (As on 10.05.2018) MISSION ANTYODAYA (RD)

- **Announced in Budget 2017-18** Targets convergence of government interventions with Gram Panchayats as basic unit, following a saturation approach.
- **Aims** to make a real difference in lives of 1 crore households in 50,000 Gram Panchayats, based on measurable outcomes.

## GRAM SWARAJ ABHIYAN

- **Focused campaign** during 14th April to 5th May, 2018 to saturate 16850 villages in 484 districts under 7 schemes
- **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana**; Ujjwala Diwas, 20th April, 2018 Saubhagya: Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana: Gram Shakti Diwas-28th April, 2018 Ujala Scheme Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana Mission Indradhanush: 23rd-27th April, 2018

## JAN DHAN Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)

- **JAN DHAN Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)** Launched by the Prime Minister on 28 August 2014 for financial inclusion. 60% bank accounts opened in rural areas (As on 25.4.2018) 31.52 crore Jan Dhan accounts opened (As on 25.4.2018)
- **Total balance** in Jan Dhan accounts Rs. 80871.67 crores (As on 25.4.2018) Over 23.71 Crore Rupay Cards issued (As on 25.4.2018) Share of zero-balance Jan Dhan accounts dropped to 24% in December 2016 from 73% in December 2014.
- **Over 1.26 lakh** bank-mitras appointed by banks 2.5 lakh Gram-Dak-Sewaks will function as banking correspondents

## JAN SURAKSHA

- **Pradhan Mantri Suraksha BimaYojana (PMSBY)** Launched by the Prime Minister on 9th May 2015 in Kolkata Covers accidental death risks
- **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 (PMJJBY)

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- **Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY)** Launched by the Prime Minister on 9th May 2015 in Kolkata · 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 (APY)

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- **Atal Pension Yojana (APY)** Launched by the Prime Minister on 9th May 2015 in Kolkata Focus on the unorganized sector As on 5 January, 2018 about 80 lakh subscribers have been enrolled under APY.

## PRADHAN MANTRI VAYA VANDAN YOJANA

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- **PRADHAN MANTRI VAYA VANDAN YOJANA** Announced by PM on New Year eve of 2017& launched by the Finance Minister on 21.7.2017 To provide social security and protect elderly. For citizens aged 60 years and above, it was opened for subscription from May 4, 2017 to May 3, 2018
- **Now PMVVY Pension Investment Limit** has been Doubled from Rs. 7.5 lakh to 15 lakh Now Senior Citizens can get up to Rs. 10,000 pension per month.
- **Scheme** has been extended by two years from May 4, 2018 to March 31, 2020. The scheme provides an assured pension based on a guaranteed rate of return of 8 per cent per annum for ten years.
- **As of March, 2018**, 2.23 lakh senior citizens have subscribed to PMVVY

## DBT · Applicable across the country. · As on 09/05/2018:

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- **ü 435 such schemes/components** have been identified where cash is directly transferred to bank account of the beneficiaries.
- **ü Total DBT** (cumulative) Rs. 3,89,596 crore has been transferred to the beneficiaries in the Cash Schemes.
- **ü DBT and other** governance reforms have led to Estimated savings/ benefits of Rs. 82,985 Cr

## PAHAL (Pratyaksh Hanstantrit Labh:

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- **PAHAL (Pratyaksh Hanstantrit Labh:** Direct Benefit Transfer for LPG consumer (DBTL) scheme · Launched in 54 districts on 15.11.2014 and expanded to 622 more districts from 1 January 2015.
- **The success of PAHAL** is evident from the fact it made to the Guinness Book of World Records as the world's largest cash benefit transfer scheme.
- **Launched** in 54 districts on 15.11.2014 and expanded to 622 more districts from 1 January 2015. · As on 07.05.2018, more than 20.54 crore LPG consumers have joined the PAHAL Scheme.
- **World's largest cash transfer program.** · Rs. 72,537 crore transferred so far as subsidy directly into accounts
- **Estimated** Subsidy savings of Rs. 29,446 crore from 2014-17

## FOOD SECURITY FOR POOR (Food & Public Distribution)

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- **FOOD SECURITY FOR POOR (Food & Public Distribution)** · National Food Security Act, NFSA extended all over the country. · 80.72 crore (as on 27.03.2018) persons covered now get coarse grains at Rs. 1/kg, wheat at Rs. 2/ kg and rice at Rs. 3/ kg.
- **NFSA Act** is being implemented in all the 36 States/UTs as against only in 11 states in May 2014.

## UJJWALA

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- **UJJWALA** Scheme for Providing Free LPG connections to Women from BPL Households launched by PM in Ballia, Uttar Pradesh on 1.5.2016
- **As on 6.5.2018, more than 3.78 crore new LPG** connections given to them. Out of this, 30.5% and 13.3% connections issued to SC and ST categories respectively.
- **Scheme spread all over the country, now in 712 districts** Target enhanced from 5 crore to 8 core LPG connections in four years during 2016-20). The scheme opened to all SC &ST households, beneficiaries of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and Antyodaya Anna Yojana, forest dwellers, "most backward classes," tea garden and ex-tea garden tribes, and people residing in islands or river islands
- **Funds allocated: Rs.12800 crores** LPG Coverage: During 2016-17, more than 3.31 crore new LPG connections have been released and during 2017-18, more than 2.82 crore new LPG connections have been released. As on 1.3.2018, National LPG coverage has reached to 79.9% from 61 % as on 01.01.2016.

## MGNREGA

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- **Highest ever allocation of Rs. 55,000 crores for MGNREGA in 2018-19 Year** • **Payment of wages to MGNREGA** workers within 15 days in 86 percent of the cases as compared to only 37 percent in 2015-16 and 43 percent in 2016-17 on account of increased allocation for MGNREGA at BE Stage.
- **Expenditure including State** share in FY 2016-17 is 58,063 crores and 64, 288 crore in 2017-2018 which is the highest since inception.
- **Women participation** rose to 56% in FY 2016-17, highest ever participation of women since inception of the program.
- **Against the target** of 5 lakh farm ponds for 2017-2018, 4.93 lakh farm ponds have been completed.
- **Over 96% wages** of MGNREGA laborers being paid through DBT and 85% of the wages are being paid to the workers on time.
- **Geo-tagging** of MGNREGA assets implemented in FY 2016-17. 2.9 crore assets out of 3.40 crore completed works have been geo tagged.

## INDIAN POSTAL PAYMENT BANK

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- **INDIAN POSTAL PAYMENT BANK** • Indian Postal Payment Bank to take the banking system to the doorstep of the poor and the unbanked • Over 2.5 lakh Gram DakSewaks can work as Banking Correspondents

## PRIME MINISTER'S EMPLOYMENT GENERATION PROGRAM

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- **PRIME MINISTER'S EMPLOYMENT GENERATION PROGRAM** • Since its inception, a total of 4.47 lakh micro enterprises have been assisted with a margin money subsidy of Rs 9326.01 crore providing employment to an estimated 37.32 lakh persons from inception till 2017-18 (up to 30.11.2017). • An online PMEGP e-portal has been introduced from 1st July 2016

## Prime Minister Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY)

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- **Prime Minister Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY)** • 21000 persons disclosed Rs. 4,900 crore under the Prime Minister Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY) on which Rs. 2,451 crore was collected as tax.

## SHRAMEV JAYATE Workers Get their due:

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- **SHRAMEV JAYATE Workers Get their due:** • Minimum wages increased by 42% in both agricultural and non-agricultural sectors.
- **Seventh Pay Commission: Benefited 50 lakh employees and 35 lakh pensioners.** • Gratuity ceiling limit enhanced from Rs 10 lakhs to Rs 20 lakhs for Government employees with effect from 1 January, 2016. Applicable also for employees in the private and public sector in view of the inflation and general increase in wages

- **The Payment of Bonus (Amendment) Act, 2015** : Enhances the eligibility limit for payment of bonus from Rs. 10,000 per month to Rs.21,000 per month. • Contribution of 8.33% of Employee Provident Fund (EPF) for new employees by the Government for three years.
- **Contribution of 12% to EPF** for new employees for three years by the Government in sectors employing large number of people like textile, leather and footwear. • Shram Suvidha portal: Unique Labour identification number allocated, online registration of establishments.
- **Unique Labour Identification number** allocated to give permanent identity to labourers. EPFO issued 12 crores UAN out of which 3 crore have been activated using Mobile services. (As on 31.3.2017). No. of KYC details digitally approved are 7.05 crore.
- **Amendments in Labour laws** to exempt certain industries from returns, labour registration, inspection etc. • Amendment in factories Act, 1948 to allow for: Night shift for women, increased hours of overtime
- **Apprentices Act, 1961** modified to ensure more apprentices. Stipend linked to minimum wages. • **Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act 2017**: To increase paid maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks. For the first time, a provision for 12 weeks paid maternity leave has been made for both Commissioning and Adopting mothers. The act has approximately benefited 18 Lakh women employees.
- **Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 2016**: Complete ban on the employment of a child below 14 years and prohibition on employment of adolescent (14-18) in hazardous occupation & profession.
- **Implementation of Revamped Bonded Labour Rehabilitation Scheme** (Revised- 17.05.2016): Financial Assistance increased to Rs. 1 Lakh per adult beneficiary, Rs. 2 Lakh for special category (Children and women), Rs. 3 lakhs for special categories.
- **The Payment of Wages (Amendment) Act 2017** : Employers to pay the wages to employees in cash or by cheque or by crediting the wages in bank accounts of the employee.
- **Digital Jeevan Praman Patra** introduced for convenience of Pensioners
- **Housing Subsidy to Beedi** , Cine and Non-Coal Mine Workers increased from Rs. 40,000/- to Rs. 1,50,000.
- **Reforms** in BIS laws to improve the standards of goods and services.
- **National Career Service Project** : bringing employers, trainers and unemployed on single platform, till February 28, 2018, 4.10 Crore jobseekers, 14.87 lakh employers registered and 8.43 lakhs vacancies mobilized, 3151 career counsellors registered on the NCS portal.

## JANANI SURAKSHA YOJANA

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- **JANANI SURAKSHA YOJANA** · Institutional delivery in the country has risen to 78.9% (NFHS-4, 2015-16) from 47% (DLHS-3, 2007-08).

## RURAL ELECTRIFICATION DEEN DAYAL UPADHYAYA GRAM JYOTI YOJANA: (DDUGJY) Scheme launched on 25th July 2015

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- **Objective**: · 100% Rural Electrification with reliable, adequate & quality electricity supply and also to provide access to electricity to villages/habitations & households
- **An amount** of Rs 47,671.97 crore including subsidy of 43,004.60 crore has been released to States (as on 31, Dec, 2017) · **Status**: - April 2015: 18452 Villages un-electrified - Now- 597,464 census villages (100%) have been electrified.

## Exercise Aviaindra-18 Posted On: 01 OCT 2018 7:36PM by PIB Delhi

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- **The second edition of Exercise Aviaindra**, a Biennial Air Force level exercise between Indian and the Russian Federation, was conducted from 17 Sep 18 to 28 Sep 18. The aim of the exercise was to formulate and validate use of airpower in anti-terrorist operation in a bilateral scenario.
- **The exercise** which was conducted at Lipetsk, Russia began with interaction of the Indian contingent with their Russian counterparts. The aim of the exercise was to learn best practices from one another and it also includes simulator training. The exercise included briefing on Aerospace safety and anti-terrorist air operations.

## Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention

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- **Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention:** The Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention is being organised by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation to mark the beginning of the 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi, also coinciding with the fourth anniversary of the launch of Swachh Bharat Mission.
- **Ministers from over 70 countries will be invited and taken on a 'Gandhi Trail' in Gujarat.** The government will use the occasion to "showcase its performance" and "success story" in the Swachh Bharat programme in the past four years, which was launched on October 2, 2014, and have a face-to-face dialogue with the world leaders to share their experiences on sanitation programmes.
- **SDG: By 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals**, specifically SDG #6, aim to reach everyone with sanitation, and halve the proportion of untreated wastewater and increase recycling and safe reuse.
- **The global sanitation crisis** is reflected in the following facts, according to reports from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF):
  - **Around 60% of the global population** – 4.5 billion people – either have no toilet at home or one that doesn't safely manage excreta. 862 million people worldwide still practise open defecation. Billions of people use an unimproved source of drinking water with no protection against contamination from faeces.
  - **Globally**, 80% of the wastewater generated by society flows back into the ecosystem without being treated or reused. Only 39% of the global population (2.9 billion people) use a safely-managed sanitation service, that is, excreta safely disposed of in situ or treated off-site.
  - **Combined with safe water** and good hygiene, improved sanitation could prevent around 842,000 deaths each year.
- **Swachh Bharat Mission:** The Government of India launched the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) on 2nd October 2014, with an aim to build a Clean and Open Defecation Free (ODF) India by 2nd October 2019, as a befitting tribute to Mahatma Gandhi on his 150th birth anniversary.
- **Since the inception** of the program, the rural sanitation coverage of India has increased significantly, from 39% in October 2014 to over 90% as of September 2018. Over 78 million household toilets have been constructed under the Mission. As a result, 25 States/Union Territories, over 513 districts, and 5,04,316 villages have declared themselves as free from open defecation.

## Committee to review the Competition Act

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- **The Terms of References of the Committee are as follows:** To review the Competition Act/ Rules/ Regulations, in view of changing business environment and bring necessary changes, if required. To look into international best practices in the competition fields, especially anti-trust laws, merger guidelines and handling cross border competition issues.
- **To study other regulatory regimes/ institutional mechanisms/ government policies which overlap with the Competition Act.** Any other matters related to competition issue and considered necessary by the Committee.

- **Background:** The Competition Act was passed in the year 2002 and the Competition Commission of India was set up in pursuance of the same. The Commission started functioning in right earnest from 2009 and has contributed immensely towards the development of competition and fair play practices in the Indian market.
- **Need for review of the act:** During the past nine years the size of the Indian Economy has grown immensely and India is today amongst the top five Economies in the World and poised to forge ahead further. In this context, it is essential that Competition Law is strengthened, and re-calibrated to promote best practices which result in the citizens of this country achieving their aspirations and value for money.
- **The Competition Act:** The Competition Act, 2002, as amended by the Competition (Amendment) Act, 2007, prohibits anti-competitive agreements, abuse of dominant position by enterprises and regulates combinations (acquisition, acquiring of control and M&A), which causes or likely to cause an appreciable adverse effect on competition within India.

## Assam to launch wage compensation scheme for pregnant women in tea gardens

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- **Assam to launch wage compensation scheme for pregnant women in tea gardens** Aim: The scheme is aimed at providing better health and nutrition supplements to the pregnant women. It stresses on providing proper healthcare facilities to the pregnant women working in the tea gardens of the state.
- **Key facts:** Under the scheme, an amount of Rs 12,000 will be given to the pregnant women so that they can take care of themselves and the unborn baby without compromising the livelihood of their family.
- **The compensation** of wages to pregnant women will be given in 4 instalments – Rs 2,000 in the first trimester, Rs 4,000 in the second trimester, Rs 3,000 for institutional delivery and Rs 3,000 for registration of the child's birth. The women would also be given a maternity leave. They will not be engaged in work from the third trimester of pregnancy to three months after delivery.
- **In addition**, they will get assistance for ante-natal care and the first cycle of immunization of the child.
- **Significance:** The scheme is likely to benefit over 60,000 women in the state. It is expected to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality in the tea areas.
- **Background:** The maternal mortality rate of women working in the tea plantations of Assam is unusually high. In the Annual Health Survey of 2012-13, Assam recorded one of the highest maternal mortality rates in India, with over 300 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. The MMR in the state's tea gardens was even higher, as it was recorded to be 404. The national average during 2014-16 was 130.
- **Also, almost 50%** of the pregnant women aged between 15 and 49 years in the state were recorded to be anaemic, which is a leading contributor to maternal mortality. The bulk of the workforce in Assam's tea gardens is women.

## 'Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism' (CCIT)

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- **Background:** As a country affected by terrorism, long before the more powerful countries of the developed world began to take cognisance of the threat it poses to international peace and security, India has always condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations; stressed that tackling such behaviour required a holistic approach and collective action; and recommended that the scope of legal instruments must be expanded to bring the perpetrators of terrorism to justice.
- **India, therefore, has a vital stake in the formulation of counter-terrorist measures at the international level**, including a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT). It is in this context that India had proposed a draft of a CCIT as far back as 1996. CCIT: What is it? The Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism is a proposed treaty which intends to criminalize all forms of international terrorism and deny terrorists, their financiers and supporters access to funds, arms, and safe havens. It is a draft proposed by India in 1996 that is yet to be adopted by the UNGA.
- **What does it call for?** Universal definition of terrorism: no good terrorist or bad terrorist. Ban on all groups regardless of country of operation, cut off access to funds and safe havens. Prosecution of all groups including cross border groups. Amending domestic laws to make cross-border terror an extraditable offence. It also addresses, among other things, the issue of Pakistan's alleged support for cross-border terrorism in south Asia.

- **Concerns expressed by various countries:** US + allies: concerns over definition of terrorism, including acts by US soldiers in international interventions without UN mandate. Latin American countries: concerns over international humanitarian laws being ignored. There are also concerns that convention will be used to target Pakistan and restrict rights of self-determination groups in Palestine, Kashmir etc.

## IUCN threat categories

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- **Key facts:** Around 2,700 plant species in India are at risk but very few have been assessed by the IUCN. To bridge this gap, experts from several institutes prioritized 59 plant species that are at risk of "elimination" if the threat levels they face are not assessed soon. They assigned each species a threat status based on IUCN criteria.
- **This included the extent and area** of each plant's geographical range, which revealed that 10 species are critically endangered, 18 endangered, six vulnerable, five near threatened and one species each are data deficient and least concern.
- **Causes for decline in population:** Based on population sizes and numbers of mature individuals remaining in the wild (using field surveys that also revealed that habitat loss was a huge factor affecting many declining plant populations), the team classified 10 species as critically endangered, three as endangered and five as vulnerable. Germination tests in the laboratory also suggest that factors such as low seed viability could have caused declines in the wild too.
- **Why quantify threat levels?** Quantifying threat levels of species can be crucial for their conservation. For instance, funding agencies often consider the threat status of species provided in IUCN's Red List (a catalogue of the world's threatened species), to sponsor research and conservation activities to save them.
- **IUCN- key facts: IUCN was founded in October 1948 as the International Union for the Protection of Nature (or IUPN) following an international conference in Fontainebleau, France.** It was renamed as International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources in 1956 with the acronym IUCN. IUCN is the world's first global environmental organization. Today it is the largest professional global conservation network. The Union's HQ is located in Gland, near Geneva, in Switzerland. It demonstrates how biodiversity is fundamental to addressing some of the world's greatest challenges such as climate change, sustainable development and food security.
- **The IUCN Red List** is set upon precise criteria to evaluate the extinction risk of thousands of species and subspecies. These criteria are relevant to all species and all regions of the world. The aim is to convey the urgency of conservation issues to the public and policy makers, as well as help the international community to try to reduce species extinction.
- **Species are classified by the IUCN Red List** into nine groups, set through criteria such as rate of decline, population size, area of geographic distribution, and degree of population and distribution fragmentation.

## GCTF Terrorist Travel Initiative

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- **GCTF Terrorist Travel Initiative:** The initiative brings together stakeholders to share expertise on developing and implementing effective counterterrorism watchlisting and screening tools. The new initiative will strengthen UNSC Resolution 2396 aiming to stop terrorist travel altogether. It will improve capabilities for detecting and interdicting terrorist travel through enhanced terrorist screening and information sharing.
- **It will bring together national and local governments,** law enforcement and border screening practitioners and international organizations to share expertise to develop and implement effective counterterrorism watchlisting and screening tools.
- **Under this initiative,** series of four regional workshops in 2018 and 2019 will be convened to develop set of good practices that will be endorsed at 2019 GCTF Ministerial. The resulting document will reinforce countries and organizations to use border security tools prescribed in UNSC Resolution 2396 to stop terrorist travel.
- **Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF): GCTF's is international apolitical,** multilateral counter-terrorism (CT) platform of 29 countries and European Union (EU) with overarching mission of reducing vulnerability of people worldwide to terrorism by preventing, combating, and prosecuting terrorist acts and countering incitement and recruitment to terrorism. It was launched officially in New York on 22 September 2011.
- **GCTF's** goal is to strengthen capabilities to develop strategic, long-term approach to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremist ideologies that underpin it. Its mission is to diminish terrorist recruitment and increase countries' civilian capabilities for dealing with terrorist threats within their borders and regions.



## UN Champions of the Earth Award 2018:

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- **UN Champions of the Earth Award 2018:** Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been awarded with the UN's highest environmental honour- Champions of the Earth Award, bestowed upon five other individuals and organisations.
- **French President Emmanuel Macron**, President of France and Modi have been jointly recognised in the Policy Leadership category for their pioneering work in championing the International Solar Alliance and promoting new areas of levels of cooperation on environmental action, including Macron's work on the Global Pact for the Environment and Modi's unprecedented pledge to eliminate all single-use plastic in India by 2022.
- **Cochin International Airport** has also been honoured this year with the award for Entrepreneurial Vision, for its leadership in the use of sustainable energy.
- **Champions of the Earth Award:** The Champions of the Earth award, the UN's highest environmental recognition, was founded in 2005. The award celebrates exceptional figures from the public and private sectors and from civil society, whose actions have had a transformative positive impact on the environment.
- **The award also recognises the efforts for promoting new areas of levels of cooperation on environmental action.** Uttarakhand HC directs state to provide reservation to transgenders in educational institutions:
- **The Uttarakhand High Court** has directed the state government to provide reservation to transgenders in educational institutions and public appointments. The high court gave the state government six months' time to implement the decision.
- **The court stated that the transgenders** lead a miserable life and are often treated unfairly. Observing that they have the right to a life of dignity, the court gave the state government six months time to implement its decision.



## FARMER'S INDIA Samarth Kisan-Samridh Bharat (As on 10.05.2018) FARMERS & BUDGET 2018-19

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- **Budget allocation** for the Agriculture ministry increased by 13 per cent to Rs 58,080 crore for 2018 -19 fiscal, from Rs 51,576 crore in 2017-18
- **Farm credit target** raised to Rs 11 lakh crore for 2018-19 from Rs 10 lakh crore in 2017-18. It was around Rs 9 Lakh Crore in 2016-17 A corpus of Rs 10,000 crore to create infrastructure in fishery, aquaculture and animal husbandry sectors.
- **Agri-market infrastructure Fund:** A corpus of Rs. 2,000 crore as Agri-market infrastructure fund set up. National Bamboo Mission: Rs 1,290 crore announced to help setting up of small industries and create new employments opportunities in bamboo sector. Tax incentives to promote post-harvest agricultural activities.
- **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 (TOP) to help farmers and consumers.
- **Gramin Agricultural Markets (GrAMs):** To develop and upgrade existing 22,000 rural haats into 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.
- **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana**” launched to modernise supply chain infrastructure in the agricultural sector.
- **Budget allocation** doubled under the Krishi Sampada Yojana to push the Food processing industry · 74.5% hike in budgetary allocation during 2014-19 compared to 2009 to 2014. Up from Rs. 1,21,082 crores to Rs. 2,11,694 crore

## TARGET TO DOUBLE FARMERS' INCOME BY 2022 Seven Point Strategy

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- **Special focus on irrigation with sufficient budget, with the aim of “Per Drop More Crop”.** Provision of quality seeds and nutrients based on soil health of each field. Large investments in Warehousing and Cold Chains to prevent post-harvest crop losses.
- **Promotion of value addition through food processing.** Creation of a National Farm Market, removing distortions and e-platform across 585 Stations.
- **Introduction of a New Crop** Insurance Scheme to mitigate risks at an affordable cost.
- **Promotion of ancillary** activities like poultry, beekeeping, and fisheries. Umbrella Scheme, "Green Revolution – Krishonnati Yojana"
- **11 Schemes/Missions in agriculture sector merged under one Umbrella Scheme, "Green Revolution – Krishonnati Yojana"** Objective: To develop the agriculture and allied sector in a holistic and scientific manner to increase the income of farmers by enhancing production, productivity and better returns on produce

- **MSP & PROCUREMENT** Big hike in Minimum Support Price or MSP for Kharif crops, 1.5 times of the production cost.
- **MSP of Kharif pulses** for 2017-18. MSP of Arhar increased from Rs. 5050/- to Rs. 5,450/- per quintal. MSP of Urad increased from Rs. 5,000/- to Rs. 5,400/- per quintal. MSP of Moong increased from Rs 5,225/- to Rs. 5,575/- per quintal
- **Substantial increase** in MSP of Rabi Pulses. MSP of Gram increased from Rs. 4,000/- to Rs. 4400/- per quintal. MSP of lentil (Masoor) increased from Rs. 3,950/- to Rs. 4,250,- per quintal
- **Extent of buffer stock of Pulses increased from 1.5 lakh tonnes to 20 lakh tonnes.** About 21.28 lakh metric tonne of pulses procured (As on 04.05.2018) Procurement of wheat during Rabi season has touched 308.24 lakh tonne as on 31th August, 2017 compared to 229.30 lakh metric tonnes in 2016-17 and 280.88 lakh metric tonnes in 2015-16.
- **Pulses production** went up by more than 3.5 percent during 2017-18 (as per 2nd Advance estimates) as compared to last year's production, of 231.3 lakh, which is a record.

## FERTILIZERS (D/O FERTILIZERS) Fertilizer Subsidy Fertilizer subsidies: Urea and Nutrient bases subsidies up by almost 8 percent to Rs 70000 crore.

- **Direct Benefit Transfer in Fertilizer Subsidy** Pan-India roll out of DBT has been completed by March, 2018. Sale of all subsidised fertilizers through Point of Sale (PoS) devices installed at each retailer shop; beneficiaries to be identified through Aadhaar Card, KCC, Voter Identity Card etc.
- **Approximately 2.05** lakh retailers sensitized during introductory training sessions.
- **Success Story of implementation of DBT in Pilot Districts** • Implementation of DBT system has streamlined the Fertilizer distribution. Retailers and farmers in all districts reported "Nil Shortage" of urea owing to neem coating.
- **There is improved tracking through mFMS** Id i.e. Fertilizer companies have on-boarded untraceable retailers and co-operative depots on MFMS system to avoid delay in subsidy payments.
- **Overcharging by retailers** has reduced as each fertilizer purchase by farmers is supported by a receipt generated through PoS machines indicating both MRP paid by the farmers and the subsidy component paid by the Government on the quantity of fertilizer purchased by the farmers.
- **Cross border sale** has also reduced e.g. across border to Nepal and Bangladesh from Kishanganj.

## Neem Coated Urea

- **Government makes Neem coating of Urea mandatory-25.5.2015.** 100 % of Neem Coating of Indigenous Urea and Imported Urea achieved w.e.f. 1st September, 2015 and 1st December, 2015 respectively Improvement in soil health.
- **Reduction in usage of plant protection chemicals.** Reduction in pest and disease attack. Diversion of highly subsidized urea towards non-agricultural purposes reduced to negligible.
- **An increase in yield of paddy,** sugarcane, maize, soybean, Tur/Red Gram
- **During the last three years** i.e. 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17, the consumption (Kg/hectare) showing a declining trend - 152.53, 149.61 and 140.84 (estimated) respectively.
- **This may be due** to neem coating of Urea which increases efficacy due to slow release of Nitrogen.

## Farmer's Friendly- New Urea policy 2015

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- **Effective from 1st June, 2015** Promoting energy efficiency in Urea production, maximizing indigenous Urea production and rationalizing the subsidy burden on Govt. of India. Helping domestic urea sector to become globally competitive
- **Record Production of Urea** Highest ever production of 245 LMT of indigenous Urea during 2015-16, almost maintained in 2016-17. Highest ever additional production of 20 LMT of Urea during 2015-16 without adding additional urea production capacity.
- **The production of urea** during the year 2016-17 was 242.01 LMT, which is significantly higher than the production of urea during 2012-13 (225.75LMT) and 2013-14(227.15 LMT)
- **Special Banking Arrangement to clear fertilizer subsidy dues** In order to ensure working capital availability to fertilizer companies, Department of Fertilizers had made provision of Special Banking Arrangements for upto ₹ 7000 crores during 2017-18 through nationalised banks, wherein majority of the interest burden had been borne by the Government.
- **Introduction of 45 Kg. Urea** Bags replacing the existing 50 Kg. Bags: Vide Notification dated 4.9.2017 · CCEA, in its meeting dated 20th February, 2018, approved the MRP of urea as Rs.242 per bag
- **Reduction in the rates of P&K Fertilizers** Reduction in the MRP of DAP, MOP and Complex fertilizers by Rs. 125/-, Rs.250/- and Rs. 50/- respectively per 50 kg bag from June 2016. The prices of DAP again reduced by Rs. 65/- per 50 kg during December, 2016.
- **New Investment Policy- 2012** The Government announced New Investment Policy (NIP)-2012 on 2nd January, 2013 and its amendment on 7th October, 2014 to facilitate fresh investment in urea sector and to make India self-sufficient in the urea sector.
- **Matix Fertilizers & Chemicals Limited** set up a Coal Bed Methane(CBM) based 1.3 MMTPA Greenfield Ammonia-Urea complex at Panagarh, West Bengal. Commercial production started on 1st October, 2017.
- **Chambal Fertilizers & Chemicals Limited** to set up a brownfield project with capacity of 1.34 MMTPA at Gadepan, Rajasthan, which is likely to start commercial production in January, 2019.

## Revival of defunct Fertilizer Units

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- **Rs. 40,000 crores** to be invested to revive Defunct Fertilizer Units in Gorakhpur, Sindri, Talcher, Ramagundam and Barauni (New Urea units of 12.7 lakh MT at each location)
- **RAMAGUNDAM PROJECT** is likely to be commissioned by December 2018. SINDRI & GORAKHPUR UNITS OF FCIL AND BARAUNI UNIT OF HFCL likely to be operational by October 2020 . TALCHER PROJECT likely to start production by 2021.
- **New Ammonia-urea complex** to be set up at M/s Brahmaputra Valley Fertilizer Corporation Limited at Namrup with a capacity of 8.646 LMT per annum. Production of about 25 million MT is expected to increase to 28 million MT in the year 2019-20 and to about 34 million MT in the year 2021-22.
- **Model Fertilizer Retail Shops across the country** Against the target of 2000 Model Fertilizer Retail Shops to be opened in next 3 years from 2016-19 for abundant availability of Urea, 2044 model fertilizer retail shops made operational till 19th March 2018.
- **City Compost Scheme** Policy for Promotion of City Compost was notified on 10.02.2016 which provides Market Development Assistance (MDA) of Rs. 1500/MT on sales of City Compost. · Due to consistent efforts of the Department, the sales of City Compost during 2017-18 has increased to 1.64 LMT and an amount of Rs. 7.26 Crores of Market Development Assistance (MDA) has been released.

## E - NAM (Agriculture)

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- **National Common Agriculture Market Scheme** launched by PM on 14.4.2016 Farmers will be able to get better price of their crop through E-Nam. 585 Mandis across 16 States & 2 UTs are live on e-NAM.
- **More than 98.4 lakh** farmers are registered on this platform. 182.75 lakh tones of farm commodities worth Rs. 46025 crore has been transacted on e-NAM platform (as on 08.05.2018).

## SOIL HEALTH CARD (Agriculture)

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- **Scheme launched to reduce fertilizers usage and expenses.** 10.70 crore Soil Health Cards distributed in Phase-I during 2015-17. 3.5 crore soil Health Cards distributed in phase -2 during 2017-18.
- **Under Soil Health Management Scheme,** Rs. 243.82 crores released to the States during 2014-17 against Rs.27.76 crores during 2011-14 Under Soil Health Cards Scheme, Rs.401.65 crores released to the states during 2014-17.
- **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 by local entrepreneurs approved.

## PRADHAN MANTRI KRISHI SINCHAI YOJANA – PMKSY (Agriculture, RD, Water Resources & GR)

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- **Har Khet ko Paani:** Cabinet approves plan to ensure irrigation for every agricultural land on 1 July 2015.
- **Rs. 50,000 crores to be invested** in five years to achieve 'Water to Every Field / Har Khet Ko Paani'
- **Budget of Rs. 1550 crores** during 2015-16 for Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojna Per Drop More Crop increased to Rs.4000 crores in 2018-19 Long Term Irrigation Fund Augmented by 100% to Rs 40,000 Crore for completion of 99 priority projects.
- **Dedicated Micro Irrigation fund** with a sum of Rs. 5000 crores bring set up for the achievement of the goal of "per drop – more crop".
- **Under 'Per Drop More Crop' for micro irrigation** 28.82 lakh hectares brought under micro irrigation from 2014-18 (As on 09.05.2018 ).
- **Centre to work with the state governments** to facilitate farmers for installing solar water pumps to irrigate their fields.

## PRADHAN MANTRI FASAL BIMA YOJANA (Agriculture)

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- **To provide insurance** at lowest premium rate to farmers with added benefits.

- **Launched on 13th January 2016.** Nearly 21% hike in budget 2018-19 to Rs. 21,000 crore from Rs.10701 crore in 2017-18
- **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.
- **Implemented by 23 States** during Kharif 2016; 405.81 lakh farmers covered and 379.06 lakh hectares insured over the sum insured of Rs. 1, 31, 56578 lakh.
- **During Rabi 2017-18**, under Rabi and Kharif crops,167 lakh farmers provided protective coverage 192.68 lakh hectare for the semi insured of Rs. 69,95614 lakh under the scheme.

## DIRECT SUBSIDY TO SUGARCANE FARMERS

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- **Direct subsidy** to sugarcane farmers- Amount released directly to farmers' Account.
- **Outstanding amount due to farmers brought down.** Financial assistance @ of Rs. 5.50 per quintal of cane crushed in sugar season 2017-18 to help sugar mills to clear cane dues of farmers.

## PARAMPARAGAT KRISHI VIKAS YOJANA

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- **Promoting organic farming;** Scheme launched in 2015-16 with an allocation of Rs. 300 Crore. Outlay increased to Rs. 360 crores in 2018-19.
- **11,891 clusters** covering 2.2lakhs hectare area under Organic Farming being covered during 2015-18.
- **Organic** value chain for North Eastern States: Rs. 400 crores allocated for 2015-18; Rs. 225.95 crores released during 2015-17.

## BLUE REVOLUTION

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- **Blue Revolution Scheme:** A revolution in the Fisheries sector; Restructured the scheme by merging all the ongoing schemes under an umbrella of Blue Revolution
- **Integrated Development and Management** of Fisheries' with an outlay of Rs.3000 crore for 5 years
- **Budgetary provision** for Blue Revolution increased by 113% to Rs.643crores in 2018-19 as compared to Rs. 302 crores in 2017-18.
- **Fish production** increased from 186.12 lakh tonnes during 2012-14 to 209.59 tonnes during 2014-16
- **Average 48.35 lakh fishermen insured annually.** Annual insurance premium of fishermen reduced from Rs. 29 to Rs. 20.34 as a result of which majority of the fishermen have got insurance done
- **Insurance cover increased** to Rs. 2 lakhs from Rs. 1 lakh for accidental death and permanent disability

- **ANIMAL REARING AND DAIRY** Budgetary provision for White Revolution increased by 36% to Rs.2220 crores in 2018-19 as compared to Rs. 1634 crores in 2017-18. Annual Average Milk Production increased from 146.3 million tonnes in 2011-14 to 163.7 million tonnes during 2014-17 which shows almost 12% enhancement.

## RASHTRIYA GOKUL MISSION

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- **New initiative** under National Program for Bovine Breeding and Dairy Development to conserve and develop indigenous bovine breeds; launched in December 2014 with an allocation of Rs 500 crores
- **20 Gokul Grams are being established and 41 Bull Mother Farms modernized.** 24X7 KISAN CHANNEL A 24X7 dedicated Kisan TV Channel for farmers.

## RELIEF TO FARMERS IN DISTRESS

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- **Relief to farmers** in distress to be given in case of 33% and more damage to the crop; earlier it was for 50% and more damage.
- **Scale of assistance towards Input Subsidy** for Crop increased by 51% for rainfed areas, 50% for irrigated areas and 50% for perennial areas. Amount of relief under various heads increased by 1.5 times.
- **For food grains damaged due to excessive rainfall**, full minimum support price to be paid
- **Families of the deceased persons** to be given an assistance of Rs.4 lakhs, up from Rs.2.5 lakhs
- **Provision to State Disaster Relief Fund**, SDRF has seen a jump of 82% for the 5-year period 2015-20, as compared to the 5-year period between 2010-15. It went up to Rs. 61,220 crores from Rs. 33,580.93 crore

## INSTITUTIONAL CREDIT TO SMALL FARMERS

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- **Under the Interest Subvention Scheme (ISS)** Short Term Crop loans upto Rs.3 lakh are extended to prompt payee farmers at a sub vented interest rate of 4.1% per annum for a period up to one year for those who repay promptly.
- **The ISS also provides for post-harvest** loans for up to 6 months at the same rate of interest as Short Term Crop loans to Kisan Credit Card holding Small and Marginal Farmers
- **Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Scheme** to provide adequate and timely credit support from the banking system under a single window to the farmers for their cultivation and other needs.
- **Joint Liability Groups (JLGs)** promoted by banks to bring small, marginal, tenant farmers, oral lessees, etc. taking up farm activities, off-farm activities and non-farm activities, into the fold of institutional credit.
- **24.53 lakh Joint Liability Groups (JLGs)** have been provided Rs. 26,848.13 crore loan by banks across the country as on 31st March, 2017. Further in 2017-18 up to September 2017, 0.89 lakh JLGs were also provided loan Rs. 1,081.54 crores

## IBSAMAR-VI kicks off at Simons Town, South Africa

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- **The sixth edition of IBSAMAR, a joint Multi** – National Maritime Exercise between the Indian, Brazilian and South African Navies, is being held at Simons Town, South Africa from 01 – 13 Oct 18. The last edition of IBSAMAR (IBSAMAR V) was conducted off Goa, from 19 – 26 Feb 16.
- **The aim of the exercise** is to undertake collective training for participating navies, building interoperability and mutual understanding as well as sharing of best practices.
- **The Indian Navy is represented in IBSAMAR VI** by Guided Missile Frigate Tarkash, Guided Missile Destroyer Kolkata, Long Range Maritime Patrol Aircraft P8I, Seaking and Chetak helicopters as well as a MARCOS contingent.
- **The Commanding Officers** of the IN Ships called on the Chief of Fleet Staff of the SA Navy as well as a few other senior officers and the Magistrate and the Commissioner of Simon's Town. A reception was hosted onboard the Brazilian naval ship BNS Barraso in the evening.
- **The exercise includes** both harbour and sea phases with various navigation and seamanship evolutions, surface weapons firing, force protection exercises, antipiracy exercise, anti-air and anti-submarine exercise as well as flying operations.
- **Apart** from professional activities, sports and social engagements are also planned.

## PM to receive UNEP Champions of the Earth Award on October 3

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- **The Prime Minister**, Shri Narendra Modi, will receive the United Nations' highest environmental honour, the 'UNEP Champions of the Earth' award at a special ceremony in Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra, New Delhi on October 3.
- **The award announced** on 26th September, on the sidelines of 73rd UN General Assembly at New York City, will be presented by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres. The Prime Minister will also address the gathering.
- **Prime Minister Modi** has been selected in the leadership category for his pioneering work in championing the International Solar Alliance and for his unprecedented pledge to eliminate all single-use plastic in India by 2022.
- **The annual** 'Champions of the Earth' prize is awarded to outstanding leaders from government, civil society and the private sector whose actions have had a positive impact on the environment.

## Zonal councils:

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- **Eastern Zonal Council** The Council reviewed progress of unresolved items of the last meeting relating to Phulbari Dam under the Agreement of 1978 between Bihar and West Bengal, release of central share under post-matric and pre-matric scholarship schemes for SCs/STs/OBCs, scheme for modernization of state police forces among others.
- **Zonal councils:** Zonal councils have been established by the Parliament to promote interstate cooperation and coordination. They are statutory bodies established under the States Reorganisation Act 1956 and not constitutional bodies. They are only deliberative and advisory bodies.
- **There are 5 five Zonal councils namely:** The Northern Zonal Council, comprising the States of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, National Capital Territory of Delhi and Union Territory of Chandigarh. The Central Zonal Council, comprising the States of Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. The Eastern Zonal Council, comprising the States of Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, and West Bengal.
- **The Western Zonal Council**, comprising the States of Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra and the Union Territories of Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli. The Southern Zonal Council, comprising the States of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Puducherry.



- **The North Eastern States** i.e. (i) Assam (ii) Arunachal Pradesh (iii) Manipur (iv) Tripura (v) Mizoram (vi) Meghalaya (vii) Sikkim and (viii) Nagaland are not included in the Zonal Councils and their special problems are looked after by the North Eastern Council, set up under the North Eastern Council Act, 1972.
- **Composition:** Chairman – The Union Home Minister is the Chairman of each of these Councils. Vice Chairman – The Chief Ministers of the States included in each zone act as Vice-Chairman of the Zonal Council for that zone by rotation, each holding office for a period of one year at a time. Members- Chief Minister and two other Ministers as nominated by the Governor from each of the States and two members from Union Territories included in the zone.
- **Advisers-** One person nominated by the Planning Commission (which has been replaced by NITI Ayog now) for each of the Zonal Councils, Chief Secretaries and another officer/Development Commissioner nominated by each of the States included in the Zone. Union Ministers are also invited to participate in the meetings of Zonal Councils depending upon necessity.
- **The main objectives of setting up of Zonal Councils are:** Bringing out national integration. Arresting the growth of acute State consciousness, regionalism, linguism and particularistic tendencies. Enabling the Centre and the States to co-operate and exchange ideas and experiences.
- **Establishing** a climate of co-operation amongst the States for successful and speedy execution of development projects.

## Karnataka Good Samaritan Bill

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- **About the Bill:** The legislation aims to give protection to good samaritans and ensure immediate medical assistance for road accident victims within the 'golden hour' and encourage people to offer first aid to victims without fear of harassment in the hands of police and investigations.
- **Under the new law,** the Karnataka government will provide financial help to good samaritans who help victims in a timely manner, they will be exempted from repeated attendance in courts and police stations, in case attendance is mandatory, expenses of such "running around to courts and police stations" will be taken care through the proposed 'Good Samaritan Fund'.
- **After admitting** the accident victim to the hospital, the good samaritan can leave immediately, all government as well as private hospitals are bound to give first aid to the accident victims.
- **Significance:** With this, Karnataka has become the first state to give legal protection to good samaritans through a legislation amidst the rising incidents of accidental deaths in India, which saw 1,50,785 people getting killed in road accidents in 2016. In medical terms, the 'golden hour' is the first hour after a traumatic injury when emergency treatment is very crucial.
- **Need for legal protection:** There were 4,80,652 road accidents in the country in 2016 in which 1,50,785 people were killed. In 2015, there were 5,01,423 road accidents in the country in which 1,46,133 people were killed. There is no central law to protect the good samaritans. However, the Union Surface Transport Ministry had issued a set of guidelines in 2015 following a Supreme Court order to protect the good samaritans.
- **There have been many instances** when people get busy in clicking photos or making videos of the victims, instead of providing the accident victims medical help. With the new law, there will be clear message that good samaritans will not be harassed in any manner.
- **Karnataka is one of the top five** states which saw a large number of people getting killed in road accidents in 2016 and 2015.

## Asian Development Bank (ADB)

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- **South Asia Sub-regional Economic Cooperation Road Connectivity Investment** Program, approved in 2014, aims to expand about 500 kilometers of roads in India's North Bengal and North-Eastern Region that will enable efficient and safe transport within India and regionally with other SASEC member countries.
- **The Program is an important initiative** in Regional Connectivity aimed at increasing domestic and regional trade through North Bengal-North East Region International Trade corridor by upgrading key roads.

- **Significance of the project:** The Project will upgrade about 65 kilometers of Imphal-Moreh Section of National Highway in Manipur, construction of about 1.5 km of an international bridge between India and Nepal, and completion of about 103 km of a State Highway in Manipur between Imphal and Tamenglong under Project-I.
- **The Project will reduce transaction costs** along the targeted cross-border corridors substantially, creating economies of scale and commercial prosperity.
- **Background: Manipur being a landlocked state** with almost 90% of the area under difficult terrain presently has only road transport as a means of mass transport system within the state. Hence development of the road infrastructure is of paramount importance to improve connectivity and progress of the State and to ensure that the administrative set up reaches the isolated and remote habitats.
- **About SASEC:** The SASEC programme of ADB was formed in 2001 in response to the request of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal to assist in facilitating economic cooperation among them. Sri Lanka and Maldives joined the sub-regional group in 2014.
- **As a project-based partnership,** SASEC programme has been helping enhance cross-border connectivity, facilitate faster and more efficient trade and promote cross-border power trade.
- **The Manila,** Philippines-based Asian Development Bank (ADB) serves as the Secretariat for the SASEC member countries.

## Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna (PMFBY)

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- **The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare** has requested the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and the State Governments to include this as an agenda in the upcoming Gram Sabhas, especially for the one scheduled on 2nd October 2018, in connection with Gandhi Jayanti.
- **This is as part** of the awareness initiatives taken up at various levels by the Govt and Insurance Companies to create awareness about the Scheme and mobilise farmers to insure their crops.
- **About PMFBY:** In April, 2016, the government of India had launched Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) after rolling back the earlier insurance schemes viz. National Agriculture Insurance Scheme (NAIS), Weather-based Crop Insurance scheme and Modified National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (MNAIS).
- **Premium: It envisages** a uniform premium of only 2% to be paid by farmers for Kharif crops, and 1.5% for Rabi crops. The premium for annual commercial and horticultural crops will be 5%.
- **The scheme is mandatory for farmers who have taken institutional loans from banks. It's optional for farmers who have not taken institutional credit.**
- **Objectives: Providing financial support to farmers suffering crop loss/damage arising out of unforeseen events. Stabilizing the income of farmers** to ensure their continuance in farming. Encouraging farmers to adopt innovative and modern agricultural practices.
- **Ensuring flow of credit** to the agriculture sector which contributes to food security, crop diversification and enhancing growth and competitiveness of agriculture sector besides protecting farmers from production risks.

## Open Acreage Licensing Programme (OALP)

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- **Significance:** Initially, 110 e-bids were received for 55 blocks on offer with participation from 9 companies, singly or in consortium. Finally, contracts have been signed for all 55 blocks with 6 companies.
- **This will add a huge accretion of 59,282 sq.km** to the exploration area. This is about 65% of the area presently under exploration in the country. This will lead to significant increase in E&P activities in India and in long run discoveries from these field may significantly boost domestic production.
- **Background:** The bid round-I of OALP was launched in January 2018 under the liberalized Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP). It is for the first time that bidding in the E&P sector in India was for blocks that had been selected by bidders themselves with government playing a facilitator role.

- **Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP):** The OALP, a part of the government's Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP), gives exploration companies the option to select the exploration blocks on their own, without having to wait for the formal bid round from the Government. The company then submits an application to the government, which puts that block up for bid. The new policy will open up 2.8 million square kilometres of sedimentary basins for exploration and eventual production.
- **About Hydrocarbon Exploration & Licensing Policy (HELP):** The Hydrocarbon Exploration & Licensing Policy (HELP) opens up India's entire sedimentary basin for investment from domestic and foreign players under a simplified, transparent and investor-friendly fiscal and administrative regime.
- **The new policy aims to provide investors** a ready access to huge amount of seismic data available in National Data Repository (NDR), flexibility to carve out exploration acreages through an open acreage licensing process and increased operational autonomy through a new revenue sharing model.
- **The National Data Repository (NDR)** manifested through an open acreage licensing (OAL) process will be a key facilitator by providing seamless access to India's entire E&P data process through a digital medium to all investors with the objective of harnessing the potential of India's large basinal area.
- **Way ahead:** Open Acreage Licensing Policy and the National Data Repository together are a significant and welcome step towards opening up the hydrocarbon exploration and production industry in India. By placing greater discretion in the hands of explorers and operators, the Licensing Policy attempts to address a major drawback in the New Exploration Licensing Policy, which forced energy explorers to bid for blocks chosen by the government. Such initiatives help India attract enough investment to meet the government's objective of reducing oil imports by 10% by 2022.
- **There's a compelling opportunity for gas**, which India must seize to reduce import dependency and shift to a lower carbon trajectory. HELP is more about gas than oil. While the overall thrust is positive, concerns regarding the contractual regime and gas pricing formula remain, and will need to be addressed.

## Limited Liability Partnership (LLP)

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- **Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) What is LLP?** LLP is an alternative corporate business form that gives the benefits of limited liability of a company and the flexibility of a partnership. The LLP can continue its existence irrespective of changes in partners. It is capable of entering into contracts and holding property in its own name.
- **The LLP is a separate legal entity**, is liable to the full extent of its assets but liability of the partners is limited to their agreed contribution in the LLP. Further, no partner is liable on account of the independent or un-authorized actions of other partners, thus individual partners are shielded from joint liability created by another partner's wrongful business decisions or misconduct.
- **Mutual rights and duties** of the partners within a LLP are governed by an agreement between the partners or between the partners and the LLP as the case may be. The LLP, however, is not relieved of the liability for its other obligations as a separate entity. Since LLP contains elements of both 'a corporate structure' as well as 'a partnership firm structure' LLP is called a hybrid between a company and a partnership.
- **LLP form is a form of business model which:** Is organized and operates on the basis of an agreement. Provides flexibility without imposing detailed legal and procedural requirements.
- **Enables professional/technical** expertise and initiative to combine with financial risk taking capacity in an innovative and efficient manner.

## World Habitat Day:

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- **World Habitat Day:** The United Nations designated the first Monday of October of every year as World Habitat Day to reflect on the state of our towns and cities, and on the basic right of all to adequate shelter. The Day is also intended to remind the world that we all have the power and the responsibility to shape the future of our cities and towns.
- **2018 theme: Municipal Solid Waste Management.** The focus of this year's World Habitat Day celebrations is taking action to address the municipal solid waste management challenge. This year's theme is Municipal Solid Waste Management with a slogan Waste-wise cities.

- **Background: The purpose of World Habitat Day** is to reflect on the state of our towns and cities, and on the basic right of all to adequate shelter. It is also intended to remind the world that we all have the power and the responsibility to shape the future of our cities and towns.
- **World Habitat Day** was established in 1985 by the United Nations General Assembly through Resolution 40/202, and was first celebrated in 1986.
- **Niwari is 52nd district of MP:** Niwari will become the 52nd district of Madhya Pradesh, with effect from October 1. A proposal to this effect was cleared by the state Cabinet recently.

## Exercise Avaiindra-18:

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- **The second edition of Exercise Avaiindra**, a Biennial Air Force level exercise between Indian and the Russian Federation, was held recently in Russia.
- **The aim of the exercise** was to formulate and validate use of airpower in anti-terrorist operation in a bilateral scenario. It also includes simulator training. The exercise included briefing on Aerospace safety and anti-terrorist air operations.

## Vayoshreshtha Samman- 2018:

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- **What are they? They are National Awards** for Senior Citizens. They were recently presented by the President to eminent senior citizens and institutions in recognition of their service towards the cause of elderly persons, especially indigent senior citizens.
- **Vayoshreshtha Samman** is a Scheme of National Awards instituted by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (D/o Social Justice & Empowerment) initially in 2005 and was upgraded to the status of National Awards in 2013, for institutions involved in rendering distinguished service for the cause of elderly persons especially indigent senior citizens and to eminent citizens in recognition of their service/achievements.
- **Ministries of Social Justice & Empowerment**, Health and Rural Development are running such useful schemes for the welfare of elderly persons.
- **The awards** are presented on 1st of October every year pursuant to the adoption of a resolution by the UN General Assembly to observe the year 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons.



## EMPOWERING WOMEN-EMPOWERING INDIA Sashakt Naari Sashakt Bharat CARE & PROTECTION OF WOMEN Beti Bachao Beti Padhao

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- **1. Launched by the Prime Minister** on 22nd January, 2015 at Panipat, Haryana
- **2. Expanded to cover** all 640 districts by the PM on 8th March, 2018 at Jhunjhunu in Rajasthan,
- **3. Two major components of the Scheme** , (i) Multi-sectoral intervention and media advocacy in 405 districts (including initial 161 districts) is being implemented by District Collectors & (ii) 360 degree approach in alert media advocacy & outreach activities is in operation in the remaining 235 districts.
- **4. 100% central sector scheme** with outlay of Rs. 1132.5 Cr from 2017-18 to 2019-2020.
- **5. Multi-sectoral intervention** in selected districts led to innovative initiatives to generate awareness and created enabling environment for girls.
- **6. Encouraging trends** as per the latest data by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, MoH&FW for 161 districts for the time period between April-March, 2015-16 and 2016-17 indicates that;
  - **a. Improving trend in Sex ratio at Birth (SRB)** is visible in 104 BBBP districts.
  - **b. 119 Districts have reported progress** in first trimester registration against the reported Ante-Natal Care registrations
  - **c. 146 districts have reported improvement** in Institutional deliveries
- **7. Secondary School Enrollment target** for girls raised to 82% by 2018-19. Under the Unified District Information System for Education (U-DISE) 2015-16: girls' enrolment in secondary education was 80.97% against 76% in 2013-14.

## Pradhan Mantri Sukanya Samridhi Yojana Launched on 22.1.2015.

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- **A small deposit savings** scheme to promote the welfare of girl child and ensure them a secure future.
- **More than 1.26 crore** accounts have been opened · Amount of over Rs. 19,183 crores deposited till November 2017.

## POSHAN-National Nutrition Mission

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- **Prime Minister launched National Nutrition Mission-2022** (Poshan Abhiyan) at Jhunjhunu on 8.3.2018 to provide the best nutrition to newborns across the nation.

- **The Abhiyaan targets** to reduce stunting, under-nutrition, anemia (among young children, women and adolescent girls) and reduce low birth weight by 2%, 2%, 3% and 2% per annum respectively.
- **The target of the mission** is to bring down stunting among children in the age group 0-6 years from 38.4% to 25% by 2022.
- **Bachche Shashakt** , desh shashakt karne ka abhiyan · Budget outlay for three years from 2017-18 till 2019-20: Rs.9046 crores.
- **POSHAN Abhiyaan** to address Malnutrition through Convergence, Use of Technology and a Targeted approach

## Pradhan Mantri Ujjawala Yojana

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- **Scheme for Providing Free LPG** connections to Women from BPL Households launched by PM in Ballia, Uttar Pradesh on 1.5.2016 As on 6.5.2018, more than 3.78 crore new LPG connections given to them. Out of this, 30.5% and 13.3% connections issued to SC and ST categories respectively.
- **Scheme spread all over the country, now in 712 districts** Target enhanced from 5 crore to 8 core LPG connections in four years during 2016-20). The scheme opened to all SC &ST households, beneficiaries of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and Antyodaya Anna Yojana, forest dwellers, "most backward classes," tea garden and ex-tea garden tribes, and people residing in islands or river islands
- **Funds allocated: Rs.12800 crores** LPG Coverage: During 2016-17, more than 3.31 crore new LPG connections have been released and during 2017-18, more than 2.82 crore new LPG connections have been released. As on 1.3.2018, National LPG coverage has reached to 79.9% from 61 % as on 01.01.2016.

## Mahila Shakti Kendras

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- **The anganwadi centres in the villages** to be upgraded and re-modeled as centres for empowerment of women in villages.
- **Under MSK Scheme, the national and state level** (State Resource Centre for Women) structures of erstwhile NMEW Scheme will continue.
- **New District Level Centre for Women (DLCW)** envisaged for 640 districts (to be covered in a phased manner) for facilitating women centric schemes of the government and for giving a foothold to BBBP scheme. During FY 2017-18, 220 DLCWs envisaged and Block Level initiatives under Mahila Shakti Kendra proposed for 50 most backward districts.
- **An amount of Rs. 49.57 crore** released to the State Govt. /UT Adm. for implementing Mahila Shakti Kendra during FY 2017-18.

## Mahila e-Haat · Launched in March 2016

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- **To enable an online digital marketing** platform for women entrepreneurs, SHGs and NGOs and provide them direct access to markets to sell their products.
- **Women entrepreneurs/SHGs/NGOs** from 24 states are showcasing over 2000 products/services across 18 categories.
- **26000 Self Help Groups** and 4.75 lakh women benefitted · Registered women have already managed to sell goods worth Rs 30 lakhs

## Six months maternity leave

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- **To enable working women** to get at least six months of paid leave so that they can provide proper care to the child
- **Maternity Benefit Act** has come into force from April 01, 2017 to extend period of mandatory paid maternity leave for working women to 26 weeks (~6 months).
- **Empowers working women** as they need not fear loss of salary or job due to childbirth and now also have time to recuperate and breastfeed their child.

## Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) · Launched formally on 1.9.2017 by WCD Minister.

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- **Initially confined to 53 districts** . PM in his New year eve speech in 2017 announced its expansion to all 640 districts across the country.
- **Partial compensation** for the wage loss in terms of cash incentive to the pregnant &/lactating mother so that she can take adequate rest before and after delivery of the first child.
- **It is expected** that approximately 51.70 lakhs beneficiaries per annum would benefit from the scheme.
- **More than 22 lakh** beneficiaries under PMVVY.(As on 6.4.2018) · PMMVY is a DBT compliant scheme and maternity benefits are directly transferred to the bank/post office account of the beneficiary.

## Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritava Abhiyan · Launched in November 2016

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- **To provide assured** , comprehensive and quality antenatal care, free of cost, to all pregnant women on 9th of every month.
- **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.

## Stand up India

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- **Launched by Prime Minister in April, 2016** · Aims to promote entrepreneurship among SC/ST women · Banks have sanctioned 54,733 loans to Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Women borrowers as on 28.02.2018.

## One Stop Centres – Sakhi

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- **Launched in March 2015**, the centres provide under one roof medical, police, legal help and psychosocial counselling to women affected by violence.
- **170 centres already established** and functional by end of March 2018. One centre per district will be established by the end of 2018-19
- **In the last one year**, 105 new One Stop Centres (OSCs) have become operational in addition to previous 55 OSCs. Such centres have offered support to over 97,000 women.
- **They offer** a single window to a range of services including access to police, medical, legal and psychological support and temporary shelter in 33 States/UTs. A further 150 OSCs are planned to be set up by 2020.

## Panic button on mobile phones

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- **Orders issued for** all Cell Phones to have physical panic buttons for women in distress to alert the police as well as family members

## Universalization of women helpline (181)

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- **To provide universal** helpline for women who need assistance of any kind.
- **It has been decided** to provide Universal Helpline to all states · Funds sanctioned to 33 states over last two years · 29 states have already set up the facility

## Widow Shelter Home

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- **To enable widows** who do not have family support to lead a life of dignity
- **Construction of Largest ever Government funded home for 1000 widows at Vrindavan.** · More such homes to be set up in other cities

## Swadhar Greh

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- **Swadhar Greh Scheme** targets the women victims of difficult circumstances and envisages providing shelter, food, clothing and health as well as economic and social security for these women.
- **At present total 559** Swadhar Greh are functioning in the country benefiting 17231 beneficiaries.



## Protection of women against Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace

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- **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013** operationalized
- **Operating guidelines** and training manuals issued
- **She-Box for online filing** of complaints launched
- **Training of heads** of Internal Complaint Committees of all central government ministries/ departments conducted.
- **Training of Elected Women Representatives of Panchayats** - Approximately 20,000 Elected Women Representatives of Panchayats are being trained across the country to ensure better village governance and administration. The training program has been launched in 2017.

## WHO guidelines on sanitation and health

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- **Highlights:** The new WHO Guidelines on Sanitation and Health summarize the evidence on the effectiveness of a range of sanitation interventions and provide a comprehensive framework for health-protecting sanitation, covering policy and governance measures, implementation of sanitation technologies, systems and behavioural interventions, risk-based management, and monitoring approaches.
- **Critically**, the guidelines articulate the role of the health sector in maximizing the health impact of sanitation interventions. The guidelines also identify gaps in the evidence-base to guide future research efforts to improve the effectiveness of sanitation interventions.
- **Need for global guidelines on sanitation and health:** Worldwide, 2.3 billion people lack basic sanitation (with almost half forced to defecate in the open). They are among the 4.5 billion without access to safely managed sanitation services – in other words a toilet connected to a sewer or pit or septic tank that treats human waste. Without proper access, millions of people the world over are deprived of the dignity, safety and convenience of a decent toilet.
- **Sanitation is a fundamental foundation** of human health and development and underpins the core mission of WHO and ministries of health worldwide. WHO's Sanitation and Health Guidelines are essential to securing health and wellbeing for everyone, everywhere.
- **Significance of the guidelines:** Poor sanitation is a major factor in transmission of neglected tropical diseases. Billions of people live without access to even the most basic sanitation services.
- **WHO developed the new guidelines** on sanitation and health because current sanitation programmes are not achieving anticipated health gains and there is a lack of authoritative health-based guidance on sanitation.
- **By adopting WHO's new guidelines**, countries can significantly reduce the diarrhoeal deaths due to unsafe water, sanitation and hygiene. For every US \$1 invested in sanitation, WHO estimates a nearly six-fold return as measured by lower health costs, increased productivity and fewer premature deaths.

## UNESCO site status

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- **UNESCO site status** The sites chosen are- Lonar Lake in Maharashtra and St. Mary's Island and Malpe beach in coastal Karnataka are the GSI's candidates for UNESCO Global Geopark Network status.

- **Global Geopark:** UNESCO Global Geoparks are single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development.
- **Their bottom-up approach** of combining conservation with sustainable development while involving local communities is becoming increasingly popular. At present, there are 140 UNESCO Global Geoparks in 38 countries.
- **An aspiring Global Geopark** must have a dedicated website, a corporate identity, comprehensive management plan, protection plans, finance, and partnerships for it to be accepted.
- **Once a UNESCO Global Geopark, always a UNESCO Global Geopark?** No, a UNESCO Global Geopark is given this designation for a period of four years after which the functioning and quality of each UNESCO Global Geopark is thoroughly re-examined during a revalidation process.
- **As part of the revalidation process**, the UNESCO Global Geopark under review has to prepare a progress report and a field mission will be undertaken by two evaluators to revalidate the quality of the UNESCO Global Geopark. If, on the basis of the field evaluation report, the UNESCO Global Geopark continues to fulfil the criteria the area will continue as a UNESCO Global Geopark for a further four-year period (so-called "green card").
- **If the area no longer** fulfils the criteria, the management body will be informed to take appropriate steps within a two-year period (so-called "yellow card"). Should the UNESCO Global Geopark not fulfil the criteria within two years after receiving a "yellow card", the area will lose its status as a UNESCO Global Geopark (so-called "red card").
- **What is the Global Geoparks Network?** The Global Geoparks Network (GGN), of which membership is obligatory for UNESCO Global Geoparks, is a legally constituted not-for-profit organisation with an annual membership fee. The GGN was founded in 2004 and is a dynamic network where members are committed to work together and exchange ideas of best practise and join in common projects to raise the quality standards of all products and practises of a UNESCO Global Geopark. While the GGN as a whole comes together every two years, it functions through the operation of regional networks, such as the European Geoparks Network that meets twice a year to develop and promote joint activities.
- **Difference between UNESCO Global Geoparks, Biosphere Reserves and World Heritage Sites:** UNESCO Global Geoparks, together with the other two UNESCO site designations Biosphere Reserves and World Heritage Sites, give a complete picture of celebrating our heritage while at the same time conserving the world's cultural, biological and geological diversity, and promoting sustainable economic development.
- **While Biosphere Reserves** focus on the harmonised management of biological and cultural diversity and World Heritage Sites promote the conservation of natural and cultural sites of outstanding universal value, UNESCO Global Geoparks give international recognition for sites that promote the importance and significance of protecting the Earth's geodiversity through actively engaging with the local communities.
- **In case an aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark** includes a World Heritage Site or Biosphere Reserve, a clear justification and evidence has to be provided on how UNESCO Global Geopark status will add value by being both independently branded and in synergy with the other designations.
- **Key facts:** Lonar lake is an ancient circular lake created by a meteorite strike in Maharashtra. It is the only known meteorite crater in basaltic rock. Lonar crater became a geo-heritage site in 1979. It is relatively young geologically, at just 50,000 years old.
- **Mary's Island**, declared a national geo-heritage site in 1975, is estimated to be an 88-million-year-old formation that goes back to a time when Greater India broke away from Madagascar.

## International Solar Alliance

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- **About ISA:** The Paris Declaration establishes ISA as an alliance dedicated to the promotion of solar energy among its member countries.
- **Objectives:** The ISA's major objectives include global deployment of over 1,000GW of solar generation capacity and mobilisation of investment of over US\$ 1000 billion into solar energy by 2030.
- **What it does?** As an action-oriented organisation, the ISA brings together countries with rich solar potential to aggregate global demand, thereby reducing prices through bulk purchase, facilitating the deployment of existing solar technologies at scale, and promoting collaborative solar R&D and capacity building.
- **When it entered into force?** When the ISA Framework Agreement entered into force on December 6th, 2017, ISA formally became a de-jure treaty based International Intergovernmental Organization, headquartered at Gurugram, India.

- **About IORA: The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)**, formerly known as the Indian Ocean Rim Initiative and Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC), is an international organisation consisting of coastal states bordering the Indian Ocean.
- **The IORA is a regional forum**, tripartite in nature, bringing together representatives of Government, Business and Academia, for promoting co-operation and closer interaction among them.
- **The IORA is an association** of 21 countries and 7 dialogue partners which have identified 6 areas of cooperation including medicinal plants. The Coordinating Secretariat of IORA is located at Ebene, Mauritius.

## Soil moisture map

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- **How was it developed?** The experts used the 'Variable Infiltration Capacity' model to provide the soil moisture prediction.
- **The product**, termed 'Experimental Forecasts Land Surface Products', is available on the IMD website. It has been developed using the hydrological model that takes into consideration soil, vegetation, land use and land cover among other parameters.
- **Highlights of the findings:** In Bundelkhand, most farmers keep their land fallow or just grow some fodder crop during the kharif season since the rains are unpredictable and there could be extended dry spells after sowing. They then mainly cultivate the rabi crop using the soil moisture left behind by the monsoon rains.
- **It is a similar trend in Bihar**, in low lying areas of Seemanchal and Kosi belt, where no crop is grown during Kharif because of inundated lands. This means that if there is not enough rainfall in one or two months, these are regions which will demand heavy irrigation whether that comes from groundwater or surface water storage (reservoirs).
- **Based on observed conditions** at present, Gujarat, parts of Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu and parts of Andhra Pradesh are deficient in terms of soil moisture right now.
- **Significance and the need for data on soil moisture:** Soil moisture is crucial for agriculture since it directly affects crop growth and how much irrigation is required for the area. It is because crucial information needed for agriculture is not revealed only through rainfall data.
- **Soil moisture** gives us more information on what is needed for crop growth in different parts of the country. Besides, timely soil moisture forecasts will help target interventions, in terms of seed varieties for better planning in agriculture.

## Purchasing Managers Index (PMI)

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- **Purchasing Managers Index (PMI)** The Nikkei India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rose to 52.2 in September from 51.7 in August. A reading above 50 indicates an expansion while one below 50 denotes a contraction.
- **What is a PMI?** PMI or a Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) is an indicator of business activity — both in the manufacturing and services sectors. It is a survey-based measure that asks the respondents about changes in their perception of some key business variables from the month before. It is calculated separately for the manufacturing and services sectors and then a composite index is constructed.
- **How is the PMI derived?** The PMI is derived from a series of qualitative questions. Executives from a reasonably big sample, running into hundreds of firms, are asked whether key indicators such as output, new orders, business expectations and employment were stronger than the month before and are asked to rate them.
- **How does one read the PMI?** A figure above 50 denotes expansion in business activity. Anything below 50 denotes contraction. Higher the difference from this mid-point greater the expansion or contraction. The rate of expansion can also be judged by comparing the PMI with that of the previous month data. If the figure is higher than the previous month's then the economy is expanding at a faster rate. If it is lower than the previous month then it is growing at a lower rate.

- **What are its implications for the economy?** The PMI is usually released at the start of the month, much before most of the official data on industrial output, manufacturing and GDP growth becomes available. It is, therefore, considered a good leading indicator of economic activity. Economists consider the manufacturing growth measured by the PMI as a good indicator of industrial output, for which official statistics are released later. Central banks of many countries also use the index to help make decisions on interest rates.
- **What does it mean for financial markets?** The PMI also gives an indication of corporate earnings and is closely watched by investors as well as the bond markets. A good reading enhances the attractiveness of an economy vis-a-vis another competing economy.

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## BSE first to launch commodity derivatives contract in gold and silver

- **Background:** Till date, commodity derivatives contract are available only on MCX and NCDEX, the two specialised commodity derivatives exchanges in the country. The launch of commodity derivatives platform on the BSE will help in efficient price discovery, reduce timeline and make it cost-effective.
- **Definition:** A derivative is a contract between two parties which derives its value/price from an underlying asset. The most common types of derivatives are futures, options, forwards and swaps.
- **Description:** It is a financial instrument which derives its value/price from the underlying assets. Originally, underlying corpus is first created which can consist of one security or a combination of different securities. The value of the underlying asset is bound to change as the value of the underlying assets keep changing continuously. Generally stocks, bonds, currency, commodities and interest rates form the underlying asset.

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## 'World Peace Monument' dome:

- **The world's largest dome has been inaugurated at the Maharashtra Institute of Technology (MIT)'s World Peace University (MIT-WPU) campus at Loni Kalbhor** on the occasion of the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.
- **The World Peace Monument dome has a diameter of 160 feet**, compared with the Vatican Dome's 139.6 feet, and stands 263 feet tall with a bell hanging from the centre, and the prayer hall is of around 30,000 sq ft.
- **It is supported by 24 massive columns**, each 63 feet tall, at the periphery of the dome and underneath — inside and outside — stand imposing bronze statues of 54 of the biggest names in world history stand, irrespective of nationality or religion.
- **The dome is built atop the MIT World Peace Library** and the World Peace Prayer Hall, which are named after the 13th century poet-saint and philosopher Dnyaneshwar — a pivotal figure of the Bhakti movement in Maharashtra.



## EMPOWERING PEOPLE-EMPOWERING INDIA Sabka Bharat- Samagra Bharat SOCIAL JUSTICE & EMPOWERMENT BUDGETARY ALLOCATION

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- **The allocation** for Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes increased to Rs. 95,000 crores by over 12% compared to 2017-18.
- **The allocation** for Scheduled Castes increased to Rs. 56,619 crores while the allocation for Scheduled Tribes increased to Rs. 39,185 crores.
- **Increase of 41%** in the budget allocation for the welfare of OBC in 2018-19 over 2017-18.

## SCHOLARSHIPS FOR SC/ST/OBC STUDENTS

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- **Scholarships for SC/ST students** – 3,30,64,900 student benefitted during 2014-15 and 2015-16 by distribution of Rs. 7565 Cr.
- **For the Pre-Matric Scholarship** for OBC, the income eligibility has been increased from Rs. 44,500/- per annum to Rs. 2.5 lakh per annum. · For Pre-Matric Scholarship for SC, the income eligibility raised from Rs.2 lakh to Rs. 2.5 lakhs.
- **Also the Stipend for day scholars** has been raised from Rs. 150 to Rs. 225 and for hostelers, stipend raised from Rs. 350 to Rs. 525/. In Top Class Education for Scheduled Castes, income ceiling raised from Rs. 4.5 lakh to Rs. 6 lakh per annum.
- **For Free coaching for SC and OBC students**, the income eligibility raised from Rs. 4.5 lakhs to Rs. 6 lakhs. For local students, Stipend raised from Rs. 1500/- Rs. 2500/- and for outstation students, Stipend raised from Rs. 3000 to Rs. 5000. · For Pre-matric Scholarship for OBC, the rates of scholarships increased substantially.

## INCREASE IN RESERVATION FOR DIVYANGJAN

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- **Reservations for Divyangjans** in Government jobs raised from 3% to 4%.
- **Over 6 lakh Divyangjans** have so far benefitted from 5790 camps organized across the country since May 2014.
- **Special camps organized** for distribution of Aids and Assistive devices to 8 lakh persons with disabilities.

## ACCESSIBLE INDIA CAMPAIGN

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- **Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan** launched by the Government on 3rd December, 2015 · Objective is to make at least 50 percent of all government buildings in the national capital and all state capitals "fully accessible" for the disabled by December 2018.
- **The scheme is ensuring** a dignified life to Divyangjans. · Special camps organized for distribution of Aids and Assistive devices to 8 lakh persons with disabilities. · Access Audit of 1662 buildings in 50 cities completed till date.
- **All 34 International Airports** and all 48 Domestic Airports have been provided with accessible features viz. Ramps, Accessible Toilets, lifts with Braille symbols and auditory signals.
- **667 out of 709 A1, A, B, category Railway Stations** and 13613 buses out of 1,41,572 buses have been provided with accessibility features.
- **917 identified websites of State Governments/UTs** are in the process of being made accessible through ERNET India.

## MUDRA

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- **Budget 2018: lending target** under the MUDRA Yojana enhanced to Rs 3 lakh crore for the 2018-19 fiscal.
- **Of the total loan accounts**, 76 per cent are of women and more than 50 per cent belong to SCs, STs and OBCs.

## STAND UP INDIA

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- **54,733 loans sanctioned** by the banks to Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Women borrowers as on 28.02.2018.
- **VENTURE CAPITAL FUND** · Under the scheme of Venture Capital Fund, 66 companies have been approved Rs. 240 crores for Scheduled Caste Entrepreneurs.( As on 7th May, 2018) .
- **A New Scheme Venture Capital Fund** for OBCs on similar lines as Venture Capital Fund for SCs has been launched with an initial corpus of Rs. 200 crore. Amount of Rs. 140 crore has been provided during 2018-19 under Venture Capital Fund for Scheduled Castes.

## SAKSHAM

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- **Scholarship scheme** launched on 11 November 2014 to provide scholarship to differently abled students to pursue technical education.
- **Scholarship amount** of Rs. 30,000 is provided towards tuition fee reimbursement and Rs. 20000 as contingency allowance. Under the scheme, 1000 scholarships per annum are available.

## NIRAMAY Yojana

- **Rs one lakh health insurance** cover to people with autism, cerebral palsy and many disabilities.
- **INDIAN SIGN LANGUAGE RESEARCH AND TRAINING CENTRE (ISLRTC)** · Established on 28th September, 2015. · First Indian Sign Language Dictionary of 3000 words was launched on 23.03.2018.
- **CELEBRATIONS OF 125TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR:** · 14th April declared as 'Rashtriya Samrasata Divas'. · 26th November declared as 'Constitution Day'. · Gramodaya se Bharat UdayAbihiyan- 14th- 24th April 2016.

## THE RIGHT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 2016

- **Types of disabilities** have been increased from existing 7 to 21.
- **Speech and Language Disability** and Specific Learning Disability have been added for the first time.
- **Acid Attack Victims** have been included.
- **Right to free education** for children with disabilities of 6-18 years and Reservation of 5% seats for students with disabilities in Govt. and Govt. aided higher education institutions.
- **Penalties for offences** committed against persons with Disabilities (PwDs).

## THE SCHEDULED CASTES AND THE SCHEDULED TRIBES (PREVENTION OF ATROCITIES) AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

- **Provides for the establishment** of exclusive special courts for the speedy trial of offences of atrocities against the members of SCs & STs.
- **Inserts a new chapter** relating to "Rights of Victims and Witnesses".
- **Imposing certain duties** and responsibilities upon the State for making necessary arrangement for protection of victims, their defendants and witnesses.

## MINORITY WELFARE Empowerment

- **Largest increase** in a union budget for minority development: 62% increase in funding for minority affairs in 2018-19 budget to Rs. 4,700 crore.
- **More than 45 lakh minority** community students have benefitted from scholarships, fellowships, skill development and coaching schemes during the last one year
- **Since 2014, 2.66 crore beneficiaries** under Educational empowerment schemes 5,43,594, beneficiaries under employment oriented skill development programmes 1,76,2908 under women empowerment schemes .

## Triple Talaq Bill

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- **Lok Sabha passed the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill**, which seeks to ban instant triple talaq and will lead to imprisonment of up to three years and fine. • Bill that empowers Muslim Women passed by Lok Sabha on 29th December 2017.
- **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.

## PRADHAN MANTRI JAN VIKAS KARYAKRAM

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- **Multi Sectoral Development Program**, MSDP restructured as "Prime Minister Jan Vikas Karyakram" by Cabinet on 2.5.2018 .
- **Objective: To provide better socio-economic infrastructure** facilities to the minority communities and widen the coverage of the scheme.
- **Details:** • **Area to be covered under PMJVK** 57 per cent more than MsDP. • MsDP covered 196 districts of the country whereas PMJVK would cover 308 districts of the country • 80% of the resources under the PMJVK for projects related to education, health and skill development.
- **33-40 % of resources** under the PMJVK would be specifically allocated for women centric projects
- **Earlier, only those cluster** of villages which were having at least 50 population of minority community were taken. Now the population criteria has been lowered to 25 per cent. • Financial outlay: Rs. 3972 crore

## Educational Empowerment:

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- **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** Ø Preserving and promoting the rich heritage of traditional arts & crafts of the Minority communities., Ø Boosting skill of craftsmen, weavers and artisans who are already engaged in traditional ancestral work

## Nai Manzil

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- **Ø 69,840 trainees** have been allocated for education and skill training in 22 States in 2016-17. Ø 30,160 trainees have been allocated during 2017-18.
- **Maulana Azad National Academy of Skills- MANAS** Ø Maulana Azad National Academy for Skills set up to address skill development needs of minority communities.
- **Garib Nawaz Skill Development Centres:** Ø The objective is to enable a large number of minority youths of India to take-up relevant skill sets which are in demand. Under the scheme, Maulana Azad Education Foundation (MAEF) will use the cutting-edge of information technology to ensure quality, transparency and credibility to its skill training programmes
- **Ø 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.
- **Hamari Dharohar** Ø 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
- **Hunar Haat for Sab Ka Saath, Sabka Vikas** Ø Exhibition to promote the traditional arts/crafts practised by minority communities (Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Parsis, Jains, and Buddhists) and provide them with an opportunity to establish national and global market linkages.

## First Regional Conference on 'Women in Detention and Access to Justice'

- **Objectives of the conference:** This conference is organised with a view to provide a platform for the prison personnel of all ranks at the national level to share their candid views on various operational as well as administrative issues not only with their counterparts, but also with other experts of national repute in this field.
- **The conference also seeks to identify** best practices and standards in the working of Correctional Administration to meet new challenges in the present day's context to bring out prison reforms in objective terms.
- **This event would also promote research** and developmental activities on the functioning of the Correctional Administration across the country on the one hand and nudge to develop a scientific approach among the various Correctional Administration in a professional manner.
- **Stats: As of 2015, there are 4,19,623 persons** in jail in India, of which, 17,834 (about 4.3%) are women. Of these, 11,916 (66.8%) are undertrial prisoners. There is an increasing trend in the number of women prisoners – from 3.3% of all prisoners in 2000 to 4.3% in 2015.
- **A majority of female inmates** are in the age group of 30-50 years (50.5%), followed by 18-30 years (31.3%).
- **Of the total 1,401 prisons in India,** only 18 are exclusive for women, housing 2,985 female prisoners. Thus, a majority of women inmates are housed in women's enclosures of general prisons.
- **Need for reforms:** Women in prisons face greater hardships than their male counterparts due to many factors such as social stigma, financial dependence on their families or husbands etc. These difficulties are further exacerbated when the woman has children.
- **Women have to face numerous problems** in prisons owing to inadequacy of female staff which often translates to the reality that male staff becomes responsible for female inmates, which is undesirable. Women are not provided with meals that are nutritious and according to their bodily requirements.
- **Women are at a most disadvantageous** position when it comes to their reintegration in society after release. Many are abandoned or harassed post-release, mainly due to the stigma attached with incarceration, which is even more pronounced in cases of women.
- **Women also tend to lose ties with their children** over the years, due to inadequate child custody procedures. Also, a robust grievance redressal mechanism was required to tackle cases of sexual harassment, violence and abuse against women in jails.
- **Way ahead:** Reforms are needed for improving the lives of women under incarceration including the elderly and the disabled, addressing a wide range of issues pertaining to pregnancy and childbirth in prison, mental health, legal aid, reintegration in society and their caregiving responsibilities among others. In this regard, changes in the National Model Prison Manual 2016 have also been suggested to bring it in line with international standards and norms.

## Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana Camp

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- **About Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana:** The Scheme aims at providing Senior Citizens, belonging to BPL category and suffering from any of the age related disability/infirmity Low vision, Hearing impairment, Loss of teeth and Locomotor disability, with such assisted-living devices which can restore near normalcy in their bodily functions, overcoming the disability/infirmity manifested.
- **This is a Central Sector Scheme**, fully funded by the Central Government. The expenditure for implementation of the scheme will be met from the "Senior Citizens' Welfare Fund". Under the scheme, free of cost distribution of the devices, commensurate with the extent of disability/infirmity that is manifested among the eligible senior citizens will take place.
- **In case of multiple disabilities/infirmities** manifested in the same person, the assistive devices will be given in respect of each disability/impairment. Beneficiaries in each district will be identified by the State Governments/UT Administrations through a Committee chaired by the Deputy Commissioner/District Collector. As far as possible, 30% of the beneficiaries in each district shall be women.
- **Background:** As per the Census figures of 2011, the population of senior citizens in India is 10.38 crore. More than 70% of the population of senior citizens live in rural areas of the country. A sizeable percentage (5.2%) of the senior citizens suffers from some sort of disabilities related to old age. Projections indicate that the number of elderly population will increase to around 173 million by 2026.

## Global Skills Park (GSP)

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- **About the Global Skills Park (GSP):** It will be the First Multi-Skills Park in India, to enhance the quality of Technical and Vocational Education And Training (TVET) System in the State and create a more skilled workforce.
- **The Project will engage international TVET** partners to support advanced training at the GSP who will bring global best practices in TVET management, training infrastructure, industry cooperation, and quality assurance.
- **The GSP campus will consist of core Advanced Training Institutes** including the Center for Occupational Skills Acquisition and the Center for Advanced Agricultural Training as well as other support services focusing on entrepreneurship, training of trainers, and skill-related research.
- **The campus will have training facilities** focusing on skills for manufacturing, service, and advanced agricultural jobs, benefitting about 20,000 trainees and trainers.
- **Significance:** The Project will help improve the quality and relevance of the State's TVET programs and will help impart advanced job-ready skills training of international standards that can meet the employment needs of the State's emerging sectors.
- **The Project will also help in modernizing 10 industrial training institutes** across the state by renovating training infrastructure and upgrading skills courses to align with industry and market needs.

## International Court of Justice

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- **Background:** Mr. Trump moved to restore tough U.S. sanctions in May after withdrawing from Tehran's nuclear accord with world powers. Iran challenged the sanctions in a case filed in July at the ICJ.
- **Why lift imposed sanctions?** The U.S. sanctions "have the potential to endanger civil aviation safety" in Iran and sanctions limiting sales of goods required for humanitarian needs such as food, medicines and medical devices "may have a serious detrimental impact on the health and lives of individuals on the territory of Iran."
- **About ICJ: What is it?** The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the principal judicial body of the UN. Established in 1946 to replace the Permanent Court of International Justice, the ICJ mainly operates under the statute of its predecessor, which is included in the UN Charter.

- **It has two primary functions:** to settle legal disputes submitted by States in accordance with established international laws, and to act as an advisory board on issues submitted to it by authorized international organizations.
- **Members of the Court:** The International Court of Justice is composed of 15 judges elected to nine-year terms of office by the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council. These organs vote simultaneously but separately. In order to be elected, a candidate must receive an absolute majority of the votes in both bodies. In order to ensure a measure of continuity, one third of the Court is elected every three years. Judges are eligible for re-election.
- **Who nominates the candidates?** Every state government, party to the Charter, designates a group who propose candidates for the office of ICJ judges. This group includes four members/jurists of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (machinery which enables arbitral tribunals to be set up as desired and facilitates their work) also picked by the State. Countries not part of the statute follow the same procedure where a group nominates the candidates.
- **Each group** is limited to nominate four candidates, two of whom could be of their nationality. Within a fixed duration set by the Secretary-General, the names of the candidates have to be sent to him/her.
- **What are the qualifications of ICJ judges?** A judge should have a high moral character. A judge should fit to the qualifications of appointment of highest judicial officers as prescribed by their respective states or. A judge should be a juriconsult of recognized competence in international law.
- **The 15 judges of the Court are distributed as per the regions:** Three from Africa. Two from Latin America and Caribbean. Three from Asia. Five from Western Europe and other states. Two from Eastern Europe.
- **Independence of the Judges:** Once elected, a Member of the Court is a delegate neither of the government of his own country nor of that of any other State. Unlike most other organs of international organizations, the Court is not composed of representatives of governments. Members of the Court are independent judges whose first task, before taking up their duties, is to make a solemn declaration in open court that they will exercise their powers impartially and conscientiously.
- **In order to guarantee** his or her independence, no Member of the Court can be dismissed unless, in the unanimous opinion of the other Members, he/she no longer fulfils the required conditions. This has in fact never happened.

## Udyam Abhilasha

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- **What is it?** It is a National Level Entrepreneurship Awareness Campaign launched by Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) on the occasion of Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.
- **The campaign** has been launched in 115 Aspirational Districts identified by NITI Aayog in 28 States.
- **About the Campaign:** The campaign would create and strengthen cadre of more than 800 trainers to provide entrepreneurship training to the aspiring youths across these districts thus encouraging them to enter the admired segment of entrepreneurs.
- **SIDBI has partnered** with CSC e-Governance Services India Limited, a Special Purpose Vehicle, (CSC SPV) set up by the Ministry of Electronics & IT, Govt. of India for implementing the campaign through their CSCs.
- **The objectives of the missionary campaign include:** To inspire rural youth in aspirational districts to be entrepreneurs by assisting them to set up their own enterprise. To impart trainings through digital medium across the country. To create business opportunities for CSC VLEs.
- **To focus on women aspirants** in these aspirational districts to encourage women entrepreneurship. To assist participants to become bankable and avail credit facility from banks to set up their own enterprise.
- **About SIDBI:** Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) was set up on 2nd April 1990 under an Act of Parliament.
- **It acts as the Principal Financial Institution for Promotion**, Financing and Development of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) sector as well as for co-ordination of functions of institutions engaged in similar activities.

## World's first Hyperloop passenger capsule unveiled

- **The capsule** is 105 feet (32 meters) long and weighs 5 tons. Named as the Quintero One, the product is made almost entirely out of composite material.
- **What is hyperloop transportation system?** It is a transportation system where a pod-like vehicle is propelled through a near-vacuum tube connecting cities at speeds matching that of an aircraft.
- **The hyperloop concept** is a brainchild of Tesla founder Elon Musk. US-based Hyperloop Transport Technology (HTT) claimed it costs \$40 million per kilometre to build a hyperloop system while building a high-speed train line would cost almost twice. The hyperloop system is being designed to transport passengers and freight.
- **How it operates?** In hyperloop transportation, custom-designed capsules or pods are expected to zip smoothly through continuous steel tubes which are held at partial vacuum. The pod which sandwiches the passenger compartment between an air compressor upfront and a battery compartment in the rear is supported by air caster skis at the bottom.
- **The skis float** on a thin layer of air provided under high pressure, eliminating rolling resistance and allowing for movement of the pods at high speeds. These capsules are expected to be driverless with estimated speeds of 1,000 km/h. Linear induction motors that are placed along the tube control the speed of the pod. Electronically-assisted acceleration and braking determines the speed of the capsule.
- **The Problems Plaguing the Hyperloop:** Constructing a tube hundreds of kilometers long would be an engineering marvel in of itself. However, introducing a tube hundreds of kilometers long that operates at a near perfect vacuum which can support the force of capsule weighing thousands of kilograms as it travels hundreds of kilometers an hour is nothing short of sci-fi fantasy.
- **Small scale experiments** reveal the fundamentals of the idea are sound. Although, in the real world, there are too many factors that cannot be accounted for with a small scale design. In the real world, there are tens of thousands of kilograms of atmospheric pressure which threatens to crush any vacuum chamber.
- **There is also the problem** with thermal expansion which threatens to buckle any large structure without proper thermal expansion capabilities. The Hyperloop would also be stupendously expensive. There are many unavoidable problems facing the Hyperloop that threaten the structural integrity, and every human life on board. The problems can be addressed, but at a great cost.
- **Facts for Prelims:** The government of Andhra Pradesh has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with California-based Hyperloop Transportation Technologies (HTT) to develop India's first Hyperloop route in the state. The proposed route for the Hyperloop between the city centers of Vijaywada and Amaravati could potentially turn a trip of more than one hour into a 6 minute ride.
- **The project will use a Public Private Partnership (PPP)** model with funding primarily from private investors.

## Mobile Asteroid Surface Scout (MACOT)

- **About MASCOT:** The 10-kg box-shaped MASCOT is loaded with sensors. It has been built by the German Aerospace Center (DLR) and the French Space Agency (Cnes).
- **It can take images** at multiple wavelengths, investigate minerals with a microscope, gauge surface temperatures and measure magnetic fields. MASCOT will be largely immobile — it will “jump” just once on its mission, and it can turn on its sides. The MASCOT has a maximum battery life of just 16 hours.
- **MINERVA-II micro-rovers:** About 10 days ago, Hayabusa2 dropped a pair of MINERVA-II micro-rovers on the Ryugu asteroid. It was the first time that moving, robotic observation device have been successfully landed on an asteroid. The rovers will take advantage of Ryugu's low gravity to jump around on the surface -travelling as far as 15 metres (49 feet) while airborne and staying in the air for as long as 15 minutes — to survey the asteroid's physical features with cameras and sensors.
- **Objectives of Hayabusa2 mission:** The Hayabusa2 is scheduled later this month to deploy an “impactor” that will explode above the asteroid, shooting a two-kilo (four-pound) copper object into it to blast a small crater on the surface. The probe will then hover over the artificial crater and collect samples using an extended arm.
- **The samples of “fresh” materials,** unexposed to millennia of wind and radiation, could help answer some fundamental questions about life and the universe, including whether elements from space helped give rise to life on Earth.
- **Background:** Hayabusa2, about the size of a large fridge and equipped with solar panels, is the successor to JAXA's first asteroid explorer, Hayabusa — Japanese for falcon.

- **That probe returned from a smaller**, potato-shaped, asteroid in 2010 with dust samples despite various setbacks during an epic seven-year odyssey and was hailed as a scientific triumph.

## Indian Railway Stations Development Corporation Limited (IRSDC):

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- **Context:** Cabinet approves Redevelopment of Railway Stations by IRSDC as Nodal Agency, through simplified procedures and longer lease tenure.
- **About IRSDC:** The Indian Railway Stations Development Corporation (IRSDC) is a special purpose vehicle (SPV) of the Government of India that has been designed to develop new stations and redevelop existing Indian railway stations. IRSDC is a joint venture between IRCON and Rail Land Development Authority with a 51:49 equity shareholding ratio respectively.

## National Institute of Mental Health Rehabilitation in Sehore District:

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- **The Union Cabinet** has approved the establishment of National Institute of Mental Health Rehabilitation(NIMHR) in Sehore District in Madhya Pradesh.
- **About:** NIMHR will be the first of its kind in the country in the area of mental health rehabilitation. It will serve as an institution of excellence for capacity building in human resource and research in the area of mental health rehabilitation, and also recommending body suggesting models/protocols for effective rehabilitation of persons with mental illness.



## EMPOWERING PEOPLE-EMPOWERING INDIA Sabka Bharat- Samagra Bharat

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- **The allocation** for Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes increased to Rs. 95,000 crores by over 12% compared to 2017-18.
- **The allocation** for Scheduled Castes increased to Rs. 56,619 crores while the allocation for Scheduled Tribes increased to Rs. 39,185 crores.
- **Increase of 41%** in the budget allocation for the welfare of OBC in 2018-19 over 2017-18.

## SCHOLARSHIPS FOR SC/ST/OBC STUDENTS

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- **Scholarships for SC/ST students** – 3,30,64,900 student benefitted during 2014-15 and 2015-16 by distribution of Rs. 7565 Cr.
- **For the Pre-Matric Scholarship for OBC**, the income eligibility has been increased from Rs. 44,500/- per annum to Rs. 2.5 lakh per annum.
- **For Pre-Matric Scholarship for SC**, the income eligibility raised from Rs.2 lakh to Rs. 2.5 lakhs.
- **Also the Stipend for day scholars** has been raised from Rs. 150 to Rs. 225 and for hostelers, stipend raised from Rs. 350 to Rs. 525/. In Top Class Education for Scheduled Castes, income ceiling raised from Rs. 4.5 lakh to Rs. 6 lakh per annum.
- **For Free coaching for SC and OBC students**, the income eligibility raised from Rs. 4.5 lakhs to Rs. 6 lakhs. For local students, Stipend raised from Rs. 1500/- Rs. 2500/- and for outstation students, Stipend raised from Rs. 3000 to Rs. 5000.
- **For Pre-matric Scholarship for OBC**, the rates of scholarships increased substantially.

## INCREASE IN RESERVATION FOR DIVYANGJAN

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- **INCREASE IN RESERVATION FOR DIVYANGJAN** · Reservations for Divyangjans in Government jobs raised from 3% to 4%.
- **Over 6 lakh Divyangjans** have so far benefitted from 5790 camps organized across the country since May 2014.
- **Special camps organized** for distribution of Aids and Assistive devices to 8 lakh persons with disabilities.

## ACCESSIBLE INDIA CAMPAIGN

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- **Sugama Bharat Abhiyan** launched by the Government on 3rd December, 2015
- **Objective is to make at least 50 percent** of all government buildings in the national capital and all state capitals "fully accessible" for the disabled by December 2018.
- **The scheme is ensuring a dignified life to Divyangjans.** · Special camps organized for distribution of Aids and Assistive devices to 8 lakh persons with disabilities.
- **Access Audit of 1662 buildings** in 50 cities completed till date.
- **All 34 International Airports** and all 48 Domestic Airports have been provided with accessible features viz. Ramps, Accessible Toilets, lifts with Braille symbols and auditory signals.
- **667 out of 709 A1, A, B, category Railway Stations** and 13613 buses out of 1,41,572 buses have been provided with accessibility features.
- **917 identified websites of State Governments/UTs** are in the process of being made accessible through ERNET India.

## MUDRA

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- **MUDRA** · Budget 2018: lending target under the MUDRA Yojana enhanced to Rs 3 lakh crore for the 2018-19 fiscal.
- **Of the total loan accounts**, 76 per cent are of women and more than 50 per cent belong to SCs, STs and OBCs.

## STAND UP INDIA

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- **54,733 loans sanctioned** by the banks to Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Women borrowers as on 28.02.2018.
- **VENTURE CAPITAL FUND** · Under the scheme of Venture Capital Fund, 66 companies have been approved Rs. 240 crores for Scheduled Caste Entrepreneurs.( As on 7th May, 2018) .
- **A New Scheme Venture Capital Fund** for OBCs on similar lines as Venture Capital Fund for SCs has been launched with an initial corpus of Rs. 200 crore. Amount of Rs. 140 crore has been provided during 2018-19 under Venture Capital Fund for Scheduled Castes.

## SAKSHAM

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- **SAKSHAM** · Scholarship scheme launched on 11 November 2014 to provide scholarship to differently abled students to pursue technical education. · Scholarship amount of Rs. 30,000 is provided towards tuition fee reimbursement and Rs. 20000 as contingency allowance. Under the scheme, 1000 scholarships per annum are available.
- **NIRAMAY Yojana** · Rs one lakh health insurance cover to people with autism, cerebral palsy and many disabilities.

- **INDIAN SIGN LANGUAGE RESEARCH AND TRAINING CENTRE (ISLRTC)** · Established on 28th September, 2015. · First Indian Sign Language Dictionary of 3000 words was launched on 23.03.2018.

## CELEBRATIONS OF 125TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR:

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- **14th April declared as 'Rashtriya Samrasata Divas'**. · 26th November declared as 'Constitution Day'. · Gramodaya se Bharat UdayAbihiyan- 14th- 24th April 2016.
- **THE RIGHT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 2016** · Types of disabilities have been increased from existing 7 to 21.
- **Speech and Language Disability** and Specific Learning Disability have been added for the first time. · Acid Attack Victims have been included.
- **Right to free education** for children with disabilities of 6-18 years and Reservation of 5% seats for students with disabilities in Govt. and Govt. aided higher education institutions. · Penalties for offences committed against persons with Disabilities (PwDs).

## THE SCHEDULED CASTES AND THE SCHEDULED TRIBES (PREVENTION OF ATROCITIES) AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

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- **Provides for the establishment** of exclusive special courts for the speedy trial of offences of atrocities against the members of SCs & STs.
- **Inserts a new chapter relating** to "Rights of Victims and Witnesses".
- **Imposing certain duties** and responsibilities upon the State for making necessary arrangement for protection of victims, their defendants and witnesses.

## MINORITY WELFARE Empowerment

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- **Largest increase** in a union budget for minority development: 62% increase in funding for minority affairs in 2018-19 budget to Rs. 4,700 crore.
- **More than 45 lakh minority** community students have benefitted from scholarships, fellowships, skill development and coaching schemes during the last one year
- **Since 2014, 2.66 crore beneficiaries** under Educational empowerment schemes 5,43,594, beneficiaries under employment oriented skill development programmes 1,76,2908 under women empowerment schemes .

## Triple Talaq Bill

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- **Lok Sabha passed the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill**, which seeks to ban instant triple talaq and will lead to imprisonment of up to three years and fine. · Bill that empowers Muslim Women passed by Lok Sabha on 29th December 2017.
- **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.
- **PRADHAN MANTRI JAN VIKAS KARYAKRAM** Multi Sectoral Development Program, MSDP restructured as "Prime Minister Jan Vikas Karyakram" by Cabinet on 2.5.2018 .
- **Objective: To provide better socio-economic infrastructure** facilities to the minority communities and widen the coverage of the scheme.
- **Details:** · **Area to be covered under PMJVK 57 per cent more than MsDP.** · MsDP covered 196 districts of the country whereas PMJVK would cover 308 districts of the country · 80%of the resources under the PMJVK for projects related to education, health and skill development.
- **33-40 % of resources under the PMJVK would be specifically allocated for women centric projects** · Earlier, only those cluster of villages which were having at least 50 population of minority community were taken. Now the population criteria has been lowered to 25 per cent.
- **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** Ø Preserving and promoting the rich heritage of traditional arts & crafts of the Minority communities., Ø Boosting skill of craftsmen, weavers and artisans who are already engaged in traditional ancestral work

## Nai Manzil

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- Ø **69,840 trainees** have been allocated for education and skill training in 22 States in 2016-17. Ø 30,160 trainees have been allocated during 2017-18.
- **Maulana Azad National Academy of Skills- MANAS** Ø Maulana Azad National Academy for Skills set up to address skill development needs of minority communities.
- **Garib Nawaz Skill Development Centres:** Ø The objective is to enable a large number of minority youths of India to take-up relevant skill sets which are in demand. Under the scheme, Maulana Azad Education Foundation (MAEF) will use the cutting-edge of information technology to ensure quality, transparency and credibility to its skill training programmes
- Ø **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.

## Hamari Dharohar

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- Ø **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 · Hunar Haat for Sab Ka Saath, Sabka Vikas
- Ø **Exhibition to promote the traditional arts/crafts** practised by minority communities (Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Parsis, Jains, and Buddhists) and provide them with an opportunity to establish national and global market linkages

## GI Tag for Alphonso from Konkan

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- **Alphonso from Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg, Palghar, Thane and Raigad districts** of Maharashtra, is registered as Geographical Indication (GI). A Geographical Indication or a GI is an indication used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin. Such a name conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness which is essentially attributable to its origin in that defined geographical locality. Darjeeling Tea, Mahabaleshwar Strawberry, Blue Pottery of Jaipur, Banarasi Sarees and TirupatiLaddus are some of the GIs.
- **GI products can benefit the rural economy** in remote areas, by supplementing the incomes of artisans, farmers, weavers and craftsmen. Our rural artisans possess unique skills and knowledge of traditional practices and methods, passed down from generation to generation, which need to be protected and promoted.
- **Recently, Union Minister of Commerce and Industry**, Suresh Prabhu, launched the logo and tagline for the Geographical Indications (GI) of India and said that the GI will give the rightful share in the intellectual property to the artisan and the place of origin of the product. He emphasised that it's an area of strength and optimism for India, whereby GI tag has given protection to a large number of hand-made and manufactured products, especially in the informal sector.
- **The Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion** has taken several initiatives in this regard and is actively involved in promotion and marketing of GIs with a vision to enhance the horizon both socially and economically for GI producers.
- **The king of mangoes, Alphonso, better known as 'Hapus' in Maharashtra**, is in demand in domestic and international markets not only for its taste but also for pleasant fragrance and vibrant colour. It has long been one of the world's most popular fruit and is exported to various countries including Japan, Korea and Europe. New markets such as USA and Australia have recently opened up.
- **The first product to get a GI tag in India was the Darjeeling tea in 2004**. There are a total of 325 products from India that carry this indication.

## Launch of Methanol Cooking Fuel Program of India

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- **Namrup, Assam: This day of Oct 5th, 2018** is a historic day for India, Northeast and Assam Petro-chemicals, a state-owned company for launching Asia's first cannisters based and India's first "Methanol Cooking Fuel Program". The program was inaugurated by Dr V K Saraswat, Member, NITI Aayog and Chairman, Methanol Apex Committee at the Assam Petro-chemicals campus at Namrup.
- **500 households inside the Assam Petro Complex** will be the first pilot project, scaling it to 40,000 households in Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Telangana, Goa and Karnataka. The project is a natural extension of our Prime Minister's vision of reducing import of crude and an effort to provide clean, import substitute, cost effective and pollution free cooking medium. Assam Petrochemicals Limited has been manufacturing methanol for the last 30 years and is in the process of upgrading their 100 TPD methanol plant to 600 TPD by Dec 2019.
- **The safe handling cannister based cooking stoves** are from Swedish Technology and through a Technology transfer a large-scale cooking stove manufacturing plant will come up in India in the next 18 months producing 10 lakh Cookstoves and 1 Crore Cannisters per year. This technology is very unique, it handles methanol extremely safely, does not need regulator or any piping system.
- **The cooking medium can directly substitute LPG, Kerosene, Wood, Charcoal** and any other fuel for cooking. The gaseous form, Methanol - DME, can be blended in 20% ratio with LPG. LPG-DME blending program is expected to kickstart in the country by next year.
- **1.2 litres cannisters can last for full five hours on twin burners** and 8 such Cannisters as rack can last for one month for a family of three. The cost of energy equivalent of one cylinder of LPG for Methanol is Rs. 650, compared to Rs. 850 per cylinder resulting in a minimum of 20% Savings. For instance, in Manipur the cost of transportation of LPG is Rs. 200, whereas same cost for Methanol will be Rs. 12. This provides for an excellent alternative as household fuel and commercial, institutional and fuel for restaurants. China uses 4 MMTA of Methanol as Cooking Fuel annually.

## Assam wage compensation scheme

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- **Aim: The scheme is aimed at providing better** health and nutrition supplements to the pregnant women. It stresses on providing proper healthcare facilities to the pregnant women working in the tea gardens of the state.
- **Highlights of the scheme:** Under the scheme, an amount of Rs 12,000 will be given to the pregnant women so that they can take care of themselves and the unborn baby without compromising the livelihood of their family.
- **The compensation of wages** to pregnant women will be given in 4 instalments – Rs 2,000 in the first trimester, Rs 4,000 in the second trimester, Rs 3,000 for institutional delivery and Rs 3,000 for registration of the child's birth.
- **The women would also be given a maternity leave.** They will not be engaged in work from the third trimester of pregnancy to three months after delivery. In addition, they will get assistance for ante-natal care and the first cycle of immunization of the child.
- **Significance of the scheme:** The bulk of the workforce in Assam's tea gardens is women. The maternal mortality rate of women working in the tea plantations of Assam is unusually high. The scheme is likely to benefit over 60,000 women in the state. It is expected to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality in the tea areas.
- **Background:** In the Annual Health Survey of 2012-13, Assam recorded one of the highest maternal mortality rates in India, with over 300 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. The MMR in the state's tea gardens was even higher, as it was recorded to be 404. The national average during 2014-16 was 130. Further, almost 50% of the pregnant women aged between 15 and 49 years in the state were recorded to be anaemic, which is a leading contributor to maternal mortality.

## Odisha food security scheme

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- **Key Highlights:** Under the scheme, the beneficiaries will get 5 kg of rice per person per month at the rate of Rs 1 per kg, the same as availed by people covered under the National Food Security Act, 2013.
- **As per the provisions of the State** Food Security Scheme, 25 lakh poor people "left out" from the benefits of the NFSA, will get the rice at subsidised rates.
- **The distribution of rice** to selected beneficiaries will be carried out through e-Point of sale (e-PoS) device at the designated fair price shops.
- **Background:** The NFSA was implemented in 2014; however, many people were denied the benefit. The move was taken after the centre repeatedly failed to respond to the state's plea of including the left out people in its national food security scheme.

## Government e-Payments Adoption Ranking (GEAR)

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- **The 2018 GEAR**, an Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) global Index and benchmarking study commissioned by Visa, ranks governments by quantifying their e-payment capabilities based on various indicators.
- **The ranking is based on seven parameters** viz. Government-to-Citizen (G2C), Citizen-to-Government (C2G), Business-to-Government (B2G), Government-to-Business (G2B) transactions, infrastructure, socio-economic and policy environment.
- **Performance of India across various categories:** In the latest study, India is ranked 28th among 73 countries. This is up from 36th rank in 2011.
- **B2C category:** India leads the Business to Government category, along with Australia, Singapore and South Korea. The category refers to the ease with which businesses can calculate and make their tax payments, register and renew their registrations online and digitally calculate their pension fund contributions, thereby making those payments on a periodic basis.
- **G2B category:** At the same time, by simplifying refund and loan application processes, wherein businesses can track status digitally, coupled with dedicated digital portals to submit proposals for government procurement services, India leads the Government to Business category as well.

- **The C2G category** evaluates the extent to which citizens can complete various transactions electronically by assessing six indicators, including online one-stop shops, income tax payments, and obtaining an ID card. India ranks third in this category, along with four other countries, while France and the UAE top the list.
- **The G2C category** captures the extent to which various government transfers like tax refunds, pension and welfare benefits and unemployment benefits can be accessed electronically. In India, while everything pertaining to tax filing and pension and welfare benefits has smoothly migrated to digital, the unemployment benefits system continues to be driven by paper processes, as a result of which the country still lags behind, in 25th place.
- **The infrastructure and socio-economic categories examine the supportive** infrastructure for e-payments and their acceptance in society at large. With respect to infrastructure, while India has witnessed an increase in Internet penetration over recent years, substantial pockets of communities continue to lack reliable access, leaving country ranked 58th.
- **In the socio-economic category**, India is ranked 60th out of 73 countries, highlighting an urgent need to focus efforts on enhancing educational levels, as well as improving citizens' and businesses' engagement with Internet-enabled services.
- **The policy category assesses** the policy environment and examines how it spurs e-payments adoption. Though India ranks at a low 40th owing to a few inhibiting policy decisions, the government's efforts to strengthen Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) with an objective to foster innovation and protect country's traditional knowledge could motivate innovation and act as a catalyst businesses to grow. Incentives to consumers and merchants to adopt digital payments are also restricted to selected e-payment methods, potentially limiting the effectiveness of these measures.

## IORA- Delhi declaration

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- **The Delhi declaration on Renewable Energy in the Indian Ocean Region:** It calls for collaboration among IORA member states in meeting the growing demand for renewable energy in the Indian Ocean littorals, development of a common renewable energy agenda for the Indian Ocean region and promote regional capacity building.
- **The declaration also calls** for promotion of technology development and transfer, strengthening of public private partnerships in renewable energy and collaboration among IORA member states and the member nations of the International Solar Alliance (ISA).
- **IORA member countries resolved** to collaborate with the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA). As per the declaration adopted, IORA member nations will also collaborate with the ISA member nations to exchange knowledge and share views and potential interests in the renewable energy sector.
- **Additionally, IORA member nations** and IRENA will undertake the expansion of the Global Renewable Energy Atlas, the world's largest-ever joint renewable resource data project, coordinated by IRENA, thereby creating the Indian Ocean region's first and most comprehensive map and database which can then be used to tap the sizable renewable energy potential of the region.
- **About IORA:** The Indian Ocean Rim Association was set up with the objective of strengthening regional cooperation and sustainable development within the Indian Ocean Region with 21 Member States and 7 Dialogue Partners.
- **The IORA is a regional forum**, tripartite in nature, bringing together representatives of Government, Business and Academia, for promoting co-operation and closer interaction among them.
- **It is based on the principles of Open Regionalism** for strengthening Economic Cooperation particularly on Trade Facilitation and Investment, Promotion as well as Social Development of the region.
- **India, Australia, Iran IR, Indonesia Thailand, Malaysia, South Africa**, Mozambique, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Bangladesh, Singapore, Mauritius, Madagascar, UAE, Yemen, Seychelles, Somalia, Comoros and Oman are members of IORA.

## Deal replacing NAFTA signed

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- **The trilateral pact** is expected to be signed by the three North American countries before the end of November, after which it would be submitted to Congress.

- **About United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA):** It's basically NAFTA 2.0, with major changes on cars and new policies on labor and environmental standards, intellectual property protections, and some digital trade provisions. The changes include:
- **Country of origin rules:** Automobiles must have 75% of their components manufactured in Mexico, the US, or Canada to qualify for zero tariffs (up from 62.5 percent under NAFTA).
- **Labor provisions:** 40 to 45 percent of automobile parts have to be made by workers who earn at least \$16 an hour by 2023. Mexico has also agreed to pass laws giving workers the right to union representation, extend labor protections to migrant workers, and protect women from discrimination. The countries can also sanction one another for labor violations.
- **US farmers get more access** to the Canadian dairy market: The US got Canada to open up its dairy market to US farmers, which was a big issue for Trump.
- **Intellectual property and digital trade:** The deal extends the terms of copyright to 70 years beyond the life of the author (up from 50). It also extends the period that a pharmaceutical drug can be protected from generic competition.
- **It also includes new provisions** to deal with the digital economy, including prohibiting duties on things like music and e-books, and protections for internet companies so they're not liable for content their users produce.
- **Sunset clause:** The agreement puts in a 16-year "sunset" clause — meaning the terms of the agreement expire, or "sunset," after a set period of time. The deal is also subject to a review every six years, at which point the US, Mexico, and Canada can decide to extend USMCA.
- **What is NAFTA?** NAFTA is the initialism for the North American Free Trade Agreement, an agreement signed by Canada, Mexico, and the United States that reduced or eliminated trade barriers in North America. (Since the U.S. and Canada already had a free trade agreement (signed in 1988), NAFTA merely brought Mexico into the trade bloc.)
- **Negotiations** for the trade agreement began in 1990 under the administration of George H.W. Bush and were finalized under Bill Clinton's presidency in 1993. The agreement went into effect on January 1, 1994.
- **What was the purpose of NAFTA?** 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).

## Nobel Prize Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine:

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- **The Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine** is awarded once a year for outstanding discoveries in the fields of life sciences and medicine. It is one of five Nobel Prizes established in 1895 by Swedish chemist Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite, in his will.
- **The 2018 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine** has been jointly conferred to James P. Allison and Tasuku Honjo "for their discovery of cancer therapy by inhibition of negative immune regulation".
- **The duo successfully established an entirely** new principle for cancer therapy by stimulating the ability of immune system to attack tumour cells. It is called "Immune checkpoint therapy". They showed how different strategies for slowing down the brakes on the immune system can be used in the treatment of cancer. Their discoveries are landmark in fight against cancer.

- **Nobel Prize in Chemistry:** US scientists Frances Arnold and George Smith and British researcher Gregory Winter have won the 2018 Nobel Prize in Chemistry. They were selected for harnessing power of evolution to develop enzymes and antibodies that have led to new pharmaceuticals and biofuels.
- **Nobel Physics Prize:** Three scientists Arthur Ashkin (USA), Gerard Mourou (France) and Donna Strickland (Canada) have won the 2018 Nobel Prize in Physics. They were selected for groundbreaking inventions in the field of laser physics.
- **Arthur Ashkin:** He received prize for optical tweezers and their application to biological systems. His optical tweezers are able to grab particles, atoms, viruses and other living cells with their laser beam fingers, allowing use of radiation pressure of light to move physical objects.
- **Gerard Mourou and Donna Strickland:** They were jointly awarded for their method of generating high-intensity, ultra-short optical pulses. They have created ultrashort high-intensity laser pulses without destroying amplifying material, thus paving way towards shortest and most intense laser pulses ever created by mankind. Their innovative technique is known as 'chirped pulse amplification' (CPA), has now become standard for high-intensity lasers, including ultra-sharp beams used in corrective eye surgeries.

## Sahyog HOP TAC -2018: Operation Samudra Maitri:

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- **India has launched massive** humanitarian operation Samudra Maitri to provide assistance to earthquake and tsunami victims in Indonesia.
- **Under this operation**, India has dispatched two aircraft C-130J and C-17 and three naval ships carrying relief material and personnel to the country.

## National Real Estate Development Council (NAREDCO):

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- **Why in News?** Realtors body National Real Estate Development Council (NAREDCO) has signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs to provide skill training and jobs in construction sector for 2.5 lakh poor people.
- **The partnership** will strengthen skill trainings and employment opportunities in construction sector for urban poor under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihoods Mission.

## About National Real Estate Development Council (NAREDCO):

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- **It is autonomous self-regulatory body** under Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. It was established in 1998 and is headquartered in New Delhi.
- **It serves as apex national body** for real estate industry and provides single platform for Government, industry and public to discuss various problems and opportunities face to face for speedy resolution of issues.
- **Its mandate also includes to induce transparency** and ethics in real estate business and transform unorganized Indian real estate sector into matured and globally competitive business sector.

## Gita Gopinath becomes first woman Chief Economist at IMF:

- **India-born Gita Gopinath** has been appointed as the Chief Economist of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
- **She has become the first woman to hold the position.** Gita Gopinath has also become the second Indian to hold the position, after former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan.



## YOUNG INDIA-VIBRANT INDIA Sphoorth Bharat- Sangathit Bharat SCHOLARSHIPS · National Means-cum-Merit Scholarship Scheme (NMMSS)

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- § **3.81 lakh scholarships** sanctioned during 2014-15 to 2016-17.
- § **4.30 lakh scholarships** have been sanctioned during the current year 2017-18 (as on 31.03.2018).
- · **National Scheme of incentive to Girls** for Secondary Scholarship (NSIGSE)
- § **9.71 lakh incentive to girls**, sanctioned during 2014-15 to 2016-17.
- § **9.73 lakh incentives to girls**, sanctioned during the current year 2017-18 (as on 28.02 2018).
- · **As per the record maintained by AICTE**, a sum of Rs. 292.50 Crore (approx.) has been released to 11,862 GATE qualified M. Tech. students. In addition, Rs. 2.61 Lakh released under National Doctoral Fellowship Scheme. Overall, a sum of Rs. 1076 Crore released to GATE qualified M. Tech. Students in the last three year.

## STAND UP INDIA

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- · **To promote entrepreneurship** among SC/ST and Women launched by PM on 5th April, 2016
- · **54,733 loans sanctioned to Scheduled Castes (SCs)**, Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Women borrowers by the banks as on 28.02.2018.
- · **As on 25th April 2018**. 58592 SUI applications sanctioned for Rs.12709 crores

## STARTUP INDIA

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- · **Startup India** launched on 16th January 2016 for promotion of Entrepreneurship among youth.
- · **Tax relief for three** consecutive years out of a block of seven year for startups.
- · **Start-up Fund** of Rs. 10,000 Crore to be released by 2025. · Startups are allowed to issue ESOPs to promoters working as employees
- · **9036 Start-ups** have been recognised as on 25th April, 2018 · 99 Startups have been funded (as on 25th April, 2018)



## MUDRA Pradhan Mantri MUDRA (Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency) Yojana

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- **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'.
- **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

## SKILL INDIA

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- **Launched on 15.7.2015 by Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)** to provide formal short-term skill training across the country in market relevant and new age job roles. Recognizing the skills through training, assessment and certification and enhancing employability leading to increased opportunities among the youth.
- **More than 2.5 crore youth** have been skilled so far under MSDE programs.

## Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)

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- **Under PMKVY (2015-16)**, 13,000 training centres opened across India Training in 375 trades.
- **19.85 lakh youth trained** as a part of PMKVY 1 (2015-2016) and under PMKVY 2 (2016-2020), more than 27 lakh candidates have been trained (19.01 lakh Short term training + 7.45 lakh Recognition of Prior Learning trainings +54.87 Special projects) and approximately 5.70 lakh are undergoing training.
- **More than 63%** have been placed out of the certified candidates.
- **Women constitute approximately 50%** of all enrolled candidates under fresh training provided through PMKVY
- **Physical target centres known as Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras (PMKK)** are being set up in every district across India. As on09.05.2018, 531 PMKKs have been allocated to 27 states/UTs covering 484 districts and 406 parliamentary constituencies. Out of these, 451 PMKKs have been established.

## Industrial Training Institute (ITI) and Apprenticeship Training

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- **More than 13,985 ITIs** have been opened targeting one ITI in each block of the country.
- **Extensive upgradation** and modernization of ITIs enabling ISO29990 certification in the country with more than 30 lakh seats which have been sanctioned to these institutes.
- **More than 10 lakh Apprentices** and 45,000 corporate have registered under the recently revised National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS), leveraging on the job training across manufacturing and services sector.

## Pradhan Mantri Yuva Yojana

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- **In order to encourage** entrepreneurship among youth the scheme was launched on 9 November 2016.
- **Focus on learning by** doing with e-Learning and Class room teaching.
- **E Cell to help students** develop their entrepreneurial capabilities by exposing them to the real-life situations.
- **Participating institutes** and students to be provided handholding support through a network of 55 Regional/Nodal Hubs, spread across the country.

## National Young Leaders Program

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- **The National Young Leader Programme** was launched by the Government in December 2014 to make policies to be "youth inclusive", so as to make youth an integral part of the development process and also to seek the participation of youth in the decision making and national building process.
- **The programme has five components** viz. (i) Youth Parliament; (ii) Youth for Development Programme; (iii) National Young Leaders Award; (iv) National Youth Advisory Council; and (v) National Youth Development Fund.

## BOOST TO SPORTS Revamped Khelo India Program:

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- **To revive the sports culture** in India at the grass-root level, by building a strong framework for all sports played in our country and establish India as a great sporting nation.
- **Annual financial assistance** of Rs.5 lakh per annum for 8 years to talented players identified in priority sports disciplines at various levels

## Khelo India School Games:

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- **PM Narendra Modi launched** the first Khelo India School Games at Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium in New Delhi on January 31, 2018.
- **3507 Players from 29 States** and 7 Union Territories participated.
- **Medal Tally- 199 Gold + 199 Silver +275 Bronze medals**
- **Revamped Khelo India program** approved with an estimated financial outlay of Rs.1, 756 crore for 2017-18 to 2019-20.

## Commonwealth Games 2018 Medals Tally:

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- **India finished third in the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games 2018**, winning 66 Medals.

## National Sports University (Manipur)

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- **National Sports University** will be first of its kind to promote sports education in the areas of Sports Science, Sports Technology, Sports Management, Sports Coaching and will also function as National training centre for selected training centres.

## Olympics, Commonwealth Games and Asian Games

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- **An Olympic Task Force (OTF)** was set up in January 2017 to prepare a comprehensive Action Plan for effective preparation of Indian sportspersons in the next three Olympic Games 2020 Tokyo, 2024 & 2028.

## Training Center for Para Athletes:

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- **Training Center for Para Athletes:**
- **First ever-training center** with world class facilities dedicated for Para Athletes at Gandhinagar, Gujarat on 5th February 2017.

## Sports Talent Search Portal launched:

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- **To provide a transparent** platform for talented youth to upload their achievements.
- **Portal accessed by 140727** individuals, of which 8016 sportspersons are registered with portal.
- **433 applications of the eligible candidates** forwarded to SAI centres of which 249 sportspersons were invited for the selection trials. Based on the performance in selection trials, the selection committee recommended 23 talented sportspersons for admission in SAI centres.

## Beyond Dispute: The SBM Facts

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- **Beyond Dispute: The SBM Facts** The Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) recently launched the 150th birth year celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi, as the Mission enters its fifth and final year of implementation. The SBM has transformed into a massive jan andolan created on the ground using Information, Education, and Communication, making it a behaviour change campaign.
- **Sanitation programs themselves** are not a new occurrence for India, with programs being run since 1981. However, in contrast to the construction or supply led programs of the past, SBM has a demand centric model. The program focuses on behaviour change to generate demand for sanitation services by the rural population which is then followed by supply.
- **However, some recent reports** have sought to undermine the progress made by the SBM on the ground, with incorrect claims. In this regard, the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation presents the following clarifications.
- **Progress The SBM has shown tremendous** progress these last 4 years, under the personal leadership of the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi leading to massive behaviour change campaign and people's movement underway on the ground.
- **Since the inception of the program**, the rural sanitation coverage of India has increased significantly, from 39% in October 2014 to 95% today. Nearly 8.7 crore household toilets have been constructed under the Mission. As a result, 25 States/Union Territories, 529 districts, and 5,09,067 villages have declared themselves as free from open defecation.
- **Earlier this year, the National Annual Rural Sanitation Survey** (NARSS) conducted under the World Bank support project found that 93.4% of the households in rural India who have access to a toilet use it, confirming that behaviour change is happening on the ground. The survey covered 92040 households in 6136 villages across States and UTs in India.
- **The Swachh Bharat Mission is the world's largest public funded sanitation** program. Between the Centre and State, over Rs. 1 lakh crore would have been allocated for the Mission in 2019. In addition to the budget allocation of ₹15,000 crore this year (FY 2018-2019), ₹15,000 crore has been further allocated through Extra Budgetary Resources.
- **Communication strategy** Behaviour Change Communication is undertaken under the SBM at the ground level and is complemented with mass media at the national level as well. For example, mass media campaigns such as Darwaza Band, starring Amitabh Bachchan, Akshay Kumar, Bhumi Pednekar and Anushka Sharma, communicates the messages of women empowerment, promotion of twin pit toilets and usage of toilets, while the SBM foot soldiers, Swachhagrahis, participate in the triggering of communities for behaviour change and sustaining improved behaviours through Inter-Personal Communication. There are currently over 5 lakh Swachhagrahis across the country undertaking behaviour change interventions at the grassroots.
- **Water for ODF** A policy decision has been taken under the National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP) to prioritize the provision of piped water supply (PWS) for villages that become ODF. Of the 5 lakh plus ODF villages, translating to 14.13 lakh habitations, 6.16 habitations have PWS through public stand posts. The remaining are being covered on priority. At a technical level, the SBM promotes the use of the rural pan, a steep slope pan, which requires no more than 1-1.5 liters of water for every use of the toilet, addressing challenges related to scarcity of water.
- **ODF-Quality** A strong parallel focus is being maintained on the quality of the work on the ground and sustaining progress much after the program reaches its goal in 2019. Verification of all ODF declared villages is very unique to Swachh Bharat Mission. Multiple rounds of verification are carried out for the village by the districts and States. Within 90 days of declaration, verification is done for each household in the village. Another round of sustainability verification is done 180 days after the first round.
- **Impact of SBM** A recent WHO study reports that Swachh Bharat would have led to saving of 300,000 lives by 2019 and around 150,000 lives would be saved annually thereafter. In a report titled 'The Financial and Economic Impact of SBM in India (2017)' UNICEF estimated that a household in an ODF village in rural India saves Rs. 50,000 every year. BMGF has released a study that shows significant improvements in diarrhoea prevalence and stunting among children in ODF villages, compared to nearby non-ODF villages.
- **The Swachh Bharat model** of sanitation has led India into a sanitation revolution, and the country is on track for an ODF India by October 2019

## Swachh Survekshan Grameen Awards 2018

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- **Swachh Survekshan Grameen Awards 2018**
- **Haryana was ranked as best State.** Satara District of Maharashtra was ranked as best district. Uttar Pradesh was rewarded for maximum citizens' participation.
- **Zonal Ranking – Top States:** Northern: Haryana. Southern: Andhra Pradesh. Eastern: Chhattisgarh. Western: Gujarat. North-East: Sikkim. Union Territories: Dadar & Nagar Haveli.
- **Zonal Ranking – Top Districts:** Northern: Rewari (Haryana). Southern: Peddapalli (Telangana). Eastern: Surajpur (Chhattisgarh). Western: Satara (Maharashtra). North-East: Tawang (Arunachal Pradesh).
- **About Swachh Survekshan Grameen:** SSG is a rural cleanliness survey to rank all states and districts on basis of qualitative and quantitative evaluation. The objective of SSG 2018 is to undertake ranking of states and districts on basis of their performance attained on key quantitative and qualitative Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen (SBM-G) parameters. The rankings will be based on taking into account set of comprehensive cleanliness parameters.
- **The criteria of SSG-2018** include survey of public places, citizens' perspective of cleanliness, their recommendations and data from SBM-G. As part of it, more than 6000 villages in 698 districts across India were covered. It covered nearly 30,000 public places namely schools, anganwadis, public health centres, haat/bazaars/religious places in these villages.
- **Weightage:** The SSG 2018 will assign 65% weightage to findings and outcome and 35% to service level parameters to be obtained from Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) of the MDWS.
- **The weights to different elements** of SSG are direct observation of sanitation in public places (30%), citizen's feedback on sanitation parameters (35%), service level progress on sanitation progress in the country as per SBM-G-MIS (35%).
- **Survey:** The SSG 2018 was conducted by independent survey agency in all districts from 1st to 31st August 2018. It will also take feedback from over 50 lakh citizens on SBM related issues through direct interaction as well as online feedback.

## Atal Innovation Mission

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- **The MoU seeks to:** Remove cultural and language barriers between students of Russia and India. Share the best practices in the promotion of educational, scientific, innovative achievements.
- **Promote innovative cooperation.** Search and develop the talented youth of both countries fostering a knowledge-driven innovation ecosystem in both the countries.
- **About AIM:** The Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) is the Government of India's flagship initiative to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in the country.
- **AIM is mandated** to create an umbrella structure to oversee innovation ecosystem of the country and revolutionizing the innovation eco-system – touching upon the entire innovation life cycle through various programs.
- **The Atal Innovation Mission shall have two core functions:** Entrepreneurship promotion through Self-Employment and Talent Utilization, wherein innovators would be supported and mentored to become successful entrepreneurs. Innovation promotion: to provide a platform where innovative ideas are generated.

## Digi Yatra

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- **Digi Yatra:** The initiative seeks to promote paperless and hassle-free air travel. It will be operational by end of February, 2019 at Bengaluru and Hyderabad airports. In later phase, Airports Authority of India (AAI) will roll out this initiative at Kolkata, Varanasi, Pune and Vijayawada airports by April 2019.

- **Under it**, there will be one-time verification at departure airport while travelling for first time using ID. After successful verification, facial recognition biometric will be captured and stored in Digi Yatra ID.
- **For this system**, passengers will be registered through centralized system and will be given Digi Travel ID. This ID will include details such as names of passengers, their e-mail id, mobile number and any other identity card in case of non-basis. Travelers can also use this ID when booking tickets.
- **Significance:** This initiative will bring benefits to passengers and all stakeholders involved in process including airport operator who will be having travel information in advance for better resource planning and real-time data of passengers within terminal. This will enable the operator to take proactive action to avoid congestion.

## Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA)

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- **However**, the U.S. has warned the deal would invoke sanctions under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) law.
- **What is CAATSA?** CAATSA is a US federal law that imposed sanctions on Iran, North Korea and Russia. It includes sanctions against countries that engage in significant transactions with Russia's defence and intelligence sectors.
- **However**, any imposition of sanctions on India, which is now a major defence partner, could be disastrous for the bilateral relationship.
- **What is S-400?** It is an air defence missile system that can take down enemies' aircraft in the sky from the surface itself. The S-400 is known as Russia's most advanced long-range surface-to-air missile defence system, capable of destroying hostile strategic bombers, jets, missiles and drones at a range of 380-km.
- **The S-400** is an upgraded version of the S-300 systems. The missile system, manufactured by Almaz-Antey, has been in service in Russia since 2007.
- **Why does India want S-400?** S-400 would be like a "booster shot" in the Indian Air Force's (IAF) arm. India needs to be well-equipped against neighboring threats. Pakistan has over 20 fighter squadrons, with upgraded F-16s, and inducting J-17 from China in large numbers. China has 1,700 fighters, including 800 4-Gen fighters.

## UN Conference on Disarmament About the Conference on Disarmament:

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- **The Conference on Disarmament (CD)** is a multilateral disarmament forum established by the international community to negotiate arms control and disarmament agreements based at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. The Conference meets annually in three separate sessions in Geneva.
- **The Conference** was first established in 1979 as the Committee on Disarmament as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community. It was renamed the Conference on Disarmament in 1984.
- **The Conference succeeded three other** disarmament-related bodies: the Ten-Nation Committee on Disarmament (1960), the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament (1962–68) and the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (1969–78).
- **Membership: The conference** is currently composed of 65 formal members, representing all areas of the world, as well as all known nuclear-weapon states. Additionally, members are organized into a number of informal regional groups to facilitate their preparation for, and representation in the plenary meetings of the Conference.
- **Relationship to the United Nations:** The Conference is formally independent from the United Nations. However, while it is not formally a UN organization, it is linked to it in various ways. First and foremost, the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva serves as the Secretary-General of the Conference. Furthermore, while the Conference adopts its own rules of procedure and agenda, the United Nations General Assembly can pass resolutions recommending specific topics to the Conference. Finally, the Conference submits a report of its activities to the General Assembly yearly, or more frequently, as appropriate.

## India International Science Festival (IISF-2018) Theme: “Science for Transformation”. About IISF-2018:

- **IISF** is conceivably the biggest platform in India that brings together students, researchers, artists and general public to celebrate our nation's achievements in science and technology.
- **It is a medium** to encourage the young minds towards the field of science and to promote the networking of stakeholders working towards the propagation of science.
- **Through this festival**, the largest of its kind in the country and in this region, it is expected that the message of excitement of Science and scientific temper will be spread to the students and will be inspiring for the youth.
- **All stakeholders** collectively work towards “Vigyan se Vikas”- contributing to the Making of a New India.

## Methanol Cooking Fuel Program of India Highlights of the project:

- **Under the pilot project**, stove and methanol canister will be made available in a limited scale. The methanol cooking fuel will be available in canisters of 1.2 kg capacity each, which will be priced at around Rs 32 and around 18 of them would be equivalent to one conventional domestic LPG cylinder.
- **The technology for the canister** and the special burner has been provided by Sweden. In two months, APL will start commercial production of methanol-based cooking fuel. Initially the product will be made available for the northeastern region.
- **Boost to NITI Aayog's Programme:** This is India's first step towards realising the concept of 'Methanol Economy', the flagship programme of NITI Aayog. Through the programme, the NITI Aayog has been working on a roadmap to replace 20% of the country's crude imports through methanol alone.
- **Methanol as an alternative fuel:** Methanol is a promising fuel as it is clean, cheaper than fossil fuels and a good substitute for heavy fuels. India imports methanol from Saudi Arabia and Iran at present. Across the world, methanol is emerging as a clean, sustainable transportation fuel of the future.
- **Why Methanol?** Methanol can be used as an energy producing fuel, transportation fuel and cooking fuel, cutting down India's oil import bill by an estimated 20% over the next few years. Unlike CNG, using methanol as a transportation fuel would require minimal alteration in the vehicles.
- **Methanol is a clean-burning fuel** that produces fewer smog-causing emissions — such as sulphur oxides (SOx), nitrogen oxides (NOx) and particulate matter — and can improve air quality and related human health issues.
- **Methanol is most commonly** produced on a commercial scale from natural gas. It can also be produced from renewable sources such as biomass and recycled carbon dioxide. As a high-octane vehicle fuel, methanol offers excellent acceleration and power. It also improves vehicle efficiency.
- **Methanol as an enduring solution to human energy needs?** Methanol has the potential to be an enduring solution to human energy needs because the belched out CO<sub>2</sub> (greenhouse gas emission) both from using Methanol and while producing Methanol can be tapped back to produce Methanol. Thereby a seamless loop of CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration cycle is created to perpetually burn fuels without polluting the environment at all. CO<sub>2</sub> from steel plants, Thermal Power plants, Cement Plants etc. can be tapped in large quantities to produce Methanol.
- **Way ahead:** The Concept of “Methanol Economy” is being actively pursued by China, Italy, Sweden, Israel, US, Australia, Japan and many other European countries. 10% of fuel in China in transport Sector is Methanol. Methanol Economy, if adopted by India can be one of the best ways to mitigate the Environmental hazards of a growing economy. NITI Aayog is preparing a road map for a full-scale implementation in the near future.

## What is Monetary Policy and Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)?

- **To achieve** the goals of broad economic policy, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) uses monetary policy to control inflation, interest rates, supply of money and credit availability.
- **The RBI has** a government-constituted Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) which is tasked with framing monetary policy using tools like the repo rate, reverse repo rate, bank rate, cash reserve ratio (CRR).
- **Composition of MPC:** The committee will have six members. Of the six members, the government will nominate three. No government official will be nominated to the MPC.
- **The other three members** would be from the RBI with the governor being the ex-officio chairperson. Deputy governor of RBI in charge of the monetary policy will be a member, as also an executive director of the central bank.
- **Decision: Decisions** will be taken by majority vote with each member having a vote.
- **RBI governor's role:** The RBI Governor will chair the committee. The governor, however, will not enjoy a veto power to overrule the other panel members, but will have a casting vote in case of a tie.
- **Selection:** The government nominees to the MPC will be selected by a Search-cum-Selection Committee under Cabinet Secretary with RBI Governor and Economic Affairs Secretary and three experts in the field of economics or banking or finance or monetary policy as its members.
- **Term: Members of the MPC** will be appointed for a period of four years and shall not be eligible for reappointment.





## CLEAN INDIA- GREEN INDIA Swachh Bharat- Harit Bharat SWACHH BHARAT ABHIYAN (UD, RD) Swachh Bharat Abhiyan-Gramin Launched on 2.10.2014

- **To fulfil Mahatma Gandhi's dream of a clean and hygienic India. Target: ODF by October 2,2019** · Over 6.98 crore household toilets constructed since the launch of the Mission (as on 31st March 2018), 7.15 crore toilets constructed as on 10/05/2018.
- **3.44 lakh villages** in 361 districts made ODF (as on 31st March, 2018), 3.6 lakh villages and 383 districts made ODF as on 10/05/2018
- **4,465 open defecation free villages under Namami Ganga.** · Sanitation Coverage increased from 38.70% in 2014 to 82.72% as on 31.03.2018, 83.43% as on 10/05/2018 . · 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 is collected and spend to achieve the objective.
- **Swachh Bharat Urban Launched on 2.10.2014** to make 4,041 cities and towns Open Defecation Free and clean by October 2019 & achieve 100% solid waste management. · Milestones Achieved
- **47.10 lakhs** individual household toilets constructed so far.
- **3.18 lakhs** Community and Public Toilet seats constructed so far.
- **2679 cities** have been so far self-declared Open Defecation Free and after third party certification 2,133 cities/ ULBs have been certified as Open Defecation Free (ODF).
- **62,436 urban wards** covered under 100% Door to Door collection of solid waste.
- **Waste to Compost** total achievement 13.11 lakh TPA from 145 functional Plants.
- **Around 88 Mega Watts** of energy is being produced from waste.
- **Rs 6,592 crores** released to states under various Mission components till date.
- **Swachh Survekshan 2018 (SS 2018)** has been taken up, covering all 4041 ULBs in the country, making it the largest sanitation survey in the world. SS 2016 and SS 2017 had covered 73 cities and 434 cities respectively.
- **Star rating protocol** for garbage free cities has been launched, making it the first of its kind initiative to institutionalize a single metric for evaluating cities' cleanliness status.
- **Google maps** business listing initiative for Public toilets has been taken up as a first of its kind initiative, for all 106 cities (cities with more than 5 lakh population and state capitals).

## Swachh Vidyalaya

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- **The targets were fully achieved** with 4,17,796 toilets added to 2,61,400 government elementary and secondary schools during the year from 15.8.2014 to 15.8.2015.
- **This includes schools** in the most difficult to reach areas in the country such as districts facing Left Wing Extremism (LWE), in forests, remote mountainous terrain and in crowded slums.
- **"With this**, about 14.31 crore students in 11.02 lakh government schools all over the country now have access to gender segregated toilet facilities."

## Swachh Swasth Sarvatra

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- **A joint initiative with Ministry** of Drinking Water and Sanitation to leverage achievements of complementary program-Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) and Kayakalp

## Rural Drinking Water Supply

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- **- Rural drinking water** supply coverage - No. of fully covered habitations increased from 73.66% as on 1.4.14 to more than 78.14 % on 31.3.2017.
- **About 2,70,000** habitations covered from 2014-2017.
- **More than 56.41 percent** of the rural population have access to piped water supply.
- **17% Households** have piped water connections. Clean Water to Arsenic and Fluoride affected 27544 habitations by March 2021.

## Sub Mission of the National Rural Drinking Water Program (NRDWP)

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- **To provide** safe drinking water to over 27,544 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.

## Namami Gange

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- **A total 221 projects** have been taken up under Namami Gange programme for various activities such as sewage infrastructure, ghats& crematoria, river front development, river surface cleaning, institutional development, biodiversity conservation, afforestation and rural sanitation at a total cost of Rs 22,238 crore, Out of these 221 projects, 58 projects have been completed and balance projects are at various stages of execution.

## Sewerage Infrastructure Projects

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- **97 towns have been identified** along main stem of river Ganga generating 3603 Mld (estimated for year 2035) of sewage. The existing sewage treatment capacity in these towns is 1651 Mld.
- **In the first phase**, 95 sewerage projects have been taken up in 61 of the 97 towns. These projects will create another 1940 Mld STP capacity at a cost of INR 14,458 Cr.
- **Ten (10) major towns** contribute almost 64% of present sewage generation of these 97 towns. The towns are: Haridwar, Kanpur, Allahabad, Farrukhabad, Varanasi, Patna, Bhagalpur, Kolkata, Howrah and Bally. All the requirements of sewage treatment infrastructure in these 10 towns have been fully addressed. Twenty Four (24) of the 95 projects undertaken have been completed, creating 186 mld STP capacity thereof, and presently in operation.
- **Out of 95 Projects**, Forty One(41) projects are under progress and other 30 projects are under various stages of tendering. This will create an additional sewage treatment capacity of 1754 mld.
- **The projects taken up** so far will take care of all the interventions required for all 5 states – Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar Jharkhand and West Bengal in respect of sewage treatment requirement till year 2035 on the main stem of river Ganga.
- **In addition**, 10 projects have been taken up on Ganga tributaries, like Yamuna (Sonapat and Panipat in Haryana, Delhi, Mathura and Vrindavan in UP), Ramganga (Moradabad, UP), Saryu (Ayodhya, UP) and Kosi (Naugachia, Bihar).
- **These projects** are for creating 1353 Mld sewage treatment capacity at a cost of INR 3028 Cr. From these, two projects of Haryana 70 mld of new treatment capacity has been created & operational apart from rehabilitation of another 75 mld treatment capacity.
- **In the next phase**, towns along major tributaries of river Ganga are being taken up. A comprehensive study is underway to identify the sewage treatment infrastructure related requirements in these towns.

## Ghat Cleaning

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- **Projects have been taken up for 24X7** cleaning of ghats at Varanasi, Bithoor, Kanpur, Allahabad, Mathura-Vrindavan and Haridwar to avoid solid waste disposal into river from ghats and also to improve public facilities and cleanliness. In consideration of the encouraging results from this project, ghat cleaning activity is being extended to ghats of other major towns along rivers Ganga and Yamuna.
- **Ghats & Crematoria** Development of Ghats & Crematoria works in select cities have been taken up and work on 151 Ghats and 54 Crematoria is in progress at various places and likely to be completed by March 2019. 24 ghats were completed in West Bengal from 2011 to 2014 which are under maintenance. The focus now is to complete the ghats and crematoria under construction.
- **River Surface Cleaning** 11 Trash Skimmers have been deployed in 11 cities i.e. Delhi, Haridwar, Mathura-Vrindavan, Garhmukteshwar, Kanpur, Allahabad, Varanasi, Patna, Sahibganj, Nabadwip and Kolkata to arrest floating material and to tackle river surface pollution.
- **Industrial Pollution Management** 952 Grossly Polluting Industries (GPIs) have been identified on main stem of river Ganga after reinventorisation exercise carried out by CPCB (2017-18) wherein permanently closed GPIs have been removed and new industries have been added in the list.
- **Surprise inspection of GPIs (as on 15th June 2018)**, 253 are non-complying, 180 have been issued closure directions and 73 have been issued show cause notices.

- **A preliminary estimate** suggests a significant reduction of BOD discharge from 132 TPD in 2012-13 to 67 TPD in 2017 from industrial sources (~49 % reduction).
- **As on 02.07.2018**, 764 industries have been connected to CPCB server and directions have been issued to remaining GPIs for installation and connectivity to CPCB server.
- **12 Technical Institutes** engaged for surprise inspections of 952 Grossly Polluting Industries w.e.f 2nd April 2018. As on 16th July, 2018, inspection of 929 GPIs has been completed by the TPIs.
- **Out of 929 GPIs** inspected by GPIs, 318 inspections reports have been processed by SPCBs. Action has been taken by SPCBs on 29 non-complying industries (25 Show cause issued and 4 letter issued for compliance).
- **Water Quality Monitoring** 138 locations (20 km interval) water quality monitoring carried out. 94 Manual water quality stations 44 Real Time Water Quality stations Dissolved Oxygen levels improved at 33 locations, Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) decreased at 26 locations and coliform bacteria count decreased at 30 locations (2016 vs 2017 data).

## Ganga Gram

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- **Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (MoDWS)** identified 1707 Gram Panchayats situated on the bank of River Ganga in 5 State (Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, and West Bengal).
- **578 Crores** has been released to Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (MoDWS) for construction of toilets in 1707 Gram Panchayats of 5 Ganga Basin States.
- **Consortium of 7 IITs** has been engaged in the preparation of Ganga River basin Plan and 65 villages have been adopted by 13 IITs to develop as model villages. UNDP has been engaged as the executing agency for rural sanitation programme and to develop Jharkhand as a model State at an estimated cost of Rs. 127 Crore.

## Swachh Iconic Places

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- **100 places** of historical, cultural, social and religious importance to be taken up for intensive clean-up campaigns to make them world class in terms of swachhata
- **Work** has already begun in 20 such places in the first two phases

## Swachhata Action Plans

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- **Each Ministry of GoI** has pledged an action plan to inculcate swachhata and sanitation in their spheres of influence
- **For year 2017-18**, 72 Ministries/ Departments allocated Rs 18,154.64 crore for activities under Swachhata Action Plan (SAP)
- **As per details** uploaded by Ministries/ Department on SAP Portal, Rs, 12,230.92 crore has been utilized (as on 9 May 2018)
- **Initiative for Environment Protection** · All Environment Clearances made online. · National Air Quality Index launched on 6th April, 2015 to monitor the quality of air in major urban centres across the country on a real-time basis.

- **Six sets** of Waste Management rules notified India declared its Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) in the run to COP-21 at Paris in December 2015.
- **The third countrywide** assessment of the status of tigers, co-predators and their prey, released in January, 2015 using the refined methodology as recommended by the Tiger Task Force.
- **The findings** indicate a countrywide 30% increase in tiger numbers in 2014 with an estimated number of 2,226, as compared to 1706 tigers, according to the 2010 estimation.

## UJALA (Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All)

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- - **More than 29.83 crore LED bulbs**
- - **Energy saved** per year- 38,743 mn kWh
- - **Cost saving** per year INR 15,497 Cr
- - **CO2 Reduction** per year- 3,13,82,026 t CO2
- - **Avoided Peak Demand**- 7,757 MW

## Future of Work in India” survey by WEF

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- **The “Future of Work in India”** survey of 770 companies conducted by the WEF (World Economic Forum) included various sectors such as textiles, banking & financial services, transport & logistics, and retail.
- **Highlights and findings of the report:** Major gender gap in Indian corporates: Four out of five retail firms hire less than 10% women. Companies in India experiencing the highest growth prefer hiring men and technology-led job growth benefits men more than women. Notably, while one in three companies preferred hiring men, only one in 10 companies said they wanted to hire more women, accentuating the gender gap rampant in the country.
- **Statistics:** The report found that just 2.4% of these have half or more female employees, and as many as 71% have fewer than 10%. Out of this 71%, 30% companies have no female employees, and another 32% have less than 5%. The sector-wise breakup showed that 79% companies in retail, and 77% in transport & logistics, have less than 10% female employees, while banking & finance companies have 61% female participation and textiles 64%.
- **Global comparison:** India's female workforce participation is mere 27% and stands 23% points lower than global average. Jobs in India are experiencing highest growth and companies are hiring women at only 26%. Women in India are entering workforce at a slower rate than current female workforce participation.
- **More than 33%** of the total companies said that they prefer to hire men, as compared to just over one-tenth that said that they are looking to hire more women going forward. In the last five years, the surveyed companies stated that they hired just 26% female workers in the job roles that saw the most growth, which is less than India's already low female labour force participation of 27%.
- **About WEF:** The World Economic Forum is the International Organization for Public-Private Cooperation. The Forum engages the foremost political, business and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas.
- **It was established** in 1971 as a not-for-profit foundation and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. It is independent, impartial and not tied to any special interests. The Forum strives in all its efforts to demonstrate entrepreneurship in the global public interest while upholding the highest standards of governance. Moral and intellectual integrity is at the heart of everything it does.

## Task force for closing skills gap in India

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- **The Task Force** is the second country-led public-private collaboration of the World Economic Forum's Closing the Skills Gap Project after South Africa.
- **About Closing the skills gap task force:** The task force will bring together leaders from business, government, civil society and the education and training sectors to accelerate the future-proofing of education and training systems in the country.
- **The goal of the Task Force** is to develop an action plan to address skills gaps in India and make the Indian workforce ready for jobs of future.
- **Significance:** With more than half of our population in the working age, skills development will be critical to sustaining inclusive growth and development in India.' The "Closing the Skills Gap" task force will be a significant step to accelerate the impact on skills development already achieved by bringing together relevant stakeholders to act collectively.
- **Closing the Skills Gap Project by WEF:** The Closing the Skills Gap Project aims to create global and national platforms to address current skills gaps and to reshape education and training for the future. It works at three levels:
  - **Country implementation deep-dives:** At the national level, the Closing the Skills Gap Task Forces provides a platform for multi-stakeholder collaboration to close the skills gap and prepare for the future of work. Each Closing the Skills Gap Task Force brings together leaders from business, government, civil society, and education and training sectors to accelerate reskilling and upskilling efforts in the current workforce and the future-proofing of national education and training systems.
  - **Global and regional knowledge exchange:** At the global level, an informal Global Alliance for Closing the Skills Gap provides an exclusive global platform for leaders and experts from business, government, civil society, and the education and training sectors to build consensus, share ideas, and identify preferred models and best practices.
  - **Global business commitments:** With skilling, reskilling and upskilling becoming a clear "no-regret" move for addressing the flux in labour markets, there is a rapid movement of multinational businesses towards such efforts for their employees, communities and wider audience. Managed strategically, this can be impactful and a win-win for companies and workers alike. As a first step, the Forum is consolidating global business commitments with the goal to reach 10 million people by January 2020.

## Parker Solar Probe

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- **These gravity assists** will help the spacecraft tighten its orbit closer and closer to the Sun over the course of the mission.
- **What next?** Throughout its mission, the probe will make six more Venus gravity assist and 24 total passes by the Sun. This manoeuvre will change Parker Solar Probe's trajectory to take the spacecraft closer 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.
- **Facts for Prelims:** The previous closest pass to the Sun was by a probe called Helios 2, which in 1976 came within 27 million miles (43 million km). By way of comparison, the average distance from the Sun for Earth is 93 million miles (150 million km).

## Gaganyaan 2022

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- **As per the MoU,** ROSCOSMOS has offered ride to Indian astronaut short visit to International Space Station (ISS) on board Soyuz spacecraft for short training mission in 2022.
- **About Gaganyaan:** It is India's first manned space mission. Under it, India is planning to send three humans (Gaganyatris) into space i.e. in low earth orbit (LEO) by 2022 i.e. by 75th Independence Day for period of five to seven days.
- **India plans** to build a crew vehicle that can accommodate 2 or 3 astronauts and human rate its GLSV Mk-III launcher.
- **Recent technological advancements:** In what appears to be a preparation for the Gaganyaan mission, ISRO recently 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.
- **If India** does launch the Gaganyaan mission, it will be the the fourth nation to do so after the United States, Russia and China.

## National Dolphin Research Centre (NDRC)

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- **The announcement** for the centre was made on the occasion of Dolphin day (October 5), observed in Bihar for protection and conservation of Gangetic river dolphin to create awareness to save endangered species.
- **Role:** NDRC will play important role in strengthening conservation efforts and research to save endangered mammal whose population is decreasing. Bihar is home to around half of the country's estimated 3,000 dolphin population.
- **About Gangetic Dolphins:** The Ganges River dolphin, or susu, inhabits the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Karnaphuli-Sangu river systems of Nepal, India, and Bangladesh. It is classified as endangered by the IUCN.
- **This dolphin** is among the four "obligate" freshwater dolphins – the other three are the baiji now likely extinct from the Yangtze river in China, the bhulan of the Indus in Pakistan and the boto of the Amazon River in Latin America. Although there are several species of marine dolphins whose ranges include some freshwater habitats, these four species live only in rivers and lakes.
- **Being a mammal**, the Ganges River dolphin cannot breathe in the water and must surface every 30-120 seconds. Because of the sound it produces when breathing, the animal is popularly referred to as the 'Susu'.
- **Threats:** The survival of the Ganges River dolphin is threatened by unintentional killing through entanglement in fishing gear; directed harvest for dolphin oil, which is used as a fish attractant and for medicinal purposes; water development projects (e.g. water extraction and the construction of barrages, high dams, and embankments); industrial waste and pesticides; municipal sewage discharge and noise from vessel traffic; and overexploitation of prey, mainly due to the widespread use of non-selective fishing gear.

## Tiny spheres to trap water contaminants developed

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- **Bisphenol A (BPA):** BPA is commonly used to coat the insides of food cans, bottle tops and water supply lines, and was once a component of baby bottles.
- **Concerns:** While BPA that seeps into food and drink is considered safe in low doses, prolonged exposure is suspected of affecting the health of children and contributing to high blood pressure.
- **Tiny spheres to trap BPA- how they function?** The micron-sized spheres developed resemble tiny flower-like collections of titanium dioxide petals.
- **The supple petals** provide plenty of surface area for researchers to anchor cyclodextrin — a benign sugar-based molecule often used in food and drugs. It has a two-faced structure, with a hydrophobic (water-avoiding) cavity and a hydrophilic (water-attracting) outer surface.
- **BPA is hydrophobic** and naturally attracted to the cavity. Once trapped, reactive oxygen species (ROS) produced by the spheres degrades BPA into harmless chemicals.

## JIMEX:

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- **What is it?** It is a joint Maritime Exercise between India and Japan. It was started in January 2012 with special focus on Maritime Security Cooperation.
- **Why in News?** The 3rd edition of Japan-India Maritime Exercise (JIMEX) is being held at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. JIMEX-18 is aimed to enhance interoperability, improve understanding and imbibe best practices between navies of two countries.
- **Nobel Peace Prize:** Dr. Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad have jointly been awarded the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize. They were given award for their efforts to end use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict.
- **The Nobel Peace Prize** is awarded by a committee elected by the Norwegian Parliament.







## EMERGING INDIA Sushikshit Bharat (As on 10.05.2018) 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 New Super Speciality AIIMS –like Hospitals being set up · 73 Government Medical Colleges being upgraded
- **Details:** · 6 AIIMS Functional ü Raipur, Patna, Jodhpur, Bhopal, Rishikesh and Bhubaneswar ü Full functionality to be achieved by September, 2018 · 8 Additional AIIMS Sanctioned
- ü **Rae Bareli (UP)**, Mangalagiri near Guntur in Andhra Pradesh, Kalyani in West Bengal, Nagpur in Maharashtra, Gorakhpur in UP, Bathinda in Punjab, Kamrup District in Guwahati, Assam, Kothipura in Bilaspur District, Himachal Pradesh
- · **3 more AIIMS have been put up for approval to Cabinet** Site being selected for another 3 AIIMS

## MEDICAL EDUCATION:

- **92 Medical College** (46 Govt. and 46 Pvt.) have been set up in last four years, 15354 MBBS seats (6519 in Govt. Colleges and 8835 in Pvt. Colleges) have been increased in last 4 years.
- **12646 PG Seats** (Broad & Super Specialty Course) have been increased in last four years.

## EDUCATION PADHE BHARAT, BADHE BHARAT ABHIYAN

- **To ensure quality** at the foundational years of schooling i.e. Classes I and II. INTEGRATION OF PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATION
- **Integrated scheme** on school education by subsuming Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and teacher education.

- **Effective from April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2020.** · Budget Outlay: Rs.75000 crores. · Emphasis of the Integrated Scheme is on improving quality of school education by focusing on the two T's – Teacher and Technology.

## UNNAT BHARAT ABHIYAN

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- **Unnat Bharat Abhiyan** launched to connect institutions of higher education to rural India. · 505 villages selected.

## NEW IITs

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- **6 New IITs at Jammu, Bhilai, Goa, Dharwad, Tirupati and Palakkad** are fully functional. · ISM Dhanbad converted into an IIT.

## INDIAN INSTITUTES OF SCIENCE EDUCATION & RESEARCH (IISERS) Achievements

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- **2015: New IISER** was established at Tirupati in the residual State of Andhra Pradesh. 2016: IISER was established at Berhampur, Odisha.
- **2017: With the adoption** of the NITSER (Amendment) Bill, 2017 in the Lok Sabha on 28.03.2017 and Rajya Sabha on 26.07.2017 and necessary notifications issued in the Gazette of India, the two new IISERs at Tirupati and Berhampur stood incorporated at Sl. Nos. 6 & 7 of the Second Schedule to the NITSER Act, 2007.
- **NEW IIMs:** Seven New IIMs set up: Amritsar (Punjab), Bodh Gaya (Bihar), Nagpur (Maharashtra), Sambalpur (Odisha), Sirmour (Himachal Pradesh), Vishakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh), Jammu (J&K)

## GIAN (Global Initiative of Academic Networks)

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- **Launched on 30th November, 2015** to invite distinguished academicians, entrepreneurs, scientists, experts from premier institutions from across the world, to teach in the higher educational institutions in India.
- **No. of Courses** approved till date: 1417 Courses already organized: 1037 No of host Institutions: 138

## SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds)

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- **'Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds'** (SWAYAM) to provide one integrated platform and portal for online courses, using information and communication technology (ICT) and covering all higher education subjects and skill sector courses.
- **Till date**, more than 28 Lakhs learners have been enrolled in 1000+ courses being run through SWAYAM.

## NATIONAL RANKINGS FOR HIGHER INSTITUTIONS

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- **National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF)** launched to help Indian Educational Institutions to participate in the world rankings with greater confidence.
- **To promote quality in education** and encourage competition to perform better and to set up new benchmarks of performance in Higher education space
- **National Institutional Ranking Framework-2018:** 2809 institutions have participated in nine categories.
- **This includes 301 Universities**, 906 Engineering Institutions, 487 Management Institutions, 286 Pharmacy Institutions, 71 Law Institutions, 101 Medical Institutions, 59 Architecture Institutions and 1087 General Degree Colleges.

## RESEARCH & QUALITY HIGHER EDUCATION

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- **5 New Research Parks** at IIT Delhi, IIT Guwahati, IIT Kanpur, IIT Hyderabad and IISc Bangalore @ Rs.75 crore each approved.

## PRIME MINISTER NATIONAL RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP SCHEME Launch Date: Approved by Cabinet on 7.2.2018 Objective:

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- **Scholarship worth Rs. 70-80,000/Month** for Best students who have completed or are in the final year of B. Tech or Integrated M.Tech or M.Sc. in Science and Technology streams from IISc/IITs/NITs/IISERs/IIITs
- **They will be offered direct admission** in PhD programme in the IITs/IISc.
- **Prime Minister's Research Fellows (PMRF)**' scheme at a total cost of Rs.1650 crore for a period of seven years beginning 2018-19.

## Uchhatar Avishkar Yojana (UAY)

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- **Launched on 6.10.2015 to promote** innovation and promote collaboration between the academia and industry – within or outside India.
- **Overall annual investment: Rs. 250 Crore.** Funding pattern of the projects -25% by Industry, 25% by participating Department/Ministry and 50% by MHRD. Work on 87 projects at a cost of Rs.265.59 crore is on.

- **National Digital Library (NDL)** National Digital Library of India (NDL India) project by HRD Ministry to develop a virtual repository of learning resources with a single-window search facility.
- **1.5 Crore e-books and documents are available.**
- **Content** available in English, Hindi and some other languages.
- **30 lakh users** including those from 9000 educational institutions.

## Smart India Hackathon

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- **A unique IT Initiative** in which students are encouraged to apply knowledge to the real life situations and to find innovative solutions to the day to day problems
- **Smart India Hackathon 2018 (SIH 2018)** launched on 16th October 2017 includes 2 sub-editions – Software as well as Hardware:
- **Software Edition- 36-hour** software product development competition, similar in concept to SIH 2017.
- **In the new Hardware Edition** of the Hackathon, the teams work for 5 consecutive days and build their hardware solutions for the proposed problem statements.
- **The Grand Finale** of Software Edition SIH 2018 held on 30th & 31st March, 2018.

## Atal Innovation Mission:

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- **To spur innovation through Atal Tinkering Labs** in schools and Atal Incubation Centres across the country.
- **Progress:** · 2441 ATL Schools selected as on Date: · 941 Selected in Phase 1 announced from the applications invited in 2016. · 1500 Selected in Phase 2 announced on 25-Dec-2017 i.e. on Atal Ji's 93rd Birthday from applications invited in 2017. · All States are covered as of now in ATL Selection · Incubation Centres:
- **Established Atal Incubation Centre:** 6 EIC Supported in 16-17. Around 8-10 are in pipeline for approval during 2017-18. Funding support for scaling up of operations: Rs 10 Crore in 2-3 years.
- **Atal Incubation Centre:** 13 selected in 16-17, around 20-25 in pipeline for consideration during 17-18. Funding support upto Rs 10 Crore for 5 years

## AYUSH Education Reforms

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- **AYUSH Education Reforms**
- **“National Eligibility Entrance Test (NEET)** merit list for all AYUSH Educational Institutions for admission of Undergraduate Course & Post graduate Courses through designated Authority.”
- **Aadhar Based Geo Location** enabled attendance system for teaching staff, non-teaching/hospital staff and PG students in AYUSH Medical Colleges.

- **AYUSH National Teachers Eligibility Test** to be conducted for appointment of all teachers in AYUSH Institutions, and an unique verification code for such teachers shall be allotted by CCH / CCIM before their appointment.



## Mission Indradhanush Launch Date: 25.12. 2014 Objective:

- **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: 3.15 crore children vaccinated 80.58 lakh children fully immunized 80.63 lakh pregnant female immunized 91.94 lakh vitamin A doses administered 79.73 lakh ORS packets distributed 2.73 crore zinc tablets distributed
- **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.

## NEW VACCINES 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.
- **It has been expanded** to 9 states namely Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha, Assam, Tripura, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu & Madhya Pradesh. Nearly 1.42 crore doses of Rotavirus vaccine have been administered to children by December'17,
- **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.
- **MR campaign has been completed** in 13 states/UTs namely, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Goa, Puducherry, Lakshwadeep, Andhra Pradesh, Chandigarh, Daman & Diu, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Telangana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Kerala (ongoing in Arunachal Pradesh and Odisha). Around 7.7 crore children have been vaccinated till March 2018 in these states.
- **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.
- **Around 15.6 crore children** aged 1-15 years have been vaccinated with JE vaccine. Special JE re-campaign was carried out in all 38 JE endemic districts of Uttar Pradesh where 99.20 lakh children were administered JE vaccine. Adult JE campaign has been completed in all identified 31 districts. Under this campaign, around 3.29 crore adults were vaccinated with JE vaccine
- **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. Till January'18, more than 14 lakh doses of PCV have been administered to children across above mentioned areas.
- **JANANI SURAKSHA YOJANA** · Institutional delivery in the country has risen to 78.9% (NFHS-4, 2015-16) from 47% (DLHS-3, 2007-08).

## NEW SCHEMES PRADHAN MANTRI SURAKSHIT MATRITVA ABHIYAN-PMSMA

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- **Objective:** 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

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- **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** · 958 essential medicines, including lifesaving drugs, brought under Price Control regime, giving the consumer total benefit Rs. 9241 Crores (As on 31.03.2018) ü Cardiac Stents to cost 85% lesser ü Knee Implants to cost 69% lesser

## PRADHAN MANTRI BHARTIYA JANAUSHADHI PARIYOAJANA (PMBJP)

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- **Total of 4155 Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras** are functional in 35 States/UTs of the country, as on 01.10.2018 from 99 in May 2014
- **Scheme's product basket** has been expanded to cover more than 700 medicines and 154 surgicals aids and consumables covering all therapeutic categories Prices are 50-90% less than that of branded drugs
- **Out of the total** 719 districts in the country, 634 districts have already been covered by opening of PMBJP Kendras.

## AYUSHMAN BHARAT – PRADHAN MANTRI NATIONAL HEALTH PROTECTION MISSION (AB-PMNHPM) Launch Date:

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- **February 1,2018:** Budget speech: Launch of Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri National Health Protection Mission (AB-PMNHPM) in 2018-19
- **April 14, 2018:** Inauguration 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:** No Family Size, ensuring all members of designated families specifically girl child and senior citizens get coverage.
- **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.
- **Coverage of more than 10 Crore beneficiary** families (identified through SECC database).
- **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)

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- **1.5 lakh Sub Centres & Primary Health Centres** being transformed as Health & Wellness Centres (HWCs) to provide Comprehensive Primary Healthcare services to community. Services provided close to homes/community
- **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

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- **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 ü More than 22.84 dialysis session held ü More than 2.38 lakh patients benefitted ü 497 operational dialysis units/centers ü 3330 operational dialysis machines

## Kayakalp

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- **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-IDY** Promoting Yoga worldwide and at home. First IDY observed on 21st June in New Delhi followed by Chandigarh in 2016 and Lucknow in 2017. UN declares 21st June as IDY.

- **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

## MAJOR POLICY INITIATIVES NATIONAL HEALTH POLICY

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- **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

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- **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

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- **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)

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- **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.
- **Total number of patients** serviced till 15.3.2018 : 60.49 lakh
- **The drugs having MRP Value** of Rs. 566.34 Crores have been dispensed at Rs. 254.36 Crores, resulting on saving of Rs. 311.99 Crores to the patients.

## PRADHAN MANTRI SWASTHYA SURAKSHA YOJANA (PMSSY)

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- **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 New Super Speciality AIIMS –like Hospitals being set up · 73 Government Medical Colleges being upgraded
- **Details:** · 6 AIIMS Functional o Raipur, Patna, Jodhpur, Bhopal, Rishikesh and Bhubaneswar o Full functionality to be achieved by September, 2018 · 8 Additional AIIMS Sanctioned
- **o Rae Bareilly (UP), Mangalagiri near Guntur in Andhra Pradesh, Kalyani in West Bengal, Nagpur in Maharashtra, Gorakhpur in UP, Bathinda in Punjab, Kamrup District in Guwahati, Assam, Kothipura in Bilaspur District, Himachal Pradesh**
- **3 more AIIMS have been put up for approval to Cabinet** Site being selected for another 3 AIIMS

## MEDICAL EDUCATION:

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- **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)

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- **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

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- **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 (ROTO)** 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

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- **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:

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- **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:

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- **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

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- **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

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- **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:

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- **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

## Kala-azar (KA)

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- **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)

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

## Mobile Health app for citizens of India Launched by IAF on Air Force Day

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- **On the occasion of 86th anniversary**, the Indian Air Force has launched an innovative mobile health App named 'MedWatch' in keeping with the Prime Minister's vision of 'Digital India, Ayushman Bharat and Mission Indradhanush'. The app is conceived by the doctors of IAF and developed in house by Directorate of Information Technology (DIT) with ZERO financial outlay.
- **'MedWatch' will provide correct**, Scientific and authentic health information to airwarriors and all citizens of India. The app is available on [www.apps.mgov.gov.in](http://www.apps.mgov.gov.in) and comprises of host of features like information on basic First Aid, Health topics and Nutritional Facts; reminders for timely Medical Review, Vaccination and utility tools like Health Record Card, BMI calculator, helpline numbers and web links.
- **'MedWatch' is the first mobile health app** in the three Armed Services and was launched by Air Chief Marshal BS Dhanoa PVSM AVSM YSM VM ADC, Chief of the Air Staff, on Air Force Day,' at New Delhi on 08 Oct 18. The app was also displayed and showcased to the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India at Air House in the evening.
- **The MedWatch mobile health app is an Indian Air Force** initiative and a small contribution to our citizen.

## Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA)

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- **About Environment Pollution Control Authority (EPCA):** EPCA was constituted with the objective of 'protecting and improving' the quality of the environment and 'controlling environmental pollution' in the National Capital Region. The EPCA also assists the apex court in various environment-related matters in the region.
- **EPCA is Supreme Court mandated body** tasked with taking various measures to tackle air pollution in the National Capital Region. It was notified in 1998 by Environment Ministry under Environment Protection Act, 1986.
- **Composition: Besides the chairman, the EPCA has 14 members**, some of whom are the environment secretary of the National Capital Territory of Delhi (NCT), chairperson of the New Delhi Municipal Council, transport commissioner of the NCT, the commissioners of various municipal corporations of Delhi and professors at IIT Delhi and Jawaharlal Nehru University.
- **Functions:** To protect and improve quality of environment and prevent and control environmental pollution in National Capital Region. To enforce Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) in NCR as per the pollution levels.

## 'Nirman Kusuma' programme

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- **Key facts:** Under the scheme, the children of construction workers would get financial assistance for their education in Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and polytechnics.

- **While an ITI student** will be entitled to get financial assistance of Rs. 23,600, a diploma student to get Rs. 26,300 per annum.
- **Outreach:** Under the scheme, an ITI student will get assistance of Rs. 23,600 a year and a diploma student will get Rs. 26,300.

## NRC for Tripura

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- **Need:** A petition has been filed in the court contending that the "influx" of illegal immigrants into Tripura amounted to 'external aggression' under Article 355 of the Constitution. Also, the presence of illegal immigrants violates the political rights of the citizens of Tripura said the PIL.
- **Concerns:** Tripura was a predominantly tribal State, but now it has become a non-tribal State. Indigenous people who were once the majority has now become a minority in their own land claimed the PIL. Uncontrolled influx of illegal migrants from Bangladesh to Tripura has caused huge demographic changes in Tripura.

## International Social Security Association

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- **The award recognizes** the measures taken by ESIC for extension of coverage of the Scheme for Promoting Registration of Employers and Employees (SPREE), reducing the rate of contribution rates for 24 months in newly implemented areas and raising the wage limit for coverage under the ESI Act.
- **About International Social Security Association:** The ISSA is the principal international organization for Social Security Organizations, Govts. and Departments of Social Security. The ISSA was founded in 1927 under the auspices of the International Labour Organization (ILO), Geneva.
- **It promotes excellence** in social security administration through professional guidelines, expert knowledge, services and support to enable its Members to develop dynamic social security systems.
- **The ESI Corporation** hosts ISSA Liaison Office for South Asia at New Delhi. The Liaison Office coordinates with the Member countries and Social Security Institutions in Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Iran on activities of ISSA related to social security.
- **Facts for Prelims:** The regional social security forum for Asia and the Pacific is a triennial Forum, which is the most important social security event in the region.
- **The International Social Security Association (ISSA)** invites submissions for the ISSA Good Practices award for Asia and the Pacific regions, on the occasion of the triennial regional forum. The Forum provides unique opportunities to CEOs and Managers of ISSA Member Institutions to discuss key social security challenges and share their experiences.

## Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna (PMFBY)

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- **In this regard,** Government has amended provisions of crop insurance scheme in consultation with various stakeholders after review of its working for the last two years. The amended provisions of the scheme have been implemented from October 2018.
- **As per the new provisions:** Certain horticultural crops have been brought under ambit of PMFBY on experimental basis. Damages due to individual fields due to incidents of localised disasters like water logging, land slide, cloud bursts, hailstorms and fire too are brought under scheme.
- **Henceforth, insurances** firms will also have to spend 0.5% of their earnings from annual premium to advertise provisions of the scheme. Fines in cases of delay in clearing insurance claims for crop damages have been proposed.

- **In case firm delays insurance** clearances beyond two months, it will have to pay an annual interest of 12%. Similarly State government too will have to pay interest of 12% in case of delay in release of state's share of subsidy in premium to insurance firms.
- **About PMFBY:** In April, 2016, the government of India had launched Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) after rolling back the earlier insurance schemes viz. National Agriculture Insurance Scheme (NAIS), Weather-based Crop Insurance scheme and Modified National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (MNAIS).
- **Premium:** It envisages a uniform premium of only 2% to be paid by farmers for Kharif crops, and 1.5% for Rabi crops. The premium for annual commercial and horticultural crops will be 5%.
- **The scheme** is mandatory for farmers who have taken institutional loans from banks. It's optional for farmers who have not taken institutional credit.
- **Objectives:** Providing financial support to farmers suffering crop loss/damage arising out of unforeseen events.
- **Stabilizing the income** of farmers to ensure their continuance in farming. Encouraging farmers to adopt innovative and modern agricultural practices.
- **Ensuring flow of credit** to the agriculture sector which contributes to food security, crop diversification and enhancing growth and competitiveness of agriculture sector besides protecting farmers from production risks.

## NASA's New Horizons mission

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- **About New Horizons Mission:** New Horizons was launched on 19 January 2006, and has been travelling through space for the past nine years.
- **Just over a year** after launch, it passed Jupiter and used the giant world's gravity to boost its velocity, as well as making scientific observations. This boost shortened the time to reach Pluto by years.
- **The mission will** complete what NASA calls the reconnaissance of the classical solar system, and it makes the U.S. the first nation to send a space probe to every planet from Mercury to Pluto. The probe has traveled more than 3 billion miles to reach Pluto.
- **New Horizon's** core science mission is to map the surfaces of Pluto and Charon, to study Pluto's atmosphere and to take temperature readings.
- **The spacecraft** was launched in 2006, before the big debate started over Pluto's status as a planet. In August of that same year, the International Astronomical Union reclassified Pluto as a dwarf planet.
- **Facts for Prelims:** The Kuiper belt sometimes called the Edgeworth–Kuiper belt, is a region of the Solar System beyond the planets, extending from the orbit of Neptune (at 30 AU) to approximately 50 AU from the Sun. It is similar to the asteroid belt, but it is far larger—20 times as wide and 20 to 200 times as massive.

## Canine distemper virus (CDV)

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- **What is Canine Distemper Virus?** Canine Distemper Virus (CDV) is a viral disease that infects the gastrointestinal, respiratory, and central nervous systems.
- **Dogs who have not been vaccinated** for Canine Distemper are the most at-risk. While the disease can also be contracted when improperly vaccinated or when a dog has high susceptibility to bacterial infection, these cases are rare.
- **CDV can be spread** through direct contact (licking, breathing air, etc.) or indirect contact (bedding, toys, food bowls, etc.), though it cannot live on surfaces for very long. Inhaling the virus is the primary method of exposure. There is no known cure for CDV.
- **What's the issue?** The magnificent Asiatic lion is under threat. Twenty-three lions have died in as many days in the eastern part of Gujarat's Gir sanctuary. This case is more worrisome as the big cat population in Gujarat is the last of the Asiatic lions in the wild.



- **Facts for Prelims:** Gir sanctuary is the only wild population of Asiatic lions in the world. It is listed in Schedule I of Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, has been categories as Endangered on IUCN Red List and is listed Appendix I of CITES.

## Strategic Policy Group About the Strategic Policy Group (SPG): Composition:

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- **It will be headed** by National Security Advisor. Its members include the NITI Aayog vice chairman, cabinet secretary, the chiefs of the three defence services, the RBI governor, the foreign secretary, the home secretary, the finance secretary and the defence secretary.
- **The secretary of the Department** of Defence Production and Supplies, the scientific adviser to the defence minister and the secretary, cabinet secretariat will also be members of the panel.
- **The other members are secretary**, department of revenue; secretary, department of atomic energy; secretary, department of space; director, Intelligence Bureau, and secretary, National Security Council Secretariat.
- **Representatives of other ministries** and departments will be invited to the meetings of the group as and when necessary.
- **Functions:** It will assist the National Security Council and undertake among other tasks, a long-term strategic review of country's security affairs. It will be the principal mechanism for inter-ministerial coordination and integration of relevant inputs in the formulation of national security policies.
- **Meetings:** The NSA will convene the meetings of the SPG and the cabinet secretary will coordinate implementation of the group's decisions by union ministries and departments, and state governments.

## Eurasian Otter:

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- **Context:** Researchers have confirmed the presence of the elusive Eurasian Otter one of the least-known of India's three Otter species in the Western Ghats after more than 70 years.
- **While the species** is widespread across Europe, northern Africa and several south Asian countries, it is not as frequently seen as smooth-coated or small-clawed otters in India.
- **Key facts:** Otters are members of the mammalian family called Mustelidae. They are shy and have elusive habits, adapting to a variety of habitats ranging from marine to freshwater environments. IUCN Status: Near Threatened. It is protected under the Wildlife Protection Act (1972).
- **Major threats to Asian otter population** are loss of wetland habitats due to construction of largescale hydroelectric projects, conversion of wetlands for settlements and agriculture, reduction in prey biomass, poaching and contamination of waterways by pesticides. Poaching for pelt and other body parts that are believed to possess therapeutic properties.
- **Few nomadic hunting tribes** eat otter flesh. Reductions in prey biomass (fish stocks) and infrastructural developments have led to disappearance of otters from the many streams and rivers which were once major otter habitats.



## Building India – INFRASTRUCTURE Saksham Bharat - Samartha Bharat Banta Bharat – Aage Badhta Bharat ROADS & HIGHWAYS

- **The construction targets** for 2018-19 have been set at 16,418 km. The targets are 67% more than the 9829 kilometres length of National Highways constructed during 2017-18. The target for award has been set at 20,000 kilometres during the current year 2018-19. This is about 25 per cent more than the 17055 kilometres awarded during 2017-18.
- **The expenditure on road construction** rose from Rs. 32,483 crores in 2013-14 to Rs. 1,16,324 crore in 2017-18.
- **Total length of roads**, including those under PMGSY, built from 2014-15 till the current year is about 1,20,000 km which is significantly higher than previous three years.
- **National Highway Network** expanded from 92851 km in 2013-14 to 120543 km in 2017-18. The total length of NHs is 1,29,709 km. as on 30.6.2018. Speed of construction has gone up to 27 km per day in 2017-18 against 12 kms per day in 2013-14.
- **The 135 km long access-controlled Eastern Peripheral Expressway (EPE)** was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister on 27.05.2018.. The EPE has been constructed with the objective to decongest the national capital by providing an alternate route to the traffic not destined for Delhi. Consequently, it plays a seminal role in reducing air pollution caused by such vehicles while traversing through Delhi.
- **Package-I of the Delhi-Meerut Expressway**, stretching from Nizamuddin Bridge to Delhi UP Border was inaugurated by Prime Minister on 27.5.18. This 8,360 kms stretch of National Highway has been completed at a cost of about Rs. 841.50 crore in a record time of 18 months as against the earlier scheduled construction period of 30 months. This is the first National Highway in the country with 14-lanes, dedicated cycle tracks and pedestrian paths on both sides, with several eco friendly features.
- **Prime Minister laid the foundation stone** of the Zojila Tunnel project at an event in Jive-tsal in Leh on 19th May 2018. The major Tunnel project is envisaged to be constructed on the Srinagar Leh National Highway. The 14.2 km long Zojila tunnel will be India's longest road tunnel and Asia's longest bidirectional Tunnel. The tunnel is being built at a total cost of about Rs. 6800 crore. The construction of this tunnel will provide all -weather connectivity between Srinagar, Kargil and Leh.. It will also cut down the time taken to cross the Zojila pass from the present 3.5 hours to just 15 minutes, besides making the drive much safer and convenient
- **India's Longest Road Tunnel** - the Chennai - Nashri tunnel in Jammu opens for public.
- **India's longest bridge**- the 9.15 km long Dhola-Sadiya Bridge over River Brahmaputra in Assam dedicated to public on 26th May 2017. The bridge has ensured 24x7 connectivity between upper Assam and Eastern part of Arunachal Pradesh
- **Bridges over Narmada at Bharuch and Chambal** at Kota thrown open for public New Brahmaputra Bridge - The pre-stressed concrete bridge at 40 meter downstream of the existing Saraighat Bridge on New NH 27 of length of around 1500 m and cost of Rs 475 crore will facilitate movement of patients from all districts North of Brahmaputra to Guwahati for treatment. With opening of new Bridge, problem of traffic jam eliminated.

## Chardham Mahamarg Vikas Pariyojna · Launched on 27.12.2016

- **To improve connectivity** to the Char Dham pilgrimage centres in the Himalayas and make journey to these centres safer, faster and more convenient Developing around 900 km of national highways at an approximate cost of Rs 12,000 crore.

- **Targeted for completion by March, 2020 Expressways** 1000 km of Expressways to come up along High Density Corridors. Some of these at advanced stages of construction/ pre construction activities include Western Peripheral Expressway around Delhi, Delhi-Meerut Expressway, Bangalore-Chennai Expressway, Mumbai-Vadodara Expressway
- **Ensuring Road Safety Decrease in number of road accidents.** Rectification of Black Spots Connectivity with neighboring countries
- **Passenger bus service between India and Bangladesh-** Bus services on Guwahati-Shillong-Dhaka route and Kolkata- Agartala via Dhaka route flagged off by Prime Ministers of both countries at Dhaka on 6th June 2015
- **MoU between India and Nepal** in August 2017 for construction of a new Bridge over River Mechi on Indo-Nepal Border at an estimated cost of Rs.158.65 core
- **Green Initiatives** BS IV Compliance for four wheelers- from 1st April 2017. Advancing BS –VI Norms to 1st April 2020 instead of the earlier target date of April 2021, bypassing BSV norms Hybrid vehicle launched, electric vehicles promoted.
- **Ministry issued notification** regarding blending of Gasoline with Methanol in order to reduce vehicle exhaust emissions and also to reduce the import burden on account of crude petroleum.
- **E- Initiatives** E-Tolling of vehicles through FASTags - over 17 lakh FASTag units are being used by road users INAM PRO – Web based market place for cement and other construction material RAILWAYS

## Safety Reigns Supreme

- **Best ever safety** record in 2017-18: Less than 100 accidents recorded in a year. 62% reduction in consequential train accidents from 118 in 2013-14 to 73 in 2017-18
- **50% increase in track** renewal from 2,926 kms in 2013-14 to 4,405 kms in 2017-18
- **1.1 lakh safety posts** being filled-up through recruitment
- **5,469 Unmanned Level** Crossings eliminated in the last four years. Average pace of elimination is 20% more than that of 2009-14.
- **Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh** (RRSK) fund of Rs. 1 Lakh Cr to be spent on safety over a period of five years.
- **Capacity Enhancement: Building Infrastructure For Tomorrow** · Accelerated commissioning of Broad Gauge line: 9,528 kms between April, 2014 to March, 2018 (4 years) vis-à-vis 7,600 kms during 2009-14
- **Mumbai Ahmedabad High Speed Rail:** First Ever Bullet Train in India
- **High Speed of the train** will reduce travel time from approx. 8 hrs to 2 hrs
- **Enhanced safety through Japanese Shinkansen technology.**
- **Generate employment** for about 20,000 workers during the construction phase
- **Dedicated Freight Corridors:** Unlocking Indian Economy
- **Commissioning of Western and Eastern DFCs** (2,822 Kms) in phases by 2019-20
- **Lead to reduction in freight travel time,** transportation cost and de-congestion in existing network. Bring development and job creation by connecting factories and farms to ports.
- **New Modern Trains/Coaches: A Journey to Remember** · More than 700 Deen Dayalu coaches produced with extra safety and modern features · 5 Long distance unreserved Antyodaya trains with general second class coaches introduced · Tejas train between Mumbai to Goa started with speed potential of 200 kmph and ultra-modern features · 9 Humsafar trains with additional amenities in the coaches introduced

- **Major Thrust to Suburban Networks** · Upgradation of Mumbai Suburban System: Rs. 51,000 Cr project in Budget 2018-19. · Development of Bengaluru Suburban System: Rs. 17,000 Cr in Budget 2018-19.
- **Passenger Convenience:** · SMS services started on 1,373 trains for informing passengers about any delay in trains · Capacity of e-ticketing increased from 2,000 tickets per minute to 15,000 tickets per minute · 'No Bill, Free Food' Policy: Point of Sale (POS) machines introduced in trains for compulsory billing of food aboard trains to crackdown on overcharging

## AIRPORTS

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- **Expanding Wings: Growth in Civil Aviation** · India emerges as the world's third largest aviation market. · Passenger traffic growth in the range of 18-20 percent over the past three years. Domestic air passengers crossed 100 million mark for the first time in 2017
- **National Civil Aviation Policy-2016** · First ever comprehensive National Civil Aviation Policy-2016 unveiled .
- **UDAN (Udey Desh ka Aam Nagrik)** - · Regional Connectivity Scheme, RCS to make air travel to India's Tier-II and Tier-III cities affordable for the common man. · Launched in October 2016, UDAN provides regional air connectivity to unserved and underserved airports at a subsidized fare of Rs. 2,500 per hour.
- **First UDAN flight launched by PM on Shimla-Delhi sector on 27.4.2017.** · 109 airports and helipads have been connected so far.

## Strategic Disinvestment of Air India

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- **Cabinet Committee** on Economic Affairs gave an in-principle approval to privatise Air India along with its five subsidiaries on 28.6.2017
- **Air India** specific alternative mechanism was set up to guide the process.
- **Government to disinvest** 76% stake in Air India along with 100% stake in low cost international carrier Air India Express Ltd and 50% in Air India SATS Airport Services Pvt. Ltd, a joint venture services company.
- **New Airports** · New Airports Under the New Greenfield Airport Policy: Noida International Airport (Jewar), Mopa (Goa), Purandar Airport (Pune), Bhogapuram Airport (Visakhapatnam), Dholera Airport (Ahmedabad), Hirasar Airport (Rajkot).
- **Upgradation and expansion of Delhi, Bengaluru, Hyderabad Airports.**

## Ease of Doing Business

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- **Ease of Doing Business** by allowing 100 % FDI in domestic scheduled air transport, Open Skies Service Agreements offers to 49 countries.
- **INLAND WATERWAYS** · Only 5 National Waterways in last 30 years. · Central Legislation to declare 106 additional inland waterways as national waterways
- **The total number** of national waterways has become 111. This has paved the way for better regulation and development of the national waterways in the country .
- **The Government** has taken initiatives to earmark 2.5 % of Central Road Fund (CRF) for development of National Waterways by reducing the share of NH cess from 41.5% to 39 %

## SHIPPING SAGARMALA

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- **Over 500 projects** with infrastructure investment of more than Rs. 8 Lac Crore
- **289 projects** of Rs. 2.17 Lac Crore already under implementation / development · Coastal shipping to increase from 80 MTPA to 200+ MTPA by 2025
- **Project will enable creation** of 10 million (1 crore) jobs (including 4 million direct jobs)
- **Four Pillars of Sagarmala:** 1. Port modernization & New Port Development (234 projects; Rs.1.4 lac Cr) 2. Port Connectivity Enhancement (206 Projects; Rs.2.5 lac Cr) 3. Port-led Industrialization (46 Projects; Rs.4.4 lac Cr) 4. Coastal Community Development (22 Projects; Rs.2,700 Cr)

## PORTS

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- **Improved port performance** · Focus on improvement of efficiency and productivity in Major Ports. · 80 MTPA capacity unlocked.
- **Improvement in efficiency parameters of major ports** ü Avg. Turn-around Time improved from 73 to 65 hours. ü Operating surplus of Major Ports has increased by 11% as compared to corresponding period of last year.
- **100% FDI** under the automatic route is being allowed for port development projects
- **New Port Development**-TEFRs prepared for 6 new port locations - Vadhavan (Maharashtra), Enayam (Tamil Nadu), Tajpur (West Bengal), Paradip Outer Harbour (Odisha), Sirkazhi (Tamil Nadu), Belekeri (Karnataka). DPR under preparation for Port of Vadhavan, Enayam and Paradip Outer Harbour.
- **Promoting Ship building** and Ship Repair- from 2025 only India- made ships for government purpose. · Traffic handled at the major ports on the rise from 555 MT in 2013-14 to 648 MT in 2016-17
- **Ease of Doing Business** · 42 Action Points identified for enabling trading across border out of which 35 have been implemented. These include:- - Elimination of manual forms, increase in Direct Port Delivery volumes from 3% in December, 2016 to 35.98% in December, 2017,
- **Issue of e-Delivery Orders** by Shipping Lines, installation of RFID based gate automation system in the Major Ports, - Integration of the Port Community System with Customs ICEGATE for seamless exchange of messages and installation of Container scanners.
- **Deendayal Port** In recognition of the invaluable contribution and sacrifices made by Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay towards serving the nation and also upliftment of the poor & downtrodden, the name of Kandla Port has been changed to Deendayal Port.
- **Chahbahar Port in Iran** India-Iran collaboration in the development of Chahbahar Port in Iran.
- **Coastal and Cruise Shipping** · New cruise terminals at Mormugao port and Chennai Port to develop cruise shipping and tourism in the country. · Uniform tariff at all major ports fixed to attract cruise vessels in India.
- **NavIC (Navigation Indian Constellation)** With the successful launch of IRNSS-1G, Navigation satellite, India joined the elite list of countries with their own satellite navigation system

## TEXTILES:

- **(i) Integrated Scheme for Development of Silk Industry (Silk Samagra):** Scheme with an outlay of Rs.2161 crores to benefit 85 lakh sericulture and silk industry workers, including women, SCs, STs, other weaker sections of society & those in LWE and NER.
- **(ii) Additional 10% incentive** to garmenting units under Advanced Technology Upgradation Fund, ATUFs to incentivize production and generation of employment in garment sector.
- **(iii) Revised Guidelines** on Scheme for Integrated Textile Parks (SITP): 66 textile parks are at different stages of implementation

## CONNECTING NORTH EAST INDIA (DONER) • INFRASTRUCTURE & CONNECTIVITY

- • **“North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS)”:** The 90 % funded NLCPR Scheme of the Ministry restructured as a New 100% Centrally funded scheme, NESIDS to fill the gaps in social and physical infrastructure in the region with an outlay of Rs.1600 Crore.
- • **‘North-East Road Sector Development Scheme (NERSDS)’** launched for rehabilitation/up-gradation of important but neglected inter-State roads of the region, to be implemented by National Highways Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL).

## RAILWAY CONNECTIVITY

- • **North East** is fully integrated with rest of India with the entire network converted to Broad Gauge. 970 km gauge conversion done between 2014-17.
- • **Rail connectivity** established with states of Meghalaya (Dudhnoi-Mendipathar), Tripura (Kumarghat-Agartala) and Mizoram (Kathakal-Bhairabi)
- • **Train connectivity** established for Itanagar and Silchar to Delhi
- • **Railway tunnel** (10.27 km) in India coming up on the Jiribam–Tupul–Imphal new broad gauge railway line

## CONNECTING NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES

- • **1360 km India-Myanmar-Thailand** Trilateral Highway connecting Moreh in India to Mae Sot in Thailand, through Myanmar.
- • **NEW AIRPORTS & SERVICES** • A New Greenfield Airport constructed in Sikkim- at Pakyong (Gangtok). • UDAN Regional Connectivity Service to connect NE States on airline network.
- • **INLAND WATERWAYS** • The Shipping Ministry is developing inland waterways in the North East. • 19 new National Waterways declared in the North Eastern Region (NER).

## SMART CITIES OF THE NER

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- **Two cities identified:** Kohima in Nagaland and Namchi in Sikkim
- **TUIRIAL HYDRO ELECTRIC POWER PROJECT** • Tuirial Hydro Electric Power (60MW) launched in Mizoram by PM, implemented by North Eastern Electricity Power Corporation Ltd. (NEEPCO). • Northeast is all set to get India's first-ever "Air Dispensary" based in a helicopter.
- **Assam Gas Cracker Project:** Launched on 5th February, 2016 in Dibrugarh with a production capacity of 2,20,000 Tonnes per annum of Polyethylene and 60,000 TPA of Polypropylene along with other products. • Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT) set up in Guwahati.
- **Sikkim becomes the First Fully Organic State** in India in 2016. • North Eastern Institute of Ayurveda & Homoeopathy inaugurated in Shillong in 2016.
- **"NITI Forum for North East"** set up in 2018 to facilitate the overall development in the NE Region.
- **Mobile App i.e. 'My DoNER'** App developed to increase transparency and effective surveillance of ongoing projects with Instant and Easy Access of Project Information, Crowd Sourcing, Geo-tagging of Projects and Close Monitoring of Projects.
- **National Sports University (Manipur)** - First of its kind to promote sports education in the areas of Sports Science, Sports Technology, Sports Management, Sports Coaching & function as National training centre.
- **'North East Venture Fund'** with a corpus of Rs.100 crores launched- Joint initiative of Ministry of DoNER and North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd. to promote entrepreneurship and Start-ups in the North Eastern Region.
- **North East Rural Livelihood Project (NERLP):** SHGs formed in all 11-project districts across 1645 villages. Against the target of forming 26,000 SHGs, the total number of SHGs formed has gone up to 27,951.
- **NORTH EAST REGION TEXTILE PROMOTION SCHEME (NERTPS).** An umbrella scheme implemented in project-based approach with necessary flexibility in design and implementation to cater to the specific need of the NE States. Projects worth about Rs 1200 Crore with GOI share of Rs.1150 Crore covering all sub sectors of textiles sanctioned under the scheme during last 4 years.

## Chhotu ram About Sir Chhotu Ram:

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- **Sir Chhotu Ram**, who was born on November 24, 1881, was regarded as a messiah of peasants and was instrumental in empowering farmers in pre-Independence era and getting pro-farmers law enacted. He had fought for farmers' rights during the British rule.
- **On political front**, he was a co-founder of the National Unionist Party which ruled all the time Panjab Province in pre-Independent India and kept Congress and Muslim League at bay.
- **Chhotu Ram was awarded** the title of 'Rao Bahadur'. He was knighted in 1937 and was popularly known as Deen Bandhu.
- **His legacy has been evoked** by the formation of a new party, the National Unionist Zamindara Party by guar farmers in Rajasthan in 2013.

## How are Cyclones named?

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- **In September 2004**, an international panel on tropical cyclones decided that countries from the region would each put in names, which would be assigned to storms in the Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea.

- **Eight countries** — India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Maldives, Myanmar, Oman, Sri Lanka and Thailand – participated and came up with a list of 64 names. In the event of a storm, the Regional Specialized Meteorological Centre, New Delhi, selects a name from the list.
- **Why it is necessary to name cyclones?** The late origin of this naming system — unlike storms in the Atlantic, which have been getting named since 1953 — was ostensibly to protect sensitivities in the ethnically diverse region.
- **The purpose of the move** was also to make it easier for “people easily to understand and remember the tropical cyclone/hurricane in a region, thus to facilitate disaster risk awareness, preparedness, management and reduction.
- **Guidelines for naming cyclones:** Citizens can submit names to the Director General of Meteorology, IMD, for consideration, but the weather agency has strict rules for the selection process.
- **A name, for instance,** ‘should be short and readily understood when broadcast’. The names must also be neutral, ‘not culturally sensitive and not convey some unintended and potentially inflammatory meaning’.
- **Furthermore, on the account** of the ‘death and destruction’ a storm in the Indian Ocean causes, their names are retired after use, unlike those in the Atlantic and Eastern Pacific lists, which are reused every few years.
- **Cyclone categories:** Category 1: Wind and gales of 90-125 kph, negligible house damage, some damage to trees and crops. Category 2: Destructive winds of 125-164 kph. Minor house damage, significant damage to trees, crops and caravans, risk of power failure. Category 3: Very destructive winds of 165-224 kph. Some roof and structural damage, some caravans destroyed, power failure likely.
- **Category 4:** Very destructive winds of 225-279 kph. Significant roofing loss and structural damage, caravans destroyed, blown away, widespread power failures. Category 5: Very destructive winds gusts of more than 280 kph. Extremely dangerous with widespread destruction.
- **Names reused every six years:** Atlantic and Pacific storm names are reused every six years, but are retired “if a storm is so deadly or costly that the future use of the name would be insensitive or confusing,” according to forecasters at the US National Hurricane Center in Miami.
- **Cyclone season:** The country’s cyclone season runs from April to December, with severe storms often causing dozens of deaths, evacuations of tens of thousands of people from low-lying villages and wide damage to crops and property.
- **What’s the difference between hurricanes, cyclones and typhoons?** Hurricanes, cyclones and typhoons are all tropical storms. They are all the same thing but are given different names depending on where they appear. When they reach populated areas they usually bring very strong wind and rain which can cause a lot of damage.
- **Hurricanes are tropical storms** that form over the North Atlantic Ocean and Northeast Pacific. Cyclones are formed over the South Pacific and Indian Ocean. Typhoons are formed over the Northwest Pacific Ocean.

## Section 151A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 What’s the issue now?

- **Experts have** written to the President questioning the rationale behind holding byelections close to general elections. President Ram Nath Kovind has been requested to withdraw notification of the byelection. They have questioned EC’s move as the announcement of byelections to parliamentary constituencies were only in Karnataka while there are vacant constituencies in Andhra Pradesh too.
- **What is Section 151A of RPA all about?** It mandates the Election Commission to fill the casual vacancies in the Houses of Parliament and State Legislatures through bye elections within six months from the date of occurrence of the vacancy, provided that the remainder of the term of a member in relation to a vacancy is one year or more.
- **How EC defends its move?** Byelections are required to be held under Section 151A of RP Act within six months from the date of occurrence of the vacancy. Vacancies in Karnataka occurred more than a year before the expiry of the term of the house. In case of vacancies in Andhra Pradesh, there is no need to hold byelections as the remaining term of Lok Sabha is less than one year.

## ‘MedWatch’ Key facts:



- **The app is conceived** by the doctors of IAF and developed in house by Directorate of Information Technology (DIT) with ZERO financial outlay.
- **'MedWatch'** will provide correct, Scientific and authentic health information to air warriors and all citizens of India.
- **It comprises** of host of features like information on basic First Aid, Health topics and Nutritional Facts; reminders for timely Medical Review, Vaccination and utility tools like Health Record Card, BMI calculator, helpline numbers and web links.

## '2nd World Conference on Access to Medical Products: Achieving the SDGs 2030'

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- **The main objective** of the 2nd World Conference 2018 is to take forward the recommendations from the 1st World Conference 2017 and build on the work done for access to medical products in the context of SDGs, including trade agreements.
- **The specific objectives** are to promote an enabling ecosystem in the context of WHO's 13th Global Programme of Work for access to medical products; foster new approaches in innovation landscape for medical products and health technologies for accelerating research and innovation; and identify knowledge, information and policy options on the interface of international trade and health to achieve SDG 2030 goals.
- **Background:** Reliable access to effective, safe, quality-assured and affordable medical products (medicines, vaccines, diagnostics, devices) is key to progressing towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and the SDGs. UHC includes appropriate access to affordable and quality-assured medical products supporting countries in achieving the targets of the health SDGs. India's contribution towards access to medical products worldwide is well recognized.

## South-East Asia Regulatory Network (SEARN)

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- **Background:** In the South-East Asia region in WHO, India is actively contributing & providing support for the SEARN to guarantee access to high-quality medical products.
- **About SEARN:** The South East Asia Research Network (SEARN), based at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, is a platform to facilitate research collaboration.
- **It provides** a forum to support the communication and dissemination of research findings, highlight research areas and a network connecting people and collaborators outside with an interest in South East Asia.
- **Composition:** SEARN includes all ASEAN countries: Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar (Burma), Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, Singapore, Timor-Leste (East Timor) and the Philippines.
- **Objective are:** Encourage communication and dissemination of research findings. Showcase ongoing research. Act as a news forum.
- **Facts for Prelims:** Communicable Diseases Policy Research Group: CDPRG is a multidisciplinary team based in Bangkok, Thailand, which conducts research in South East Asia, and beyond. It carries out research, with a focus on the diverse public health problems associated with communicable disease control internationally, that is in support of and for policy reform.

## Universal Postal Union (UPU)

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- **The 2018 theme is:** "Imagine you are a letter travelling through time. What message do you wish to convey to your readers?".
- **About Universal Postal Union (UPU):** It is a specialized agency of United Nations that coordinates postal policies among member nations, in addition to worldwide postal system. It was established in 1874 and is second oldest international organization worldwide after International Telecommunication Union (ITU) which was established in 1865. It is headquartered in Berne, Switzerland.
- **It has 192 member countries.** It is primary forum for cooperation between postal sector players among member countries.
- **Functions:** It helps to ensure truly universal network of up-to-date products and services. It sets rules for international mail exchanges and makes recommendations for growth in mail, financial and parcel services volumes and also to improve quality of service for customers.

## Forest fires in India and its impact Highlights of the report:

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- **Occurrence of forest fires and their impact:** Forest fires occur in around half of the country's 647 districts every year. Central India has the largest area affected by fire. North-East accounts for 56% of burnt forest land during 2003-2016, followed by southern states and the North-East. However, North-eastern states account for the biggest share of fire detections, with at least 55% of fire incidents reported during 2003-2016.
- **Concerns:** With at least one in four people dependent on forests for their livelihood, India is losing at least ₹1,100 crore due to forest fires every year, says a new World Bank report. The report calls for a national plan for the prevention of forest fire. Repeated fires in short succession are reducing diversity of species and harming natural regeneration, while posing a risk to over 92 million in India who live in areas of forest cover.
- **Way ahead:** The findings are significant since preventing forest fires is crucial to meet Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) in order to limit global warming. As per the Fifth Assessment Report of IPCC, forest fires globally contribute 2.5 billion to 4.0 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> to carbon emissions every year. Tackling forest fires is even more important in India as the country has committed to bringing 33% of its geographical area under forest cover by 2030, as part of NDCs.
- **Facts for Prelims:** India aims to increase its forest cover by 5 million hectares, as part of India's National Action Plan on Climate Change.

## India for Humanity initiative:

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- **Context:** Union Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has launched India for Humanity initiative to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and honour of his service to humanity. It will feature year-long series of artificial limb fitment camps in a number of countries spanning globe.
- **For this initiative,** MEA has collaborated with renowned charitable organisation Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti (BMVSS).
- **Aim:** to provide physical, economic and social rehabilitation of differently-abled around world by helping them regain their mobility and dignity to become self-respecting and productive members of society. It focuses on Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of compassion, caring and service to humanity.

## Jal Bachao, Video Banao, Puraskar Pao contest:

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- **The Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation** announced the winners for the Third and Fourth fortnight of the Jal Bachao, Video Banao, Puraskar Pao contest.

- **What is the contest about?** Jal Bachao, Video Banao, Puraskar Pao contest was launched by the Ministry in collaboration with the MyGov portal of the Government of India with the objective of spreading awareness about water conservation.



## DIGITAL INDIA Samparkit Bharat (As on 10.05.2018) DIGITAL SAKSHARTA ABHIYAN (DISHA) OR NATIONAL DIGITAL LITERACY MISSION (NDLM)

- **National Digital Literacy Mission (NDLM)** initiated with the vision to make at least one person in every family digitally literate with digital literacy skills by 2020.
- **Target is to provide digital literacy** to 6 crore rural households. The outlay for this project is Rs.2,351.38 crore to usher in digital literacy in rural India by March, 2019.
- **2 lakh 50 thousands** gram panchayats to be connected with WiFi, Hotspot enabled broadband connection.
- **The target for National Digital Literacy Mission (NDLM)** was to train 10.00 Lakh candidates, which was achieved in June 2016.
- **The target for Digital SakshartaAbhiyan (DISHA)** was 42.50 Lakh Candidates which has been achieved in December 2016. Under Pradhan Mantri Digital SakshartaAbhiyan, target is to make 6 crore adults digitally literate in two years.

## AADHAR

- **Aadhaar enrolment** has increased to 120.7 Crore (As on 31 March 2018) from 63.22 cr (as on 31st May, 2014)
- **Nearly 100% of the adult (18+years)** population has Aadhaar (as on 31st March, 2018) from 62% (as on 31st May, 2014).
- **Number of unique bank accounts** linked with Aadhaar has increased to 59.15 cr (as on 31st March, 2018) from less than 7 cr (as on 31st May, 2014). Since September, 2016 58.3 Crore mobile SIM cards have been issued using Aadhaar eKYC.
- **125 Banks have joined Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AEPS)**, leading to an increase in AEPS transactions from just 0.46 Crore on 31st May, 2014 to 141.16 Crore on 31st March, 2018.
- **Aadhaar enrolment trend during March**, 2014 to May, 2014 was about 3-4 lakh per day and about 5-6 lakh per day till October 2016. Since Demonetization, the Aadhaar enrolment/ Update requests are in the range of 3-4 lakh per day. More than 1 cr Income Tax Payee have linked their Pan Card with Aadhaar.
- **Jeevan Pramaan: Aadhaar based platform** for biometric authentication of the pensioners and senior citizens. Since its launch on 10 November 2014, over 150.15 lakh pensioners have registered on the portal till date, which was 16.54 lakh in 2016. As per the latest data available around 3.87 Aadhaar based PoS terminals have been introduced

## COMMON SERVICE CENTRES

- **As on December 2017**, around 2.92 lakh CSCs are active and offering digital services like Aadhaar enrolment, Ticket booking, of utilities and other e Governance services to citizens from 2.15 Lakh Gram Panchayats, which was only 2.29 Lakh 2016.

- **This has developed digital entrepreneurs** among poor, marginalised, Dalits and women of India.
- **More than 52,000 women** are working in these Centres that provide digital services like ticket booking, tele medicines, Jan Aushadhi, Aadhaar service to people.

## BHARAT NET PROJECT PHASE-1 BHARATNET PROJECT PHASE-1 and PHASE-2

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- **BharatNet Project** will enable delivery of high-speed broadband services in over 2.5 lakh villages benefitting more than 200 million rural Indians.
- **Over One lakh Gram Panchayats (GP)** across the country connected with high speed optical fibre network as per the declared deadline of 31 Dec 2017, under BharatNet Phase 1
- **As on 6th May 2018, 2,72,690 km Optical Fibre** Cable has been laid covering 1,15,461 GPs out of which 1,09,278 GPs have been made Service Ready.

## TELECOM SECTOR

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- **Overall Tele-density** in the country increased from 75% in Jun 2014 to 94% in Sep 2017. 280 million subscribers added in last three years.
- **Smartphone penetration** doubled from 190 million in 2014 to 390 Million in 2017
- **Two thirds (~ 66%) increase** in the internet coverage –251 million users in Jun 2014 to 429 million in Sep 2017
- **No. of mobile BTS** (Base Transceiver Stations) doubled in the country from 7.94 Lacs in May 2014 to 16.75 Lacs in Dec 2017
- **Optic Fibre Cable coverage** doubled from 7 Lacs KM in May 2014 to 14 Lacs KM in Dec 2017
- **Average mobile data usage** per subscriber grew 25 times – from 62 MB per month in 2014 to 1.6 GB per month in 2017
- **Cheapest tariff globally** – Rs. 300 per GB in 2014 to Rs. 21 per GB as on Sep 2017, tariff reduction of 93%
- **Five times growth in broadband** access from 61 million subscribers in Mar 2014 to 325 million subscribers in Sep 2017
- **Five times jump in FDI inflows in Telecom Sector** – from \$ 1.3 Bn in FY 2014 to \$ 6.1 Bn in FY 18 (till Sep'17)
- **Total no. of telephone subscriptions** is 1206.71 million as on September,2017. Out of which 501.99 million connections are in rural areas and 704.89 million are in urban areas. Country's total tele-density is 93.40%. In rural areas it is 56.71% and in urban areas it 173.15% during September 2017
- **Wireless telephony constitutes** 98.04% of all subscriptions (September 2017)
- **Total number of internet subscribers** is 445.96 million at the end of Dec-17.

## INFORMATION & BROADCASTING FM Phase III Auctions

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- **Batch 1 auction successfully** completed in 2015 after a gap of 9 years.
- **Ø 96 new FM channels in 55 cities were started** Ø Government received Rs. 1103 Cr by auction & Rs.1600 Cr as migration fee from FM Channel owners
- **Batch II of Phase III Auctions concluded in 2017** Ø 66 FM channels for 48 cities allotted Ø Government realized Rs 200.24 cr through auction · Auction of 683 channels in 236 cities in subsequent batches. These auctions will yield estimated revenue more than Rs. 1,100 crore
- **Community Radio** · 201 Community Radio Stations operational across India. · Subsidy increased for setting up of CRS from 50 % to 90% in the North Eastern States & 75% in other States, subject to a maximum limit of Rs. 7.5 lakhs
- **Akashvani Maitree** · Exclusive service for Bangladesh and Bengali Diaspora launched by All India Radio
- **24x7 Kisan Channel** Launched by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on 26 th May, 2015.

## World Bank's Human Capital Index released

- **The World Bank released** today a Human Capital Index (HCI) as part of the World Development Report 2019.
- **Broader theme of the World Development Report (WDR)** this year is "The Changing Nature of Work". As part of this report, the World Bank has launched a Human Capital Project (HCP). The HCP programme is claimed to be a program of advocacy, measurement, and analytical work to raise awareness and increase demand for interventions to build human capital. There are three components of HCP- a cross-country human capital measurement metric called the Human Capital Index (HCI), a programme of measurement and research to inform policy action, and a programme of support for country strategies to accelerate investment in human capital.
- **The HCI has been constructed for 157 countries.** It claims to seek to measure the amount of human capital that a child born today can expect to attain by age 18. The HCI index values are contended to convey the productivity of the next generation of workers, compared to a benchmark of complete standard education and full health.
- **The HCI has three components:**
  1. **Survival**, as measured by under-5 mortality rates;
  2. **Expected years** of Quality-Adjusted School which combines information on the quantity and quality of education (quality is measured by harmonizing test scores from major international student achievement testing programs and quantity from number of years of school that a child can expect to obtain by age 18 given the prevailing pattern of enrolment rates across grades in respective countries); and
  3. **Health environment** using two proxies of (a) adult survival rates and (b) the rate of stunting for children under age 5.
- **UNDP constructs Human Development Index (HDI)** for several years. The HCI uses survival rates and stunting rate instead of life expectancy as measure of health, and quality-adjusted learning instead of merely years of schooling as measure of education. HCI also excludes per capita income whereas the HDI uses it. Two significant changes from HDI are exclusion of income component and introduction of quality adjustment in learning. Exclusion of income element and introduction of quality adjustment makes HCI far less representative of Human Capital Development than the Index claims it to be.
- **The first HCI published** today at the Annual Meetings of the Fund Bank comes with a conclusion that for 56% of the world's population the HCI is at or below 0.50; and for 92% it is at or below 0.75. Hence only 8% of the population can expect to be 75% as productive as they could be.
- **The HCI measures the Index outcomes** for each country as a fraction of maximum value of 1. As expected the advanced economies such as North America and Europe mostly have HCI value of above 0.75, while South Asia and Sub Saharan Africa have the lowest HCI among the regions. The HCI for India has been estimated at 0.44. The quality adjusted learning has been measured in case of India by using the data as old as 2009.
- **The key observations** regarding HCI for India in the Report are as under: · Human Capital Index: A child born in India today will be only 44 per cent as productive when she grows up as she could be if she enjoyed complete education and full health.
- **The HCI in India** for females is marginally better than that for males.

- **Further**, there has been marked improvement in the HCI components in India over the last five years.
- **Probability of Survival to Age 5**: 96 out of 100 children born in India survive to age 5.
- **Expected Years of School**: In India, a child who starts school at age 4 can expect to complete 10.2 years of school by her 18th birthday.
- **Harmonized Test Scores**: Students in India score 355 on a scale where 625 represents advanced attainment and 300 represents minimum attainment.
- **Learning-adjusted Years of School**: Factoring in what children actually learn, expected years of school is only 5.8 years.
- **Adult Survival Rate**: Across India, 83 per cent of 15-year olds will survive until age 60.
- **Healthy Growth (Not Stunted Rate)**: 62 out of 100 children are not stunted. 38 out of 100 children are stunted, and so at risk of cognitive and physical limitations that can last a lifetime.
- **Gender Differences**: In India, HCI for girls is marginally higher than for boys.
- **There are serious reservations about the advisability and utility of this exercise of constructing HCI**. There are major methodological weaknesses, besides substantial data gaps. For instance, for the schooling parameter, though quantity is assessed using enrolment rates reported by UNESCO, quality is gauged using harmonized test scores from major international student achievement testing programs. Due to lack of availability of an authoritative and uniform test score, about 9 different test scores and systems using varying methodology have been claimed to have been harmonized by the World Bank. None of the 9 systems cover more than 100 countries, with some have very limited regional coverage. This makes the methodology quite complex and non-uniform. For some countries, average national scores in a particular year and in some cases in selected cities or states have been used as predictors of education potential and future economic growth. As most nations have country-wide assessments of elementary education, which could have been used, this is not a reasonable approach. For India, the data for quality of education pertains to 2009 assessment by PISA, which was conducted for only two states, namely Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The methodology for harmonization is hugely suspect, the data quite dated and consequently the results quite non-comparable.
- **The use of PISA and TIMSS scores raises questions of possible conflict of interest as the methodology** for testing is largely controlled by non-UN agencies and is not globalized unlike the methodology of UNICEF and WHO that are used for health and survival indicators.
- **The purpose of the Index has been stated to be to create political incentive for increased spending on health and education**. Unfortunately, the indicators used for measuring the Index are so slow moving that none can really be excited about setting out the programme of Index improvement. Adult survival rates, stunting, and under-5 mortality are outcome indicators that will change at a relatively slow rate as compared to process indicators used in computing for example the Ease of Doing Business.
- **Several key factors, on the other hand, seem to have been neglected. As against the variability of outcomes for similar levels on investment**, it would be more useful to developing countries if the Index focused on enabling them to measure and improve the cost-effectiveness of their spending on health and education. Also, the differences in development outcomes arising from governance issues, political systems, socio-cultural context, and legacy issues have been totally ignored. The metric of HCI is too simplistic at one level and too ignorant of development realities at another.
- **Analysed in the context of India, the HCI score for India does not reflect the key initiatives** that are being taken for developing human capital in the country.
- **The Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan has been launched to focus on access and quality of education for the benefit of 197 million school children**. Through the Ayushman Bharat Programme, India has now launched the world's largest Health Insurance initiative providing 500 million citizens with adequate health coverage, and transforming 150,000 Health Centres into Wellness Centres to provide comprehensive primary healthcare services.
- **Sanitation coverage has expanded from 38% in 2014 to 83% in 2018 under the Swachh Bharat Mission**. This has been made possible through the construction of over 72 million toilets and simultaneous societal reforms driven through strong political will. The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana has reduced drudgery and improved the health of about 38 million women by providing them with LPG connection to replace firewood and coke based cooking stoves. In pursuing with the agenda of financial inclusion, the Pradhan Mantri Jandhan Yojana has provided access to formal banking services to over 328 million persons.
- **The share of account ownership among rural adults has more than doubled from 33% in 2011 to 79% in 2017**, significantly bridging the rural-urban gap. Financial inclusion and the Aadhaar identification system has enabled India to make direct cash transfer of about US\$ 64 billion to citizens, thus improving governance and social protection.
- **These initiatives are transforming human capital in India** at rapid pace and very comprehensively touching upon the lives of millions of people living in rural and tribal areas.
- **The qualitative aspects of improved governance that have a strong correlation with human capital development cannot be and have not been captured by the way the HCI has been constructed**. The gap in data and methodology overlook the initiatives taken by a country and, in turn, portray an incomplete and pre-determined picture.
- **This infact makes the case for an adoption of the Index by more countries somewhat remote**. The hasty introduction of the HCI by the World Bank may deny the larger Human Capital Project its due despite the lofty objectives of the latter.

- **With the emphasis on country scores and rankings, the HCI could trivialize the importance of the Human Capital Project**, which may in turn overshadow the critical issues discussed in the World Development Report on the changing nature of work.
- **The Government of India, therefore, has decided to ignore the HCI and will continue to undertake its path breaking programme** for human capital development aiming to rapidly transforming quality and ease of life for all its children.

## Competition Commission of India Latest amendments:

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- **The provisions of the Competition Act, 2002** ("Act") relating to the regulation of combinations as well as the Combination Regulations have been in force with effect from 1st June 2011.
- **A key change brought about by the present amendments** is that the parties to combinations can now submit remedies voluntarily in response to the notice issued under Section 29(1) of the Act. If such remedies are considered sufficient to address the perceived competition harm, the combination can be approved. This amendment is expected to expedite disposal of such combination cases.
- **In another significant amendment**, where the notice is found to exhibit significant information gaps, parties to combinations are allowed to withdraw the notice and refile the same. With this amendment, the parties could address the deficiencies without facing an invalidation by CCI. Further, fee already paid in respect of such notice shall be adjusted against the fee payable in respect of new notice, if the refiling is done within a period of 3 months.
- **Apart from these, certain consequential** and other clarificatory changes have also been made in the Combination Regulations.
- **About Competition Commission Of India:** The Competition Commission of India (CCI) was established under the Competition Act, 2002 for the administration, implementation and enforcement of the Act, and was duly constituted in March 2009. Chairman and members are appointed by the central government.
- **The following are the objectives of the Commission:** To prevent practices having adverse effect on competition. To promote and sustain competition in markets. To protect the interests of consumers. To ensure freedom of trade.
- **Functions of the commission:** It is the duty of the Commission to eliminate practices having adverse effect on competition, promote and sustain competition, protect the interests of consumers and ensure freedom of trade in the markets of India.
- **The Commission** is also required to give opinion on competition issues on a reference received from a statutory authority established under any law and to undertake competition advocacy, create public awareness and impart training on competition issues.
- **The Competition Act:** The Competition Act, 2002, as amended by the Competition (Amendment) Act, 2007, prohibits anti-competitive agreements, abuse of dominant position by enterprises and regulates combinations (acquisition, acquiring of control and M&A), which causes or likely to cause an appreciable adverse effect on competition within India.

## National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET) Functions:

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- **NCVET will regulate** the functioning of entities engaged in vocational education and training, both long-term and short-term and establish minimum standards for the functioning of such entities. The primary functions of NCVET will include:
- **Recognition and regulation** of awarding bodies, assessment bodies and skill related information providers. Approval of qualifications developed by awarding bodies and Sector Skill Councils (SSCs).
- **Indirect regulation of vocational training** institutes through awarding bodies and assessment agencies. Research and information dissemination. Grievance redressal.
- **Composition:** The Council would be headed by a Chairperson and will have Executive and Non-Executive Members.



- **Benefits:** This institutional reform will lead to improvement in quality and market relevance of skill development programs lending credibility to vocational education and training encouraging greater private investment and employer participation in the skills space.
- **This in turn will** help achieve the twin objectives of enhancing aspirational value of vocational education and of increasing skilled manpower furthering the Prime Minister's agenda of making India the skill capital of the world.
- **Being a regulator** of India's skill ecosystem, NCVET will have a positive impact on each individual who is a part of vocational education and training in the country. The idea of skill-based education will be seen in a more inspirational manner which would further encourage students to apply for skill-based educational courses.
- **This is also expected** to facilitate the ease of doing business by providing a steady supply of skilled workforce to the industry and services.
- **Need:** A need was felt for an overarching regulatory authority which could tend to all aspects of short-term and long-term skill-based training. In view of this, NCVET is envisaged as an institution which will perform the regulatory functions so far vested in NCVT and NSDA. Regulatory functions currently being carried out by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) through the Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) will also be housed in the NCVET.
- **Facts for Prelims:** The National Skill Development Agency (NSDA) is an autonomous body under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. It coordinates and harmonizes the skill development efforts of the Indian government and the private sector to achieve the skilling targets of the 12th Plan document and beyond.
- **The NSDA's role** is also to anchor the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) and facilitate the setting up of professional certifying bodies in addition to the existing ones.

## International Court of Arbitration

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- **The workshop** is part of on-going efforts to institutionalize and streamline dispute resolution to make India a hub for doing business. It encourages and highlights the need for understanding and implementing arbitration across the spectrum of commercial contracts.
- **Efforts by Government of India** in this regard- Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, 2018:
- **The Lok Sabha has passed** the Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, 2018. It will amend the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996. The Act contains provisions to deal with domestic and international arbitration, and defines the law for conducting conciliation proceedings.
- **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.
- **Way ahead:** Moving towards a New India in 2022, ensuring legal reform is a key and critical priority. Complementing 'Make in India' vision with 'Resolve in India', strong alternate dispute resolution mechanisms are important levers in encouraging the Ease of Doing Business and Ease of Living in India.
- **Facts for Prelims:** The International Court of Arbitration is a branch of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and one of the world's leading institutions for providing international arbitration services. The International Court of Arbitration is known for resolving international commercial and business disputes, administering more than half of all arbitration disputes worldwide. The ICC seat is located in Paris.
- **The International Chamber** of Commerce is an international business organization with hundreds of thousands of member companies in over 130 countries spanning virtually every sector of private enterprise.

## Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)

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- **Benefits:** This Ro-Ro facility will cut down the circuitous road route of 423 KMs that trucks take from Neamati to Majuli Island via Tezpur Road Bridge, by limiting the distance to only 12.7 KM with the use of river route.
- **About Majuli Island:** Majuli is the first island district of the country. The island is formed by the Brahmaputra river in the south and the Kherkutia Xuti, an anabranch of the Brahmaputra, joined by the Subansiri River in the north. Majuli is the nerve centre of neo-Vaishnavite.
- **Majuli Island** was also declared the largest river island in the world, toppling Marajo in Brazil, by Guinness World Records in 2016.
- **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.

## 'Minimum river flows' for the Ganga

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- **Implications:** The new norms would require hydropower projects located along the river to modify their operations so as to ensure they are in compliance. Power projects that don't meet these norms as yet would be given three years to comply and "mini and micro projects" would be exempt from these requirements.
- **Flow specifications:** The upper stretches of the Ganga — from its origins in the glaciers and until Haridwar — would have to maintain: 20% of the monthly average flow of the preceding 10-days between November and March, which is the dry season; 25% of the average during the 'lean season' of October, April and May; and 30% of monthly average during the monsoon months of June-September.
- **For the main stem of the Ganga** — from Haridwar in Uttarakhand to Unnao, Uttar Pradesh — the notification specifies minimum flow at various barrages: Bhimgoda (Haridwar) must ensure a minimum of 36 cubic metres per second (cumecs) between October-May, and 57 cumecs in the monsoon; and the barrages at Bijnor, Narora and Kanpur must maintain a minimum of 24 cumecs in the non-monsoon months of October-May, and 48 cumecs during the monsoon months of June-September.
- **Designated Authority:** The Central Water Commission would be the designated authority to collect relevant data and submit flow monitoring-cum-compliance reports on a quarterly basis to the NMCG, according to the notification.
- **Background:** The notification is issued in the backdrop of ongoing 'fast unto death' by environmentalist and former IIT Kanpur faculty member GD Agarwal at Haridwar on issue of Ganga conservation. The 87-year-old Agrawal has been observing hunger strike since June 22 for pollution free and uninterrupted flow in the Ganga.
- **Facts for Prelims:** About CWC: Central Water Commission is a premier Technical Organization of India in the field of Water Resources and is presently functioning as an attached office of the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Government of India.
- **Functions:** The Commission is entrusted with the general responsibilities of initiating, coordinating and furthering in consultation of the State Governments concerned, schemes for control, conservation and utilization of water resources throughout the country, for purpose of Flood Control, Irrigation, Navigation, Drinking Water Supply and Water Power Development. It also undertakes the investigations, construction and execution of any such schemes as required.

## National Environment Survey (NES)

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- **About NES:** What it does? The NES will rank all districts on their environmental performance and document their best green practices based on various environmental parameters.
- **How?** The first NES will be carried out by Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) through Environmental Information System (ENVIS) and its hubs and resource partners across the country. It will be done through grid-based approach, using grids measuring 9×9 km to collect comprehensive data on various environmental parameters.
- **The parameters** include air, water, soil quality; solid, hazardous and e-waste; emission inventory; forest & wildlife; flora & fauna; wetlands, lakes, rivers and other water bodies. It will also assess carbon sequestration potential of all the districts across the country.

- **Significance:** The green data from this survey will provide important tool in hands of policy-makers for decision making at all levels – district, state and national. The survey will fully map and create emission inventory, provide valuation of ecosystem services and collate research in the field of environment. Initially the survey will be focusing on 55 districts and later will be scaled up to all districts in the country. The skilled manpower required for the survey will be provided from persons skilled and trained under MoEFCC's Green Skill Development Programme.

## Citizenship status of Gorkhas living in Assam

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- **What's the issue?** Recently, some cases of members of Gorkha community living in Assam were referred to the Foreigners Tribunals. Following this, a representation from the All Assam Gorkha Students' had approached the Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh to solve the issue.
- **Directions by the Centre:** In a communication to the Government of Assam, MHA has listed various provisions to obviate the difficulties faced by Gorkhas in the matter of Indian citizenship. These include:
  - **The members of the Gorkha community** who were Indian citizens at the time of commencement of the Constitution, or those who are Indian citizens by birth, or those who have acquired Indian citizenship by registration or naturalization in accordance with the provisions of The Citizenship Act, 1955 are not "foreigners" in terms of section 2 (a) of The Foreigners Act, 1946 as well as The Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939, therefore, such cases will not be referred to the Foreigners Tribunals.
  - **Any member of the Gorkha community** holding Nepalese nationality and who has arrived in India by land or air over the Nepal border even without a passport or visa and staying in India for any length of time shall not be treated as an illegal migrant if he/she is in possession of any of the identity documents namely the Nepalese Passport, Nepalese Citizenship Certificate, voter Identification card issued by the Election Commission of Nepal, limited validity photo-identity certificate issued by Nepalese Mission in India when deemed necessary and for children between age group of 10-18 years, photo ID issued by the principal of the school, if accompanied by parents having valid travel documents.
  - **No such document is required for children** below the age group of 10 years, the communication added citing provisions of India-Nepal Treaty signed in 1950.
  - **Exempt from Foreigner Tribunals:** The cases of members of Gorkha community falling within the parameters shall not be referred to the Foreigner Tribunals for opinion as to whether the person is a "foreigner" within the meaning of The Foreigners Act, 1946.
  - **Only those individuals**, who have come from specified territories i.e. territories included in Bangladesh immediately before commencement of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 1985, to the State of Assam, and are not Indian citizens, can be referred to the Foreigners tribunals.
- **What is National Register of Citizens (NRC)?** The NRC was introduced to identify illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and recognise the Indian citizens in Assam. It was first prepared in 1951 and Assam is the only state having this arrangement.

## Wing Loong II:

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- **What is it?** It is a high-end reconnaissance, strike and multi-role endurance unmanned aerial system, capable of being fitted with air-to-surface weapons. It is designed for both reconnaissance and strike missions.
- **Why in News?** China has agreed to sell 48 Wing Loong II high-end armed drones to Pakistan.



## ENERGISING INDIA Samarth Bharat-Sanvardhit Bharat (As on 10.05.2018) DEEN DAYAL UPADHYAYA GRAM JYOTI YOJANA: (DDUGJY)

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- **Scheme launched on 25th July 2015** - An amount of Rs 47,671.97 crore including subsidy of 43,004.60 crore has been released to States (as on 31, Dec, 2017)
- **Achievement:** Out of 597,464 census villages, 597,464 villages (100%) have been electrified

## GARV (Grameen Vidyutikaran) App

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- **GARV (Grameen Vidyutikaran) App** to help citizens track rural electrification under Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY)

## UJALA (Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All) · Launched on 5.1.2015 As on 07.05.2018:

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- - **More than 29.83 crore** LED bulbs distributed. - Energy saved per year- 38,743 mn Kwh
- - **Cost saving per year INR 15,497 Cr** - CO2 Reduction per year- 3,13,82,026t CO2
- - **Avoided Peak Demand-** 7,757 MW

## UDAY - Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana

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- **Launched on 20 November 2015** to obtain operational and financial turnaround of State owned Power Distribution Companies (DISCOMs).
- **UDAY web portal** ([www.uday.gov.in](http://www.uday.gov.in)) has been created as a transparent monitoring mechanism
- **Operational Indicators (As on 10th April 18):** - Feeder metering: 100% achieved in Urban areas and Rural areas - Rural Feeder audit: 100% conducted
- **Feeder Segregation: 62% achieved** - Bonds issued: Rs. 2,32,163 crore (86.29%; data from 16 States)
- **Tariff Revision done for 25 out of 27 States/UTs** - Distribution of LEDs Under UJALA: 100%

## SAUBHAGYA (Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana)

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- **Launched on 25 September 2017.** Aims to provide free electricity connections to four crore poor and middle-income families.
- **Total outlay of the project** - Rs. 16,320 crores, with Gross Budgetary Support (GBS) of Rs. 12,320 Crores.
- **Outlay for the rural households** - Rs. 14,025 crores, with GBS of Rs. 10,587.50 Crores.
- **Outlay for the urban households** - Rs. 2,295 crores, with GBS of Rs. 1,732.50 Crores. The Government of India will provide largely funds for the Scheme to all States/UTs.
- **The States and Union Territories** are required to complete the works of household electrification by 31 December 2018.
- **Household progress** Household progress (from 11 Oct, 2017 to 9th May 8, 2018) – Out of 3,61,47,572 households: (i) Households Electrified – 54,47,334 (ii) To be electrified – 3,07,00,238 (Source SAUBHAGYA dashboard)

## COAL Transparency and Accountability

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- **89 Coal Mines successfully allocated** - 31 through e-auction and 58 to Government Companies
- **SHAKTI: Transformational policy** for auction and allocation of coal linkages for affordable power, access to coal and accountability in allocation of coal
- **Reform to Transform: Commercial Coal Mining** · Approved in February 2018, the most ambitious reform in coal sector since its nationalisation in 1973 · To reduce import dependency of coal and energy security through assured coal supply · Higher investment will create direct and indirect employment
- **Shortage to Surplus** · Coal Production of Coal India increased from 46.2 crore tonnes in 2013-14 to 56.7 crore tonnes in 2017-18, an increase of ~23% from 2013-14
- **Surplus to Superior** · Third party sampling procedure to verify coal quality · UTTAM App launched for ensuring transparency and efficiency in the coal quality monitoring process · Now 100% crushed coal to power plants

## PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS GIVE IT UP CAMPAIGN · Launched on 27th March 2015

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- **'Give It Up' campaign**- About 1.04 crore consumers have given up subsidy (As on 31st December 2017).

## URJA GANGA

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- **To promote Gas based economy** and development of eastern India, 2655 km long Jagdishpur – Haldia&Bokaro – Dhamra Natural Gas Pipeline Project, popularly known as Pradhan MantriUrja Ganga, is being executed. Further Government has approved extension of this pipe line from Barauni to Guwahati of 750 Kilometer length which will connect North East Region with National Gas Grid. This Project is scheduled to be completed by 2021.
- **A capital grant** of Rs. 5,176 Crore (40 per cent of the estimated capital cost of Rs. 12,940 Crore) has been approved by the Government. Rupees 850 crores has been released to GAIL till 2017-18.
- **Will cater to energy** requirements of five states, covering 40 districts.
- **Will revive three large fertilizer plants** -Sindri, Gorakhpur & Barauni, enable industrialization of over 20 cities and development of city gas network in 7 cities, thereby generating large numbers of jobs.

## Global Hunger Index

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- **The GHI scores are based on a formula** that captures three dimensions of hunger—insufficient caloric intake, child undernutrition, and child mortality—using four component indicators:
- **UNDERNOURISHMENT: the share of the population** that is under-nourished, reflecting insufficient caloric intake
- **CHILD WASTING: the share of children** under the age of five who are wasted (low weight-for-height), reflecting acute undernutrition.
- **CHILD STUNTING: the share of children** under the age of five who are stunted (low height-for-age), reflecting chronic undernutrition.
- **CHILD MORTALITY: the mortality rate** of children under the age of five.
- **Performance of India:** India has been ranked at 103 out of 119 countries in the Global Hunger Index 2018, with hunger levels in the country categorized as “serious”. At least one in five Indian children under the age of five is wasted. The only country with a higher prevalence of child wasting is the war-torn nation of South Sudan.
- **India’s ranking has dropped** three places from last year, although the Index says its results are not accurately comparable from year to year and instead provides a few reference years for comparable data.
- **India has shown improvement** in three of the indicators over the comparable reference years. The percentage of undernourished people in the population has dropped from 18.2% in 2000 to 14.8% in 2018. The child mortality rate has halved from 9.2% to 4.3%, while child stunting has dropped from 54.2% to 38.4% over the same period.
- **Concerns:** The report terms hunger and forced migration for the severity worldwide. Globally, the level of hunger still falls into the “serious” category, despite improvement over the last two decades.
- **The Index projects** that at the current rate of progress, 50 countries will fail to reach the “low” hunger category by 2030. This puts the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal 2, which aims to end hunger by 2030, in jeopardy.
- **Way ahead:** Child wasting is high across South Asia, constituting a “critical public health emergency”. Wasting rates are highest for infants aged 0 to 5 months. Therefore, attention to birth outcomes and breastfeeding is important. Also, child wasting in the region is associated with a low maternal body mass index. Hence, there is need for a focus on the nutritional status of the mother during pregnancy.
- **Factors that could** reduce child stunting in South Asia include increased consumption of non-staple foods, access to sanitation, women’s education, access to safe water, gender equality, and national food availability.

## ‘National Policy on Electronics 2018’ Highlights of the policy:

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- **Aim:** To promote domestic manufacturing in entire value-chain of ESDM sector for spur economic development in the country. It also aims to double the target of mobile phone production from 500 million units in 2019 to 1 billion by 2025 to meet objective.
- **Target:** Create \$400 billion electronics manufacturing industry by 2025, with mobile phone devices segment accounting for three-fourths of production. It also includes targeted production of 1 billion mobile handsets by 2025, valued at \$190 billion (approximately Rs. 13 lakh crore) and also 600 million mobile handsets valued at \$110 billion (approximately Rs. 7 lakh crore) for export.
- **Incentives:** It replaces existing incentive schemes like Modified Special Incentive Package Scheme (M-SIPS), with schemes that are easier to implement such as interest subsidy and credit default guarantee etc. It also takes into consideration interest subsidy and credit default guarantee in order to encourage new units and in expansion of existing units in electronics manufacturing sector.
- **It also proposes** to push development of core competencies in all sub-sectors of electronics including electronic components and semiconductors, automotive electronics, defence electronics, industrial electronics, strategic electronics etc. It also proposes to set up 20 greenfield and three brownfield electronic manufacturing cluster projects have been sanctioned with project outlay of Rs 3,898 crore, including Rs 1,577 crore from Central Government.
- **Tax benefits:** It proposes suitable direct tax benefits, including inter-alia investment-linked deduction under Income Tax (IT) Act for electronics manufacturing sector, for setting up of new manufacturing unit or expansion of an existing unit.
- **The proposal** includes increasing tax benefits on expenditure incurred on R&D, enhancing rate of duty drawback for electronics sector, reimbursement of state levies and other levies for which input tax credit is not available, allowing duty free import of second-hand capital goods for electronics hardware manufacturing etc. It also proposes cess on select electronic goods resources to promote certain critical sub-sectors of electronic manufacturing such as semiconductor wafer fabrication and display fabrication units.

## Zika virus

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- **Following this**, the Health Ministry has taken precautionary measures: It has activated control room at National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) to undertake regular monitoring of the situation.
- **A Central team** also has been deputed to Jaipur. State government also has been supplied with IEC material prepared to create awareness about zika virus disease and its prevention strategies.
- **Extensive surveillance** and vector control measures are also being undertaken in area as per protocol by the state government.
- **What is Zika Virus?** Zika virus is similar to dengue fever, yellow fever and West Nile virus. Carried by infected Aedes aegypti mosquitos, Zika is largely transmitted through bites, but can also occur through intrauterine infection.
- **It was first identified in 1947 in Zika Forest, Uganda from where it derives its name.** If a woman is bitten by an infected mosquito and becomes infected, Zika can cross into the placenta and affect the fetus. While anyone can contract Zika, pregnant women are the most at risk due to the potential for fetal microcephaly and other neurologic abnormalities.
- **Symptoms include fever, headache, red eyes, skin rash, fatigue, muscle pain etc. Treatment and Prevention:** There is no specific treatment or vaccine currently available to treat Zika. The best form of prevention is protection against mosquito bites and clearing stagnant water where mosquitoes breed.

## World Bank's Human Capital Index

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- **Theme for the World Development Report (WDR) 2018: "The Changing Nature of Work".**
- **Human Capital Project (HCP):** As part of this report, the World Bank has launched a Human Capital Project (HCP). The HCP programme is claimed to be a program of advocacy, measurement, and analytical work to raise awareness and increase demand for interventions to build human capital.

- **There are three components of HCP-** a cross-country human capital measurement metric called the Human Capital Index (HCI), a programme of measurement and research to inform policy action, and a programme of support for country strategies to accelerate investment in human capital.
- **About Human Capital Index (HCI):** The HCI has been constructed for 157 countries. It claims to seek to measure the amount of human capital that a child born today can expect to attain by age 18. The HCI index values are contended to convey the productivity of the next generation of workers, compared to a benchmark of complete standard education and full health.
- **The HCI has three components:** Survival, as measured by under-5 mortality rates. Expected years of Quality-Adjusted School which combines information on the quantity and quality of education. Health environment using two proxies of (a) adult survival rates and (b) the rate of stunting for children under age 5.
- **HCI Vs. HDI:** UNDP constructs Human Development Index (HDI) for several years. The HCI uses survival rates and stunting rate instead of life expectancy as measure of health, and quality-adjusted learning instead of merely years of schooling as measure of education.
- **HCI also excludes per capita** income whereas the HDI uses it. Two significant changes from HDI are exclusion of income component and introduction of quality adjustment in learning. Exclusion of income element and introduction of quality adjustment makes HCI far less representative of Human Capital Development than the Index claims it to be.
- **Global performance:** The HCI measures the Index outcomes for each country as a fraction of maximum value of 1. As expected the advanced economies such as North America and Europe mostly have HCI value of above 0.75, while South Asia and Sub Saharan Africa have the lowest HCI among the regions.
- **Performance of India:** The HCI for India has been estimated at 0.44. The quality adjusted learning has been measured in case of India by using the data as old as 2009. Human Capital Index: A child born in India today will be only 44 per cent as productive when she grows up as she could be if she enjoyed complete education and full health.
- **The HCI in India** for females is marginally better than that for males. Further, there has been marked improvement in the HCI components in India over the last five years.
- **Probability of Survival to Age 5:** 96 out of 100 children born in India survive to age 5.
- **Expected Years of School:** In India, a child who starts school at age 4 can expect to complete 10.2 years of school by her 18th birthday.
- **Harmonized Test Scores:** Students in India score 355 on a scale where 625 represents advanced attainment and 300 represents minimum attainment. Learning-adjusted Years of School: Factoring in what children actually learn, expected years of school is only 5.8 years.
- **Adult Survival Rate:** Across India, 83 per cent of 15-year olds will survive until age 60.
- **Healthy Growth (Not Stunted Rate):** 62 out of 100 children are not stunted. 38 out of 100 children are stunted, and so at risk of cognitive and physical limitations that can last a lifetime.
- **Gender Differences:** In India, HCI for girls is marginally higher than for boys.
- **Why India has decided to ignore the HCI?** Discontent with the Methodology. Assessment lacking Global Standard. Gross negligence of important measures.

## Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution

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- **About the Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution:** The centre would be based in Maharashtra and it has selected drones, artificial intelligence and blockchain as the first three project areas.
- **It will work in collaboration** with the government on a national level to co-design new policy frameworks and protocols for emerging technology alongside leaders from business, academia, start-ups and international organizations.
- **NITI Aayog will coordinate** the partnership on behalf of the government and the work of the centre among multiple ministries. The WEF has also entered into partnerships with the Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh governments for the new initiative and more states would be roped in going forward.



- **Projects will be scaled** across India and globally. As part of the WEF's global network, the new centre in India will work closely with project teams in San Francisco, Tokyo and Beijing, where such Centres are already present.
- **What is Fourth Industrial Revolution?** As described by the founder and executive chairman of WEF, Klaus Schwab, "the fourth industrial revolution is a technological revolution that will fundamentally alter the way we live, work and relate to one another".
- **Background:** 1st industrial revolution: The first Industrial Revolution began in Britain in the last quarter of the 18th century with the mechanisation of the textile industry, harnessing of steam power, and birth of the modern factory.
- **2nd industrial revolution:** The Second Industrial Revolution, from the last third of the nineteenth century to the outbreak of World War I, was powered by developments in electricity, transportation, chemicals, steel, and mass production and consumption. Industrialization spread even further – to Japan after the Meiji Restoration and deep into Russia, which was booming at the outset of World War I. During this era, factories could produce countless numbers of identical products quickly and cheaply.
- **3rd industrial revolution:** The third industrial revolution, beginning c. 1970, was digital — and applied electronics and information technology to processes of production. Mass customisation and additive manufacturing — the so-called '3D printing' — are its key concepts, and its applications, yet to be imagined fully, are quite mind-boggling.
- **How different will be the 4th industrial revolution?** There are three reasons why today's transformations represent not merely a prolongation of the Third Industrial Revolution but rather the arrival of a Fourth and distinct one: velocity, scope, and systems impact.
- **The speed of current breakthroughs** has no historical precedent. When compared with previous industrial revolutions, the Fourth is evolving at an exponential rather than a linear pace.
- **Moreover**, it is disrupting almost every industry in every country. And the breadth and depth of these changes herald the transformation of entire systems of production, management, and governance.
- **The 4th revolution** will be characterized by the advent of cyber-physical systems which, while being reliant on the technologies and infrastructure of the third industrial revolution, represent entirely new ways in which technology becomes embedded within societies and even our human bodies. Examples include genome editing, new forms of machine intelligence, and breakthrough approaches to governance that rely on cryptographic methods such as blockchain.
- **Hence, it can be said** that the 4th industrial revolution is conceptualised as an upgrade on the third revolution and is marked by a fusion of technologies straddling the physical, digital and biological worlds.

## UNISDR report on climate related disasters

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- **India suffered a whopping \$79.5 billion** economic loss due to climate-related disasters in the last 20 years.
- **Highlights of the report:** The report highlights the impact of extreme weather events on the global economy. It states that the years between 1998 to 2017 have seen a dramatic rise of 151% in direct economic losses from climate-related disasters.
- **In terms of the impact of disasters** on the global economy between 1998 and 2017, affected countries reported direct losses of \$2.908 trillion, more than twice of what was lost in the previous two decades.
- **Extreme weather events now account** for 77 % of total economic losses of \$2.245 trillion. This represents a "dramatic rise" of 151% compared with losses reported between 1978 and 1997, which amounted to \$895 billion.
- **The greatest economic losses** have been experienced by the US at \$944.8 billion, followed by China at \$492.2 billion, Japan at \$376.3 billion, India at USD 79.5 billion and Puerto Rico at USD 71.7 billion.
- **Storms, floods and earthquakes place** three European countries in the top ten nations for economic losses: France, \$48.3 billion; Germany, \$57.9 billion and Italy \$56.6 billion. Thailand with \$52.4 billion and Mexico at \$46.5 billion complete the list.
- **In terms of occurrences**, climate-related disasters also dominate the picture, accounting for 91 per cent of all 7,255 major recorded events between 1998 and 2017. Floods (43.4 per cent) and storms (28.2 per cent) are the two most frequently occurring disasters.

- **During this period**, 1.3 million people lost their lives and 4.4 billion people were injured, rendered homeless, displaced or in need of emergency assistance. 563 earthquakes, including related tsunamis, accounted for 56 per cent of the total deaths or 747,234 lives lost.
- **Concerns:** The report concludes that climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of extreme weather events. The disasters will continue to be major impediments to sustainable development so long as the economic incentives to build and develop hazard-prone locations outweigh the perceived disaster risks.
- **Way ahead:** In the wake of the devastating earthquake and tsunami in Indonesia, it is clear that disasters have a steep human cost as millions of people are displaced every year, losing their homes and jobs because of extreme weather events and earthquakes. Therefore, a better understanding of the economic losses from extreme weather events can help to generate greater action on climate change and increased ambition on reducing greenhouse-gas emissions.
- **Measuring economic losses** can also motivate Governments to do more to achieve the targets of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, which seeks a substantial reduction in disaster losses by 2030. Besides, reducing the economic losses from disasters has the power to transform lives and contribute greatly to the eradication of poverty.
- **Integrating disaster risk** reduction into investment decisions is the most cost-effective way to reduce these risks; investing in disaster risk reduction is therefore a pre-condition for developing sustainable in a changing climate.

## UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR):

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- **It was established in 1999** as dedicated secretariat to facilitate implementation of International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR). It is an organisational unit of UN Secretariat and is led by the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction (SRSG). It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- **It is mandated by United Nations General Assembly** resolution (56/195) to serve as focal point in United Nations system for coordination of disaster reduction and to ensure synergies among disaster reduction activities of United Nations system and regional organizations and activities in socio-economic and humanitarian fields.

## IND-INDO CORPAT 2018:

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- **Online portal for grant** of Industrial Entrepreneurs' Memorandum and Industrial Licence
- **Department of Industrial Policy** and Promotion (DIPP) has developed a new online portal for facilitating filing of online applications for Industrial Entrepreneurs' Memorandum (IEM) and Industrial Licence (IL) under Arms Act as well as Industries (Development & Regulation) (ID&R) Act, 1951 at <https://services.dipp.gov.in>.
- **This portal will be available** for public with effect from 16th October 2018 for filing application and no applications shall be received through E-biz portal or in physical form either under ID&R Act or Arms Act 1959.
- **Applications for IEM and IL under ID&R Act, 1951** are currently accepted through E-biz portal whereas applications for manufacture of defence items under Arms Act are received physically.

## The Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries observes "World Egg Day"

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- **Minister of State Shri Parshottam Rupala** highlights the importance of eggs in human nutrition and increasing poultry farmers' income

- **The Department of Animal Husbandry**, Dairying and Fisheries, Government of India organized "World Egg Day" today. The Minister of State of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare Smt. Krishna Raj was the Chief Guest at the event and Minister of State of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare Shri Parshottam Rupala was the Chairman for the event. Farmers, members of poultry associations, research scholars, administrators and around 700 participants including poultry farmers attended the event. In the technical session, eminent speakers were invited to speak on various topics relating to importance of eggs in human nutrition which were followed by discussions & deliberations.
- **Shri Tarun Shridhar Secretary, Department of Animal Husbandry**, Dairying and Fisheries, addressing the gathering highlighted the importance of eggs in human nutrition and increasing poultry farmers' income. Minister of State of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare Shri Parshottam Rupala released a booklet on poultry entrepreneurs' success stories. Sanction orders were distributed to 5 entrepreneur beneficiaries under the Poultry Venture Capital Fund - Entrepreneurship Development and Employment Generation component of National Livestock Mission.
- **International Egg Commission has declared** the second Friday of October every year as World Egg Day. This is celebrated in countries all around the world, and is a unique opportunity to help raise awareness of the nutritional benefits of eggs.
- **India is the third highest producer of eggs** in the world, but the per capita availability is around 69 eggs per person per year. Egg is a wholesome, nutritious food with high nutrient density. It is a high value protein and provides a wide variety of other nutrients like vitamins, essential amino acids and minerals etc. crucial for growth and good health.

## Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs Notifies the Modified Land Pooling Policy

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- **The Policy Applicable** in the Urbanizable Areas of Urban Extensions in 95 Villages of Delhi.
- **The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** vide Notification S.O. 5220(E) dated 11.10.2018, has notified the modified land policy. The policy would be applicable in the urbanizable areas of urban extensions in 95 villages of Delhi. The policy replaces the earlier policy notified in the year 2013. It aims at developing smart and sustainable neighborhoods, sectors and zones, planned and executed as per the availability of water, power and other infrastructure.
- **The core of the policy is active role of private sector** and farmers also involved in assembling land and developing physical and social infrastructure. Owners or group of owners can pool land parcels for development as per prescribed norms. Land Parcels of any size can participate under the policy. However, the minimum land to be pooled is 2 hectares to ensure adequate return of land for development and form a Developer Entity. DDA will now play the role of a facilitator and the process of planning, pooling and development will be taken up by Developer Entities/ Consortiums.
- **For smooth planning and development of infrastructure**, integrated Sector-based planning approach shall be followed. A minimum of 70% contiguous land of the developable area within a sector, free of encumbrances is required to be pooled to make the sectors eligible for development under the Policy.
- **Considering the availability of resources and services** an FAR of 200 is allowed for group housing/residential use under the policy. DDA has estimated that it is expected to generate about 17 Lakh Dwelling units out of which around 5 lakh Dwelling units will be available under EWS category, to house about 76 lakh persons.
- **Differential land return in two categories as per the earlier policy has been replaced with uniform division of land on 60:40 basis** in the modified Policy. The Consortium will retain 60% of pooled land and hold the remaining 40% on behalf of DDA. Consortium can utilize 60% of pooled land for development of residential, commercial, public and semi-public facilities as per the policy and MPD-2021 provisions. The remaining 40% of the pooled land is to be surrendered, free of encumbrances, as and when required to DDA/service providing agencies to undertake developmental work. To keep pace with new forms of development, provision for achieving a vertical mix of uses (residential, commercial, public and semi-public) at building level is introduced. Additional Development Controls have been introduced to regulate building and infrastructure aspects of developments.
- **External Development Charges (EDC) shall be payable on entire area of pooled land in installments to cover the cost of providing city level infrastructure.**
- **In order to promote affordable and inclusive housing**, FAR of 15% over and above maximum permissible residential FAR has also been allowed for EWS/affordable housing.
- **A Single Window System is being created for implementation** of policy in DDA. All processes of receiving applications, verifications, grant of approvals and licenses, etc. shall be online and will be completed in a time bound manner. A two-stage Grievance Redressal Mechanism within DDA has been introduced for clear operationalization and implementation of the policy.



## Malaysian government decides to abolish capital punishment

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- **Why is it being abolished?** Activists contended that the death penalty is barbarous, unimaginably cruel and pointless, as it has never been proven to deter serious crimes. They say, once the sentence is scrapped, Malaysia will have the moral authority to fight for the lives of Malaysians facing death sentences abroad.
- **Background:** Capital punishment is currently mandatory in Malaysia for a wide range of crimes including murder, drug trafficking, treason, kidnapping, possession of firearms and acts of terror. The sentence is carried out in the nation by hanging, a legacy which has lived on since the British colonial rule.
- **Can capital punishment reduce crime rates?** Statistics have not been able to prove or disprove the efficacy of capital punishment as a deterrent. While the U.K. has seen an increase in murders since 1965 when capital punishment for murder was removed from the statute book, Canada has not seen any such impact since it abolished the death penalty in 1976. The underlying socio-economic conditions in a society that cause crimes seem to have as much of an impact on the increase or decrease of crimes as the law does.
- **Need of the hour:** It is not the severity of the punishment but the certainty and uniformity of it which will reduce crime. Even for capital punishment to work as a deterrent, the fairness of the investigation, the certainty of conviction, and the speed of the trial are vital. With the police and judicial independence being under a cloud, especially after the incidents in Kathua and Unnao, the deterrent value of capital punishment seems diminished unless police reforms and fast-track courts are a part of the package.

## UNHRC

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- **Background:** Besides India, the 18 new members were elected by absolute majority through a secret ballot. India had previously been elected to the Geneva-based Human Rights Council for the 2011-2014 and 2014-2017 terms.
- **About UNHRC:** The UN body was established in 2006 with the aim of promoting and protecting human rights around the globe, as well as investigating alleged human rights violations.
- **It is made up of 47 member states**, which are selected by the UN General Assembly on a staggered basis each year for three-year-long terms.
- **Members meet around three times a year** to debate human rights issues and pass non-binding resolutions and recommendations by majority vote.
- **The council also carries out the Universal Periodic Review** of all UN member states, which allows civil society groups to bring accusations of human rights violations in member states to the attention of the UN.

## 100k Genome Asia Project About 100k Genome Asia Project:

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- **A non-profit consortium** called GenomeAsia 100K has announced an ambitious plan to sequence 100,000 Asian individuals in hopes of accelerating precision medicine applications for Asian populations.

- **It will also leverage** on big data analytics and advances in data science and artificial intelligence. Participants from 12 South Asian countries and at least seven North and East Asian countries will be selected.
- **In the first phase**, the project will focus on creating phased reference genomes for all major Asian ethnic groups—representing a major step forward in understanding the population history and substructure of the region.
- **The sequencing of 100,000 individual genomes** will be paired with microbiome, clinical and phenotype information to allow deeper analysis of diseased and healthy individuals in the context of inferred local ancestries.
- **Significance:** With recent insights into the genome diversity of Asian ethnicities, it will become possible to understand the biology of disease in the currently understudied Asian populations that represent 40 percent of humankind.
- **Furthermore**, the unique genetic diversity prevalent in South, North and East Asia provides a valuable source of clinical insights that should enhance our understanding of several rare and inherited diseases, as well as chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

## Chandra X-Ray Observatory About Chandra X-Ray Observatory:

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- **The Chandra X-Ray Observatory** is a NASA telescope that looks at black holes, quasars, supernovas, and the like – all sources of high energy in the universe. It shows a side of the cosmos that is invisible to the human eye.
- **It was previously known** as the Advanced X-ray Astrophysics Facility (AXAF).
- **After more than a decade in service**, the observatory has helped scientists glimpse the universe in action. It has watched galaxies collide, observed a black hole with cosmic hurricane winds, and glimpsed a supernova turning itself inside out after an explosion.
- **The telescope is named after the Nobel Prize-winning** Indian-American astrophysicist Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar.

## International Day for Disaster Reduction 2018

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- **Theme: The theme of the 2018 International Day** for Disaster Reduction was 'Reducing Disaster Economic Losses'.
- **The 2018 theme continues as part of the "Sendai Seven" campaign**, centred on the seven targets of the Sendai Framework. This year focuses on Target C of the Sendai Framework, which is, 'reducing disaster economic losses in relation to global GDP by 2030'.
- **Background:** In 1989, the UN General Assembly through a resolution had designated the second Wednesday of October as International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction.
- **Later on December 21, 2009**, the Assembly adopted a new resolution on in which it designated 13 October as the date to commemorate the Day and it also changed the day's name to International Day for Disaster Reduction.
- **The main objective** of the observance is to raise awareness of how people are taking action to reduce their risk to disasters.
- **About Sendai Framework:** The "Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030" was adopted during the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Sendai, Japan in March, 2015.
- **Key features of the Sendai framework:** It is the first major agreement of the post-2015 development agenda, with seven targets and four priorities for action.
- **It was endorsed** by the UN General Assembly following the 2015 Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR).

- **The Framework** is for 15-year. It is a voluntary and non-binding agreement which recognizes that the State has the primary role to reduce disaster risk but that responsibility should be shared with other stakeholders including local government, the private sector and other stakeholders.
- **The new Framework** is the successor instrument to the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters.
- **Implementation:** The implementation of the Sendai Framework involves adopting integrated and inclusive institutional measures so as to work towards preventing vulnerability to disaster, increase preparedness for response and recovery and strengthen resilience.

## WORLD EGG DAY 2018- October 12th:

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- **World Egg Day** is celebrated on the second Friday in October. It was founded by the International Egg Commission (IEC) at a conference held in Vienna in 1996.
- **The idea behind the day** was raising awareness across the world, of the important place eggs have in human nutrition.
- **The IEC was formed in 1964** in order to give a global presence to egg producers and to promote and popularize egg consumption as part of a balanced diet.

## Alternative Nobel Literature Prize:

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- **Context: Guadeloupean author** Maryse Conde has won the New Academy Prize in Literature, an alternative award formed in protest to Nobel Literature Prize.
- **About New Academy Prize in Literature:** New Academy Prize in Literature was formed by New Academy consisting of more than 100 Swedish writers, artists and journalists in protest to denounce what its founders called bias, arrogance and sexism of Swedish Academy, which selects Nobel laureates. The New Academy Prize is accompanied by one million kronor, or around \$112,000.

## The world's most innovative universities- 2018:

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- **What is it?** The Reuters' top 100 World's Most Innovative University ranking recognises universities from across the world for their work in inventing new technologies, advance science and power new markets and industries. It was first published in 2015, since then there has been no mention of any Indian university in the list.
- **The 2018 edition:** For the fourth year running, Stanford University tops Reuters' ranking of the World's Most Innovative Universities. No Indian university is in the list.
- **In this top 100 list,** 48 universities are from North America find mention on the list, 23 Asian universities, 27 from Europe and 2 from the Middle East. The list has no mention of universities from South America, Africa and Oceania countries that include Australasia, Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia.
- **US dominated the list** with 46 universities among the top 100. This year Chinese varsities have increased their presence in this with total five universities. The key factor was this year's ranking was Geopolitical trends. Stanford University from US has topped this list for four consecutive years. The second and third spots have been held by US's Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Harvard University respectively.

## RESURGENT INDIA- SELF RELIANT INDIA

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- **Launched by PM** on 25th September 2014 - To make India the hub of manufacturing.
- **Partnership between** the Government & Industry has increased.
- **Since the launch of Make in India** initiative, India has emerged as one of the fastest growing major economies.
- **India ranked 3rd in the list** of top prospective host economies for 2016-18 in the UNCTAD World Investment Report (WIR).
- **India's ranking in World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index** has made giant leap of 30 positions – from 130 in 2016 to 100 in 2017: World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Report, 2018
- **India has established** itself as one of the top 10 inbound investment destinations in the world. One of the key reasons is India opening up its sectors for FDI.
- **India is one of the most open economies** of the world when it comes to sectors opened up for FDI
- **Due to its investment** friendly policies and opening up of FDI sectors, India for the first time received FDI of more than USD 50 billion in FY 2015-16; and the highest ever FDI inflow of USD 60.08 billion in 2016-17.
- **FDI has shown an extremely** positive trend since the launch of Make in India with growth of 56% on FDI inflow and 68% on FDI Equity inflows.
- **Highest FDI inflow** for the last 3 financial years (USD 160.7 billion) – 32% of cumulative FDI inflow over past 17 financial years (USD 484 billion)
- **FDI in India opened in key sectors such as** - Defence Manufacturing, Food Processing, Telecommunications, Agriculture, Pharmaceuticals, Civil Aviation, Space, Private Security Agencies, Railways, Insurance and Pensions, Medical Devices and Pensions.
- **100 percent FDI via the automatic route** in most of the sectors barring Defence Manufacturing sector (FDI upto 49 percent applicable via automatic route and 100 percent FDI allowed via Government Route)

## Indigenous Defence Production (Defence)

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- **Indigenous built ballistic missiles** Indigenous Defence technologies built by India

## Technology driven India (DoS) Mangalyaan Mission

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- **India's Mars Orbiter mission** has successfully completed more than three years in orbit and first two years data is released in the public domain for the use of researchers.

## India sends 104 Satellites in Space

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- **India sends 104 Satellites in Space**
- **A first time achievement** by any space faring nation
- **India scripted** a new chapter in the history of space exploration on 15th February, 2017 with the successful launch of a record number of 104 Satellites by ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle PSLV-C37 in a single mission.
- **Out of these**, 101 co-passenger satellites were international customer satellites from USA (96), Netherlands (1), Switzerland (1), Israel (1), Kazakhstan (1) and Saudi Arabia (1).

## National Supercomputing Mission NavIC

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- **The Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS)** with an operational name of NavIC ("sailor" or "navigator" which also stands for Navigation with Indian Constellation), is an indigenous regional Satellite Navigation System set up by India.
- **To provide accurate real-time** positioning and timing services over India and the region extending to 1,500 kilometres (930 mi) around India

## Communication Satellites:

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- **"South Asia Satellite"** – A gift from India to the South Asian countries, was successfully launched and dedicated to neighboring countries by Honorable Prime Minister of India. "South Asia Satellite" was successfully launched by GSLV-F09 on May 05, 2017. Ground segment utilisation is under progress by each country.
- **GSLV-MkIII** in its first developmental flight, successfully launched GSAT-19, India's high throughput communication satellite on June 05, 2017. This is a unique mission wherein indigenously developed cryogenic engine and stage was successfully demonstrated; in addition, the GSAT-19 with High through put communication capability was successfully placed in the orbit.
- **GSAT-17** communication satellite was launched on June 29, 2017 from Kourou using procured launch services from M/s Arianespace. It carries C-band & Ext C-band payloads, search & rescue payload, P/L for mobile communication, and Data Relay Transponder payload for providing continuity of services and in-orbit back up. GSAT-17 is being used for TV broadcasting, VSAT applications and MSS applications.





## Justice Verma Committee

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- **However, as early as 2013, the Justice J.S. Verma Committee**, in its landmark report on gender laws, had recommended setting up of an employment tribunal instead of an internal complaints committee (ICC) in sweeping changes to the Sexual Harassment at the Workplace Bill.
- **The panel was formed in the aftermath** of the December 16 Nirbhaya gangrape in 2012 and the ensuing nationwide protests, and submitted its report on January 23, 2013.
- **Background:** At that time of the submission of the report, the Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Bill had already been passed by the Lok Sabha and was awaiting the Rajya Sabha's nod. The Bill was passed unchanged by the Upper House a month later.
- **The Committee**, chaired by Justice Verma and including Justice Leila Seth and senior lawyer Gopal Subramaniam, termed the Sexual Harassment Bill "unsatisfactory" and said it did not reflect the spirit of the Vishakha guidelines — framed by the Supreme Court in 1997 to curb sexual harassment at the workplace.
- **Major recommendations made by the panel:** Punishment for Rape: The panel has not recommended the death penalty for rapists. It suggests that the punishment for rape should be rigorous imprisonment or RI for seven years to
- **Punishment for other sexual offences:** The panel recognised the need to curb all forms of sexual offences and recommended – Voyeurism be punished with upto seven years in jail; stalking or attempts to contact a person repeatedly through any means by up to three years. Acid attacks would be punished by up to seven years if imprisonment; trafficking will be punished with RI for seven to ten years.
- **Registering complaints and medical examination:** Every complaint of rape must be registered by the police and civil society should perform its duty to report any case of rape coming to its knowledge. Any officer, who fails to register a case of rape reported to him, or attempts to abort its investigation, commits an offence which shall be punishable as prescribed.
- **Marriages to be registered:**As a primary recommendation, all marriages in India (irrespective of the personal laws under which such marriages are solemnised) should mandatorily be registered in the presence of a magistrate. The magistrate will ensure that the marriage has been solemnised without any demand for dowry having been made and that it has taken place with the full and free consent of both partners.
- **Amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure:** The panel observed, "The manner in which the rights of women can be recognised can only be manifested when they have full access to justice and when the rule of law can be upheld in their favour." The proposed Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2012, should be modified, suggests the panel.
- **Bill of Rights for women:** A separate Bill of Rights for women that entitles a woman a life of dignity and security and will ensure that a woman shall have the right to have complete sexual autonomy including with respect to her relationships.
- **Review of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act:** The panel has observed that the "impunity of systematic sexual violence is being legitimised by the armed forces special powers act." It has said there is an imminent need to review the continuance of AFSPA in areas as soon as possible. It has also recommended posting special commissioners for women's safety in conflict areas.
- **Police reforms:** To inspire public confidence, the panel said, "police officers with reputations of outstanding ability and character must be placed at the higher levels of the police force." All existing appointments need to be reviewed to ensure that the police force has the requisite moral vision.
- **Role of the judiciary:** The judiciary has the primary responsibility of enforcing fundamental rights, through constitutional remedies. The judiciary can take suo motu cognizance of such issues being deeply concerned with them both in the Supreme Court and the High Court. An all India strategy to deal with this issue would be advisable. The Chief Justice of India could be approached to commence appropriate proceedings on the judicial side. The Chief Justice may consider making appropriate orders relating to the issue of missing children to curb the illegal trade of their trafficking etc.
- **Political Reforms:** The Justice Verma committee observed that reforms are needed to deal with criminalisation of politics. The panel has suggest that, in the event cognizance has been taken by a magistrate of an criminal offence, the candidate ought to be disqualified from participating in the electoral process. Any candidate who fails to disclose a charge should be disqualified subsequently. It suggested lawmakers facing criminal charges, who have already been elected to Parliament and state legislatures, should voluntarily vacate their seats.

## Data Localisation

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- **What's the issue?** The US companies want Donald Trump administration to put pressure on Indian authorities in a bid to seek relaxation on the RBI order of ensuring implementation of data localisation by 15 October. US companies have been lobbying with the Finance Ministry and the RBI over the issue.
- **Background:** U.S trade groups, representing companies such as Amazon, American Express and Microsoft, have opposed India's push to store data locally. That push comes amid rising global efforts to protect user data but is one that could hit planned investments by the firms in the Indian market, where the companies currently have limited data storage.
- **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.
- **Way ahead: Though these policy goals** are justifiable, a deeper analysis is required to determine the possible adverse spill-over effects on relevant stakeholders in case a faulty roadmap is adopted to achieve them.
- **Adequate attention** needs to be given to the interests of India's Information Technology Enabled Services (ITeS) and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industries, which are thriving on cross-border data flow.

## Sikkim wins FAO's Future Policy Award 2018

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- **Background:** Sikkim became the first fully organic state of India in 2016. Over the years around 75000 hectares of land in the state has been converted into certified organic farms following the guidelines as prescribed by National Programme for Organic Production.
- **Within 1.24 million tonnes** of organic production in the country around 80000 million is supplied by Sikkim alone.
- **Organic farming and its significance:** Organic cultivation doesn't involve the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers and thus helps to maintain a harmonious balance among the various complex ecosystems. Also it improves the quality of the soil which further improves the standards of the crops produced there. In the long term, organic farming leads in subsistence of agriculture, bio-diversity conservation and environmental protection. It will also help in building the soil health resulting in sustainable increased crop production.
- **The first steps towards an Organic State:** The first step towards making Sikkim an organic state was to recognise its natural factors that made it an ideal location for organic farming. These included its topography, the local use of traditional farming systems, the diversity of its climatic conditions and the fact the local soil is rich in organic carbon.
- **Then, in 2003, the 'Going for Organic Farming in Sikkim'** programme was prepared, along with the Sikkim State Organic Board, which prioritised the creation of new infrastructures and the mobilising of resources. From here, a seven-year plan was introduced to ban chemical fertilisers – gradually replacing them with organic plant nutrients.
- **The initiatives that propelled Sikkim's progress:** In 2004, the production of organic manure began, replacing other compost. Between 2004 and 2006, two seed testing and processing units were introduced, as well as soil testing laboratories for studying soil health.
- **The Centre of Excellence for Organic Farming was created.** Starting in 2008, several organic certification programmes took place, with much of the land being certified by organisations such as the Department of Science and Technology and the Food Security and Agriculture Department.
- **In 2010, a bio fertiliser production unit** was put together, and the National Level Workshop was introduced in Sikkim's villages. Later that year, a plan for the adoption of fully organic farming was put into place, known as the Sikkim Organic Mission.
- **Maintaining the state for the future-** To ensure Sikkim stays green in the long term, there are a few additional initiatives that have been introduced to the state:
  - **Firstly, animals** are no longer allowed to graze in the reserve forest in order to conserve natural resources. There are still plenty of other spaces for animals to graze, while protecting this land. Plastic bags have been banned, encouraging shoppers to take their own bags to the store to cut down on plastic manufacturing and waste. The State Green Mission was launched, which includes planting fruit bearing trees, plantation drives and more.
  - **Future Policy Gold Award:** The prizes, nicknamed the "Oscar for best policies", honour exceptional policies adopted by political leaders who have decided to act, no longer accepting widespread hunger, poverty or environmental degradation. Previously it was honoured for policies combating desertification, violence against women and girls, nuclear weapons and pollution of the oceans.

## MSME & BUDGET 2018-19

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- **Big step for MSMEs** in Budget 2018-19 to boost employment and economic growth. · Budget allocation up from Rs. 6481.96 crore in 2017-18 to Rs.6552.61 crore in 2018-19.
- **Allocation under Prime Minister Employment Generation** Program has gone up from Rs. 1024.49 crore in 2017-18 to Rs. 1,800 crore in 2018-19. · Corporate tax rate slashed to 25% for companies with annual turnover up to Rs 250 crore from Rs 50 crore.
- **The Credit Guarantee Fund** has already been enhanced from Rs.2500 crore to Rs. 7500 crore. · Three- fold increase in the allocation for setting up of the state-of-the-art Technology Centres from Rs.150 crore in 2017-18 to Rs. 550 crore in 2018-19.
- **Allocation under Khadi Grant** enhanced significantly from Rs.265.10 crore in 17-18 to Rs. 415 crore in BE 2018-19. · New scheme of Solar Charkha Mission proposed to further employment generation.
- **Allocation for National SC/ST Hub** has been raised from Rs. 60 crore to Rs 93.96 crore with a view to giving an impetus to the growth of the business of SC/ST entrepreneurs

## BUDGETARY REFORMS

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- **Budget guided by mission to strengthen** agriculture, rural development, health, education, employment, MSME and infrastructure sectors
- **MSP for all unannounced kharif crops** raised to one and half times of their production cost like majority of rabi crops: Institutional Farm Credit raised to 11 lakh crore in 2018-19 from 8.5 lakh crore in 2014-15.
- **Two New Funds of Rs10,000 crore** announced for Fisheries and Animal Husbandry sectors; Re-structured National Bamboo Mission gets Rs.1290 crore. Loans to Women Self Help Groups will increase to Rs. 75,000 crore in 2019 from 42,500 crore last year
- **Outlay on health, education and social protection** enhanced to the tune of Rs.1.38 lakh crore in Budget 18-19. Tribal students to get Ekalavya Residential School in each tribal block by 2022. Welfare fund for SCs gets a boost.
- **World's largest Health Protection Scheme** covering over 10 crore poor and vulnerable families launched with a family limit upto 5 lakh rupees for secondary and tertiary treatment. Fiscal Deficit pegged at 3.5 %, projected at 3.3 % for 2018-19. Rs. 5.97 lakh crore allocation for infrastructure
- **Disinvestment crossed target of Rs 72,500 crore to reach Rs 1,00,000 crore** · **Hike in deduction limit for health insurance premium** and/ or medical expenditure from Rs. 30,000 to Rs. 50,000 under section 80D.
- **Tax on Long Term Capital Gains exceeding Rs. 1 lakh** at the rate of 10 percent, without allowing any indexation benefit. Plan and Non Plan distinction of expenditure was done away w.e.f. 2017-18 – a holistic view of expenditure would be taken and due focus would be on Capital and Revenue expenditure.
- **The Railway Budget was integrated with union Budget** w.e.f. 2017-18, ending a very old colonial practice of keeping Railways on a higher pedestal.
- **The date of presentation of Union Budget** was advanced to Feb 1 w.e.f. 2017-18: This would help ministries and state governments to plan and spend their full budget from April 1st of this year, without being constrained by vote on account.
- **Medium Term Expenditure Framework(MTEF)** statement was restructured this fiscal to give projected expenditures(revenue and capital) for each demand for next two FYs. This is the harbinger of multi-year budgeting. This would be further improved in future years to have detailed statement of Budgeted Estimates for each demand on multiyear basis.
- **Outcome Budget: linking financial** outlays against each scheme to their targeted outcome, was provided for the first time as one single document for Gol for 2017-18.
- **Small Savings and other administered** interest rates were aligned to the prevailing interest regime in the country. This will help the country transition into a low-interest rate regime. This would benefit the people and business.
- **Gross Budgetary Allocations** of ministries prioritised to check too thin spread of resources.
- **We have been able to achieve** the implementation of real cooperative federalism by accepting 14th FC's recommendations involving devolution of 42% resources to the states.

## Public Debt and Cash Management Debt and Cash Management

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- **Public Debt Management Cell (PDMC)** created to interface among domestic borrowing, small savings management, external borrowing and contingent liabilities.
- **Detailed modalities on the cash management** in Central Government were issued in August 2016 to achieve the objectives of reducing idle cash balances, and match inflows and out flows in a manner to avoid idle cash building or curtailing expenditure. In process expenditure would be well spread over the year.
- **Switching and buyback operations** were carried out as strategic debt management tool to achieve better fiscal management. The aim is to minimise idle cash and also minimise interest payments(almost 25% OF Gol expenditure)
- **Small saving and other administered** interest rates were aligned to the prevailing interest regime in the country.

- **States were excluded from the obligatory** borrowing of NSSF.
- **The window of giving indiscriminate loans** to CPSU or write-off dues without assessing merit stopped.
- **Comprehensive CPSU Dividend policy** finalised in consultation with DIPAM.
- **Senior Citizen Welfare Fund** has been created and operationalized.
- **NSI organization** has been restructured to increase its operational effectiveness and save on administrative costs.

## World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Ranking

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- **World Bank Doing Business (DB) Report, 20-18 has ranked India at 100 among 190 countries.** India has leapt 30 ranks over its rank of 130 in Doing Business Report 2017.
- **DB report acknowledges India as one of the top improver.** With a jump of 30 ranks India secured the highest jump in rank of any country in DB Report, 2018. India is the only country in South Asia and BRICS economies to feature among most improved economies of the DB Report this year.
- **India has improved its rank in 6 out of 10 indicators** and has moved closer to international best practices (Distance to Frontier score).
- **India is guided by Mantra of "Reform, Perform, Transform"** of the Prime Minister. A strong leadership has provided the political will to carry out comprehensive and complex reforms, supported by a bureaucracy committed to perform.

## Capital for Public Sector Banks (PSBs)

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- **Recapitalization of PSBs by infusion of Rs. 2,11,000 crore** over the next two years to support credit growth and job creation
- **Budgetary provisions of Rs. 18,139 crore + Recapitalisation Bonds** worth Rs. 1,35,000 crore, and the balance through raising of capital by banks from the market while diluting government equity.
- **Parliament approved on 5th January, 2018** the proposal to issue Rs 80,000 Crore worth of Recap Bonds as Third batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants for 2017-18 for capitalizing the state-run banks.

## Setting up of an Alternative Mechanism

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- **Cabinet gave in-principle** approval for Public Sector Banks to amalgamate through an Alternative Mechanism (AM) on 23rd August 2017.
- **It would facilitate consolidation** among the Nationalized Banks to create strong and competitive banks.
- **Alternative Mechanism Committee** for Consolidation of the Public Sector Banks (PSBs) set up on 1st Nov 2017.

## Merger of SBI Associates with State Bank of India (SBI)

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- **Merger of (i) State Bank of Bikaner & Jaipur (SBBJ)**, (ii) State Bank of Hyderabad (SBH), (iii) State Bank of Mysore (SBM), (iv) State Bank of Patiala (SBP) and (v) State Bank of Travancore (SBT) with State Bank of India (SBI) effective from 1st April, 2017.
- **It will lead to better management** of high-value credit exposures common to SBI and Associate Banks, with more focused oversight and control over cash flows of large corporate borrowing entities as NPAs.
- **Customers of Subsidiary Banks** will have access to SBI's global network which spans across all the time zones.

## Gold Monetization Scheme, Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme, and India Gold Coins

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- **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.
- **Revision of guidelines of Sovereign Gold Bonds** Scheme approved by Cabinet on 26th July 2017.

## ShramevJayate

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- **Minimum wages increased by 42% in both agricultural and non-agricultural sectors.** • Seventh Pay Commission: Benefited 50 lakh employees and 35 lakh pensioners.
- **Gratuity ceiling limit** enhanced from Rs 10 lakhs to Rs 20 lakhs for Government employees with effect from 1 January, 2016. Applicable also for employees in the private and public sector in view of the inflation and general increase in wages • The Payment of Bonus (Amendment) Act, 2015: Enhances the eligibility limit for payment of bonus from Rs. 10,000 per month to Rs.21,000 per month.
- **Contribution of 8.33% of Employee Provident Fund (EPF) for new employees by the Government for three years.**
- **Contribution of 12% to EPF for new employees for three years by the Government in sectors employing large number of people like textile, leather and footwear.**
- **Shram Suvidha portal: Unique Labour identification number allocated, online registration of establishments.**
- **Unique Labour Identification number allocated to give permanent identity to labourers. EPFO issued 12 crores UAN out of which 3 crore have been activated using Mobile services. (As on 31.3.2017). No. of KYC details digitally approved are 7.05 crore.** • **Amendments in Labour laws** to exempt certain industries from returns, labour registration, inspection etc.
- **Amendment in factories Act, 1948** to allow for: Night shift for women, increased hours of overtime
- **Apprentices Act, 1961** modified to ensure more apprentices. Stipend linked to minimum wages.
- **Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act 2017:** To increase paid maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks. For the first time, a provision for 12 weeks paid maternity leave has been made for both Commissioning and Adopting mothers. The act has approximately benefited 18 Lakh women employees.

- **Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016:** Complete ban on the employment of a child below 14 years and prohibition on employment of adolescent (14-18) in hazardous occupation & profession.
- **Implementation of Revamped Bonded Labour Rehabilitation Scheme (Revised- 17.05.2016):** Financial Assistance increased to Rs. 1 Lakh per adult beneficiary, Rs. 2 Lakh for special category (Children and women), Rs. 3 lakhs for special categories.
- **The Payment of Wages (Amendment) Act 2017:** Employers to pay the wages to employees in cash or by cheque or by crediting the wages in bank accounts of the employee.
- **Digital Jeevan Praman Patra** introduced for convenience of Pensioners • Housing Subsidy to Beedi, Cine and Non-Coal Mine Workers increased from Rs. 40,000/- to Rs. 1,50,000. •
- **Reforms in BIS laws** to improve the standards of goods and services. •
- **National Career Service Project:** bringing employers, trainers and unemployed on single platform, till February 28, 2018, 4.10 Crore jobseekers, 14.87 lakh employers registered and 8.43 lakhs vacancies mobilized, 3151 career counsellors registered on the NCS portal.

## Shri RK Singh launches award scheme under 'Saubhagya'

- **More than 1.65 Crore households connected since the launch of Saubhagya** Shri RK Singh, Minister of State (IC) for Power and New & Renewable Energy announced an award scheme under Saubhagya here today to felicitate the DISCOMs / Power Department of the States and their employees for achieving 100 per cent household electrification in their area of operations. Awards would be provided for achieving 100 per cent household electrification at DISCOM/Power Department level of the States. Eight States which have already achieved more than 99 per cent household electrification prior to launch of Saubhagya (Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Punjab and Tamil Nadu), are ineligible for participation under the award scheme. All the remaining States and their Discoms are eligible for the award.
- **Award will be given in three categories, (i) DISCOMs / Power Departments of Special Category States** (which includes seven North Eastern States, Sikkim, J&K and Uttarakhand); (ii) DISCOMs / Power Departments of other than Special Category States (which includes Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Telengana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal) having more than 5 Lakh un-electrified households and (iii) DISCOMs / Power Departments of other than Special Category States having less than 5 Lakh un-electrified households.
- **There will be two quantum of award in each of the three categories. Under first quantum of award,** the 1st DISCOM / Power Department to achieve 100 per cent household electrification by 30th November 2018 would be provided cash award of Rs. 50 Lakh. The Principal Secretary (Energy/Power) of the State will devise the mechanism to distribute this cash prize amongst employees of the concerned DISCOM / Power Department. From this amount, Rs. 20 Lakh will be given to the division of DISCOM/Power Department with highest number of households electrified. Certificate of appreciation would also be given to five officials of concerned DISCOM/Power Department of any level from managing Director to Lineman to be nominated by the Principal Secretary (Energy / Power) of the States. The second quantum of award includes cash award of Rs. 100 Crore as grant to the concerned DISCOM/Power Department to be spent in distribution infrastructure development in their area of operation. The Principal Secretary (Energy/Power) of the State will decide work to be executed from this amount.
- **Other DISCOM/Power Department of the States to achieve 100% household electrification** by 31st December 2018 would also be provided certificate of appreciation for five officials of any level from managing Director to Lineman to be nominated by the Principal Secretary (Energy / Power) of the States.
- **Government of India launched 'Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana'** (Saubhagya) in Sept. 2017 to achieve the goal of universal household electrification in the country by 31st March 2019. The scheme envisages to provide last mile connectivity and electricity connections to all remaining households in rural as well as urban areas. With the support of State Power Departments and DISCOMs more than 1.65 Crore households have already been connected since the launch of scheme. All the States have shown confidence in achievement of the target much before the targeted timelines.



## BepiColombo

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- **The four-tonne spacecraft** will be launched into orbit by Esa's rocket Ariane 5 from the European spaceport at Kourou, French Guiana, on 20 October.
- **It will then make a 5.2bn mile** (8.5bn km) journey over seven years to reach its destination by 2025.
- **About BepiColombo:** BepiColombo is a joint mission between ESA and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), executed under ESA leadership.
- **The mission comprises two spacecraft:** the Mercury Planetary Orbiter (MPO) and the Mercury Magnetospheric Orbiter (MMO). The MPO will study the surface and internal composition of the planet, and the MMO will study Mercury's magnetosphere, that is, the region of space around the planet that is influenced by its magnetic field.
- **Need: The scientific interest** in going to Mercury lies in the valuable information that such a mission can provide to enhance our understanding of the planet itself as well as the formation of our Solar System; information which cannot be obtained with observations made from Earth.
- **Challenges: Europe's space scientists** have identified the mission as one of the most challenging long-term planetary projects, because Mercury's proximity to the Sun makes it difficult for a spacecraft to reach the planet and to survive in the harsh environment found there.
- **Significance: Mercury is a poorly explored planet.** So far, only two spacecraft have visited the planet: NASA's Mariner 10, which flew past three times in 1974–5 and returned the first close-up images of the planet, and NASA's MESSENGER spacecraft, which performed three flybys (two in 2008 and one in 2009) before entering orbit around the planet in March 2011. The information obtained when BepiColombo arrives will throw light not only on the composition and history of Mercury, but also on the history and formation of the inner planets in general, including Earth.

## Delhi To Enforce Emergency Plan

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- **Key facts:** An AQI in the range of 0-50 is considered 'good', 51-100 'satisfactory', 101-200 'moderate', 201-300 'poor', 301-400 'very poor' and 401-500 'severe'. The Supreme Court has empowered the Environment Pollution Control Authority (EPCA) to take various measures to tackle pollution. Under the order, the EPCA has mandated enforcement of Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) in the city.
- **Graded Action plan:** An emergency protocol under the Graded Response Action Plan which involve a series of measures on basis of the Air Quality Index are set to be implemented. When the mark is between moderate and poor category, the burning of garbage will be stopped and pollution control regulations will be enforced.
- **If the air quality drops** to very poor category, additional measures will be taken including stopping of diesel gensets, enhancing parking fees and increasing frequency of metro and buses. For severe and very severe category air quality, additional measures would include frequent mechanised cleaning of roads and sprinkling of water, stopping entry of trucks, stopping construction activities and appointment of task force to take decisions like shutting of schools.
- **Background:** Over the last several years, air quality in Delhi begins sliding from October-November as winds slow down and temperature drops. Pollutants like sand particles and smoke get trapped, turning the national capital virtually into a gas chamber.
- **The particulate matter** in Delhi's air went off charts last year, pushing up the level of pollutants to 10 times more than Chinese capital Beijing, known as the world's most polluted city.
- **About Environment Pollution Control Authority (EPCA):** EPCA was constituted with the objective of 'protecting and improving' the quality of the environment and 'controlling environmental pollution' in the National Capital Region. The EPCA also assists the apex court in various environment-related matters in the region.



- **EPCA is Supreme Court** mandated body tasked with taking various measures to tackle air pollution in the National Capital Region. It was notified in 1998 by Environment Ministry under Environment Protection Act, 1986.
- **Composition:** Besides the chairman, the EPCA has 14 members, some of whom are the environment secretary of the National Capital Territory of Delhi (NCT), chairperson of the New Delhi Municipal Council, transport commissioner of the NCT, the commissioners of various municipal corporations of Delhi and professors at IIT Delhi and Jawaharlal Nehru University.
- **Functions:** To protect and improve quality of environment and prevent and control environmental pollution in National Capital Region. To enforce Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) in NCR as per the pollution levels.

## Mount Etna:

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- **Why in News?** The southeast flank of Mount Etna in Sicily is sliding towards the sea at a rate of several centimetres a year.
- **What's causing this?** It's likely caused by gravity pulling on Etna's lower underwater slopes, far from the summit.
- **Concerns:** The kind of stress that this movement creates inside volcanoes can cause devastating landslides. This means Etna is more susceptible to catastrophic collapse than had previously been realised.
- **About Mt. Etna:** Mount Etna is the largest active volcano in Europe and one of the world's most frequently erupting volcanoes. It is also the volcano with the longest record of continuous eruption. Located near the east coast of the island of Sicily in Italy, Mount Etna is 10,900 feet (3,329 meters) tall with a base circumference of about 93 miles (150 kilometers).
- **The mountain's** largest feature is the Valle del Bove (Valley of the Ox), a large horseshoe-shaped caldera on the eastern slope. Etna sits on the active fault between the African plate and the Ionian microplate, which are both being subducted together beneath the Eurasian plate.
- **In June 2013**, it was added to the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Due to its history of recent activity and nearby population, Mount Etna has been designated a Decade Volcano by the United Nations.

## Einstein Prize:

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- **Context:** Indian American Professor Abhay Ashtekar has been conferred with prestigious Einstein Prize for numerous and seminal contributions to general relativity, including the theory of black holes, canonical quantum gravity, and quantum cosmology.
- **About Einstein Prize:** The Einstein Prize is a biennial prize awarded by the American Physical Society. The recipients are chosen for their outstanding accomplishments in the field of gravitational physics.
- **The prize carries an award of \$10,000.** The prize is special because is it the highest honour bestowed by APS in the broad area of gravitational science.
- **The first Einstein prize** was awarded jointly to Peter Bergmann and John Wheeler, who introduced general relativity to American universities by creating research groups.

## DEMONETISATION

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- **A historic announcement** by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 8th November 2016 - Demonetization of high denomination currency notes of Rs.500 and Rs.1000. Aims to curb the menace of black money, corruption, circulation of fake Indian currency notes, terrorist financing and money laundering.
- **In the longer term** to make India's GDP bigger, cleaner and real with greater formalization of economy.
- **Gave a major fillip** to the digital transactions and unearthing of substantial amounts of black money.
- **50 lakh new bank accounts** opened to enable cashless transaction of wages. 29.17% increase in number of new return filers added from FY 2015-16 to FY 2016-17 and 25.1% from FY 16-17 to FY17-18
- **25% increase in number** of e>Returns filed from FY 2016-17 to FY 2017-18. 81% increase from FY 2013-14 to FY 2017-18
- **Value of IMPS transactions** increased almost 59% from August 2016 to August 2017.
- **2.26 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.
- **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.
- **20,500 returns selected for scrutiny.** About 3 lakh notices issued to non-filers having large cash deposit. 2.1 Crore returns filed out of 3 lakh notices.

## DIGITAL PAYMENTS PROMOTION

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- **Mera mobile, mera bank, mera batua:** BHIM app (based on United Payments Interface (UPI), to promote cashless economy brings payments to people's phones.
- **BHIM Phone Mein, Cash Jeb Mein** Campaign to promote use of digital payments.
- **Over 2.64 crore BHIM App downloads** (As on 31st March,2018) Transaction worth Rs. 4,972.69 crore (As on 18th April,2018) 89 Banks Live on BHIM

## GST: ONE NATION, ONE TAX; ONE NATION-ONE MARKET

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- **Rolled out on the midnight** of 30th June 2017 & came into effect from 1st July 2017.
- **GST is administered by both Centre** and States and has subsumed several state and central indirect taxes such as State VAT, Central Excise Duty, Purchase Tax and Entry Tax.
- **4 Tax Rates- 5%, 12%, 18%, 28%** · Reduction in overall taxes on goods, estimated to be 25-30%
- **National Anti-Profitteering Authority** set up so that benefits of lower prices of goods and services are passed on to the consumers.
- **Led to ease of doing business** and increase in tax revenue collections.

## Benefits of GST

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- **Decrease in Inflation due to** Reduction in Cascading effect of Taxes Overall Reduction in Prices Ease of Doing Business due to
- **Common National Market** Benefits to Small Taxpayers India has moved up from 130 to 100th rank in the Ease of Doing Business ranking of the World Bank. Decrease in "Black" Transactions due to
- **Self-Regulating on line Tax System** Non-Intrusive and transparent Tax System More informed consumer due to
- **Simplified Tax Regime** Reduction in Multiplicity of Taxes Poorer States to gain due to
- **GST being a destination based Tax** Consumer States to benefit the most Abolition of CST Make in India boost due to
- **Exports to be Zero Rated** Protection of Domestic Industry – IGST



## DEMONETISATION TO CURB BLACK MONEY

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- **In the longer term** to make India's GDP bigger, cleaner and real with greater formalization of economy. Gave a major fillip to the digital transactions and unearthing of substantial amounts of black money. 50 lakh new bank accounts opened to enable cashless transaction of wages. 29.17% increase in number of new returns added from FY 2015-16 to FY 2016-17 and 25.1% from FY 16-17 to FY17-18
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## Formation of SIT & curbing of black money

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- **Special Investigation Team, SIT** set up at the First Cabinet Meeting after the NDA Government assumed office ENABLING LEGISLATIONS & AMENDMENTS Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) – Mauritius, Cyprus, Singapore Bankruptcy Act: ü The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 : Considered as the biggest Economic reforms next only to GST
- **ü The law is for insolvency resolution** of corporate persons, partnership firms and individuals in a time bound manner ü The law promotes entrepreneurship, availability of credit, and balances the interests of all stakeholders
- **Benami Property Act** · Reshaping of the laws relating to Benami property · Blocking a major avenue for generation and holding of back money in the form of Benami property, especially in real estate
- **Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) and Imposition of Tax Act 2015** · Agreement on Real Time Information with Switzerland · Income Disclosure Scheme 2016
- **Amendments in Whistle Blower's Protection Act 2011** · Action for Amendments in the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988. · New Direct Tax Code also initiated to re-write the Income Tax Act.

## CRACKDOWN ON SHELL COMPANIES

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## COAL BLOCK ALLOCATION

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- **Transparency and Accountability** • 89 Coal Mines successfully allocated - 31 through e-auction and 58 to Government Companies • SHAKTI: Transformational policy for auction and allocation of coal linkages for affordable power, access to coal and accountability in allocation of coal
- **Coal Sector- Governance** • COAL PROJECTS MONITORING PORTAL (E-CPMP) • MINING SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM (MSS) • ONLINE COAL CLEARANCES SYSTEM • CONTRACT LABOUR PAYMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
- **DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer)** · Applicable across the country. · As on 09/05/2018:
  - **ü 435 such schemes** have been identified where cash is directly transferred to bank account of the beneficiaries. ü Total DBT (cumulative) Rs. 3,89,596 crore has been transferred to the beneficiaries. ü DBT and other governance reforms have led to Estimated savings/ benefits of Rs. 82,985 Cr

## GEM (GOVERNMENT E MARKET PLACE) FOR PROCUREMENT OF GOODS AND SERVICES

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- **Launched on 9th August 2016** · Allows Government departments and agencies to make direct purchases of up to Rs. 50,000
- **To reduce corruption** and increase transparency in Government procurement · 19,497 Buyers organisation listed on GeM Platform (as on 6th April, 2018) · 80,243 Sellers and service providers enrolled (as on 6th April, 2018)

## MINIMUM GOVERNMENT – MAXIMUM GOVERNANCE

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- **Bio metric attendance system:** Improved work culture in Government offices with emphasis on punctuality
- **Abolition of interviews:** For recruitment to non-gazetted posts in the Central government as part of efforts to put an end to corruption in jobs.
- **Self-certification:** Joining of direct recruits in Central Government has been allowed on the basis of self-certification of antecedents and police verification can be done later within 6 months.
- **Online Help** - Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS): Online public grievance redressal mechanisms for effective and timely redress / settlement of citizens' grievances.

- **Rapid Resolution of Public Grievances** - 1. Grievance Analysis Study in respect of top 20 Ministries/Departments receiving maximum number of grievances was conducted. Grievance prone areas were identified, root cause analysis was done after which systemic reforms were suggested. Ministries/Departments such as Railways, CDBT etc. have implemented these reforms resulting in reduction of grievances.
- **2. On an average**, more than 90% of pending grievances are resolved every week.
- **3. A Certificate of Appreciation** on quarterly basis is being given to Ministries/Departments for recognizing outstanding Public Grievance Redressal by them. 24 such certificates have since been awarded.
- **PM Awards for Excellence in Public Administration**- The scope of PM's awards has been greatly expanded by bringing in wide competition in all districts; including exemplary implementation of priority programmes, innovations by aspirational districts and others as well as those by officials of Government of India at various levels (AS/JS, Director/DS). Discussions on implementation of priority programmes and issues for effective governance were conducted involving officials of line Ministries and experts during the 2 day celebration of Civil Service Day.
- **National Conference on e-Governance** National Conference on e-governance involving all State Governments and UT Administrations for sensitization and cross learning of e-governance ideas impacting the Citizens and Citizens Centric Service Delivery is being conducted on a yearly basis. National e-Governance Awards have been given to Central Ministries/Departments, States and District level innovation in e-governance.
- **MyGov**: A 'Good Governance' initiative providing opportunity for citizens and well-wishers from across the world to share their views on key issues directly with the PM.
- **PRAGATI(Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation)**: Meetings every 4th Wednesday by the Prime Minister to assess and track the implementation of projects

## Special courts to try politicians

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- **Background**: The apex court had on December 14 last year ordered special courts to be established to fast track the long-pending trials against MPs and MLAs in a bid to weed out corruption and criminality in politics. So far, the centre has set up 12 special courts to deal such cases.
- **Need for special courts**: There are several high-profile cases against leaders from almost all political parties—regional and national where investigations have dragged on for years and those facing trial have evaded prison.
- **Implications of this move**: The Centre's decision could be a setback to politicians who, despite facing serious charges, have remained members of Parliament and state assemblies due to time consumed in trials. Such cases will fall in the purview of special courts and their fate will be decided expeditiously.
- **Way ahead**: The court has given 11 States/Union Territories (UTs) and the High Courts of Karnataka, Kerala and Tripura a deadline of four weeks to comply with its September 12 order.
- **The order has called on States/UTs** to furnish data to determine the number of special courts to be set up across the country to exclusively try accused legislators.
- **The States/UTs** which have not complied with the September 12 order are Goa, Himachal Pradesh Meghalaya, Mizoram, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu and Lakshadweep.

## Strategic Petroleum Reserves

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- **It is seeking \$1.5 billion** of investments from global oil producers and traders to build additional emergency crude reserves that will act as a buffer against volatility in oil prices. The plan is to build underground caverns that can hold a combined 6.5 million tons of crude at two locations.

- **Background:** India has built 5.33 million tons of underground reserves in three locations, including Padur, under an earlier phase that can meet 9.5 days of the country's oil needs. The government purchased crude to fill the caverns in Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh and half of another facility in Mangalore in Karnataka, while leasing out the other half to Abu Dhabi National Oil Co.
- **Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves**, which was formed in 2006, is scouting investors to fill the caverns at Padur. It will hold roadshows in New Delhi, Singapore and London this month to draw investors for the new caverns as well as filling the Padur facility.
- **About SPR programme:** To ensure energy security, the Government of India had decided to set up 5 million metric tons (MMT) of strategic crude oil storages at three locations namely, Visakhapatnam, Mangalore and Padur (near Udupi). These strategic storages would be in addition to the existing storages of crude oil and petroleum products with the oil companies and would serve as a cushion during any external supply disruptions.
- **In the 2017-18 budget**, it was announced that two more such caverns will be set up Chandikhole in Jajpur district of Odisha and Bikaner in Rajasthan as part of the second phase. The construction of the Strategic Crude Oil Storage facilities is being managed by Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited (ISPRL), a Special Purpose Vehicle, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Oil Industry Development Board (OIDB) under the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.
- **Need for strategic oil reserves:** In 1990, as the Gulf war engulfed West Asia, India was in the throes of a major energy crisis. By all accounts India's oil reserves at the time were adequate for only three days. While India managed to avert the crisis then, the threat of energy disruption continues to present a real danger even today.
- **It is unlikely** that India's energy needs will dramatically move away from fossil fuels in the near future. Over 80% of these fuels come from imports, a majority of which is sourced from West Asia. This is a major strategic risk and poses a massive financial drain for an embattled economy and its growing current account deficit.
- **To address energy insecurity**, the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government mooted the concept of strategic petroleum reserves in 1998. Today, with India consuming upwards of four million barrels of crude every day (January 2015 figures), the case for creating such reserves grows stronger.

## Youth road safety learners licence programme

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- **About the youth road safety learners licence programme:** It is a PPP initiative to be run in collaboration with Diageo India and the Institute of Road Traffic Education (IRTE). It attempts to bring a formal and structured training program for the young, first-time drivers as they apply for learner's license.
- **It covers varied aspects** of responsible driving including defensive driving, ill effects of driving under the influence of alcohol, speeding and wearing of helmets spread over two days. In the first year, the programme will cover 20 universities with a total of 400 programmes across the country.
- **Significance:** The programme is a part of the Union Government's efforts to emphasise on the importance of road safety, as recent times have seen an alarming rise in road fatalities especially among the youth.
- **The programme** will help the government achieve its target of reducing road accidents by 50 percent by 2020. It will help improve road safety awareness amongst the young adults by inculcating behavioural change and creating awareness about responsible driving habits.
- **Background:** India accounts for 12.5 per cent (over 1.45 lakh fatalities a year) of global road accidents, with one road accident occurring every four minutes. Alarming, 72 per cent victims involved in such road mishaps are between the age groups of 15-44 years with speeding, reckless and drunk driving being the top reason accounting for 1.5 per cent of road traffic accidents and 4.6 per cent of fatalities.
- **Some of the major factors** resulting in high road accidents include rash driving, drunken driving and the lack of adequate safety measures like not wearing helmets.

## 'Saubhagya' scheme

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- **About the award scheme:** Eligibility: Awards would be provided for achieving 100% household electrification at DISCOM/Power Department level of the States. Eight States which have already achieved more than 99% household electrification prior to launch of Saubhagya (Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Punjab and Tamil Nadu), are ineligible for participation under the award scheme. All the remaining States and their Discoms are eligible for the award.

- **Award will be given in three categories,** (i) DISCOMs / Power Departments of Special Category States (which includes seven North Eastern States, Sikkim, J&K and Uttarakhand); (ii) DISCOMs / Power Departments of other than Special Category States (which includes Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Telengana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal) having more than 5 Lakh un-electrified households and (iii) DISCOMs / Power Departments of other than Special Category States having less than 5 Lakh un-electrified households.
- **About SAUBHAGYA Scheme:** Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana – ‘Saubhagya’ was launched in September, 2017. Under Saubhagya free electricity connections to all households (both APL and poor families) in rural areas and poor families in urban areas will be provided.
- **Rural Electrification Corporation (REC)** has been designated as nodal agency for the Saubhagya scheme. The scheme aims to achieve universal household electrification in all parts of the country at a cost of Rs 16,320 crore, including Gross Budgetary Support of Rs 12,320 crore from the government.
- **All DISCOMs including Private Sector DISCOMs,** State Power Departments and RE Cooperative Societies shall be eligible for financial assistance under the scheme in line with DDUGJY.
- **The prospective beneficiary households** for free electricity connections under the scheme would be identified using SECC 2011 data. However, un-electrified households not covered under SECC data would also be provided electricity connections under the scheme on payment of Rs. 500 which shall be recovered by DISCOMs in 10 instalments through electricity bill.
- **Scope of the Scheme:** Providing last mile connectivity and electricity connections to all un-electrified households in rural areas. Providing Solar Photovoltaic (SPV) based standalone system for un-electrified households located in remote and inaccessible villages / habitations, where grid extension is not feasible or cost effective.
- **Providing last mile connectivity and electricity** connections to all remaining economically poor un-electrified households in urban areas. Non-poor urban households are excluded from this scheme. There are around 4 Crore un-electrified households in the country and they are targeted for providing electricity connections by December 2018.

## IMF Quotas

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- **What are IMF Quotas?** The IMF is a quota-based institution. Quotas are the building blocks of the IMF's financial and governance structure. An individual member country's quota broadly reflects its relative position in the world economy. Quotas are denominated in Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), the IMF's unit of account.
- **Multiple roles of quotas:** Resource Contributions: Quotas determine the maximum amount of financial resources a member is obliged to provide to the IMF.
- **Voting Power:** Quotas are a key determinant of the voting power in IMF decisions. Votes comprise one vote per SDR100,000 of quota plus basic votes (same for all members).
- **Access to Financing:** The maximum amount of financing a member can obtain from the IMF under normal access is based on its quota. SDR Allocations: Quotas determine a member's share in a general allocation of SDRs.
- **Quota reviews:** The IMF's Board of Governors conducts general quota reviews at regular intervals (no more than five years). Any changes in quotas must be approved by an 85% majority of the total voting power, and a member's own quota cannot be changed without its consent. Two main issues addressed in a general quota review are the size of an overall quota increase and the distribution of the increase among the members.
- **About IMF:** The IMF, along with the World Bank, was conceived in 1944 at a conference in Bretton Woods, in the US state of New Hampshire. It aims to preserve economic stability and to tackle – or ideally prevent – financial crises. Over time, its focus has switched to the developing world. The IMF is funded by a charge – known as a “quota” – paid by member nations – based on a country's wealth. The IMF also acts as a lender of last resort, disbursing its foreign exchange reserves for short periods to any member in difficulties.

## Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

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- **Outcomes:** Trade ministers of 16-member RCEP bloc, including India and China, have urged all participating countries to continue to exert all efforts for early conclusion of the negotiations.



- **The meeting assumes** significance as there is a tremendous pressure on India to conclude the negotiations as early as possible despite the fact that several issues pertaining to goods and services have yet to be agreed upon by the 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.

## Air Quality Early Warning System

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- **About the Air Quality Early Warning System:** The System is designed to predict extreme air pollution events and give alerts to take necessary steps as per Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) of the Government of India. The air pollution system has been developed jointly by the scientists at Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune, India Meteorological Department and National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF).
- **The system will help in proactively forewarning,** 3-4 days in advance, any large scale air pollution events which may occur over the Delhi region.
- **The warning system** consists of a) real time observations of air quality over Delhi region and details about natural aerosols like dust (from dust storms) and particulate matter using different satellite data sets b) Predictions of air pollutants from two different air quality prediction systems based on state-of-the-art atmospheric chemistry transport models and c) Warning Messages and Alerts and Bulletins.

## Chief Minister's Urban Leaders Fellowship Programme:

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- **Context:** Delhi government has launched Chief Minister's Urban Leaders Fellowship Programme that seeks to attract young leaders across the country to work with it on addressing some of the most pressing urban challenges.
- **About Chief Minister's Urban Leaders Fellowship Programme:** It aims to provide unique opportunity to young leaders across India to work within the Delhi government to address some of the most pressing urban challenges in India. It also seeks to attract youth who are passionate about public service and are willing to work for two years.
- **Fellows selected under this programme** will be assigned to work with ministers or senior officials across various departments Delhi government such as health, education, water, transport, art and culture. They will be paid remuneration of Rs 1.25 lakh per month and Rs 75,000 per month to Associate Fellows.

## Lhotshampa:

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- **Who are they?** They are a heterogeneous Bhutanese people of Nepalese descent. The Lhotshampa people are native to southern Bhutan. The Nepali-speaking Lhotshampa were branded as immigrants and stripped of citizenship rights when the then-king introduced a "One Nation, One People" policy in 1985. The edict made following the customs of the Buddhist majority mandatory, including wearing their traditional dress, and speaking Nepali was banned.
- **Why in News?** Bhutan is holding elections this week. But the Lhotshampa people, brutally driven out of the small kingdom in the 1990s, won't be voting. Bhutan still describes the Lhotshampa as immigrants, justifying its nationalistic laws as essential for cultural identity and political stability.



## SURGICAL STRIKES

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- **In order to protect Indian borders** and put an end to cross border terrorism Indian Army conducted surgical strikes in PoK on 29th September, 2016
- **Surgical Strikes reflect zero tolerance for terror** · On 18th September 2016, terrorists struck at an army camp at Uri and martyred our Jawans. In response: · Indian Army conducted surgical strikes at several terrorist launch pads to pre-empt infiltration by terrorists.
- **Significant** casualties were caused to terrorists and those providing support to them. · Indian army struck a blow to terrorist infrastructure and designs. · International community reacted overwhelmingly in India's favour.

## ACQUISITION OF RAFALE AIRCRAFT FOR BETTER SECURITY

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- **Signing of an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA)** with the Government of France for purchase of 36 Rafale Aircraft on September 23, 2016.
- **The delivery of the aircraft** would commence in September 2019 and would be completed by April 2022.
- **Rafale is an omni-role fighter**, which will provide long range capability to engage targets in depth and will provide a strong weapons and systems capability and edge over our adversaries.

## AGNI- V

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- **Long Range Surface to Surface Ballistic Missile** successfully flight tested for its full range on 26th Dec 2016 and on 18th January 2018. · The test flight further boosted India's indigenous defence capabilities and deterrence levels.
- **Additional DRDO Achievements · LCA Tejas: DRDO designed & developed Light Combat Aircraft Tejas** was inducted into the 45th squadron of Indian Air Force on 1st July 2016.
- **Airborne Early Warning and Control System (AEW&C)** was inducted into the Indian Air Force on 14th Feb 2017. It provides early warning of airborne and sea surface targets and hostile emissions.
- **155mm x 52 calibre Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System (ATAGS)** with higher firing range of 45 km has completed the trials in September 2017 and is being inducted into the Indian Army.
- **Maareech:** Advanced torpedo Defence System was inducted into Indian Navy on 14th Nov 2015. It is state-of-the-art indigenous system for torpedo detection and counter measures to protect Naval platforms against torpedo attack.

- **Varunastra Torpedo** was inducted into Indian Navy in 29th June 2016. It is a Ship launched Heavy Weight Anti Submarine Torpedo, capable of targeting quiet and stealthy submarines both in deep and littoral waters.
- **Nag Anti-Tank Missile: The 3rd generation, Lock-on-before-Launch (LOBL)**, fire-and-forget, anti-tank guided missile is being inducted into the Indian Army.
- **ASTRA: Beyond Visual Range (BVR) Missile**, capable of engaging targets decisively and integrated with SU-30 combat aircraft is on the verge of induction in the defence forces. Missile was successfully launched from Su-30 MKI fighter jet in two development trials on 20th May 2015.
- **Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE) UAV 'Rustom-II'** a multi-mission UAV is being developed with an endurance of 24 hours to carry out the intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) roles for the Armed Forces. Successfully flights tested were completed in Feb 2018.
- **Sonars-Abhay/Humsa UG/NACS/AIDSS:** Abhay- compact hull mounted sonar for shallow water crafts, upgrade for the Humsa Sonar System (Humsa UG), Near-field Acoustic Characterization system (NACS), and Advanced Indigenous Distress Sonar system for Submarines (AIDSS) developed indigenously has been handed over to the Indian Navy.
- **Weapon Locating Radar- SWATHI** was inducted into Indian Army in 02nd Mar 2017. Using advanced signal processing techniques for detecting and tracking, this Radar automatically and accurately locates hostile artillery, mortars, shells and rockets firing and its locations.
- **USHUS-II Submarine Sonar** was handed over to the Indian Navy on 24th Mar 2017. USHUS-II comprising multiple sensors and capable of detecting, localizing and tracking multiple surface and subsurface targets has been inducted into the Indian Navy.

## Major National S&T Infrastructure Developed

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- **R&D Centre, Changla, Leh:** A Guinness Book Record, DRDO has established the world's highest terrestrial R&D centre at 17,664 feet above MSL for research and development work in frontal areas of food and agriculture and biomedical sciences for the well being of soldiers deployed in high-altitude, cold-desert areas.
- **Orange (Open Range RCS and Antenna Measurement Facility)** It will help India in designing new weapon systems with extremely low cross section as well for carrying out vulnerability studies on existing platforms.
- **ATR:** Aeronautical Test Range, one of its kind of National importance has been established at Chitradurga, Karnataka. The range was dedicated to the Nation by Hon'ble RM on 28th May 2017.
- **Seakeeping and Maneuvering Basin (SMB)** facility has been established at Vizag which puts India among the few nations in the world having the capability to undertake comprehensive hydrodynamic Model testing of naval platforms and weapon systems. The inauguration and dedication of SMB to the nation by Hon'ble RM was held on 14th Nov 2015.

## INDIA'S FIRE POWER :

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- **INS Kalvari- Prime Minister** dedicated the naval submarine INS Kalvari to the nation on 14th December 2017.
- **Brahmos, the World's** fastest supersonic cruise missile created history in November 2017 when it was successfully flight-tested for the first time from the Indian Air Force's frontline fighter aircraft Sukhoi-30MKI.
- **Akash Weapon System:** Supersonic short range Surface to Air Missile was inducted into Indian Air Force on 10th July 2015 and Indian Army in 05th May 2015. It is capable of simultaneously engaging multiple targets with the range of 3-30 Km.
- **Successful test flight of 'NIRBHAY'** - India's first indigenously designed and developed Long Range Sub-Sonic Cruise Missile which can be deployed from multiple platforms.

- **Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD)** System of DRDO successfully scored a direct hit on incoming missile on 28th December 2017 from Dr Abdul Kalam Island off the coast of Odisha.
- **Special campaign** to celebrate Armed Forces Flag Day to honour the martyrs and the men in uniform.
- **The first ever Indian circumnavigation** of the globe by all-women crew on Indian Navy sailing vessel INSV Tarini. The Tarini was flagged off on 10th September 2017. The expedition titled 'Navika Sagar Parikarma' is in consensus with the national policy to give women power to attain their full potential.
- **The first ever tri-services** exercise INDRA between India and Russia was conducted at Vladivostok in Russia in October, 2017.
- **Exercise Yudh Abhyas -2017:** A two week long joint Indo-US army military exercise commence on 16th September 2017 at Joint Base Lewis, Washington DC.

## BORDER SECURITY

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- **Greater push for border security through expeditious creation of border infrastructure and developmental works:** · 2014-18 Rs 6209 crore sanctioned for border infrastructure projects. · 246 km Fence along the border. · 566 km Border Roads constructed. · 785 km floodlights installed.

## ENEMY PROPERTY ACT

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- **The Enemy Property Act, 1968** has been amended by the Enemy Property (Amendment and Validation) Act, 2017 on 14.03.2017.
- **This is a landmark** achievement by which Central Government has successfully brought assets (both movable and immovable) worth more than one lakh crores of rupees from the clutches of enemy, enemy subject and enemy firms.
- **By virtue of this Act**, the Central Government has got right, title & interest in enemy properties by barring Law of succession.

## ONE RANK ONE PENSION

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- **Status Report on implementation** of OROP benefits as on 30.09.2017 and compiled up to 31.03.2018: - As per the reports received from the CGDA, a sum of Rs. 4,172.64 crores, Rs. 2,397.22 crores, Rs. 2,322.68 crores and Rs.1,895.69 crores have been paid towards first, second, third and fourth instalment of OROP arrears respectively.
- **20,60,220 Ex-Servicemen/family pensioners**, 15,94,311 Ex-Servicemen, 15,76,254 Ex-Servicemen and 13,50,319 Ex-Servicemen are the beneficiaries during these four instalments respectively. - Total arrears paid Rs. 10,788.23 crores.

## SALUTE TO FREEDOM FIGHTERS

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- **SALUTE TO FREEDOM FIGHTERS** · Swatantrata Sainik Samman Pension of the freedom fighters and their dependents has been enhanced w.e.f. 15.08.2016 and now they will get Dearness Relief like pensioners as in the existing Dearness Relief system based on All India Consumer Price Index for Industrial workers
- **ISLAND DEVELOPMENT** · 1382 islands along the coast of the country have been identified for their holistic development. In the first phase, 26 islands, 16 in Andaman & Nicobar and 10 in Lakshadweep, have been taken up for the development by the Island Development Agency (IDA)
- **LESS VIOLENCE IN LWE AREAS Major Achievements (Security Related Issues)** (a) Reduction in Violence (Comparative Analysis of LWE Scenario: 2010 to 2013 & 2014 to 2017). · Incidents of violence reduced by 36.6% from 6524 to 4136. · Surrenders by LWE cadres increased by 143% from 1387 to 3373.
- **(b) Geographical Spread shrinks** · States reporting violence reduced from 10 (2013) to 9 (2017). · Districts reporting violence reduced from 76 (2013) to 58 (2017). · Police Stations reporting violence decreased from 330 (2013) to 291 (2017).

## Raising of CRPF Bastariya Battalion.

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- **In order to enhance local representation** in security forces and also to provide employment to local youth, a Bastariya Battalion has been raised. 743 Scheduled Tribes candidates from four most affected LWE districts of Chhattisgarh, Bijapur, Dantewada, Narayanpur and Sukma have been recruited. This figure includes 242 female candidates. All recruitment formalities have been completed and training is in progress.
- **Assistance under Security Related Expenditure (SRE) Scheme.** Under this scheme assistance is provided to 106 LWE affected districts for operational needs of Security Forces. Rs 1120.73 crore was disbursed over last four financial years (2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17 & 2017-18) as compared to Rs 875 Cr in the preceding four financial years (2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14).
- **Fortified Police Stations Scheme.** The scheme was approved in 2010. 386 Police Stations out of 400 have been completed. 320 Police Stations constructed in the last four years.
- **RESCUING LOST CHILDREN:** Ministry of Home affairs with the help of State Governments conducted Operation Muskan in July 2015 and Operation Smile in January 2016
- **Mobile APP 'HIMMAT'** Launched in January 2015 by Delhi police to instill confidence in women, to help women in distress and to ensure their safety in Delhi. This application helps women to raise SOS alert in case of any emergency and the same gets reported along with victim/caller location in real time at Police Control Room and the nearest PCR Van and local police can be rushed to the spot.

## POCSO Act

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- **The Ministry of Law**, after examining the provisions of POCSO Act vis-à-vis provisions of CrPC, has advised that there appears no period of limitation mentioned in Section 19 in regard to reporting of the offences under the POCSO Act, 2012.
- **Legal provisions:** Section 19 of the POCSO Act, which deals with sexual crimes against children, lays down the procedure for reporting a crime but doesn't specify a time limit or statute of limitation for reporting it.
- **Whereas the CrPC** lays down different time-limits for crimes which carry a punishment of up to three years, there is no time bar for crimes that would attract a jail term of more than three years.
- **Significance:** This is an important step for survivors of child abuse, who may try to file a complaint as adults but are turned away at police stations.
- **The development assumes significance** after considering the fact that on many occasions children are unable to report crimes that they suffered as the perpetrator in many cases happens to be from the family itself or any other known person. Several cases have been reported where the victims have grown up and understood the crime.

- **POCSO Act:** The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO Act) 2012 was formulated in order to effectively address sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children.
- **Role of police:** The Act casts the police in the role of child protectors during the investigative process. Thus, the police personnel receiving a report of sexual abuse of a child are given the responsibility of making urgent arrangements for the care and protection of the child, such as obtaining emergency medical treatment for the child and placing the child in a shelter home, and bringing the matter in front of the CWC, should the need arise.
- **Safeguards:** The Act further makes provisions for avoiding the re-victimisation of the child at the hands of the judicial system. It provides for special courts that conduct the trial in-camera and without revealing the identity of the child, in a manner that is as child-friendly as possible. Hence, the child may have a parent or other trusted person present at the time of testifying and can call for assistance from an interpreter, special educator, or other professional while giving evidence. Above all, the Act stipulates that a case of child sexual abuse must be disposed of within one year from the date the offence is reported.
- **Mandatory reporting:** The Act also provides for mandatory reporting of sexual offences. This casts a legal duty upon a person who has knowledge that a child has been sexually abused to report the offence; if he fails to do so, he may be punished with six months' imprisonment and/ or a fine.
- **Definitions:** The Act defines a child as any person below eighteen years of age. It defines different forms of sexual abuse, including penetrative and non-penetrative assault, as well as sexual harassment and pornography. It deems a sexual assault to be "aggravated" under certain circumstances, such as when the abused child is mentally ill or when the abuse is committed by a person in a position of trust or authority like a family member, police officer, teacher, or doctor.

## Swasth Bharat Yatra national campaign

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- **About Swasth Bharat Yatra national campaign:** Under it, pan-India cycle rally is being organized to create consumer awareness about eating safe and nutritious food for becoming healthy and combating food adulteration.
- **In this rally,** about 7,500 cyclists are expected to participate in over 18,000 km travelling across six tracks through almost every state and UT over 100 days to propagate a powerful message 'Eat Right India'. This campaign will not only mobilise masses but also create large pool of local community to sustain this movement.
- **World Food Day:** World Food Day is celebrated on October 16 every year to raise awareness on the issues of poverty and hunger. World Food Day was established by Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in November 1979 and since then the day is celebrated worldwide by many organisations that are concerned with food security.
- **2018 theme:** "OUR ACTIONS ARE OUR FUTURE. A #ZERO HUNGER WORLD BY 2030 IS POSSIBLE".
- **About FAO:** The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations is a specialised agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger. Serving both developed and developing countries, FAO acts as a neutral forum where all nations meet as equals to negotiate agreements and debate policy.

## Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP)

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- **The hi-tech Central Warehouse** would facilitate seamless distribution of Jan Aushadhi generic medicines to all PMBJP Kendra functional across the country.
- **About PMBJP:** 'Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana' is a campaign launched by the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Govt. Of India, to provide quality medicines at affordable prices to the masses through special kendra's known as Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Kendra.
- **Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Kendra (PMBJK)** have been set up to provide generic drugs, which are available at lesser prices but are equivalent in quality and efficacy as expensive branded drugs.
- **Bureau of Pharma PSUs of India (BPPI)** is the implementing agency of PMBJP. BPPI (Bureau of Pharma Public Sector Undertakings of India) has been established under the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Govt. of India, with the support of all the CPSUs.

- **What is a Generic Medicine?** Generic medicines are unbranded medicines which are equally safe and having the same efficacy as that of branded medicines in terms of their therapeutic value. The prices of generic medicines are much cheaper than their branded equivalent.

## Ask Disha

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- **About Ask Disha:** The chatbot is special computer programme designed to simulate conversation with users, especially over the internet. The first-of-its-kind initiative by IRCTC is aimed at facilitating accessibility by answering users' queries pertaining to various services offered to railway passengers.
- **The chatbot** is voice enabled and will support several regional languages in the near future. It will offer greatly improved and intuitive customer support by answering customer queries pertaining to all aspects of the services that IRCTC provides.
- **The essential features** of AskDisha include ability to quickly answer to customer queries, ability to provide round-the-clock customer support, ability to multitask, zero waiting time for query to get answered and overall ability to provide customer with stress-free experience and overall customer satisfaction.

## #Self4Society app

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- **About #Self4Society App:** This platform will help to create better synergies among so many CSR and other initiatives and lead to a much better outcome of the efforts of professionals.
- **Companies** have observed that a spirit of service and volunteering improves employee satisfaction and reduces employee attrition. The app will have incentives, gamification and intra- and inter-company competitions, and social networking.
- **The volunteer time** for the government's flagship programmes such as Swachh Bharat is expected to increase.

## Unified payments interface (UPI)

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- **As per the guidelines**, where PPIs are issued in the form of wallets, interoperability across PPIs shall be enabled through UPI and Where PPIs are issued in the form of cards, the cards shall be affiliated to the authorised card networks.
- **Significance:** The guidelines, while boosting the e-wallet segment, would also ensure the safety and accuracy of the transfer of money by individuals from one wallet to another.
- **The interoperability** amongst PPIs is going to significantly boost the e-wallet industry. The guidelines would also ensure that not only the customer's money remains safe but when the transition happens from one e-wallet app to another, it reflects utmost speed and accuracy for the interoperability to be effective and efficient.
- **What exactly is UPI?** The Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is a system developed by the NPCI and the RBI to aid instant transfer of money using a cashless system. Using UPI services, one just requires a smartphone and a banking app to send and receive money instantly or to pay a merchant for retail purchase. In the long run, UPI is likely to replace the current NEFT, RTGS, and IMPS systems as they exist today.
- **The UPI ecosystem functions with three key players:** Payment service providers (PSPs) to provide the interface to the payer and the payee. Unlike wallets, the payer and the payee can use two different PSPs. Banks to provide the underlying accounts. In some cases, the bank and the PSP may be the same. NPCI to act as the central switch by ensuring VPA resolution, effecting credit and debit transactions through IMPS.



- **How does it work?** UPI, built on IMPS, allows a payment directly and immediately from bank account. There is no need to pre-load money in wallets. It allows payments to different merchants without the hassle of typing one's card details or net-banking password.

## Indian Silk Export Promotion Council (ISEPC):

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- **Context:** 6th India International Silk Fair (IISF), organized by Indian Silk Export Promotion Council, is being held in New Delhi. The fair will give a platform to exporters to display their products and to overseas buyers an opportunity to place orders and source their merchandise.
- **Background:** India is the second largest producer of silk in the world. The country's silk industry is agriculture based and labour intensive and provides gainful employment to around eight million artisans and weavers in rural areas.
- **About The Indian Silk Export Promotion Council:** The Indian Silk Export Promotion Council (ISEPC) was set up in 1983 as a company not for profit under Companies Act duly sponsored by the Government of India in the Ministry of Textiles.
- **ISEPC works closely** with the Government of India on policy formulation concerning silk sector and provides specialized services to the entrepreneurs enlarging global business opportunities for the silk industry in India.

## UP Cabinet approves changing name of Allahabad to 'Prayagraj':

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- **The Uttar Pradesh Cabinet** has approved the proposal of the state government to rename the city of 'Allahabad' as 'Prayagraj'. The decision has been vehemently opposed by the opposition parties.
- **Background:** The city of Allahabad was originally known as Prayag in ancient times. Between 1574 and 1583, the 16th-century Mughal emperor Akbar founded a fort near the confluence of the Ganga and the Yamuna, known as Sangam, as he was impressed with its strategic position.
- **Hence, Akbar named the fort** and its neighbourhood as Ilaahabad, which meant the "Abode of God", inspired by the religion he had founded, Din-i-Illahi. In the later years, Akbar's grandson Shah Jahan renamed the entire city as Allahabad. However, the area near the Sangam, which is the site of the Kumbh Mela, continued to be called Prayag.



## PADMA AWARDS FOR UNSUNG HEROES

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- **UNsung HEROES:** For the first time, Padma Awards became People's Awards: doors were opened to unsung heroes.
- **For the first time** in the 62-year old history of Padma Awards, ordinary citizens were also given the opportunity to nominate others.
- **Previously** only Union Ministers, MoS, Chief Ministers, Governors, Members of Parliament, previous recipients and important persons could nominate others for these Awards.
- **Exemplary** people who normally went unrecognized were honoured for the first time. Eg:
  - **Shri Karimul Hak**, who runs a 'Bike-Ambulance-service' for the people of Dhalabari Village in Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal. He was awarded Padma Shri in 2017.
  - **Ms. Subhasini Mistry**, who had worked as a domestic help and saved money to build a Humanity Hospital to provide free healthcare to poor was awarded Padma Shri in 2018

## E-VISA FACILITY for 164 countries. E-TICKETING introduced for 116 monuments and 32 museums (under Protection of ASI) TOURISM GAINS

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- **Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs)** during 2017 were 10.18 million with a growth of 15.6% over the same period of the previous year, compared to FTAs of 8.8 million with a growth of 9.7% in 2016 over 2015.
- **During 2017**, a total of 1.7 million foreign tourists arrived on e-Tourist Visa as compared to 1.08 million during 2016, registering a growth of 57.2%.
- **Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEEs)** during 2017 was Rs.1,80,379 Crore with a growth of 17% over same period of previous year. Whereas, the FEEs during 2016 were Rs.1,54,146 Crore with a growth of 14% over 2015.
- **INCREDIBLE INDIA 2.0:** Launched on 27.9.2017 to promote tourism in India · Niche tourism products: Heritage Tourism, Adventure Tourism, Cruise Tourism, Rural Tourism, Wellness & Medical Tourism, MICE, etc. being promoted through the Incredible India 2.0 Campaign
- **INDIA'S RANK IMPROVES** India's rank in the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) in 2017 jumped 25 places ahead of 2013. Rank of India in TTCI report of 2017 was 40th as compared to 52nd in 2015 and 65th in 2013.
- **RENOVATION OF RIVER GHATS** · Several River Ghats are developed under the Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD Scheme
- **AADARSH SMAARAK:** 100 ASI monuments are named as Aadarsh Smaarak for upgradation of existing facilities/amenities to promote tourism.

## DEDICATED SCHEMES SWADESH DARSHAN

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- **For development of tourism infrastructure** in the country, the Ministry launched the Swadesh Darshan scheme – Integrated Development of Theme-based Tourist Circuits in January 2015.
- **Aims to develop theme based** tourist circuits on theme based principles of high tourist value, competitiveness and sustainability in an integrated manner.
- **Under the scheme**, 15 thematic circuits have been identified so far namely North-East India Circuit, Buddhist Circuit, Himalayan Circuit, Coastal Circuit, Krishna Circuit, Desert Circuit, Tribal Circuit, Eco Circuit, Wildlife Circuit, Rural Circuit, Spiritual Circuit, Ramayana Circuit, Heritage Circuit, Sufi Circuit and Teerthankar Circuit.
- **The Ministry** as on date has sanctioned 67 projects worth projects for Rs. 5638.87 Crore to 29 States and UTs covering fourteen thematic circuits under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme.
- **For North Eastern States** the Ministry has sanctioned 14 projects worth Rs. 1267.49 Crores covering all the 8 states. Under Tribal Circuit Ministry has sanctioned 4 projects worth Rs. 381.37 Crore to the SG of Nagaland, Chhattisgarh and Telangana.
- **For Buddhist Circuit** the Ministry has sanctioned 5 projects worth Rs. 361.97 Crore to the SG of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat. The timelines of the projects varies from 18-36 months. All these projects are at various stages of implementation.
- **PRASHAD (National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive)** Launched on January 2015 to beautify, develop and improve amenities of important pilgrimage and heritage destinations of the country.
- **23 projects** pilgrimage sites have been sanctioned so far for a total amount of Rs. 687.91 Crore. 11 projects/major components thereof under the scheme would be completed during the FY 2018-19.

## HRIDAY

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- **Aims to preserve and revitalize India's** heritage cities by encouraging an aesthetically appealing, informative & secure environment.
- **Being implemented in 12 cities**, Ajmer, Amaravati, Amritsar, Badami, Dwarka, Gaya, Kanchipuram, Mathura, Puri, Varanasi, Velankanni, and Warangal
- **NATIONAL MISSION ON CULTURAL MAPPING OF INDIA** To preserve rich Indian Art and Cultural Heritage and develop an objective Cultural Mapping. Profiles of about 6000 artistes have been recorded in the database.

## INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY

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- **INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY** Yoga gets international acclaim: 21st June every year is now the International Yoga Day
- **IDY 2015:** New Delhi, IDY 2016: Chandigarh, IDY 2017: Lucknow RASHTRIYA EKTA DIWAS- To mark the Birth Anniversary of Sardar Patel on 31st October
- **125TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF Dr. B R AMBEDKAR** 14 April 2015
- **350TH ANNIVERSARY OF GURU GOBIND SINGH** 05 January 2017
- **CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS OF CHAMPARAN SATYAGRAHA** Concluding ceremony on 10th April 2018 in Champaran, Bihar

## 150TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF MAHATMA GANDHI:

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- **National Implementation Committee (NIC)** set up for commemoration of the event on 2nd October 2019
- **First Meeting** of the National Implementation Committee (NIC) for commemoration of the event on 2nd October 2019 held on 2.5.2018
- **Rs 150 Cr** earmarked for 2018-19 for activities leading to the commemoration

## LPG set to make Kerala the first smoke-free State

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- **Key facts:** LPG is being supplied beyond commercial considerations with the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana initiated by the Ministry of Petroleum. With three bottling plants at Kochi, Kozhikode, and Kollam, LPG is being brought to 49.79 lakh customers through 308 distributors.
- **Background:** Kerala is one of the States with the highest penetration of LPG, which is transforming lifestyles. The target has almost been achieved in most villages, towns and cities in the Kerala.
- **LPG consumption** was 933.3 TMT (thousand tonnes) in the Kerala in 2017-18. It is estimated that one crore tonnes of emissions, from poisonous gases like firewood cooking, have been contained and 25 lakh trees have been saved.
- **About 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.
- **Significance of the project:** PMUY has been a revolutionary initiative that has transformed the lives of more than 3.57 crore households spanning across the length and breadth of the country. The initiative is in line with Governments aim to eradicate energy poverty, thereby promoting economic empowerment.
- **Way ahead:** The PMUY is a bold and much-needed initiative, but it should be recognised that this is just a first step. The real test of the PMUY and its successor programmes will be in how they translate the provision of connections to sustained use of LPG or other clean fuels such as electricity or biogas. Truly smokeless kitchens can be realized only if the government follows up with measures that go beyond connections to actual usage of LPG. This may require concerted efforts cutting across Ministries beyond petroleum and natural gas and including those of health, rural development and women and child welfare.

## Global Competitiveness Index 2018

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- **Performance of India:** India was ranked as the 58th most competitive economy with a score of 62.0 on the Global Competitiveness Index 2018. India jumped five spots from 2017, the largest gain among G20 economies. India ranked highest among South Asian countries. Sri Lanka was ranked 86th, Bangladesh 103rd, Pakistan 107th and Nepal 109th.
- **As per the report,** India leads the region in all other areas of competitiveness except for health, education and skills. As per the report, India's greatest competitive advantages include its market size and innovation.
- **Global performance:** On the list of 140 economies, the United States topped the list with a score of 85.6, followed by Singapore and Germany at the second and the third positions respectively. Other countries in the top 10 include Switzerland (4th), Japan (5th), Netherlands (6th), Hong Kong (7th), United Kingdom (8th), Sweden (9th) and Denmark (10th).
- **In Europe,** Sweden is ranked the highest among the Nordic economies at 9th position, while France (17th) is among the top 20. Countries such as Germany and Switzerland set the global standards for innovation. Competitiveness performance in the Middle East and North Africa remains diverse, with Israel (20th) and the United Arab Emirates (27th), leading the way in their respective regions.
- **17 of the 34 sub-Saharan African** economies are among the bottom 20. Mauritius (49th) leads the region, ahead of South Africa and nearly 91 places ahead of Chad (140th). Among the BRICS economies, China topped the list at 28th place with a score of 72.6, followed by Russia, India, South Africa and Brazil respectively.
- **Background:** The Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) is prepared on the basis of country-level data covering 12 categories or pillars of competitiveness.
- **Institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomic environment,** health and primary education, higher education and training, goods market efficiency, labour market efficiency, financial market development, technological readiness, market size, business sophistication and innovation are the 12 pillars.

## ASEM Summit Theme: 'Global Partners for Global Challenges'.

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- **The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is an informal process of dialogue** and cooperation bringing together the 28 European Union member states, 2 other European countries, and the European Union with 21 Asian countries and the ASEAN Secretariat.
- **The ASEM dialogue addresses political,** economic and cultural issues, with the objective of strengthening the relationship between the two regions, in a spirit of mutual respect and equal partnership. It was officially established on 1 March 1996 at the first summit in Bangkok, Thailand.
- **The ASEM Summit** is a biennial meeting between the Heads of State and Government, the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

## OneerTM

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- **About "OneerTM":** Use: It is useful for continuous treatment of water and eliminates all disease causing pathogens such as virus, bacteria, fungi, protozoa and cyst to provide safe drinking water to domestic and communities settings as per National and International standards prescribed for potable water (BIS, WHO etc.).
- **Significance:** According to the World Health Organization, "access to safe drinking-water is essential to health, a basic human right and a component of effective policy for health protection".
- **However,** currently, a large proportion of India's rural community is consuming water that does not meet the WHO drinking water quality standards. And infection through drinking water results in an increase in morbidity and mortality particularly amongst children.
- **Oneer developed** by CSIR-IITR, will provide access to safe and clean drinking water at a cost of just 2 Paise / Ltr. The Community level model is of 450 LPH capacity which can be scaled up to 5000 to 1 lakh L/day; and is also maintenance and membrane free. The technology will be helpful especially for rural people since it can be solar powered.

## Galaxy proto-supercluster — Hyperion

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- **The galaxy** has been found using new measurements made by the visible multi-object spectrograph of ESO's Very Large Telescope and pouring over vast arrays of archive data.
- **Key facts:** Hyperion's unimaginably enormous mass is estimated to be a million billion times that of our own Sun (which is approximately 1,048 Jupiters, or 333,000 Earths).
- **Hyperion is an adolescent in astronomy terms.** Its distance from earth means astronomers are viewing it as it was created just over 2 billion years after the Big Bang, which gave rise to the universe about 13.8 billion years ago. The Milky Way galaxy, which hosts our Solar System, is about 13.6 billion years old.
- **Understanding Hyperion** and how it compares to similar recent structures can give insights into how the universe developed in the past and will evolve into the future, and allows us the opportunity to challenge some models of supercluster formation. Unearthing this cosmic titan helps uncover the history of these large-scale structures.
- **Significance:** This is the first time that such a large structure has been identified at such a high redshift, just over two billion years after the Big Bang. Normally, these kinds of structures are known at lower redshifts, which means when the universe has had much more time to evolve and construct such huge things.
- **About visible multi-object spectrograph:** The VIMOS, an instrument that measures objects at a distance of billions of light years away, in practice allows experts to see what the early universe was like in the distant cosmic past. The spectrograph is hosted by the Chile-based Very Large Telescope.
- **About VLT:** The Very Large Telescope (VLT) is a telescope facility operated by the European Southern Observatory on Cerro Paranal in the Atacama Desert of northern Chile.
- **The VLT consists** of four individual telescopes, each with a primary mirror 8.2 m across, which are generally used separately but can be used together to achieve very high angular resolution. The four separate optical telescopes are known as Antu, Kueyen, Melipal and Yepun, which are all words for astronomical objects in the Mapuche language.
- **The VLT operates** at visible and infrared wavelengths. Each individual telescope can detect objects roughly four billion times fainter than can be detected with the naked eye, and when all the telescopes are combined, the facility can achieve an angular resolution of about 0.001 arc-second.
- **This is equivalent to roughly 2 meters** resolution at the distance of the Moon. The VLT is the most productive ground-based facility for astronomy, with only the Hubble Space Telescope generating more scientific papers among facilities operating at visible wavelengths.

## Man Booker Prize:

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- **Man Booker Prize:** Context: Northern Irish writer- Anna Burns has won the 2018 Man Booker Prize for her third full-length novel- "Milkman".
- **About Man Booker Prize:** The leading literary award in English, The Man Booker Prize was launched in 1969. It aims to promote the 'finest in fiction' and is awarded each year to the book adjudged as the best novel of the year written in English and published in the United Kingdom.
- **The winner of The Man Booker Prize** receives £50,000. Sponsored by Man Group, the foundation also awards £2,500 and a designer bound copy of their book to each of the six shortlisted authors. The winner and shortlisted authors are also guaranteed a worldwide readership as well as a dramatic spike in book sales.
- **The judges of The Man Booker Prize** are chosen from a wide range of disciplines including critics, writers, academics, poets, politicians, actors and 'all with a passion for quality fiction'. Subject to widespread speculation before the official announcement, the prize usually brings the winner a huge boost in sales and profile.



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## DEMONETISATION TO CURB BLACK MONEY

- **A historic announcement** by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 8th November 2016 - Demonetization of high denomination currency notes of Rs.500 and Rs.1000. Aims to curb the menace of black money, corruption, circulation of fake Indian currency notes, terrorist financing and money laundering. In the longer term to make India's GDP bigger, cleaner and real with greater formalization of economy.
- **Gave a major fillip** to the digital transactions and unearthing of substantial amounts of black money. 50 lakh new bank accounts opened to enable cashless transaction of wages. 29.17% increase in number of new returns added from FY 2015-16 to FY 2016-17 and 25.1% from FY 16-17 to FY17-18
- **25% increase in number of e>Returns** filed from FY 2016-17 to FY 2017-18. 81% increase from FY 2013-14 to FY 2017-18 Value of IMPS transactions increased almost 59% from August 2016 to August 2017, 2.26 Lakh Companies 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.
- **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. 20,500 returns selected for scrutiny. About 3 lakh notices issued to non-filers having large cash deposit. 2.1 Crore returns filed.

## Formation of SIT & curbing of black money

- **Special Investigation Team**, SIT set up at the First Cabinet Meeting after the NDA Government assumed office
- **ENABLING LEGISLATIONS & AMENDMENTS** Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) – Mauritius, Cyprus, Singapore Bankruptcy Act: ü The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 : Considered as the biggest Economic reforms next only to GST
- ü **The law is for insolvency resolution** of corporate persons, partnership firms and individuals in a time bound manner ü The law promotes entrepreneurship, availability of credit, and balances the interests of all stakeholders
- **Benami Property Act** · Reshaping of the laws relating to Benami property · Blocking a major avenue for generation and holding of back money in the form of Benami property, especially in real estate · Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) and Imposition of Tax Act 2015
- **Agreement on Real Time Information with Switzerland** · Income Disclosure Scheme 2016 · Amendments in Whistle Blower's Protection Act 2011 · Action for Amendments in the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988. · New Direct Tax Code also initiated to re-write the Income Tax Act.

## CRACKDOWN ON SHELL COMPANIES

- **2.26 Lakh Companies** 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.
- **DIGITAL PAYMENTS PROMOTION** · Mera mobile, mera bank, mera batua: BHIM app (based on United Payments Interface (UPI), to promote cashless economy brings payments to people's phones. · BHIM Phone Mein, Cash Jeb Mein Campaign to promote use of digital payments.
- **Over 2.64 crore BHIM App downloads (As on 31st March,2018)** · Transaction worth Rs. 4,972.69 crore (As on 18th April,2018) · 89 Banks Live on BHIM

## COAL BLOCK ALLOCATION

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- **Transparency and Accountability** • 89 Coal Mines successfully allocated - 31 through e-auction and 58 to Government Companies
- **SHAKTI**: Transformational policy for auction and allocation of coal linkages for affordable power, access to coal and accountability in allocation of coal
- **Coal Sector- Governance** • COAL PROJECTS MONITORING PORTAL (E-CPMP) • MINING SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM (MSS) • ONLINE COAL CLEARANCES SYSTEM • CONTRACT LABOUR PAYMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

## DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer) · Applicable across the country. · As on 09/05/2018:

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- **435 such schemes** have been identified where cash is directly transferred to bank account of the beneficiaries.
- **Total DBT (cumulative)** Rs. 3,89,596 crore has been transferred to the beneficiaries.
- **DBT and other governance reforms** have led to Estimated savings/ benefits of Rs. 82,985 Cr

## GEM (GOVERNMENT E MARKET PLACE) FOR PROCUREMENT OF GOODS AND SERVICES

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- **Launched on 9th August 2016** · Allows Government departments and agencies to make direct purchases of up to Rs. 50,000
- **To reduce corruption** and increase transparency in Government procurement
- **19,497 Buyers organisation** listed on GeM Platform (as on 6th April, 2018) · 80,243 Sellers and service providers enrolled (as on 6th April, 2018)

## MINIMUM GOVERNMENT – MAXIMUM GOVERNANCE

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- **Bio metric attendance system:** Improved work culture in Government offices with emphasis on punctuality
- **Abolition of interviews:** For recruitment to non-gazetted posts in the Central government as part of efforts to put an end to corruption in jobs.
- **Self-certification:** Joining of direct recruits in Central Government has been allowed on the basis of self-certification of antecedents and police verification can be done later within 6 months.
- **Online Help** - Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS): Online public grievance redressal mechanisms for effective and timely redress / settlement of citizens' grievances.
- **Rapid Resolution of Public Grievances** - 1. Grievance Analysis Study in respect of top 20 Ministries/Departments receiving maximum number of grievances was conducted. Grievance prone areas were identified, root cause analysis was done after which systemic reforms were suggested. Ministries/Departments such as Railways, CBDT etc. have implemented these reforms resulting in reduction of grievances.
- **2. On an average, more than 90% of pending grievances are resolved every week.** 3. A Certificate of Appreciation on quarterly basis is being given to Ministries/Departments for recognizing outstanding Public Grievance Redressal by them. 24 such certificates have since been awarded.
- **PM Awards for Excellence in Public Administration-** The scope of PM's awards has been greatly expanded by bringing in wide competition in all districts; including exemplary implementation of priority programmes, innovations by aspirational districts and others as well as those by officials of Government of India at various levels (AS/JS, Director/DS). Discussions on implementation of priority programmes and issues for effective governance were conducted involving officials of line Ministries and experts during the 2 day celebration of Civil Service Day.
- **National Conference on e-Governance** National Conference on e-governance involving all State Governments and UT Administrations for sensitization and cross learning of e-governance ideas impacting the Citizens and Citizens Centric Service Delivery is being conducted on a yearly basis. National e-Governance Awards have been given to Central Ministries/Departments, States and District level innovation in e-governance.
- **MyGov:** A 'Good Governance' initiative providing opportunity for citizens and well-wishers from across the world to share their views on key issues directly with the PM.
- **PRAGATI(Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation):** Meetings every 4th Wednesday by the Prime Minister to assess and track the implementation of projects

## Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE)

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- **Key Highlights:** The agreements were signed to launch 'Prakriti' programme, which aims to promote awareness about forests and environment and stimulate interest among the students of NVS and KVS in maintaining a balanced environment and for acquiring skills that reflect care and protection towards forests, environment and society.
- **The main objective** behind the agreements is to provide a platform for the school children to learn practical skills towards sustainable use of the resources. The two agreements have been signed for a period of 10 years. They aim to make the Indian youth more sensitive towards national and global issues of environment and thus, help them become responsible citizens.
- **The agreements** also aim to mobilise a cadre of youth for raising a peoples' movement, which is committed to the conservation of forest and environment. The collaboration will enable transfer of knowledge to students and teachers of NVS and KVS on environment, forest, environmental services and contemporary areas of forestry research through lectures and interactive sessions by ICFRE scientists.
- **About ICFRE:** The Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) is an autonomous council under the Union Environment Ministry. The council mainly guides, promotes and coordinates forestry research, extension and education at the national level through its nine institutes and five centres located across the country.
- **Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS):** The Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti is an autonomous organisation established under the Department of School Education and Literacy in the Ministry of Human Resource Development. The organisation was established to provide modern quality education to talented children, predominantly from rural areas, without regard to their family's socio-economic condition.

## Currency monitoring list

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- **Background:** India was for the first time, in April, placed by the US in its currency monitoring list of countries with potentially questionable foreign exchange policies along with five other countries — China, Germany, Japan, South Korea and Switzerland.
- **Recent developments:** India's circumstances have shifted markedly, as the central bank's net sales of foreign exchange over the first six months of 2018 led net purchases over the four quarters through June 2018 to fall to \$4 billion, or 0.2% of GDP.
- **This represented a notable change from 2017**, when purchases over the first three quarters of the year pushed net purchases of foreign exchange above 2% of GDP. Recent sales came amid a turnaround in foreign portfolio inflows, as foreign investors pulled portfolio capital out of India (and many other emerging markets) over the first half of the year.
- **The rupee depreciated by around 7% against the dollar** and by more than 4% on a real effective basis in the first half of 2018. India has a significant bilateral goods trade surplus with the US, totalling \$23 billion over the four quarters through June 2018, but India's current account is in deficit at 1.9% of GDP.
- **On what basis is a country named a 'currency manipulator'?** The three pre-conditions for being named currency manipulator are: a trade surplus of over \$20 billion with the US, a current account deficit surplus of 3% of the GDP, and persistent foreign exchange purchases of 2% plus of the GDP over 12 months.

## China's artificial moon project

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- **Key facts:** Chinese scientists plan to send three artificial moons into space in the next four years, and the moons — made from reflective material like a mirror — are expected to orbit at 500 kilometres above the Earth and light up an area with a diameter of 10 to 80 kilometres.
- **The artificial moon** will have a reflective coating that can deflect sunlight back to Earth, similar to how the moon shines.
- **The illuminated satellite** is said to be eight times brighter than the real moon. The satellites' brightness and service time are both adjustable, and the accuracy of the lighting can be controlled within tens of metres.
- **The three artificial moons** would operate alternately in order to significantly reduce infrastructural electricity consumption, especially during winter. The illuminated satellite is designed to complement the moon at night.
- **Lighting from the artificial moon** covering 50 square kilometres in Chengdu could save about 1.2 billion yuan (\$240 million) in electricity costs every year. It could also be used to light up areas experiencing power outages caused by natural disasters such as earthquakes.
- **Background:** The idea for the man-made moon originated from a French artist who imagined hanging a necklace made of mirrors in the sky to light up the streets of Paris at night. Russia attempted to launch a 25-metre "space mirror" but the project was put off in 1999.

## Dawn Mission

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- **Dawn's mission was extended several times, outperforming scientists' expectations** in its exploration of two planet-like bodies, Ceres and Vesta, that make up 45 percent of the mass of the main asteroid belt.
- **Now the spacecraft** is about to run out of a key fuel, hydrazine. When that happens, most likely between mid-September and mid-October, Dawn will lose its ability to communicate with Earth. It will remain in a silent orbit around Ceres for decades.
- **Dawn mission:** NASA's Dawn mission was aimed at studying the asteroid Vesta and dwarf planet Ceres, celestial bodies believed to have accreted early in the history of the solar system. The mission characterized the early solar system and the processes that dominated its formation.

- **Dawn is the only mission** ever to orbit two extraterrestrial targets. It orbited giant asteroid Vesta for 14 months from 2011 to 2012, then continued on to Ceres, where it has been in orbit since March 2015.

## Bihar's 'Shahi Litchi' Gets GI tag

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- **Key facts:** The famous Shahi litchi, which is famous for its sweet, juicy, unique flavour and aroma, is mostly grown in Muzaffarpur and neighbouring districts including East Champaran, Vaishali, Samastipur and Begusarai. The GI registration was done in the name of Litchi Growers Association of Bihar, which had applied for the tag.
- **Significance:** Bihar produces 40% of the litchi grown in the country on 38% of the area. The GI tag to Shahi litchi will boost up its demand in the market and will minimise the fear of fake and poor quality litchis. The GI tag for the fruit will help and benefit thousands of litchi growers who will gain access to more markets and get better price in the country and abroad.
- **About GI tag:** What is it? A GI is primarily an agricultural, natural or a manufactured product (handicrafts and industrial goods) originating from a definite geographical territory.
- **Significance of a GI tag:** Typically, such a name conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness, which is essentially attributable to the place of its origin.
- **Security:** Once the GI protection is granted, no other producer can misuse the name to market similar products. It also provides comfort to customers about the authenticity of that product.
- **Provisions in this regard:** GI is covered as element of intellectual property rights (IPRs) under Paris Convention for Protection of Industrial Property. At international level, GI is governed by WTO's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). In India, Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection Act), 1999 governs it.
- **Facts for Prelims:** Other GI tags associated with Bihar: Katrani rice, Jardalu mango and Magahi paan (betel vine).

## National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)

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- **Prime Minister** reviewed the activities of NDMA to effectively manage and respond to disasters affecting the country. He also reviewed ongoing projects undertaken by NDMA.
- **Prime Minister** emphasized on the need for better coordination between the various stakeholders and undertake more joint exercises to bring about effective response to save life and property. He stressed upon the need to bring in global expertise in the field of disaster management.
- **About NDMA:** On 23 December 2005, the Government of India enacted the Disaster Management Act, which envisaged the creation of National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), headed by the Prime Minister, and State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs) headed by respective Chief Ministers, to spearhead and implement a holistic and integrated approach to Disaster Management in India.
- **NDMA, as the apex body**, is mandated to lay down the policies, plans and guidelines for Disaster Management to ensure timely and effective response to disasters. Towards this, it has the following responsibilities:
- **Lay down policies on disaster management.** Approve the National Plan. Approve plans prepared by the Ministries or Departments of the Government of India in accordance with the National Plan. Lay down guidelines to be followed by the State Authorities in drawing up the State Plan.
- **Lay down guidelines** to be followed by the different Ministries or Departments of the Government of India for the Purpose of integrating the measures for prevention of disaster or the mitigation of its effects in their development plans and projects.
- **Coordinate the enforcement** and implementation of the policy and plans for disaster management. Recommend provision of funds for the purpose of mitigation. Provide such support to other countries affected by major disasters as may be determined by the Central Government.

- **Take such other measures** for the prevention of disaster, or the mitigation, or preparedness and capacity building for dealing with threatening disaster situations or disasters as it may consider necessary. Lay down broad policies and guidelines for the functioning of the National Institute of Disaster Management.
- **Significance:** There was no institutional framework for disaster management earlier, but after the setting up of NDMA, a mechanism has been developed not only for disaster management, but also for disaster risk reduction.
- **India got appreciation** due to NDMA's work at Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meeting on Disaster management held in Kyrgyzstan last month. India had extended help to earthquake-hit Nepal in 2014 and also India had sent NDRF team to Japan for help.
- **Its time to further strengthen** the legal and institutional systems in place for disaster management.

## Dharma Guardian:

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- **Aim:** The exercise is aimed at developing mutual understanding and respect between militaries of both countries, as also facilitate in tracking worldwide phenomenon of terrorism.

## NCR RASTA and Yatri RASTA: The North Central Railways (NCR) has launched two mobile apps:

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- **NCR RASTA (Railway assets Summerised Tracking Application):** It is for use of railway officers and staff and has exact mapping of all railway assets. It will enable railway staff to reach desired asset using Google Navigation in case of any emergency.
- **Yatri RASTA (Railway Approach to Station Tracking Application):** Yatri RASTA app: It will allow general public to locate railway stations easily. It is already available for smartphones running on Android and can be downloaded free of cost from Google Play Store.
- **India's first railway station inside tunnel to come up in Himachal Pradesh:** Context: For the first time in India, a railway station will be built inside a tunnel at a height of 3,000 metres, on the strategic Bilaspur-Manali-Leh line close to the China-India border.
- **The station** will be at a height of around 3,000 metres and will be inside a 27-km-long tunnel. Keylong is the administrative centre of Lahaul and Spiti district, 26 km north of Manali and 120 km from the India-Tibet border



## The Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Bill, 2018

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- **The Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Bill, 2018 was introduced in Lok Sabha** by the Minister of State for Home Affairs, Mr. Hansraj Ahir, on August 9, 2018. The Bill amends the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993. The Act provides for a National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), State Human Rights Commissions (SHRC), as well as Human Rights Courts.
- **Composition of NHRC: Under the Act, the chairperson of the NHRC is a person who has been a Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.** The Bill amends this to provide that a person who has been Chief Justice of India, or a Judge of the Supreme Court will be the chairperson of the NHRC.
- **The Act provides for two persons having knowledge of human rights** to be appointed as members of the NHRC. The Bill amends this to allow three members to be appointed, of which at least one will be a woman. Under the Act, chairpersons of various commissions such as the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, and National Commission for Women are members of the NHRC. The Bill provides for including the chairpersons of the National Commission for Backward Classes, the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights, and the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities as members of the NHRC.
- **Chairperson of SHRC:** Under the Act, the chairperson of a SHRC is a person who has been a Chief Justice of a High Court. The Bill amends this to provide that a person who has been Chief Justice or Judge of a High Court will be chairperson of a SHRC.
- **Term of office:** The Act states that the chairperson and members of the NHRC and SHRC will hold office for five years or till the age of seventy years, whichever is earlier. The Bill reduces the term of office to three years or till the age of seventy years, whichever is earlier. The Bill also allows for the reappointment of chairpersons of the NHRC and SHRCs.
- **Powers of Secretary-General:** The Act provides for a Secretary-General of the NHRC and a Secretary of a SHRC, who exercise powers as may be delegated to them. The Bill amends this and allows the Secretary-General and Secretary to exercise all administrative and financial powers (except judicial functions), subject to the respective chairperson's control.
- **Union Territories:** The Bill provides that the central government may confer on a SHRC human rights functions being discharged by Union Territories. Functions relating to human rights in the case of Delhi will be dealt with by the NHRC.

## The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)

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- **Towards fulfilling the Preamble promise** of securing to all the citizens, Justice – social, economic and political, Article 39 A of the Constitution of India provides for free legal aid to the poor and weaker sections of the society, to promote justice on the basis of equal opportunity. Articles 14 and 22(1) of the Constitution also make it obligatory for the State to ensure equality before law. In 1987, the Legal Services Authorities Act was enacted by the Parliament, which came into force on 9th November, 1995 to establish a nationwide uniform network for providing free and competent legal services to the weaker sections of the society.
- **The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)** has been constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 to provide free Legal Services to the weaker sections of the society. The Chief Justice of India is the Patron-in-Chief and the Senior most Hon'ble Judge, Supreme Court of India is the Executive Chairman of the Authority. Presently, NALSA is housed at 12/11, Jam Nagar House, New Delhi-110011.
- **Public awareness**, equal opportunity and deliverable justice are the cornerstones on which the edifice of NALSA is based. The principal objective of NALSA is to provide free and competent legal services to the weaker sections of the society and to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities, and to organize Lok Adalats for amicable settlement of disputes. Apart from the abovementioned, functions of NALSA include spreading legal literacy and awareness, undertaking social justice litigations etc.

- **With the aim of reaching out** to the diverse milieu of people belonging to different socio-economic, cultural and political backgrounds, NALSA identifies specific categories of the marginalized and excluded groups from the diverse populace of the country and formulates various schemes for the implementation of preventive and strategic legal service programmes to be undertaken and implemented by the Legal Services Authorities at the various levels.
- **In carrying out all these responsibilities**, NALSA works in close coordination with the various State Legal Services Authorities, District Legal Services Authorities and other agencies for a regular exchange of relevant information, monitoring and updating on the implementation and progress of the various schemes in vogue and fostering a strategic and coordinated approach to ensure smooth and streamlined functioning of the various agencies and stakeholders.

## Constitution of the National Legal Services Authority

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- **The Central Government** shall constitute a body to be called the National Legal Services Authority to exercise the powers and perform the functions conferred on, or assigned to the Central Authority under this Act.
- **The Central Authority shall consist of -**
- **The Chief Justice of India who shall be the Patron-in-Chief.**
- **A serving or retired Judge** of the Supreme Court to be nominated by the President, in consultation with the Chief Justice of India, who shall be the Executive Chairman; and
- **Such number of other members**, possessing such experience and qualifications, as may be prescribed by the Central Government, to be nominated by that government in consultation with the Chief Justice of India.
- **The Central Government** shall in consultation with the Chief Justice of India, appoint a person to be the Member-Secretary of the Central Authority, possessing such experience and qualifications as may be prescribed by that Government, to exercise such powers and perform such duties under the Executive Chairman of the Central Authority as may be prescribed by that Government or as may be assigned to him by the Executive Chairman of that Authority.
- **The terms of office and other conditions** relating thereto, of Members and the Member-Secretary of the Central Authority shall be such as may be prescribed by the Central Government in consultation with the Chief Justice of India.
- **The Central Authority** may appoint such number of officers and other employees as may be prescribed by the Central Government in consultation with the Chief Justice of India, for the efficient discharge of its functions under this Act.
- **The officers and other employees** of the Central Authority shall be entitled to such salary and allowances and shall be subject to such other conditions of service as may be prescribed by the Central Government in consultation with the Chief Justice of India.
- **The administrative expenses** of the Central Authority, including the salaries, allowances and pensions payable to the Member-Secretary, officers and other employees of the Central Authority, shall be defrayed out of the Consolidated Fund of India.
- **All orders and decisions of the Central Authority** shall be authenticated by the Member Secretary or any other officer of the Central Authority duly authorised by the Executive Chairman of that Authority.
- **No act or proceeding of the Central Authority** shall be invalid merely on the ground of the existence of any vacancy in or any defect in the constitution of the Central Authority.

## Azad Hind Government

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- **About Azad Hind Government:** Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose had announced the establishment of the provisional government of Azad Hind in occupied Singapore in 1943.

- **Known as Arzi Hukumat-e-Azad Hind**, it was supported by the Axis powers of Imperial Japan, Nazi Germany, the Italian Social Republic, and their allies.
- **The revered freedom fighter** had launched a struggle to free India from British rule under the banner of the provisional government-in exile during the latter part of the Second World War.
- **Objectives:** Bose was convinced that armed struggle was the only way to achieve independence for India. He had been a leader of the radical wing of the Indian National Congress in the late 1920s and 1930s, rising to become Congress president in 1938 and 1939 but was ousted following differences with Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress leadership.
- **Under his provisional government**, the Indians living abroad had been united. The Indian National Army drew ex-prisoners and thousands of civilian volunteers from the Indian expatriate population in Malaya (present-day Malaysia) and Burma (now Myanmar).
- **The formation:** On October 21, 1943, in his address announcing the setting up of the provisional government, he said India's Army of Liberation was drawn up in military formation on the battlefield of Singapore which was once the bulwark of the British Empire.
- **Under the provisional government**, Bose was the head of the state, the prime minister and the minister for war and foreign affairs. Captain Lakshmi headed the women's organisation while S A Ayer headed the publicity and propaganda wing.
- **Revolutionary leader** Rash Behari Bose was designated as the supreme advisor. The provisional government was also formed in the Japanese-occupied Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The islands were reoccupied by the British in 1945.
- **Bose's death** was seen as the end to the Azad Hind movement. The Second World War, also ended in 1945 with the defeat of the Axis powers.

## NCW Launches E-mail ID For Sexual Harassment At Workplace Cases

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- **The Commission** urges women who have come forward on social media and other platforms about their alleged harassers to send their formal written complaints to [metoo@gmail.com](mailto:metoo@gmail.com). The NCW will take forward complaints of sexual harassment at workplace received on the mail so that appropriate action may be taken, as per law.
- **What you need to know about NCW?** The National Commission for Women was set up as statutory body in January 1992 under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990.
- **The primary mandate** of the National Commission for Women and State Commissions for Women Commission is to safeguard and protect the interests of women. It has wide responsibility covering almost all aspects of women development.
- **The commission** regularly publishes a monthly newsletter, Rashtra Mahila in both Hindi and English.

## Should India have two time zones?

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- **Background:** Over the years, various citizens and political leaders have debated whether India should have two separate time zones. The demand is based on the huge difference in daylight times between the country's longitudinal extremes, and the costs associated with following the same time zone.
- **Opposition** to the idea is based on impracticability — particularly the risk of railway accidents, given the need to reset times at every crossing from one time zone into another.
- **Need for two time zones:** India extends from 68°7'E to 97°25'E, with the spread of 29° representing almost two hours from the geographic perspective. Legislators, activists, industrialists and ordinary citizens from the Northeast have often complained about the effect of IST on their lives, and pursued the issue of having a separate time zone with the Central government, without much success.

- **In the Northeast**, the sun rises as early as four in the morning and in winter it sets by four in the evening. By the time government offices or educational institutions open, many daylight hours are already lost. In winter this problem gets even more accentuated and the ecological costs are a disaster with much more electricity having to be consumed.
- **The proposal:** The research paper proposes to call the two time zones IST-I (UTC + 5.30 h) and IST-II (UTC + 6.30 h). The proposed line of demarcation is at 89°52'E, the narrow border between Assam and West Bengal.
- **States west of the line** would continue to follow IST (to be called IST-I). States east of the line — Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Andaman & Nicobar Islands — would follow IST-II.
- **Concerns:** India has a huge population; if the country were divided into two time zones, there would be chaos at the border between the two zones. It would mean resetting clocks with each crossing of the time zone. There is scope for more dangerous kinds of confusion. Railway signals are not fully automated and many routes have single tracks. Trains may meet with major accidents owing to human errors. Just one such accident would wipe out any benefits resulting from different time zones in the country.
- **Partitioning the already divided country** further into time zones may also have undesirable political consequences. Moreover, our research shows that the energy saving from creating two time zones is not particularly large.
- **While there is merit in the argument**, the potentially adverse consequences of introducing a new time zone within the country are many. Not forgetting the fact that a country like Russia has as many as nine time zones across contiguous territory, having to cope with the zones and to be forced to reset the watch each time you need to cross a domestic line could be complicated.
- **With a time difference** of one hour in the mornings and in the evenings, there would be nearly 25% less overlap between office timings in the two zones. This could be important for banks, offices, industries and multinational companies which need to be constantly interconnected. This will be further detrimental to productivity and to the interests of the eastern region.
- **There is already a sense** of alienation between the relatively prosperous and industrialised western zone and the less developed eastern zone. The people in the Northeast sense a distance from the mainland and a separateness in clock time may accentuate it.
- **Having a separate time zone** for the eastern region will provide no energy or other benefits to the rest of the country. Moreover, India will continue to be in off-set time zones, five and a half hours in the west and six and a half in the eastern region ahead of.

## ADMM-Plus

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- **The conferences** were attended by defence ministers from India, Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Russia and US. This was second time Singapore has chaired ADMM since its establishment in 2006 and first time to chair ADMM-Plus since its establishment in 2010.
- **Background:** ADMM and ADMM-Plus serves as key Ministerial-level platforms in regional security architecture for promoting strategic dialogue and practical cooperation between ASEAN and its partners.
- **About ASEAN:** The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, was established on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand, with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by the Founding Fathers of ASEAN, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.
- **At present there are 10 members namely**, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam. The motto of ASEAN is "One Vision, One Identity, One Community".
- **ADMM-Plus:** ADMM-Plus is platform for ASEAN and its eight dialogue partners to strengthen security and defence co-operation for peace, stability, and development in the region. Its objective is to promote mutual trust and confidence between defence establishments through greater dialogue and transparency.
- **The inaugural ADMM-Plus** was convened in Hanoi, Vietnam in 2010. The defence ministers then had agreed on five areas of practical cooperation, including maritime security, counter-terrorism, peacekeeping operations and humanitarian assistance.

## Financial Action Task Force (FATF)



- **The 40 recommendations** are segregated in 11 outcomes performance benchmarks. Pakistan is compliant in more than 50% of the recommendations.
- **Background:** Pakistan was placed on the grey list by the FATF in June for failing to curb anti-terror financing. It has been scrambling in recent months to avoid being added to a list of countries deemed non-compliant with anti-money laundering and terrorist financing regulations by the Paris-based FATF, a measure that officials here fear could further hurt its economy.
- **About FATF: What is it?** The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an inter-governmental body established in 1989 on the initiative of the G7. It is a “policy-making body” which works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in various areas. The FATF Secretariat is housed at the OECD headquarters in Paris.
- **Objectives:** The objectives of the FATF are to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.
- **Functions:** The FATF monitors the progress of its members in implementing necessary measures, reviews money laundering and terrorist financing techniques and counter-measures, and promotes the adoption and implementation of appropriate measures globally. In collaboration with other international stakeholders, the FATF works to identify national-level vulnerabilities with the aim of protecting the international financial system from misuse.

## RBI objects to payments regulator outside its control

- **Coming out strongly against the Inter-Ministerial Committee's** proposal to take PRB out of the RBI's purview, the RBI said there has been no evidence of any inefficiency in payment systems of India.
- **Background:** The seven-member government panel was headed by Subhash Chandra Garg. The panel proposed in August that a payments regulator should be established independent of the RBI, with a chairperson appointed by the government in consultation with the RBI. The proposal overruled the central bank's recommendation that its governor should be head of the payments regulator.
- **Why the RBI is opposing this move?** The RBI cited the report of the Ratan Watal Committee on digital payments as recommending the establishment of the PRB within the overall structure of the RBI, arguing therefore that there is no need for any deviation.
- **Also, as per RBI,** there has been no evidence of any inefficiency in payment systems of India. The digital payments have made good and steady progress. India is gaining international recognition as a leader in payment systems. Given this, there need not be any change in a well-functioning system. The RBI has argued that the payment system is bank-dominated in India.
- **“Regulation of the banking systems** and payment system by the same regulator provides synergy and inspires public confidence in the payment instruments. Regulation of the payment system by the central bank is the dominant international model for stability consideration. Thus, having the regulation and supervision over Payment and Settlement systems with the central bank will ensure holistic benefits,” it said.
- **Way ahead:** The RBI said it is not totally against a new Payment and Settlement System Bill but stressed that changes should not lead to existing foundations being shaken in a well-functioning structure.

## India's first Bitcoin ATM kiosk set up in Bengaluru

- **How it works?** The first-of-its-kind automated teller machine will have both a trading and exchange platform, and will allow verified customers to use the device. It is expected to become operational soon.
- **This kiosk** is accessible to registered customers of Unocoin. The customers will be able to buy or sell up to 10 Bitcoins — one of the high value cryptocurrencies per day. However, all the transactions will have to be conducted in Indian rupees which will then be changed into the currency of choice of the consumer.

- **The kiosk** will allow customers to trade in Bitcoin and Ethereum, while providing an exchange platform for 24 other cryptocurrencies in circulation.
- **Customers** risking the use of Bitcoins will have to register by using their mobile number and entering a password. A verification process is initiated during which details such as PAN number, phone number, address, bank details, and others have to be furnished. It uses an elaborate procedure for both deposits and withdrawals, with the withdrawals requiring a prior request and 12-digit OTP.
- **What is bitcoin?** Bitcoin is one of many cryptocurrencies that have gained popularity across the world.
- **A cryptocurrency** is a basically a digital asset that has been created to function as a medium of exchange, like cash. It uses cryptography to ensure the security of transactions — authentication and prevention of duplicate transactions — and to control the creation of new units of currency.
- **This is different** from cash in that cryptocurrencies have no physical form. These blur the boundaries between fiat and non-fiat currencies. They are simply numbers on a screen and there is no central bank that issues new currency. However, bitcoin has emerged as the popular face of cryptocurrencies.
- **Fiat and Non-fiat currency:** A fiat currency is any currency that has no intrinsic physical value, but whose value is established by government decree. For example, most national currencies around the world, including the Rupee and the Dollar, are fiat currencies as their values are dictated by the government.
- **Non-fiat currencies** such as the Gold Standard have more or less been effectively phased out, as they require adequate physical stockpiles to maintain their value.
- **However**, the new breed of digital cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin blurs the boundaries between fiat and non-fiat – they don't have any physical value as such, but are also not government-controlled. This has created uncertainties about their role in the modern financial system.

## Carnot Prize:

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- **Context:** Minister of Railways and Coal will receive the University of Pennsylvania's top prize in energy policy for his leadership in reforming India's power sector through various initiatives.
- **Carnot Prize:** The Carnot Prize is intended to honour those leading revolutions in energy policy to further progress and prosperity. The ministry is being recognised for directing a fast-track effort to electrify 18,000 villages in remote parts of India, helping bridge the country's vast energy divide.
- **The Carnot Prize** is named in memory of French scientist Sadi Carnot, who in 1824 published Reflections on the Motive Power of Fire, which is recognised as the first statement of what, is now known as the second law of thermodynamics.
- **Carnot recognised that the power of the steam engine** would produce a great revolution in human development.



## State Legal Services Authority-

- **Section 6. Constitution of State Legal Services Authority** (1) Every State Government shall constitute a body to be called the Legal Services Authority for the State to exercise the powers and perform the functions conferred on or assigned to, a State Authority under this Act.
- **(2) A State Authority shall consist of -**
  - (a) The Chief Justice of the High Court who shall be the Patron-in-Chief.
  - (b) A serving or retired Judge of the High Court, to be nominated by the Governor, in consultation with the Chief Justice of the High Court, who
  - (c) Such number of other Members, possessing such experience and qualifications, as may be prescribed by the State Government, to be nominated by
- **(3) The State Government** shall, in consultation with the Chief Justice of the High Court, appoint a person belonging to the State Higher Judicial Service not lower in rank than that of a District Judge, as the Member-Secretary of the State Authority, to exercise such powers and perform such duties under the Executive Chairman of the State Authority as may be prescribed by that Government or as may be assigned to him by the Executive Chairman of that Authority.
- **Provided that a person** functions as Secretary of a State Legal Aid & Advice Board immediately before the date of constitution of the State Authority may be appointed as Member-Secretary of that Authority, even if he is not qualified to be appointed a such under this sub-section, for a period not exceeding five years.
- **(4) The terms of office** and other conditions relating thereto, of Members and the Member-Secretary of the State Authority shall be such as may be prescribed by the State Government in consultation with the Chief Justice of the High Court.
- **(5) The State Authority** may appoint such number of officers and other employees may be prescribed by the State Government, in consultation with the Chief Justice of the High Court, for the efficient discharge of its functions under this Act.
- **(6) The officers and other employees** of the State Authority shall be entitled to such salary and allowances and shall be subject to such other conditions of service as may be prescribed by the State Government in consultation with the Chief Justice of the High Court.
- **(7) The administrative expenses** of the State Authority, including the salaries, allowances and pensions payable to the Member-Secretary, officers and other employees of the State Authority shall be defrayed out of the Consolidated Fund of the State.
- **(8) All orders and decisions** of the State Authority shall be authenticated by the Member-Secretary or any other officer of the State Authority duly authorised by the Executive Chairman of the State Authority.
- **(9) No act or proceeding** of a State Authority shall be invalid merely on the ground of the existence of any vacancy in, or any defect in the constitution of the State Authority.

## Third Pole

- **What is the Third Pole?** The Hindu Kush-Himalayan region spans an area of more than 4.3 million square kilometres in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan. The region stores more snow and ice than anywhere else in the world outside the polar regions, giving its name: 'The Third Pole'. The Third Pole contains the world's highest mountains, including all 14 peaks above 8,000 metres, is the source of 10 major rivers, and forms a formidable global ecological buffer.

- **Significance:** The Third Pole region has enormous socioeconomic and cultural diversity; it is home to many different ethnic communities speaking more than 600 languages and many more dialects. It is endowed with rich natural resources and contains all or part of four global biodiversity hotspots. The mountain resources provide a wide range of ecosystem services and the basis for the livelihoods to the 210 million people living in the region, as well as indirectly to the 1.3 billion people — one fifth of the world's population — living in the downstream river basins. More than 3 billion people benefit from the food and energy produced in these river basins that have their origin in the mountains.
- **The Third Pole and Climate Change:** Climate change has become a major concern in the Third Pole. Mountain systems are particularly sensitive to climate change and the Third Pole region is home to some of the people most vulnerable to these changes in the world. Changes in the river systems and their basins have impacted directly on the wellbeing of millions of people.
- **The rate of warming** in the Third Pole region is significantly higher than the global average, and the rate is higher at higher altitude, suggesting a greater vulnerability of the cryosphere environment to climate change. This trend is expected to continue.
- **Climate change** projections suggest that all areas of South Asia are likely to warm by at least 1°C by the end of the century, while in some areas the warming could be as high as 3.5-4°C. The life and livelihoods of the people in the Third Pole region is challenged due to climate change, and the stability and prosperity of the region affected by the Third Pole is at risk, which will have implications for all of Asia and for the world.
- **However**, there is still little knowledge of this situation, and its potential implications, outside the immediate vicinity; a special effort is needed to raise awareness of the fragility of the mountain social-ecological system.
- **Concerns:** The melting of glaciers of the Third Pole could affect the lives of 1.3 billion people because of its proximity to densely populated and industrialised regions. And the continuous melting of glaciers will be catastrophic for the people who depend on water from the Third Pole.
- **Facts for Prelims:** The Third Pole Environment (TPE): TPE, an international research program, was launched in 2009 and focuses on the Tibetan Plateau and surrounding mountain ranges.

## Renaming of states

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- **In a letter to Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)**, the Union Home Ministry stated that the proposed name "Bangla" may sound similar like Bangladesh and some confusions may arrive in the international arena over Bangla and Bangladesh. Since Bangladesh shares a cordial relationship with India, Home Ministry was advised to seek a response from MEA on the issue.
- **Background:** In 2016, the West Bengal Assembly passed a resolution to change the name of West Bengal to Bangla in Bengali, Bengal in English and Bangal in Hindi.
- **Rationale behind renaming:** The state government first proposed the renaming in 2016. West Bengal parliamentary affairs minister Partha Chatterjee had then argued for the change saying bureaucrats and politicians from the state often complain that they are asked to speak at the end of every national-level meeting in Delhi. This was because the speakers' lists at such meeting are prepared according to alphabetical order of the states they represent. If West Bengal gets the new name, it will leapfrog from bottom of the list to the top of the pecking order.
- **The renaming** will help the state appear at the fourth spot after Arunachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Assam in the alphabetic order of the states.
- **The procedure** of renaming of the state can be initiated by either the Parliament or the State Legislator and the procedure is as follows:
- **The renaming of a state** requires Parliamentary approval under Article 3 and 4 of the Constitution. A bill for renaming a state may be introduced in the Parliament on the recommendation of the President.
- **Before the introduction of the bill**, the President shall send the bill to the respective state assembly for expressing their views within a stipulated time. The views of the state assembly are not binding, neither on the President nor on the Parliament.
- **On the expiry of the period**, the bill will be sent to the Parliament for deliberation. The bill in order to take the force of a law must be passed by a simple majority.
- **The bill** is sent for approval to the President. After the approval of the said bill, the bill becomes a law and the name of the state stands modified.
- **Initiation by a State:** If any fresh proposal comes from states to the Home Ministry, it will prepare a note for the Union Cabinet for an amendment to the Schedule 1 of the Constitution. Thereafter, a Constitution Amendment Bill will be introduced in Parliament, which has to approve it with a simple majority, before the President gives his assent to it.

## Special courts for trial of benami transaction cases

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- **Key facts:** The sessions courts were notified after consultation with Chief Justices of High Courts under the Prohibition of Benami Property Transactions Act, 1988 for the trial of offences punishable under the provision of the Act. In the case of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, the courts of additional session's judge in each district have been designated as the special court.
- **Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Amendment Act:** The Indian Parliament passed the Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Amendment Act in August 2016 to curb the menace of black money. The bill sought to amend the Benami Transactions Act, 1988.
- **The new legislation** provided for seven years imprisonment and fine for those indulging in illegal transactions. The act has amended the definition of benami transactions and establishes adjudicating authorities and an Appellate Tribunal to deal with benami transactions.
- **Further,** the act defines benami transactions, prohibits them and provides that violation of the PBPT Act is punishable with imprisonment and fine. It also prohibits recovery of the property held benami from benamidar by the real owner. The properties held benami are liable for confiscation by the Government without payment of compensation.



## Fusion Energy Conference (FEC 2018)

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- **It was organised by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)** and hosted by Department of Atomic Energy and Gandhinagar-based Institute of Plasma Research.
- **Fusion Energy Conference (FEC 2018):** The 27th IAEA Fusion Energy Conference (FEC 2018) aims to provide a forum for the discussion of key physics and technology issues as well as innovative concepts of direct relevance to the use of nuclear fusion as a source of energy.
- **The scientific scope** of FEC 2018 is intended to reflect the priorities of this new era in fusion energy research.
- **With the participation** of international organizations such as the ITER Organization and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom), as well as the collaboration of more than forty countries and several research institutes, including those working on smaller plasma devices, it is expected that this conference will, like previous conferences in the series, serve to identify possibilities and means for continuous and effective international collaboration in this area.
- **About IAEA:** The IAEA is the world's centre for cooperation in the nuclear field. It was set up as the world's "Atoms for Peace" organization in 1957 within the United Nations family. The Agency works with its Member States and multiple partners worldwide to promote the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technologies.
- **It seeks to promote the peaceful use** of nuclear energy, and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons. IAEA reports to both the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council. The IAEA has its headquarters in Vienna, Austria.
- **The IAEA** serves as an intergovernmental forum for scientific and technical cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear technology and nuclear power worldwide.
- **Board of Governors:** 22 member states (must represent a stipulated geographic diversity) — elected by the General Conference (11 members every year) – 2 year term. At least 10 member states — nominated by the outgoing Board. Board members each receive one vote.
- **Recommendations** to the General Conference on IAEA activities and budget. Responsible for publishing IAEA standards. Responsible for making most of the policy of the IAEA. Appoints the Director General subject to General Conference approval.
- **General Conference:** 169 member states — one vote per member. Forum for debate on current issues and policies. Meets once a year. Approve the actions and budgets passed on from the Board of Governors. Approves the nominee for Director General.

## Green Climate Fund

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- **The meeting** approved 19 new projects, including a programme to protect freshwater resources in Bahrain. Environmentalists had argued the Gulf nation should pay for the project itself using money it made from its vast reserves of oil and gas.
- **About GCF:** The GCF was set up in 2010 under the UNFCCC's financial mechanism to channel funding from developed countries to developing countries to allow them to mitigate climate change and also adapt to disruptions arising from a changing climate. It was central to the Paris climate agreement signed in 2015, that the world's largest historical emitter.
- **How it helps?** The Green Climate Fund will support projects, programmes, policies and other activities in developing country Parties using thematic funding windows. It is intended to be the centrepiece of efforts to raise Climate Finance of \$100 billion a year by 2020.

- **The Fund** will promote the paradigm shift towards low-emission and climate-resilient development pathways by providing support to developing countries to limit or reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and to adapt to the impacts of climate change, taking into account the needs of those developing countries particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.
- **The Fund** will strive to maximize the impact of its funding for adaptation and mitigation, and seek a balance between the two, while promoting environmental, social, economic and development co-benefits and taking a gender-sensitive approach.
- **Who will govern the Fund?** The Fund is governed and supervised by a Board that will have full responsibility for funding decisions and that receives the guidance of the COP. The Fund is accountable to, and functions under the guidance of, the COP.

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## Acinetobacter Junii

- **Background:** Toluene is one of the petrochemical wastes that get released without treatment from industries such as refineries, paint, textile, paper and rubber. Toluene has been reported to cause serious health problems to aquatic life, and studies point that it has genotoxic and carcinogenic effects on human beings.
- **Acinetobacter Junii:** The bacteria were isolated from the soil samples, identified and studied for their toluene-degrading abilities.
- **These bacteria** change the morphology of toluene to remove its toxicity. The degradation is found to be general aerobic (in presence of oxygen) biodegradation. The bacteria use up this toluene as their carbon source in the presence of oxygen.

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## Shakti Bhatt First Book Prize:

- **Context:** US-based writer Sujatha Gidla has won 2018 Shakti Bhatt First Book Prize for her debut book "Ants Among Elephants: An Untouchable Family and the Making of Modern India".
- **About Shakti Bhatt First Book Prize:** The Shakti Bhatt First Book Prize is funded by the Shakti Bhatt Foundation. It was set up in 2008 in memory of young writer and editor Shakti Bhatti. It honours first-time writers from Indian sub-continent for their outstanding work of fiction or non-fiction. It carries cash prize of Rs. 2 lakh.

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## India's longest river bridge:

- **Context:** India's longest river bridge with total length of 19.3 kilometers will be built on Brahmaputra river in Assam.
- **Key facts:** This bridge will connect Dhubri of Assam to Fulbarani of Meghalaya. This bridge will reduce the distance between these two places by 203 kms. At present, India's largest river bridge is Dhola-Sadia bridge, its length is 9.15 kilometers.
- **Japanese Finance Agency (JICA)** has approved the loan for this project as part of road infrastructure improvement package in the north-east after assessing the economic benefit of the big project.
- **Two northeastern states** of Assam and Meghalaya will be connected by NH127B with the help of this bridge.

## Cope India air exercise:

- **Context:** India and US have agreed to elevate their bilateral 'Cope India' air exercise to trilateral format by including Japan. The next edition of this exercise is scheduled to be held in December 2018.
- **About Cope India:** It is series of international Air Force exercises between Indian Air Force (IAF) and United States Air Force conducted on and over Indian soil. The first such exercise was conducted at IAF air force station in Gwalior from February 2004.

## Harit Diwali-Swasth Diwali” campaign launched by Ministry of Environment today

- **Air pollution** is a serious health issue in the country especially in the northern parts during winter seasons. The air pollution in the northern region is attributed to dust, burning of crops in certain states, burning of garbage construction and prevailing climatic conditions. This air pollution has serious impacts on the health of children aged people and people suffering from respiratory ailments. Diwali which is a festival of lights falls during the same period. As a matter of practice people have been celebrating Diwali by bursting crackers. Crackers contains combustible chemicals that include potassium chlorate powdered aluminum, magnesium, salts of barium, copper, sodium, lithium, strontium etc. and emits smoke on combustion of these chemicals along with sound. This smoke and sound has health impacts on children, aged people and also animal and birds. Apart from these compounds large amount of waste is also generated after bursting of crackers. Keeping in view the above detrimental effects and also the importance of the festival, Ministry has initiated a “Harit-Diwali” campaign.
- **This campaign** was initiated in 2017-18 wherein large number of school children especially from eco-clubs participated and took pledge to minimize bursting of crackers and also discouraged the neighborhood and their friends from bursting of crackers. During this intensive campaign, the children were advised to celebrate Diwali in an environment-friendly manner by gifting plant sapling to their relatives and friends along with sweets, undertake cleaning of houses, neighbourhoods, schools, collect old books and unused notebooks gift to needy children, donate old warm clothing, blankets to night-shelters and other homeless people. The children were encouraged to light up their houses and their schools with candles and diyas. The above campaign was extremely successful and the air quality had not deteriorated post Diwali in 2017 unlike what was experienced in 2016.
- **On the above lines**, the Ministry has initiated the similar campaign, but this year the campaign has been extended Pan-India. The “Harit Diwali-Swasth Diwali” campaign is now merged with “Green Good Deed” movement that has been initiated as a social mobilization for conservation and protection of environment. The Ministry encourages all schools and colleges to be part of this campaign.

## Organization of Lok Adalats

- **(1) Every State Authority or District Authority** or the Supreme Court Legal Services Committee or every High Court Legal Services Committee or, as the case may be, Taluk Legal Services Committee may organise Lok Adalats at such intervals and places and for exercising such jurisdiction and for such areas as it thinks fit.
- **(2) Every Lok Adalat** organised for an area shall consist of such number of :-
  - **(a) Serving or retired judicial officers and**
  - **(b) Other persons**, of the area as may be specified by the State Authority or the District Authority or the Supreme Court Legal Services Committee or the High Court Legal Services Committee, or as the case may be, the Taluk Legal Services Committee, organising such Lok Adalats.
- **(3) The experience and qualifications** of other persons referred to in clause (b) of sub-section (2) for Lok Adalats organised by the Supreme Court Legal Services Committee shall be such as may be prescribed by the Central Government in consultation with the Chief Justice of India.
- **(4) The experience and qualifications** of other persons referred to in clause (b) of sub-section (2) for Lok Adalats other than referred to in sub-section (3) shall be such as may be prescribed by the State Government in consultation with the Chief Justice of the High Court.
- **(5) A Lok Adalat** shall have jurisdiction to determine and to arrive at a compromise or settlement between the parties to a dispute in respect of :-



- (i) Any case pending before or
  - (ii) Any matter which is falling within the jurisdiction of, and is not brought before, any court for which the Lok Adalat is organised. Provided that the Lok Adalat shall have no jurisdiction in respect of any case or matter relating to an offence not compoundable under any law.
- **Section 20. Cognizance of Cases by Lok Adalats**
  - **(1) Where in any case** referred to in clause (i) of sub-section (5) of Section 19-(i)
  - **(i) (a) The parties thereof agree or**
  - **(i) (b) One of the parties** thereof makes an application to the court, for referring the case to the Lok Adalat for settlement and if such court is prima facie satisfied that there are chances of such settlement or
  - **(ii) The court is satisfied** that the matter is an appropriate one to be taken cognizance of by the Lok Adalat, the court shall refer the case to the Lok Adalat: Provided that no case shall be referred to the Lok Adalat under sub-clause (b) of clause (i) or clause (ii) by such court except after giving a reasonable opportunity of being heard to the parties.
  - **(2) Notwithstanding** anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, the Authority or Committee organising the Lok Adalat under sub-section (1) of Section 19 may, on receipt of an application from any, one of the parties to any matter referred to in clause (ii) of sub-section (5) of Section 19 that such matter needs to be determined by a Lok Adalat, refer such matter to the Lok Adalat, for determination; Provided that no matter shall be referred to the Lok Adalat except after giving a reasonable opportunity of being heard to the other party.
  - **(3) Where any case** is referred to a Lok Adalat under sub-section (1) or where a reference has been made to it under sub-section (2), the Lok Adalat shall proceed to dispose of the case or matter and arrive at a compromise or settlement between the parties.
  - **(4) Every Lok Adalat shall**, while determining any reference before it under this Act, act with utmost expedition to arrive at a compromise or settlement between the parties and shall be guided by the principles of justice equity, fair play and other legal principles.
  - **(5) Where no award** is made by the Lok Adalat on the ground that no compromise or settlement could be arrived at between the parties, the record of the case shall be returned by it to the court, from which the reference has been received under sub-section (1) for disposal in accordance with law.
  - **(6) Where no award** is made by the Lok Adalat on the ground that no compromise or settlement could be arrived at between the parties, in a matter referred to in sub-section (2), that Lok Adalat shall advise the parties to seek remedy in a court.
  - **(7) Where the record** of the case is returned under sub-section (5) to the court, such court shall proceed to deal such reference under sub-section (1).
  - **Section 21. Award of Lok Adalat** (1) Every award of the Lok Adalat shall be deemed to be a decree of a civil court or, as the case may be, an order of any other court and where a compromise or settlement has been arrived at, by a Lok Adalat in a case referred to under sub-section (1) of Section 20, the court-fee paid in such case shall be refunded in the manner provided under the Court Fees Act, 1870 (7 of 1870).
  - **(2) Every award** made by a Lok Adalat shall be final and binding on all the parties to the dispute, and no appeal shall lie to any court against the award.
  - **Section 22. Powers of Lok Adalat or Permanent Lok Adalat** (1) The Lok Adalat shall, for the purposes of holding any determination under this Act, have the same powers as are vested in a civil court under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 (5 of 1908), while trying a suit in respect of the following matters, namely:-
    - (a) The summoning and enforcing the attendance of any witness and examining him on oath.
    - (b) The discovery and production of any document.
    - (c) The reception of evidence on affidavits.
    - (d) The requisitioning of any public record or document or copy of such record or document from any court or office and
    - (e) Such other matters as may be prescribed.
  - **Without prejudice to the generality** of the powers contained in sub-section (1), every Lok Adalat shall have the requisite powers to specify its own procedure for the determination of any dispute coming before it.
  - **All proceedings** before a Lok Adalat shall be deemed to be judicial proceedings within the meaning of Sections 193, 219 and 228 of the Indian Penal Code (45 of 1860) and every Lok Adalat shall be deemed to be a civil court for the purpose of Section 195 and Chapter XXVI of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973(2 of 1974).



## LOK ADALAT

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- **Lok Adalat** is a forum where the disputes/cases pending in the court of law or at pre-litigation stage are settled/compromised amicably. The Lok Adalat has been given statutory status under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987. Under the said Act, the award made by the Lok Adalats is deemed to be the decree of a civil court and is final and binding on all parties. No appeal lies before any court against its award.
- **NATURE OF CASES TO BE REFERRED TO LOK ADALAT** 1.) Any case pending before any court 2.) Any dispute which has not been brought before any court and is likely to be filed before the court. Provided that any matter relating to an offence not compoundable under the law shall not be settled in Lok Adalat.
- **HOW TO GET THE CASE REFERRED TO THE LOK ADALAT FOR SETTLEMENT** A) Case pending before the court 1.) If the parties agree to settle the dispute in Lok Adalat or. 2.) One of the parties makes an application to the court or . 3.) The court is satisfied that that the matter is an appropriate one for settlement in Lok Adalat.
- **B) Any dispute at pre-litigative stage** The State Legal Services Authority or District Legal Services Authority as the case may be on receipt of an application from any one of the parties to any pre-litigation stage matter refer such matter to the Lok Adalat for amicable settlement

## Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2016

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- **What is the Citizenship Amendment Bill 2016?** The Citizenship Amendment Bill was proposed in Lok Sabha on July 19, amending the Citizenship Act of 1955.
- **If this Bill is passed in Parliament**, illegal migrants from certain minority communities coming from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan will then be eligible for Indian citizenship.
- **In short, illegal migrants** belonging to the Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian religious communities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan would not be imprisoned or deported.
- **Moreover**, these citizens gain permanent citizenship after six years of residency in India instead of 11 years — as mentioned in the Citizenship Act (1955). The registration of Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders may get cancelled if they violate any law.
- **What is the Citizenship Act 1995?** Under Article 9 of the Indian Constitution, a person who voluntarily acquires citizenship of any other country is no longer an Indian citizen. Citizenship by descent: Persons born outside India on or after January 26, 1950, but before December 10, 1992, are citizens of India by descent if their father was a citizen of India at the time of their birth.
- **From December 3, 2004**, onwards, persons born outside of India shall not be considered citizens of India unless their birth is registered at an Indian consulate within one year of the date of birth. In Section 8 of the Citizenship Act 1955, if an adult makes a declaration of renunciation of Indian citizenship, he loses Indian citizenship.
- **Who is an illegal immigrant?** According to the Citizenship Act (1955), an illegal immigrant is defined as a person who enters India without a valid passport or stays in the country after the expiry of the visa permit. Also, the immigrant who uses false documents for the immigration process.
- **What are the guidelines to become an Indian citizenship?** Citizenship is granted to an individual by the government of the country when he/she complies with the legal formalities, so it's like a judicial concept.
- **In India, the Citizenship Act, 1995 prescribes five ways of acquiring citizenship:** Birth. Descent. Registration. Naturalization. Incorporation of the territory.

- **Assam NRC:** The National Register of Citizens (NRC) is a list that contains names of Indian citizens of Assam. It was last prepared after Census in 1951. Assam, which had faced an influx of people from Bangladesh since the early 20th century, is the only state having an NRC.
- **The Assam government** on July 30, 2018 released the second and final draft of the state's National Register of Citizens (NRC). The draft includes the names of Indian citizens who have been residing in Assam before March 25, 1971.
- **As per the Draft**, the total number of persons included in the list is 2,89,83,677 leaving a total of 40,70,707 as ineligible for inclusion. Out of 40,70,707 names, 37,59,630 names have been rejected and 2,48,077 names are kept on hold.

## International Conference on Status and Protection of Coral Reefs (STAPCOR – 2018)

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- **Theme: “Reef for Life”** Organizers: It was jointly organized by Department of Environment and Forest, Union Territory of Lakshadweep Administration with the technical support of Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) and in association with Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Environmental Information System (ENVIS) in consonance with declaration of year 2018 as 3rd decadal International year of Reefs.
- **What is STAPCOR?** The effect of climate change and global warming along with El-Nino on the corals has led to heavy bleaching internationally during the year 1998. This led to the foundation of STAPCOR with a decision to have an international conference in every 10 years to review the status and progress of coral reefs all over the world.
- **The goals of the 3rd IYOR – 2018 are to:** Strengthen awareness about ecological, economic, social and cultural value of coral reefs and associated ecosystems. Improve understanding of the critical threats to reefs and generate both practical and innovative solutions to reduce these threats. Generate urgent action to develop and implement effective management strategies for conservation and sustainable use of these ecosystems.
- **Background:** The first IYOR was designated in 1997 in response to the increasing threats on coral reefs and associated ecosystems. The hope was to increase awareness of the value of and threats to coral reefs, and to promote conservation, research and management efforts on a global scale.
- **What are Corals?** Corals are invertebrates belonging to a large group of colourful and fascinating animals called Cnidarians. Other animals in this group include jellyfish and sea anemones. Each individual coral animal is called a polyp, and most live in groups of hundreds to thousands of genetically identical polyps that form a 'colony'. The colony is created by a process called budding, where the original polyp literally grows copies of itself.
- **Hard and Soft Corals:** Corals are generally classified as either “hard” or “soft”. There are around 800 known species of hard coral, also known as ‘reef building’ or scleractinian corals. Soft corals, or octocorals, which include sea fans, sea feathers and sea whips, don't have the rock-like calcareous skeleton, instead they grow wood-like cores for support and fleshy rinds for protection.
- **Soft corals** also live in colonies, that often resemble brightly coloured plants or trees, and are easy to tell apart from hard corals as their polyps have tentacles that occur in multiples of 8, and have a distinctive feathery appearance. Soft corals are found in oceans from the equator to the north and south poles, generally in caves or on ledges. Here, they hang down in order to capture food floating by in the currents.
- **What are coral reefs?** Coral reefs have evolved on earth over the past 200 to 300 million years, and have developed a unique and highly evolved form of symbiosis. Coral polyps have developed this relationship with tiny single-celled algae known as zooxanthellae. Inside the tissues of each coral polyp live these zooxanthellae, sharing space and nutrients.
- **This symbiosis** between plant and animal also contributes to the brilliant colors of coral that can be seen while diving on a reef. It is the importance of light that drives corals to compete for space on the sea floor, and so constantly pushes the limits of their physiological tolerances in a competitive environment among so many different species. However, it also makes corals highly susceptible to environmental stress.

## Invest India

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- **Invest India** received this award for excellence in servicing and supporting major global wind turbines company in establishment of blade manufacturing plant in India while committing to train local staff and produce 1 gigawatt (GW) of renewable energy. Implementation of this project is expected to reduce India's wind energy cost significantly.

- **What is Invest India?** Invest India is the National Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency of India and acts as the first point of reference for investors in India. Invest India is set up as a non profit venture under the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Ministry of Commerce and Industries, Government of India.
- **A joint venture:** Operationalized in early 2010, Invest India is set up as a joint venture company between the Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce & Industry (35% equity), Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) (51% equity), and State Governments of India (0.5% each).
- **Functions:** The core mandate of Invest India is investment promotion and facilitation. It provides sector-specific and state-specific information to a foreign investor, assists in expediting regulatory approvals, and offers hand-holding services. Its mandate also includes assisting Indian investors to make informed choices about investment opportunities overseas.
- **Why Invest in India?** India to remain one of the fastest growing economies in the world- International Monetary Fund. FDI inflows increased by 37% since the launch of Make in India initiative. Leading investors ranked India as the most attractive market. Largest youth population in the world. Huge domestic market. Rising economic influence- IOR and INSTC. India registered a record improvement on EoDB ranking from 142 to 100 between 2014-2017.
- **UN Investment Promotion Award:** The awards are given annually by United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) since 2002 as part of its investment promotion and facilitation programme.
- **It honours investment promotion agencies (IPAs)** and their governments for their achievements. It also seeks to showcase best practices in attracting investment into Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)-related projects that can inspire investment promotion practitioners in developing and developed countries.

## SC order on use and sale of firecrackers

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- **What's in the Supreme Court order?** Refusing a complete ban, the top court has permitted the use and sale of "greener" firecrackers which have low emission. Firecrackers with permissible decibel sound limits will be allowed to be sold in the market.
- **Firecrackers** will be allowed to be burst for 2 hours, 8pm to 10pm on Diwali. For New Year and Christmas, the time allotted is 11.45 pm to 12.30 am.
- **The Supreme Court** has restrained E-commerce websites like Flipkart and Amazon from selling firecrackers which are beyond the permissible limit. Websites will attract contempt of court charges if they don't adhere to court's direction.
- **Station house officers** of police stations concerned will be held liable if banned firecrackers are sold in their areas. The Court has also directed Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organization (PESO) to review the chemical composition of fireworks, particularly reducing Aluminium content.
- **Background:** Three children, aged between three and four, were among the petitioners who sought blanket ban on the sale, use and transportation of firecrackers citing concerns of air pollution. On October 9 last year, the Supreme Court had suspended the use of firecrackers till November 1 in Delhi-NCR to test whether and how much, firecrackers contribute to the air quality.
- **The apex court** had said there is a need to take into account all aspects, including the fundamental right of livelihood of firecracker manufacturers and the right to health of over 1.3 billion people in the country, while considering a plea for the ban.

## Seoul Peace Prize:

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- **Context:** Seoul Peace Prize Committee has decided to confer 2018 Seoul Peace Prize on Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- **PM Modi** has been selected for award in recognition of his dedication for improving international cooperation, raising global economic growth, accelerating Human Development of people in India by fostering economic growth and furthering development of democracy through anti-corruption and social integration efforts.

- **About Seoul Peace Prize:** It was established in 1990 to commemorate success of the 24th Olympic Games held in Seoul, South Korea. It was established to crystallize Korean people's yearning for peace on Korean Peninsula and in the rest of the world. It is awarded biennially to those individuals who have made their mark through contributions to harmony of mankind, reconciliation between nations and world peace.

## Druzhba-III:

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- **What is it?** It is a joint bilateral military exercise between Pakistan and Russian special forces. The 2018 edition is being held in Pakistan. Background: Druzhba military exercise between Russia and Pakistan was started in 2016. "Druzhba" is Russian word, which means "friendship".
- **Iron Magic 19:** What is it? It is joint military exercise between United Arab Emirates (UAE) and United States (US). The latest edition is being held in Dubai.



## eCourts Project

- **The eCourts Project** was conceptualized on the basis of the "National Policy and Action Plan for Implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Indian Judiciary – 2005" submitted by eCommittee, Supreme Court of India with a vision to transform the Indian Judiciary by ICT enablement of Courts.
- **Ecommittee** is a body constituted by the Government of India in pursuance of a proposal received from Hon'ble the Chief Justice of India to constitute an eCommittee to assist him in formulating a National policy on computerization of Indian Judiciary and advise on technological communication and management related changes.
- **The eCourts Mission Mode Project**, is a Pan-India Project, monitored and funded by Department of Justice, Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India for the District Courts across the country.
- **THE PROJECT ENVISAGES** To provide efficient & time-bound citizen centric services delivery as detailed in eCourt Project Litigant's Charter. To develop, install & implement decision support systems in courts. To automate the processes to provide transparency in accessibility of information to its stakeholders.
- **To enhance judicial productivity**, both qualitatively & quantitatively, to make the justice delivery system affordable, accessible, cost effective, predictable, reliable and transparent.
- **Phase-I** : In Phase-I of the eCourts Project beginning from 2007, a large number of Court Complexes, Computer Server Rooms and Judicial Service Centres were readied for computerization of the District Courts. The District and Taluka Court Complexes covered in Phase-I were computerized with installation of hardware, LAN and Case Information Software (CIS), for providing basic case related services to the litigants and the lawyers. A large number of District Courts launched their websites for the convenience of the different stakeholders. The Change Management exercise was undertaken to train the Judicial Officers and Court Staff in the use of computers and Case Information System (CIS) was successfully implemented. The Judicial Officers were trained by the Master Trainers trained from amongst them for continuing training programme. The CIS Master trainers have trained District System Administrators (DSAs) in the use of CIS. The DSAs have trained all the Court Staff in the use of CIS. The data entry for all pending cases has reached an advanced stage of completion. The Process Re-Engineering exercise was initiated to have a fresh look on the process, procedures, systems and Court Rules in force in the different District Courts under High Courts. The Phase-I concluded with extended timelines upto 30th March 2015.
- **Phase II**: The Policy and Action Plan Document Phase-II of the eCourts Project, received approval of Hon'ble the Chief Justice of India on 8th January 2014. The government of India sanctioned the project on 4th August 2015. In Phase-II, the covered courts are provisioned for additional hardware with (1+3) systems per Court Room, the uncovered Courts of Phase-I and the newly established Courts with (2+6) systems per Court Room and the Court Complexes are provisioned for hardware, LAN etc.
- **The dynamic implementation** structure provides for greater participation and cooperation between the eCommittee, the Department of Justice (Government of India), NIC, DietY and Ministry of finance. It provides for High Courts as Implementing Agency, of the project under its jurisdiction. The Infrastructure Model provides for adopting Cloud Computing Architecture which is efficient and cost effective, while retaining the present Servers Rooms as Network Rooms and Judicial Service centers as Centralized Filing Centres. Provision has been made for computerization of office of District Legal Services Authority; Taluka Legal Services Committee, the National Judicial Academy and the State Judicial Academies for efficient delivery of services and training.
- **Continuing with the implementation** of Free and Open Source Solutions (FOSS), Phase-II has adopted the Core-Periphery model of Case Information Software, the core being Unified as National Core, while the periphery developed according to requirement of each High Court, with NIC, Pune continuing to be the Centre for Software Development and related applications, ensuring software compatibility and interoperability, both horizontally and vertically, with the data including metadata to be unified and standardized.
- **In Phase-II**, all the remaining Court Complexes are provisioned to be connected with Jails and Desktop based Video Conferencing to go beyond routine remands and production of under-trial prisoners. It will also be used for recording evidence in sensitive cases and gradually extended to cover as many types of cases as possible. With an emphasis on Capacity Building of Judicial Officers and Process Re-Engineering, the Phase-II provides for Judicial Knowledge Management System including Integrated Library Management System and use of Digital Libraries.
- **The Phase-II** of the project lays great emphasis on service delivery to the litigants, lawyers and other stakeholders. The websites will be Accessible Compliant and to the extent possible, the information will be available in the local languages. The applications for mobile phones, SMS and emails are extensively used as platforms for dissemination of information. Kiosk will be provided for every Court Complex. Certified copies of documents will be given online and ePayment Gateways will be provided for making deposits, payment of court fees, fines etc. The National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) will be further improvised to facilitate more qualitative information for Courts, Government and Public.

- **ecourts.gov.in** : On 7th August 2013, Hon'ble the Chief Justice of India launched the e-Courts National portal [ecourts.gov.in](http://ecourts.gov.in) of the eCourts Project. More than 2852 Districts and Taluka Court Complexes have secured their presence on the NJDG portal [ecourts.gov.in](http://ecourts.gov.in) and are providing Case Status, Cause lists online with many of them also uploading orders/judgments. The data of more than 7 crore pending and disposed of cases and 3.3 crore orders/judgments of District Courts in India is available on NJDG at present.
- **With dynamic real time data** generated and updated continuously, the NJDG is serving as a source of information of judicial delivery system for all the stakeholders. It is regularly analyzed for meaningful assistance in policy formation and decision making. The NJDG is working as National data warehouse for case data including the orders/judgments for Courts across the country with full coverage of District Courts.
- **The Online Analytical Processing**, and Business Intelligence Tools will help in the summation of multiple databases into tables with summarized reports for preparation of informative management system and dashboards for effective Court and Case Management. The Judicial Management Information System will be helpful in litigations and adjudication pattern analysis and also the impact analysis of any variation in governing factors relating to law, amendments, jurisdiction, recruitment etc. It will also serve as judicial performance enhancing measure for policy makers to be used for decision support system.

## Earth's inner core is softer, a study reveals

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- **Facts about the inner core of the Earth:** Radius: 1,220 kilometres (760 miles) i.e. 70 per cent of the Moon's radius. Composed of: Nickel-iron alloy. Temperature: 5,700 K (5,430 °C) or 9806 °F, which is almost the temperature of Sun.
- **What is inner core made of?** The inner core is made up of two layers outer and inner. Outer core is 1,355 miles (2,180 km) thick.
- **Why is the radius of inner core unknown?** There is no estimated radius of the inner core; however, it plays a distinct role in making Earth's magnetic field. The inner core is measured by shear waves, a seismology term, which so tiny and feeble that it can't be observed directly. In fact, detecting them has been considered the 'Holy Grail' of global seismology since scientists first predicted the inner core was solid in the 1930s and 40s.
- **Purpose of the Earth's inner core:** When charged particles from the solar wind collide with air molecules above Earth's magnetic poles, it causes the air molecules to glow, causing the auroras – the northern and southern lights.
- **How has it been discovered?** Researchers came up with a way to detect shear waves, or "J waves" in the inner core – a type of wave which can only travel through solid objects.
- **According to the research** published by the university, the wavefield method looks at the similarities between the signals at two receivers after a major earthquake, rather than the direct wave arrivals. The study shows these results can then be used to demonstrate the existence of J waves and infer the shear wave speed in the inner core.
- **It has been found that the inner core** shares some similar elastic properties with gold and platinum.
- **What is the significance of this method?** The understanding of the Earth's inner core has direct consequences for the generation and maintenance of the geomagnetic field, and without that geomagnetic field there would be no life on the Earth's surface.

## Large vacancies for judges in lower courts

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- **Directions issued:** Passing a suo motu order on the huge number of vacancies in the subordinate judiciary across the country, the court has sought the response from the High Courts/State governments as it noted that the recruitment process for filling 4,180 posts was already underway.
- **Noting** that there was a mismatch in the number of vacancies, the number of posts for which recruitment process is underway and those still pending, the apex court also sought details of the vacancies that have occurred since the current recruitment process commenced.
- **The court also sought information whether** "infrastructure and manpower available in the different states is adequate if all the posts that are borne in the cadre are to be filled up.

- **Malik Mazhar Sultan case:** A seven-month schedule for recruitment has been formulated by the top court in the Malik Mazhar Sultan case. If the time taken exceeds the schedule fixed by this Court, the reasons thereof should be furnished by the Registries of such High Courts/concerned authorities of the State where the recruitment is done through the Public Service Commission(s) which are in default.
- **Central recruitment to fill judges' vacancies is the right idea:** The Union law ministry is working with the Supreme Court to conduct a nationwide examination to recruit around 6,000 judges for the lower judiciary as a one-time measure.
- **Under the nationwide recruitment scheme,** a central agency will conduct the test with due importance given to local languages for those opting for a particular state. Subsequently, an all-India merit list will be prepared based on which the state governments will make the final appointments. Although this has been proposed as a one-time measure, there is a case here to have a permanent central judicial recruitment mechanism. This will also help ensure uniformity in judicial recruitment across the country.
- **Significance:** This is much needed given the huge number of vacancies for judges and the high pendency of cases. In fact, lower courts currently have a backlog of 2.78 crore cases. Unless judges are quickly recruited, this number can't be kept down. True, appointment of judges in district and subordinate courts is the responsibility of state governments and the high courts concerned. But things have come to this pass because of inordinate delays in holding examinations for judicial recruitment at the state level.

## Sittwe Port

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- **Where is Sittwe located?** Sittwe is the capital of Rakhine State (which has been in the news for the plight of Rohingya Muslims) in south-western Myanmar. It is located at the mouth of the Kaladan river, which flows into Mizoram in north-eastern India.
- **Significance of this port for India:** India has for years sought transit access through Bangladesh to ship goods to the landlocked north-eastern States. At present, the only route to this region from the rest of India is a rather circuitous one through a narrow strip of Indian territory nicknamed the Chicken's Neck in West Bengal, sandwiched between Bhutan and Bangladesh. The new route through Sittwe would significantly lower the cost and distance of movement from Kolkata to Mizoram and beyond.
- **About Kaladan project:** The Kaladan project connects Sittwe Port in Myanmar to the India-Myanmar border. The project was jointly initiated by India and Myanmar to create a multi-modal platform for cargo shipments from the eastern ports to Myanmar and to the North-eastern parts of the country through Myanmar. It is expected to open up sea routes and promote economic development in the North-eastern states, and also add value to the economic, commercial and strategic ties between India and Myanmar.
- **This project** will reduce distance from Kolkata to Sittwe by approximately 1328 km and will reduce the need to transport good through the narrow Siliguri corridor, also known as Chicken's Neck.
- **Way ahead:** Following this MoU the process of identifying bidders to maintain these facilities will be initiated by floating an RFP. Subsequent to the commencement of operations at this port, it would offer new infrastructure for trade including between India and Myanmar, thereby contributing to job creation and development in the whole region, particularly in the Rakhine and Chin States of Myanmar.

## The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty

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- **What's the issue?** The United States first alleged in its July 2014 Compliance Report that Russia is in violation of its INF Treaty obligations "not to possess, produce, or flight-test" a ground-launched cruise missile having a range of 500 to 5,500 kilometers or "to possess or produce launchers of such missiles." Subsequent State Department assessments in 2015, 2016, and 2017 repeated these allegations. Russia denies that it is in violation of the agreement. On December 8, 2017, the Trump administration released a strategy to counter alleged Russian violations of the Treaty.
- **About the Intermediate- Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty:** The 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty required the United States and the Soviet Union to eliminate and permanently forswear all of their nuclear and conventional ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges of 500 to 5,500 kilometers.



- **The treaty** marked the first time the superpowers had agreed to reduce their nuclear arsenals, eliminate an entire category of nuclear weapons, and utilize extensive on-site inspections for verification. As a result of the INF Treaty, the United States and the Soviet Union destroyed a total of 2,692 short-, medium-, and intermediate-range missiles by the treaty's implementation deadline of June 1, 1991.
- **Despite its name**, the INF Treaty covers all types of ground-launched cruise and ballistic missiles — whether their payload is conventional or nuclear. Moscow and Washington are prohibited from deploying these missiles anywhere in the world, not just in Europe. However, the treaty applies only to ground-launched systems. Both sides are free to deploy air- and sea-launched missiles within the 500-to-5,500-kilometer range.
- **What are the military implications of withdrawal?** It is unclear what INF-prohibited systems the United States could deploy to Europe or Asia in the near term. The U.S. military has not developed any land-based missiles within the prohibited ranges for decades and has only just started funding a new ground-launched cruise missile to match the 9M729.
- **Moscow** is in a very different position and could rapidly expand deployment. The number of operational 9M729 missiles has been quite limited, but released from its official obligations under the treaty, Moscow could deploy more units rapidly.
- **Russia** could also effectively reclassify the RS-26 Rubezh, an experimental system that has been tested just above the INF Treaty's 5,500-kilometer limit. To avoid violating the INF, Russian officials previously described the RS-26 as an intercontinental ballistic missile. However, it could form the basis for a missile of a slightly shorter range if Moscow wished to boost its INF forces — without counting it under the U.S.-Russian New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, or New START, governing longer-range systems.
- **What are the diplomatic implications of withdrawal?** Withdrawal is likely to be controversial with U.S. allies in NATO, further splitting the alliance at a difficult time for transatlantic relations. Many Western European NATO states favor retaining the INF, in conjunction with previous U.S. policy designed to push Moscow back into compliance. This raises concerns that divisions within NATO may worsen when the United States officially withdraws from the INF.
- **Withdrawal** will probably not lead to a new INF deal. Given its heavy investment in intermediate-range systems, China will not take up Trump's offer of talks with the United States and Russia. Moscow seems to be in no mood for negotiations.
- **Trump's move** is also likely to undermine the 2010 New START treaty governing U.S. and Russian long-range nuclear systems. The INF Treaty's demise will undercut New START by reopening questions on the relationship between intermediate and strategic systems that have been resolved for 30 years by the elimination of ground-based, intermediate-range missiles.

## Tea Board

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- **Key facts:** The mobile platform would have user-interface facilities with the targeted user groups (the small tea grower) and the various officials. It would also have information on the various activities of the board officials.
- **The existing database** of the STGs would be incorporated in the app, which would also give information on their registration process. There would be advisories on application of farm inputs and pesticide use. Small growers can also post queries for advice on pest control.
- **About Tea Board of India:** The Tea Board is set up under the Tea Act 1953. It has succeeded the Central Tea Board and the Indian Tea Licencing Committee which functioned respectively under the Central Tea Board Act, 1949 and the Indian Tea Control Act, 1938 which were repealed.
- **The Tea Board** is functioning as a statutory body of the Central Government under the Ministry of Commerce.
- **The Board is constituted of 31 members** (including Chairman) drawn from Members of Parliament, tea producers, tea traders, tea brokers, consumers, and representatives of Governments from the principal tea producing states, and trade unions. The Board is reconstituted every three years.
- **Functions:** The Tea Board India is responsible for the assignment of certification numbers to exports of certain tea merchants. This certification is intended to ensure the teas' origin, which in turn would reduce the amount of fraudulent labelling on rare teas.
- **The Tea Board India's** tasks include endorsement of the diverse production and productivity of tea, financial support of research organisations and the monitoring of advances in tea packaging as it relates to health beneficial aspects.
- **It coordinates research institutes**, the tea trade and government bodies, ensuring the technical support of the tea trade in the global industry.

## Cross-Border Insolvency

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- **The ILC recommended the adoption of the UNCITRAL Model Law of Cross Border Insolvency, 1997** as it provides for a comprehensive framework to deal with cross border insolvency issues. The Committee also recommended a few steps to ensure that there is no inconsistency between the domestic insolvency framework and the proposed Cross Border Insolvency Framework.
- **Need for cross-border insolvency framework:** As the size of the Indian economy grows, business and trade have adopted an increasingly international character. Creditors and corporates frequently transact business in more than one jurisdiction. Foreign banks and creditors finance Indian companies and Indian banks have foreign exposure. Also, as part of its Ease of Doing Business and Make in India policies, India seeks to attract foreign companies to set up manufacturing facilities in India.
- **Besides**, global experience demonstrates that cross-border investment decisions and their outcomes, are considerably affected by the insolvency laws in force in a country. Towards this end, even though the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 has resulted in significant improvement in India's insolvency regime, there is a need to include cross-border insolvency in the Code to provide a comprehensive insolvency framework.
- **Benefits associated:** Inclusion of cross-border insolvency framework will further enhance ease of doing business, provide a mechanism of cooperation between India and other countries in the area of insolvency resolution, and protect creditors in the global scenario.
- **Also, it will make India** an attractive investment destination for foreign creditors given the increased predictability and certainty of the insolvency framework.
- **UNCITRAL Model Law of Cross Border Insolvency, 1997:** The UNCITRAL Model Law has till now been adopted in 44 countries and forms part of international best practices in dealing with cross border insolvency issues. The model law gives precedence to domestic proceedings and protection of public interest.
- **The advantages of the model law** include greater confidence generation among foreign investors, adequate flexibility for seamless integration with the domestic Insolvency Law and a robust mechanism for international cooperation.
- **Four major principles of UNCITRAL Model Law** - The model law deals with four major principles of cross-border insolvency, namely:
  - **Direct access to foreign insolvency professionals and foreign creditors** to participate in or commence domestic insolvency proceedings against a defaulting debtor.
  - **Recognition of foreign proceedings & provision of remedies.** Cooperation between domestic and foreign courts & domestic and foreign insolvency practitioners.
  - **Coordination** between two or more concurrent insolvency proceedings in different countries. The main proceeding is determined by the concept of centre of main interest (COMI).
  - **Global scenario:** On the global scale, the UNCITRAL (United Nations Commission on International Trade Law) Model Law on Cross-Border Insolvency, 1997 (Model Law) has emerged as the most widely accepted legal framework to deal with cross-border insolvency issues while ensuring the least intrusion into the country's domestic insolvency law. Due to the growing prevalence of multinational insolvencies, the Model Law has been adopted by 44 States till date, including Singapore, UK and US.

## Harit Diwali-Swasth Diwali campaign

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- **Aim:** To reduce adverse environmental conditions especially pollution in the country after post Diwali celebrations due to excessive bursting of crackers which contributes significantly to air and noise pollution.
- **Harit Diwali-Swasth Diwali campaign:** This campaign was initiated in 2017-18 to enlighten children about harmful fire crackers and motivate them to celebrate Diwali in environment-friendly manner and not to buy fire crackers, instead buy gift, food items, or sweets for poor and underprivileged children living in their locality.
- **Under this campaign**, the MoEFCC will undertake various activities for creating awareness among various stakeholders and encourage people to participate in combating air pollution. This campaign was extremely successful and the air quality had not deteriorated post Diwali in 2017 unlike what was experienced in 2016.
- **Background:** Air pollution is a serious health issue in the country especially in the northern parts during winter seasons. It is attributed to dust, burning of crops in certain states, burning of garbage construction and prevailing climatic conditions.

- **This air pollution** has serious impacts on the health of children aged people and people suffering from respiratory ailments. Diwali which is a festival of lights falls during the same period. As a matter of practice people have been celebrating Diwali by bursting crackers.
- **Crackers contains combustible chemicals** that include potassium chlorate powdered aluminum, magnesium, salts of barium, copper, sodium, lithium, strontium etc. and emits smoke on combustion of these chemicals along with sound. This smoke and sound has health impacts on children, aged people and also animal and birds. Apart from these compounds large amount of waste is also generated after bursting of crackers.

## 'Gaming Garage':

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- **Context:** Andhra Pradesh government has proposed to set up a 'Gaming Garage' to generate employment and encourage entrepreneurs and game developers in view of its growing importance. The 'Gaming Garage' will be launched in Vijayawada very soon.
- **Key facts:** Companies such as the Unity Technologies, Denmark/San Francisco would provide the software. The Kajaani University of Applied Sciences (KAMK) of Finland would be knowledge/operational partner.
- **Any creative thinker** could walk into the Garage to develop a game of choice. The government would provide them with "the necessary software and infrastructure free of cost". It would also encourage them in commercialising their product.
- **Background:** The gaming became an industry with crores of rupees turnover with the rapid development of computers and smartphone technologies. The Cabinet in April gave its nod to animations and visual effects, gaming and comics policy to attract the best from the sector and an investment of about ₹6,400 crore by 2020.

## Miginging Island:

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- **Where is Miginging Island Located?** Compared to half the size of a football pitch, Miginging is a small rock Island, located in Lake Victoria which is the largest lake in Africa and the largest Tropical Lake in the whole world.
- **Why in News?** For over a decade, Miginging has been a source of tension between Uganda and Kenya, who have been unable to decide to whom it really belongs.

## World's longest sea crossing: Hong Kong-Zhuhai bridge:

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- **Chinese President Xi Jinping** has officially opened the world's longest sea crossing bridge, nine years after construction first began.
- **Including its access roads**, the bridge spans 55km (34 miles) and connects Hong Kong to Macau and the mainland Chinese city of Zhuhai.
- **The bridge has cost about \$20bn** (£15.3bn) and seen several delays. The bridge, designed to withstand earthquakes and typhoons, was built using 400,000 tonnes of steel, enough to build 60 Eiffel Towers.
- **About 30km of its total length** crosses the sea of the Pearl River delta. To allow ships through, a 6.7km section in the middle dips into an undersea tunnel that runs between two artificial islands.



## Computerization and computer networking of consumer forums in the country

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- **The CONFONET project** has been implemented in the backdrop of The Consumer Protection Act, 1986. Under the provision of the Act, quasi-judicial machinery, namely, Consumer Forums at the district level and Consumer Dispute Redressal Commissions at the State and National Level were setup. The project was initiated and an Executive Finance Committee (EFC) was prepared to provide a turnkey solution at each of the district forum, state commission & national level, including linkages with respective state and central governments.
- **Objective of ConfoNet** The project aims at improving operational efficiency, co-ordination, accessibility, speed in judicial administration and to set Information Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure at Consumer Redressal forums all over India.
- **It aims at providing:** - E- Governance - Efficiency - Transparency - Systematizing of working - To achieve time bound delivery of justice to the consumers.
- **Scope Of Project** The Confonet Project is a technical solution for development and implementation of a computer network based system for the application areas with main focus on Case Monitoring. The activities undertaken as part of the project include: System study, design & development of Case Monitoring System, the standardized application software for NCDRC, SCDRCs and District Forums
- **Specification finalization and supply of suitable Hardware for each of the 629 locations in phases depending on the readiness of the site** Procurement & supply of system software Networking including both LAN & WAN Training of staff on computer awareness & application usage Onsite deployment support through trained technical manpower posted at field locations

## Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI)

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- **The MoU will establish mutual co-operation framework** in the areas of Capacity Building of "Afghanistan Accountancy Board (AAB)", strengthening the IT Capacity and Quality Assurance in Afghanistan through facilitating Knowledge Transfer; Students and Members Exchange Programs; Conduct of Seminars, Conferences and Joint Activities mutually beneficial to both the parties.
- **About ICAI:** The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) is a statutory body established by an Act of Parliament of India, 'The Chartered Accountants Act, 1949', to regulate the profession of Chartered Accountancy in India.
- **ICAI is the second largest professional Accounting & Finance** body in the world. ICAI is the only licensing cum regulating body of the financial audit and accountancy profession in India.
- **It recommends the accounting standards** to be followed by companies in India to National Advisory Committee on Accounting Standards (NACAS). ICAI is solely responsible for setting the Standards on Auditing (SAs) to be followed in the audit of financial statements in India.
- **ICAI is one of the founder members of the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC)**, South Asian Federation of Accountants (SAFA), and Confederation of Asian and Pacific Accountants (CAPA).

## Appellate Tribunals against Benami Transactions

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- **Background:** Earlier the cabinet had notified sessions courts in 34 states and Union Territories, which will act as special courts for trial of offences under the benami transaction law. The rules and all the provisions of the Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Act came into force on November 1, 2016.
- **Salient Features:** Under the Prohibition of Benami Property Transactions Act of 1998, the government will appoint Adjudicating Authority Appellate Tribunal. The officials will come from the existing posts at the same level from the Income Tax Department and the Central Board of Direct Taxes.
- **The Adjudicating Authority and Appellate Tribunal** will be based in the National Capital Territory of Delhi (NCTD). Benches of Adjudicating Authority may sit in Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai, and the necessary notification in this regard will be issued after consultation with the Chairperson of the proposed Adjudicating Authority.
- **Benefits of the Tribunals:** The approval will result in effective and better administration of cases referred to the Adjudicating Authority and speedy disposal of appeals filed against the order of the Adjudicating Authority before the Appellate Tribunal.
- **It would provide first stage** review of administrative action under the PBPT Act. Establishment of the proposed Appellate Tribunal would provide an appellate mechanism for the order passed by the Adjudicating Authority under the PBPT Act.

## 'Main Nahin Hum' portal

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- **About 'Main Nahin Hum' portal and its significance:** The portal, which works on the theme 'Self4Society', will enable IT professionals and organisations to bring together their efforts towards social causes on one platform. The platform has been developed by MyGov.
- **The portal** will also help the employees in identifying the volunteering opportunities for social causes and they can also collaborate with other employees on such projects.
- **In doing so**, the portal is expected to help catalyse greater collaboration towards the service of the weaker sections of society, especially by leveraging the benefits of technology. It is also expected to generate wider participation of interested people who are motivated to work for the benefit of society.
- **Way ahead:** Since India has already become the third largest in terms of the start-up, social start-ups should become an intrinsic part of the ecosystem. Some of areas which require participation are saving natural resources such as water, agriculture, climate change etc.

## Chabahar Port

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- **Outcomes of the meeting:** The meeting decided to constitute a follow-up committee that would hold its first meeting within two months in Chabahar port. The committee would discuss and aim to finalise protocol to harmonise transit, roads, customs and consular matters for making the route attractive and decrease logistic costs.
- **Where is Chabahar port?** Iran's Chabahar port is located on the Gulf of Oman and is the only oceanic port of the country. The port gives access to the energy-rich Persian Gulf nations' southern coast and India can bypass Pakistan with the Chabahar port becoming functional.
- **Why Chabahar port is crucial for India?** The first and foremost significance of the Chabahar port is the fact that India can bypass Pakistan in transporting goods to Afghanistan. Chabahar port will boost India's access to Iran, the key gateway to the International North-South Transport Corridor that has sea, rail and road routes between India, Russia, Iran, Europe and Central Asia.
- **Chabahar port** will be beneficial to India in countering Chinese presence in the Arabian Sea which China is trying to ensure by helping Pakistan develop the Gwadar port. Gwadar port is less than 400 km from Chabahar by road and 100 km by sea.
- **With Chabahar port** being developed and operated by India, Iran also becomes a military ally to India. Chabahar could be used in case China decides to flex its navy muscles by stationing ships in Gwadar port to reckon its upper hand in the Indian Ocean, Persian Gulf and Middle East.

- **With Chabahar port** becoming functional, there will be a significant boost in the import of iron ore, sugar and rice to India. The import cost of oil to India will also see a considerable decline. India has already increased its crude purchase from Iran since the West imposed ban on Iran was lifted.
- **Chabahar port** will ensure in the establishment of a politically sustainable connectivity between India and Afghanistan. This is will, in turn, lead to better economic ties between the two countries. From a diplomatic perspective, Chabahar port could be used as a point from where humanitarian operations could be coordinated.

## MoU amongst BRICS nations regarding cooperation in the social and labour sphere

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- **As per the MoU:** The parties including India have agreed to cooperate and hold mutual events in the prominent areas viz. labour legislation and enforcement, protection of workers' rights with focus on vulnerable groups, Employment and labour market policies, Professional education, skills and training and Social protection.
- **The member countries** may utilize the BRICS Network of Labour Research Institutes and BRICS Social Security Cooperation Framework for cooperation on Social Security and other labour issues. However, the Memorandum is not an International Treaty and does not create rights and obligations for the parties governed by international law.
- **Significance and major Impacts:** The MoU provides a mechanism for cooperation, collaboration and maximum synergy amongst BRICS member countries with the common objective of inclusive growth and shared prosperity in the new industrial revolution. This would facilitate member countries to share knowledge and also implement joint programmes on matter of Labour and Employment, Social Security and Social dialogue.
- **This would also ensure networking** of international Training Centre of International Labour Organisation (ILO) with the BRICS Network of Labour Institutes which includes V.V. Giri National Labour Institute of India. This network would specifically focus on the theme of youth employment and research on new forms of employment. This network will also explore new learning technologies, including virtual network to deepen cooperation, exchange of information and capacity building. The BRICS Social Security cooperation framework will deepen social security cooperation among BRICS nations and would facilitate cooperation for improvement of social security systems and social security agreements among member countries.
- **What is BRICS?** BRICS is an acronym for the grouping of the world's leading emerging economies, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Summits: The BRICS Leaders' Summit is convened annually with discussions representing spheres of political and socio-economic coordination, in which member countries have identified several business opportunities, economic complementarities and areas of cooperation.
- **Chairship:** The Chairship of the forum is rotated annually among the members, in accordance with the acronym B-R-I-C-S. Over and above the summit, BRICS cooperation in the past decade has expanded to include an annual programme of over 100 sectoral meetings. Cooperation among members is predicated on three levels or "tracks" of interaction, namely:
  - **Track I:** Formal diplomatic engagement between the national governments. Track II: Engagement through government-affiliated institutions, e.g. state-owned enterprises and business councils. Track III: Civil society and "people-to-people" engagement.
- **Facts for Prelims:** The First BRIC Summit was held in June 2009 in Yekaterinburg, Russia. The Ninth BRICS Summit was held in Xiamen, China under the theme "BRICS: Stronger Partnership for a Brighter Future". The leaders built on achievements already made with a share vision for future development of BRICS, discussed international and regional issues of common concern and adopted the Xiamen Declaration.

## Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF)

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- **The approval** entails an estimated fund size of Rs.7,522 crore, comprising Rs.5,266.40 crore to be raised by the Nodal Loaning Entities (NLEs), Rs. 1,316.6 crore beneficiaries contribution and Rs.939.48 crore budgetary support from the Government of India.
- **National Bank** for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), National Cooperatives Development Corporation (NCDC) and all scheduled Banks (hereinafter referred as Banks) shall be the nodal Loaning Entities.
- **Benefits- it helps in:** Creation of fisheries infrastructure facilities both in marine and Inland fisheries sectors. Employment opportunities to over 9.40 lakh fishers/fishermen/fisherfolk and other entrepreneurs in fishing and allied activities.

- **Attracting private investment** in creation and management of fisheries infrastructure facilities. Adoption of new technologies. Augmenting fish production to achieve its target of 15 million tonne by 2020 set under the Blue Revolution; and achieving a sustainable growth of 8% -9% thereafter to reach the fish production to the level of about 20 MMT by 2022-23.
- **Funds:** FIDF would provide concessional finance to State Governments / UTs and State entities, cooperatives, individuals and entrepreneurs etc., for taking up of the identified investment activities of fisheries development. Under FIDF, loan lending will be over a period of five years from 2018-19 to 2022-23 and maximum repayment will be over a period of 12 years inclusive of moratorium of two years on repayment of principal.

## National Monitoring Framework on Sustainable Development Goals

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- **Composition of the committee:** The High Level Steering Committee will be chaired by Chief Statistician of India and Secretary, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). Special invitees: The Secretaries of data source Ministries and NITI Aayog members and Secretaries of other related Ministries.
- **Targets:** Measures to mainstream SDGs into on-going national policies, programmes and strategic action plans to address the developmental challenges. Statistical indicators of NIF will be the backbone of monitoring of SDGs at the national and state level and will scientifically measure the outcomes of the policies to achieve the targets under different SDGs. Based on statistical indicator, the MoSPI will bring out national reports on implementation of SDGs. The Report will facilitate assessment of progress, identify challenges and give recommendations for follow up at the national level.
- **High Level Steering Committee** will review the National Indicator Framework on regular basis for its improvement. Data source Ministries / Departments will be responsible for providing regular information to MoSPI on these indicators at required intervals and disaggregation for national and sub-national reporting of SDGs. Advanced IT tools will be used for close and effective monitoring.
- **Significance of the framework:** SDGs with 17 Goals and 169 Targets intend for promotion of sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth, creating greater opportunities for all, reducing inequalities, raising basic standards of living, fostering equitable social development and inclusion, promoting integrated and sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems.
- **NIF will help** in outcome-based monitoring & reporting on progress on SDGs at National level. There is no direct financial implication on implementation of the National Indicator Framework. However, the respective Ministries will need to re-align and strengthen their data systems to facilitate monitoring of the SDG indicators. SDGs are expected to bring change in the lives of people and the monitoring of progress of implementation of SDGs will benefit the entire nation.
- **About SDGs:** The UN General Assembly in its 70th Session considered and adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the next 15 years. The 17 SDGs came into force with effect from 1st January, 2016.
- **Though not legally binding,** the SDGs have become de facto international obligations and have potential to reorient domestic spending priorities of the countries during the next fifteen years. Countries are expected to take ownership and establish a national framework for achieving these Goals. Implementation and success will rely on countries' own sustainable development policies, plans and programmes.
- **Countries would be responsible** for follow-up and review at the national level, with regard to the progress made in implementing the Goals and targets. Actions at the national level to monitor progress under SDGs will require quality, accessible and timely data.

## BS Norms

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- **What are BS norms?** The BS — or Bharat Stage — emission standards are norms instituted by the government to regulate the output of air pollutants from internal combustion engine equipment, including motor vehicles. India has been following the European (Euro) emission norms, though with a time-lag of five years.
- **Difference between BS-IV and the new BS-VI:** The major difference in standards between the existing BS-IV and the new BS-VI auto fuel norms is the presence of sulphur. The newly introduced fuel is estimated to reduce the amount of sulphur released by 80 per cent, from 50 parts per million to 10 ppm. As per the analysts, the emission of NOx (nitrogen oxides) from diesel cars is also expected to reduce by nearly 70 per cent and 25 per cent from cars with petrol engines.

- **Why is it important to upgrade these norms?** Upgrading to stricter fuel standards helps tackle air pollution. Global automakers are betting big on India as vehicle penetration is still low here, when compared to developed countries. At the same time, cities such as Delhi are already being listed among those with the poorest air quality in the world. The national capital's recent odd-even car experiment and judicial activism against the registration of big diesel cars shows that governments can no longer afford to relax on this front.
- **With other developing countries** such as China having already upgraded to the equivalent of Euro V emission norms a while ago, India has been lagging behind. The experience of countries such as China and Malaysia shows that poor air quality can be bad for business. Therefore, these reforms can put India ahead in the race for investments too.
- **The government could face two key challenges in implementing the decision:** First, there are questions about the ability of oil marketing companies to quickly upgrade fuel quality from BS-III and BS-IV standards to BS-VI, which is likely to cost upwards of Rs 40,000 crore.
- **Second**, and more challenging, is the task of getting auto firms to make the leap. Automakers have clearly said that going to BS-VI directly would leave them with not enough time to design changes in their vehicles, considering that two critical components — diesel particulate filter and selective catalytic reduction module — would have to be adapted to India's peculiar conditions, where running speeds are much lower than in Europe or the US.





## Status of Information Technology in Indian Courts

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- **Status of Information Technology in Indian Courts** Ever since NIC took up computerization in Supreme Court in 1990, many applications have been computerized which have impact on masses i.e. litigants. Following are some of the applications which have been successfully implemented at Supreme Court and 18 High Courts and these applications have either direct or indirect impact on the masses .
- **Supreme Court of India** List of Business Information System (LOBIS) : It is about scheduling of cases to be heard by the courts on the following day. It enabled the Registries of Supreme Court and High Courts in eliminating manual process of Cause List generation thus any manipulation by vested interests. These databases contain details of fresh cases, disposed and pending cases. It is the backbone application of every Court.
- **Impact** : As Cause Lists are generated automatically by the computer manual intervention has been eliminated resulting in generation of Cause List in time with out any hassle
- **Cases are listed strictly in chronological order of date of filing; eliminated irregularities** All cases having the same law point(s) to be decided by the courts are bunched/grouped and posted before one bench. This has helped the courts in faster disposal of cases.
- **It has become simpler to recall dismissed cases when review petitions are filed.** On the spot reliable and instantaneous statistical reports are generated It has helped Registry of Supreme Court in streamlining its day to day activities to achieve one of the main objectives of COURTIS Project
- **Filing Counter Computerization** In the Supreme Court of India and all High Courts fresh cases are filed only before the computerized Filing Counters. As the advocates stand in queue for Filing cases before the counters, the data entry Operator enters preliminary details required for Registration such as Party names, advocate details, etc. The computer terminal at the query counter is used to attend to the queries of the litigants on the spot. The defects, if any, are listed out and handed over to the litigants/advocates for rectification. Time limitation is also checked by the system automatically.
- **Impact** The filing process is made easy The advocates/litigants need not wait for a long time in the queue The amount collected towards Court fee in a day is automatically calculated thus saving the time of court official's time Query counter avoids the litigants go around the sections to find out the Filing status
- **Filing process is orderly** Saves time and efforts of advocates and court officials

## Supreme Courts'

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- **COURTNIC** This is about providing Supreme Courts' pending case status information to litigants/advocates on any node of NICNET. COURTNIC answers about two hundred queries of litigants/advocates per day all over the country on the status of their pending cases. It is available on nominal charges. Primarily COURTNIC information is available in all NIC-High Court Computer Cells and in some District Court. It has been in use since 1993.
- **Impact** The response to the COURTNIC from the public is over-whelming, as pending cases information is available at his/her District headquarters. It avoids the litigants to come all over to Delhi from their place. The litigants need not find the status of their pending cases on phone as is the usual practice. Probably this facility is first of its kind in the world.
- **JUDIS** NIC has brought out Judgement Information System (JUDIS) consisting of complete text of all reported judgement of Supreme Court of India from 1950 to till Date. (<http://judis.nic.in>)
- **Supreme Court's pending Cases on IVR** Interested litigants and advocates can find out the status of their cases pending in Supreme Court on telephone by making use of Interactive Voice. Response System (IVR) free of charge. For accessing this, the phone number is: 011-24300601.

- **Cause Lists on Internet (<http://clists.nic.in>)** Causelists are scheduling of cases to be heard by the courts on the following day. The Causelists of Supreme Court and many other High Courts are available on NIC Web Servers. As the Supreme Court of India and all the 18 High Courts and their 10 Benches are fully computerised, all these courts generate Daily and Weekly Causelists from the computer servers installed by NIC. The Causelist application is the backbone application of all courts as no court can function with out that day's Causelist. Hence this has become near time critical application in all the Courts.
- **Immediately after generation of the Causelist** most of the courts cyclostyle the stencils cut from the printers attached to the servers for generating thousands of copies running into a few lakhs of pages every day. Due to this reason the courts take a lot of time for generation and supply of the Causelists to the advocates at their offices or residences. Usually the advocates receive the cyclostyled copies of a day's Cause List not before 8 PM. Some High Courts send the Causelists data on floppy to the Printers for printing thousands of copies. This process costs each High Courts lakhs of Rupees every year. By making the Causelists available on Internet, no High Court is incurring any expenditure as they are using the already available infrastructure and the Software of NIC.
- **Features It is available on Internet** Causelists of all High Courts can be accessed at URL i.e. (<http://10.249.17.134>) Advocates can generate their own Causelist consisting of his/her own cases Retrieval through the name of either petitioner or respondent Court wise list can be generated Judge wise list can be prepared Entire Causelist can be printed, if required Case no. wise access is possible Impact
- **Advocates** are able to receive the Cause lists almost immediately after courts hours
- **Advocate** can generate their own casuists which will contain only their cases, thus avoiding them to go through hundreds of pages to locate their cases As the application is available on Internet, the litigant public can easily find out whether their cases are coming for hearing or not, with out bothering the advocates
- **Some courts** are considering to reduce the generation of copies of Causelists, as most of the advocates are dependent on the Internet version of Causelists, thus the courts can save good amount money on annual basis

## Office of Profit

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- **Background:** The decision was based on an opinion tendered by the Election Commission in July, stating that the said office was exempt from purview of 'office of profit' under provisions of the Delhi MLAs (Removal of Disqualification) Act, 1997.
- **Government of NCT of Delhi**, in its submission to EC, had made it clear that Rogi Kalyan Samitis were constituted by it and that their chairpersons were not entitled to any remuneration and would therefore fall under the exemption granted by item 14 of the Schedule of the Delhi MLAs (Removal of Disqualification) Act. The Act provides for exemption of office of chairman, vice-chairman and members of the hospital advisory committee, Delhi, from purview of "office of profit".
- **What is an 'office of profit'?** If an MLA or an MP holds a government office and receives benefits from it, then that office is termed as an "office of profit". A person will be disqualified if he holds an office of profit under the central or state government, other than an office declared not to disqualify its holder by a law passed by Parliament or state legislature.
- **What are the basic criteria to disqualify an MP or MLA?** Basic disqualification criteria for an MP are laid down in Article 102 of the Constitution, and for an MLA in Article 191. They can be disqualified for: a) Holding an office of profit under government of India or state government; b) Being of unsound mind; c) Being an undischarged insolvent; d) Not being an Indian citizen or for acquiring citizenship of another country.
- **What is the underlying principle** for including 'office of profit' as criterion for disqualification?
- **Makers of the Constitution** wanted that legislators should not feel obligated to the Executive in any way, which could influence them while discharging legislative functions. In other words, an MP or MLA should be free to carry out her duties without any kind of governmental pressure.

## Anti- Defection law

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- **Background:** In 2017, a group of 19 lawmakers met then Governor C.Vidyasagar Rao and gave a memorandum expressing loss of confidence in Palaniswami and requested him to appoint a new Chief Minister.

- **The Speaker** then issued notice to the lawmakers asking them why they should not be disqualified under the anti-defection law. Subsequently, one of legislators, S.T.K. Jakkaiyan, switched over to the Palaniswami side and the others were disqualified.
- **The anti-defection law:** The 10th Schedule to the Constitution, popularly referred to as the 'Anti-Defection Law,' was inserted by the 52nd Amendment in 1985.
- **The grounds for disqualification** are mentioned under Articles 102 (2) and 191 (2). A Member of Parliament or state legislature is deemed to have defected:
- **When the elected member** voluntarily gives up his membership of a political party. If he votes or abstains from voting in such House contrary to any direction issued by his political party or anyone authorised to do so, without obtaining prior permission.
- **Independent members** would be disqualified if they joined a political party. Nominated members who were not members of a party could choose to join a party within six months; after that period, they were treated as a party member or independent member.
- **Exceptions under the Law:** Any person elected as speaker or chairman could resign from his party, and rejoin the party if he demitted that post. A party could be merged into another if at least two-thirds of its party legislators voted for the merger. The law initially permitted splitting of parties, but that has now been outlawed.
- **Decision of the Presiding Officer is subject to judicial review:** The law initially stated that the decision of the Presiding Officer is not subject to judicial review. This condition was struck down by the Supreme Court in 1992, thereby allowing appeals against the Presiding Officer's decision in the High Court and Supreme Court. However, it held that there may not be any judicial intervention until the Presiding Officer gives his order.

## Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC)

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- **About Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC):** The Government in August 2018 had sanctioned the scheme "Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC)" at a total cost of Rs.418 Cr for implementation up to 31.3.2020.
- **Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur** is the National Coordinating Institute to implement the SPARC programme. Details may be viewed at [www.sparc.iitkgp.ac.in](http://www.sparc.iitkgp.ac.in).
- **The scheme** aims at improving the research ecosystem of India's higher educational institutions by facilitating academic and research collaborations between Indian Institutions and the best institutions in the world.
- **Under this Scheme**, 600 joint research proposals will be awarded for 2 years to facilitate strong research collaboration between Indian research groups with the best in class faculty and renowned research groups in the leading universities of the world, in areas that are at the cutting edge of science or with direct social relevance to the mankind, specifically India.
- **Significance of the scheme:** This Scheme is expected to have a major impact in providing the best international expertise to address major national problems, expose Indian academicians to the best collaborators abroad, enable international faculty to stay in India for a longer duration, provide Indian students an opportunity to work in the world class laboratories, to develop strong bilateral relationships in research, and improve the international ranking of Indian Institutes.

## Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management Award, 2018

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- **About CAPAM:** Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM) is a non-profit association representing an international network of over 1100 senior public servants, Heads of Government, leading academics and researchers located in over 50 different countries across the Commonwealth.
- **The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG)**, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions is an institutional member of Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM).
- **CAPAM has been announcing its International Innovations Awards (IIA) Programme** bi-annually, since 1998. The CAPAM Awards celebrate the spirit of innovation in the public service by recognizing organizations that have made significant contributions to improve governance and services in the public sector.

- **Awardees: Unnayan Banka:** The initiative entitled "Unnayan Banka- Reinventing Education Using Technology of Banka District, State of Bihar has been awarded under the Category "Innovation Incubation".
- **"Unnayan Banka"** is an initiative which envisages "Quality education for all" especially for those at the bottom of the Pyramid, using latest technologies. It's a holistic model of overall development of youths from Education to Employability.
- **Unified Agriculture Markets:** "Unified Agriculture Markets" of Co-operation Department of Government of Karnataka has also been selected under the Category 'Innovation in Public Service Management'. This initiative has also been awarded the overall Gold Award for CAPAM Awards, 2018.

## International Air Transport Association (IATA)

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- **Highlights of the report:** Air passenger numbers worldwide could double to 8.2 billion in 2037. The biggest contribution in this growth will come from the Asia-Pacific region, which will account for half the total number of new passengers over the next 20 years.
- **While China** will climb up one spot to displace US as the world's largest aviation market in the mid-2020s, India will take the third place by surpassing the U.K. around 2024. By 2037, India is expected to add 414 million passengers to its existing 572 million passengers.
- **In fact, the Asia-Pacific region** is expected to see the fastest growth at the rate of 4.8%, followed by Africa (4.6%) and west Asia (4.4%). The other south-east Asian countries predicted to grow rapidly include Indonesia, likely to be the fourth largest by 2030 from its current ranking of 10th largest aviation market. Thailand, too, is expected to enter the top 10 markets in 2030.
- **About IATA:** What is it? The International Air Transport Association (IATA) is the trade association for the world's airlines, representing some 280 airlines or 83% of total air traffic. Formed in April 1945, it is the successor to the International Air Traffic Association, which was formed in 1919.
- **What it does?** IATA supports airline activity and helps formulate industry policy and standards. It also provides consulting and training services in many areas crucial to aviation.
- **Headquarters:** It is headquartered in Montreal, Quebec, Canada with Executive Offices in Geneva, Switzerland.

## India and Bangladesh sign agreements for enhancing inland and coastal waterways connectivity

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- **India and Bangladesh** sign agreements for enhancing inland and coastal waterways connectivity
- **Key facts:** The two countries have signed an agreement to use Chattogram and Mongla Ports in Bangladesh for movement of goods to and from India. A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) has also been signed for movement of passenger and cruise services.
- **An addendum** to 'Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade' (PIWTT) between India and Bangladesh has been signed for inclusion of Dhubri in India and Pangaon in Bangladesh as new Ports of Call.
- **The two sides** have also agreed to consider inclusion of Rupnarayanriver (National Waterway-86) from Geonkhali to Kolaghat in the protocol route and to declare Kolaghat in West Bengal as new Port of Call.
- **Both sides** agreed to declare Badarpur on river Barak (NW 16) as an Extended Port of Call of Karimganj in Assam and Ghorasal of Ashuganj in Bangladesh on a reciprocal basis.
- **Both sides** have also agreed for development of Jogighopa as a hub/trans-shipment terminal for movement of cargo to Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Bhutan and notifying Munsiganj River terminal by Bangladesh Customs for routing third party Exim cargo through Kolkata Port.
- **Benefits and significance:** The new arrangement will facilitate the movement of fly ash, cement, construction materials from India to Bangladesh through IWT on Rupnarayanriver.

- **The North Eastern states** would get connected directly to the ports of Kolkata and Haldia in India and Mongla in Bangladesh through waterways which would facilitate movement EXIM cargo and would also reduce the logistic costs.
- **The reconstruction** and opening up of Jangipur navigational lock on river Bhagirathi subject to the provisions of the Treaty between India and Bangladesh on Sharing of Ganga Waters at Farakka, 1996. This move has the potential to reduce the distance to Assam by more than 450 kms on the protocol routes.

## Citizen- Science repository of Indian mammals

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- **Key facts:** The initiative aims to develop individual species pages for all Indian mammals with information on identification, variation, distribution, breeding and non-breeding ecology and species conservation.
- **Now one** can contribute to the cause of science by sharing the picture of the animal on a specific website, providing the location of spotting. This will make more information available about lesser known mammals of the country.
- **Background:** As per current estimates, 426 species of mammals are found in India; of them 47 species are endemic to the Indian subcontinent. Along with well known species, the mammals of 100 species of rats and 126 species of bats and 24 species of whales of dolphins.
- **Significance of MaOI:** These photographic records will help researchers in having distribution map of mammals in the country. The photographs will not only help gather information on the distribution of the various species but also interactions between different species of mammals, like predation and mutualism.

## Tagore Award for Cultural Harmony:

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- **Context:** The Tagore Award for Cultural Harmony for the years 2014, 2015 & 2016 is being conferred on the doyen of Manipuri dance Sh. Rajkumar Singhajit Singh; Chhayanaut (a cultural organization of Bangladesh) and on one of India's greatest sculptors, Sh. Ram Vanji Sutar, respectively.
- **About the Tagore award:** The annual award was instituted by the Government of India during the commemoration of 150th Birth Anniversary of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore. The first Tagore Award was conferred on Pt. Ravi Shankar, the Indian Sitar Maestro in 2012 and second was conferred on Shri Zubin Mehta in 2013.
- **The award** carries an amount of Rs. 1 crore, a citation in a scroll, a plaque as well as an exquisite traditional handicraft/ handloom item.
- **The award** is open to all persons regardless of nationality, race, language, caste, creed or sex. Awardees are selected by a jury headed by the Prime Minister of India.

## IMC-2018:

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- **Context: India Mobile Congress is being held in New Delhi.** Theme: "NEW DIGITAL HORIZONS: Connect. Create. Innovate."
- **About IMC:** The India Mobile Congress 2018, hosted by the Department of telecommunications and the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), is an excellent platform for policy makers, industry and regulators to engage in meaningful deliberations to drive the future direction of this important sector.



## 5As - Ambition, Ability, Agility, Accountability & Achievement are the important to reform governance system: Vice President

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- **Setup realistic** but ambitious goals to stand up to aspirations of 600 million young Indians
- **The Vice President of India**, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that Ambition, Ability, Agility, Accountability and Achievement, are five important directions in which the country must move forward to reform our governance system cautioning officers not be complacent with current achievements.
- **Addressing the 64th Annual meeting** of the General Body of Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), as its President, the Vice President stressed the need to acquire skills to increase efficiency and effectiveness while implementing schemes. He tasked officers with an aim to take the benefits of the programmes to the needy, most vulnerable populations.
- **The Vice President** said that the bottom line of a development programme is the impact on human lives, the transformation it brings in the dignity, capability and prosperity of each citizen. He said resource institutions like the IIPA must take lead in order to make a leap forward in the way we govern ourselves.
- **The Vice President** called for setting up of realistic but ambitious goals to stand up to the aspirations of the 600 million young Indians. He called on the civil servants and administrators to make efforts to meet the challenges such as the urban rural divide, the gender divide, discrimination against women and social groups like Scheduled castes, pockets of poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy and etc.
- **There is a need to develop the ability** to adapt, improvise, innovate to create programmes and strategies to make them effectively address the challenges. We must be agile and pro-active, he added.
- **The Secretary to the Vice President**, Dr. I.V. Subba Rao, the Chairman of IIPA, Shri T.N. Chaturvedi, the Vice President of IIPA, Shri Shekhar Dutt and other dignitaries were also present on the occasion.

## Electoral Bond Scheme 2018

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- **Sale of Electoral Bonds** at Authorised Branches of State Bank of India (SBI) Posted On: 27 OCT 2018 3:55PM by PIB Delhi
- **Government of India** has notified the Electoral Bond Scheme 2018 vide Gazette Notification No. 20 dated 02nd January 2018. As per provisions of the Scheme, Electoral Bonds may be purchased by a person (as defined in item No.2(d) of Gazette Notification), who is a citizen of India or incorporated or established in India. A person being an individual can buy Electoral Bonds, either singly or jointly with other individuals. Only the Political Parties registered under Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (43 of 1951) and which secured not less than one per cent of the votes polled in the last General Election to the House of the People or the Legislative Assembly of the State, shall be eligible to receive the Electoral Bonds. The Electoral Bonds shall be encashed by an eligible Political Party only through a Bank account with the Authorized Bank.
- **2. State Bank of India (SBI)** in the 6th phase of sale, has been authorised to issue and encash Electoral Bonds through its 29 Authorised Branches (as per list enclosed) w.e.f. 01.11.2018 to 10.11.2018.
- **3. It may be noted that Electoral Bonds** shall be valid for fifteen calendar days from the date of issue and no payment shall be made to any payee Political Party if the Electoral Bond is deposited after expiry of the validity period. The Electoral Bond deposited by an eligible Political Party in its account shall be credited on the same day

## The Vice President of India And The Constitution

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- **1. The Office of the Vice-President Article 63.** The Vice-President of India is the second highest constitutional office in the country. He serves for a five-year term, but can continue to be in office, irrespective of the expiry of the term, until the successor assumes office.
- **The Constitution** is silent on who performs the duties of the Vice-President, when a vacancy occurs in the office of the Vice-President of India, before the expiry of his term, or when the Vice-President acts as the President of India. The only provision in the Constitution is with regard to the Vice-President's function as the Chairperson of the Council of States (Rajya Sabha), which is performed, during the period of such vacancy, by the Deputy Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha, or any other member of the Rajya Sabha authorised by the President of India.
- **The Vice-President** may resign his office by submitting his resignation to the President of India. The resignation becomes effective from the day it is accepted.
- **The Vice-President** can be removed from office by a resolution of the Council of States (Rajya Sabha), passed by a majority of its members at that time and agreed to by the House of the People (Lok Sabha). A resolution for this purpose may be moved only after a notice of at least a minimum of 14 days has been given of such an intention.
- **2. The Vice-President as Chairperson\* (ex-officio) of the Rajya Sabha Article 64.** The Vice-President is the ex-officio Chairperson of the Council of States (Rajya Sabha) and does not hold any other office of profit. During any period when the Vice-President acts as, or discharges the functions of the President, he does not perform the duties of the office of the Chairperson of the Council of States (Rajya Sabha) and, is not entitled to any salary or allowances payable to the Chairperson, Rajya Sabha.
- **3. The Vice-President as Acting President Article 65.** The Vice-President acts as President, during casual vacancy in the office of the President by reason of death, resignation or removal or otherwise, until a new President is elected as soon as practicable and, in no case, later than six months from the date of occurrence of the vacancy. When the President is unable to discharge his functions owing to absence, illness or any other cause, the Vice-President discharges those functions till the President resumes office. During this period, the Vice-President has all the powers, immunities and privileges of the President and receives emoluments and allowances payable to the President.
- **\*In these texts**, the expression 'Chairperson' has been used so as to be proper, genderwise. The statutory provisions however, contain the expression 'Chairman'.

## Election of The Vice President

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- **1. The Vice-President** is elected by an electoral college consisting of members of both Houses of Parliament, in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote and the voting in such election is by secret ballot. The Electoral College to elect a person to the office of the Vice-President consists of all members of both Houses of Parliament\*.
- **2. The Vice-President** is not a member of either House of Parliament or of a House of a Legislature of any state. If a member of either House of Parliament or of a House of a Legislature of any state is elected as Vice-President, he is deemed to have vacated his seat in that House on the date he/she enters his office as Vice-President.
- **3. A person cannot be elected as Vice-President unless he** - is a citizen of India; has completed the age of 35 years, and is qualified for election as a member of the Council of States (Rajya Sabha). A person is not also eligible if he holds any office of profit under the Government of India or a State Government or any subordinate local authority.
- **4. An election** to fill a vacancy caused by the expiry of the term of office of Vice-President is completed before the expiry of the term. In case a vacancy arises by reasons of death, resignation or removal or otherwise, the election to fill that vacancy is held as soon as possible after the occurrence\*\*. The person so elected is entitled to hold office for a full term of 5 years from the date he enters office.

## Superintendence of the Election of the Vice-President:

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- **The Election Commission of India conducts the election to the office of the Vice-President.**
- **Important Provisions** relating to the Election of the Vice-President: 1. The election of the next Vice-President is to be held within 60 days of the expiry of the term of office of the outgoing Vice-President.
- **2. The Returning Officer** usually appointed to conduct the Vice-Presidential elections is the Secretary-General of either House of the Parliament, by rotation. The Returning Officer issues a public notice of the intended election in a prescribed form, inviting nomination of candidates and specifies the place where the nomination papers are to be delivered.
- **Any person qualified** to be elected and intending to stand for election as Vice-President is required to be nominated by at least 20 MPs as proposers and at least 20 MPs as seconders.
- **Nomination papers** are to be presented to the Returning Officer at the place and upto the time and date, specified in the public notice. A maximum of 4 nomination papers by, or on behalf of, any candidate may be presented to, or accepted by, the Returning Officer.
- **3. A candidate seeking election** as Vice-President is required to make a security deposit of Rs.15,000/-. This is the only amount that is required to be deposited by a candidate irrespective of the number of nomination papers filed on his behalf.
- **4. The nomination papers** are scrutinised on the specified date by the Returning Officer in the presence of the candidate and his proposer or seconder and any one other person duly authorised.
- **5. Any candidate may withdraw** his candidature by a notice in writing in a prescribed form delivered to the Returning Officer within the time specified.
- **6. In the election an elector** has as many preferences as there are candidates. In casting his vote, an elector is required to record on his ballot paper the figure 1 at the space opposite the name of the candidate whom he chooses as his first preference and may, in addition, record as many subsequent preferences as he/she wishes by recording on his ballot paper the figures 2,3,4, and so on, in the space opposite the names of other candidates. The votes should be recorded in the international form of Indian numerals or in the Roman form or in the form of any Indian language but should not be indicated in words.
- **Every ballot paper represents** one vote at each count. The procedure for counting votes consists of the following steps:
  - **The number of first preference votes** secured by each candidate is ascertained. The numbers so ascertained are added up - the total is divided by two and one is added to the quotient disregarding any remainder. The resulting number is the quota sufficient for a candidate to secure his return at the election.
  - **If at the end of the first** or any subsequent count, the total number of votes credited to any candidate is equal to, or greater than the quota, that candidate is declared elected.
  - **If at the end of any count**, no candidate can be declared elected, then; the candidate who upto the stage has been credited with the lowest number of votes shall be excluded from the poll, and all his ballot papers will be again scrutinised, one by one, with reference to the second preference marked, if any, on them.
  - **These ballot papers** will be transferred to the respective remaining (continuing) candidates for whom such second preferences have been marked thereon, and the value of votes of those ballot papers credited to such candidates. These ballot papers shall be transferred to the aforesaid continuing candidate. The ballot papers on which the second preference is not marked shall be treated as exhausted ballot papers and shall not be counted further, even if they contain third or any subsequent preference.
  - **If at the end of this count**, some candidate reaches the quota, he shall be declared elected.
  - **If at the end of the second count** also, no candidate can be declared elected, the counting will proceed still further by exclusion of the candidate who is now lowest on the poll upto this stage. All his ballot papers, including the ballot papers which he might have received during the second count, will again be scrutinised with reference to the 'next available preference' marked on each of them. If on a ballot paper received by him in the first count, the second preference is marked for any of the continuing candidates, it shall be transferred to that candidate.
  - **If on any such ballot paper**, the second preference is marked for the candidate who has already been excluded in the second round, such ballot paper shall be transferred with reference to the third preference, if any, for a continuing candidate. Similarly, the ballot papers received by him in the second round by way of transfer will also be scrutinised with reference to the third preference marked on them. This process of exclusion of candidates lowest on the poll will be repeated till one of the continuing candidates reaches the quota.
- **7. After the election has been held and the votes have been counted**, the Returning Officer declares the result of the election. Thereafter, he reports the result to the Central Government (Ministry of Law & Justice) and the Election Commission of India and the Central Government publishes the name of the person elected as Vice-President, in the Official Gazette.



## Disputes regarding Election of the Vice-President:

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- **1. All doubts** and disputes arising in connection with the election of the Vice-President are enquired into and decided by the Supreme Court of India whose decision is final.
- **2. A petition** challenging the election of the Vice-President is heard by a five-judge bench of the Supreme Court of India.
- **3. The petition** has necessarily to be accompanied by a security deposit of Rs. 20,000/-.

## Constitutional Amendments

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- **The Constitution (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) Orders (Amendment) Bill, 2016** The Constitution (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) Orders (Amendment) Bill, 2016 was introduced by the Minister of Tribal Affairs, Mr. Jual Oram, in Lok Sabha on December 14, 2016. The Bill seeks to amend the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 and the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950.
- **The two Orders** were issued by the President under the Constitution specifying the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the Scheduled Tribes (STs) of the various states. The Constitution further provides that a law of Parliament is required to amend the Orders.
- **Assam: The Bill** seeks to add the following communities to the list of STs in Assam: (i) Boro, Boro Kachari, Bodo, Bodo Kachari, and (ii) Karbi (Mikir).
- **Chhattisgarh:** The Bill seeks to clarify equivalent names of the following communities that are already mentioned in the STs list: (i) Bhuinya, Bhuiyan, Bhuyan, (ii) Dhanwar, Dhanuwar, Dhanuwar, (iii) Nagesia, Nagasia, Kisan, and (iii) Sawar, Sawara, Saunra, Saonra.
- **Jharkhand:** The Bill seeks to remove the Bhogta community from the list of SCs in Jharkhand, and include it in the list of STs. It also clarifies the equivalent names of the Kharwar community in the list of STs: Bhogta, Deshwari, Ganjhu, Dautalbandi, Dwalbandi, Patbandi, Raut, Maajhia, Kairi and Kheri. It also adds a new community to the list of STs in Jharkhand: Puran.
- **Tamil Nadu:** Under the Scheduled Tribes Order, 1950, the Malayali community is a ST for the districts of Dharmapuri, North Arcot, Pudukottai, Salem, South Arcot and Tiruchirapali in Tamil Nadu. The Bill amends this entry to make the 'Malayali Gounder' community a ST throughout Tamil Nadu. It also adds a community to the STs list: Narikarovan or Kurivikkaran.
- **Tripura:** The Bill adds the following sub-tribe of the Kuki tribe to the list of STs in Tripura: Darlong.

## Transport / Tourism / Urban development The Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India (Amendment) Bill, 2018

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- **The Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India (Amendment) Bill, 2018** was introduced in Lok Sabha on July 18, 2018 by the Minister of State for Civil Aviation, Mr. Jayant Sinha.
- **It amends the Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India Act, 2008.** The Act established the Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India (AERA). The AERA regulates tariffs and other charges for aeronautical services provided at civilian airports with annual traffic above 15 lakh passengers. It also monitors the performance standard of services across these airports.
- **Definition of major airports:** The Act defines a major airport as one with annual passenger traffic over 15 lakh, or any other airports as notified by the central government. The Bill increases the threshold of annual passenger traffic for major airports to over 35 lakh.

- **Tariff determination by AERA:** Under the Act, the AERA is responsible for determining: (i) the tariff for aeronautical services at different airports every five years, (ii) the development fees of major airports, and (iii) the passengers service fee. It can also call for necessary information to determine tariffs and perform any other tariff-related functions, including amending the tariffs if necessary in the interim periods.
- **The Bill provides that the AERA will not determine:** (i) the tariff, (ii) tariff structures, or (iii) the development fees, in certain cases. These cases will include those where such tariff amounts were a part of the bid document on the basis of which the airport operations were awarded. The AERA will be consulted before incorporating such tariffs in the bid document, and such tariffs must be notified.

## About EAC-PM

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- **Economic Advisory Council** to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) is an independent body constituted to give advice on economic and related issues to the Government of India, specifically to the Prime Minister. The six member Council consists of economists of high repute and eminence: Dr. Bibek Debroy (Chairman), Shri Ratan P. Watal (Member Secretary), Dr. Surjit Bhalla (Part-Time Member), Dr. Rathin Roy (Part-Time Member), Dr. Ashima Goyal (Part-Time Member), and Dr. Shamika Ravi (Part-Time Member).
- **Terms of Reference of the EAC-PM:** Analyse any issue, economic or otherwise, referred to it by the Prime Minister and advising him thereon.
- **Addressing issues of macroeconomic** importance and presenting views thereon to the Prime Minister. This could be either suo-motu or on reference from the Prime Minister or anyone else.
- **Attending** to any other task as may be desired by the Prime Minister from time to time.



## India-Japan Development Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, including Africa

- **India and Japan** committed to working together to promote peace, stability and prosperity, through economic growth and development in the Indo-Pacific, including Africa, by enhancing connectivity through quality infrastructure and capacity building of our partners. Both countries are of firm belief that all development cooperation must be carried out in an open, transparent and non-exclusive manner and based on international standards including respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations, responsible debt financing practices, and in alignment with local economic and development strategies and priorities.
- **By synergizing India's "Act East Policy"** and Prime Minister Modi's 10 guiding principles for India's sustained and regular engagement with African countries, with Japan's "Expanded Partnership for Quality Infrastructure Initiative" and TICAD VI Nairobi declaration, the two countries welcomed and committed to further consultations with host Governments to foster tangible cooperation focusing on development of connectivity and other infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific. India and Japan welcomed progress in identification of specific cooperation, including but not limited to the following:
  - **2.1 Cooperation in Sri Lanka**, such as the development of LNG-related infrastructure;
  - **2.2 Cooperation in Myanmar**, synergizing development efforts in the Rakhine State by collaborating in housing, education and electrification projects;
  - **2.3 Cooperation in Bangladesh**, for enhancing connectivity by way of four-laning of road and reconstruction of bridges on the Ramgarh to Baraiyarhat stretch, and providing rolling stock and constructing the Jamuna Railway Bridge over the Januma River; and
  - **2.4 Cooperation in Africa**, such as organising an SME development seminar in Kenya and seeking a possibility of a collaborative project in the area of health service such as developing a cancer hospital in Kenya.
- **The two countries** also acknowledged the importance of expanding cooperation in human resource development, capacity building, healthcare, livelihood, water, sanitation and in the digital space, and of working together to extend access to education, health and other amenities, and assist the people of the Indo-Pacific, including Africa, to realize their developmental potentials.
- **Further**, the two countries will work towards establishing an India-Japan Business Platform to enhance the exchanges between Indian and Japanese businesses toward developing industrial corridors and industrial network in the region. In this context, the two countries welcomed the Memorandum of Understanding between NEXI and ECGC, which is expected to promote development of concrete India-Japan business projects in the region.
- **Both India and Japan** believe that their development cooperation in the Indo-Pacific can contribute to unlocking the potential for an equitable, positive and forward-looking change in the region, and contribute to socio-economic development of Africa.

## India-Japan Cooperation Act East Forum

- **India's North East Region** is one of the main areas of India's Act East Policy. The region also shares historical and traditional bonds with ASEAN countries, and has the potential to be India's springboard to the ASEAN region. Enhancing connectivity within North East Region and with its neighboring countries is essential to tap its potential and presents crystallized examples of the shared vision between Japan and India as expressed in the Vision Statement.
- **The Act East Forum** established last year has served as a driving force to advance India-Japan cooperation in the North-East. Its second meeting was held on 8th October with the following outcomes:
  - **2.1 Expediting implementation:** Meghalaya North East Connectivity Phase 1: Tura-Dalu (NH-51) Phase 2: Shillong-Dawki (NH-40)

- **Mizoram North East Coonectivity** Phase 1 & 2: Aizawl-Tuipang (NH-54) Sikkim: Biodiversity Conservation & Forest Management Nagaland: Forest Conservation Livelihood Improvement
- **2.2 Japan and India reaffirmed their intentions to proceed with:** Completion of Gelephu-Dalu Corridor in collaboration with the ADB
- **including Dhubri/Phulbari** bridge project, which will be the longest river bridge in India if realized, as Phase 3 of North East Road Network Connectivity Improvement Project.
- **Consideration** of developing Main District Roads (MDRs) and Other District Roads (ODRs), which will have positive socio-economic effect.
- **ODA loan** to the "Project for Renovation and Modernization of Umiam-Umtru Stage-III Hydroelectric Power Station"
- **Sustainable** Forest Management in Tripura, and consideration for a similar project in Meghalaya.

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- **2.3 Skill and Vocational Initiatives:** To launch "Japan-India North East Bamboo Initiative" in view of the significance bamboo plays in the region. Industrial uses of bamboos and bamboo forest management will be pursued under this initiative, building on the successful first "North East Bamboo Workshop."
  - **To promote** Japanese language education in the North East as a part of the commitment made by the two Prime Ministers to establish Japanese language certificate courses at 100 higher educational institutions in India. The Forum welcomed the interest for such courses expressed by Cotton University and Gauhati University in Assam state, EFLU in Meghalaya state as well as NIT-N in Nagaland state, to which Japan is prepared to provide appropriate support through Japanese Language Teachers Training Centre. More proposals from North East States are welcome.
  - **To promote** skill training including Japanese language for caregivers from North East who visit Japan for training under TITP (Technical Intern Training Program) ,which contributes to enhancing cooperation between the two countries under the Asia Health and Wellbeing Initiative.
  - **2.4 Disaster Management:** Japan's contribution to resilient infrastructures in North East Region and through Capacity Development Project on Highways in Mountainous Regions Knowledge sharing through the Japan-India Workshop on Disaster Risk Reduction Pursuit of better utilizing JICA Knowledge Co-Creation Program (Group & Region Focus) to provide relevant training opportunities for the officials of North East.
  - **The Forum** will review the progress of projects under its initiatives and further consider future cooperation concerning the North East Region of India. India-Japan Economic and ODA Cooperation Recognising the significant contribution of Japan's ODA to the socio-economic development of India, India expressed appreciation for Japan's continuous support that symbolises the ties between the two countries. In this regard, India and Japan reviewed with satisfaction the Japan's assistance as shown below:
  - **Japan's ODA Loan** Since the last Summit in India in September 2017, the following projects were provided ODA Loans: - Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Project (Phase 3) (I) [Karnataka] - Mumbai Metro Line 3 Project (II) [Maharashtra] - Project for Construction of Chennai Seawater Desalination Plant (I)
  - **[Tamil Nadu]** - Project for Improvement of Himachal Pradesh Forest Ecosystems Management and Livelihoods [Himachal Pradesh] - Project for Installation of Chennai Metropolitan Area Intelligent Transport Systems [Tamil Nadu] During the 13th Summit, the signing ceremony of exchange of notes regarding the following projects including the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Railway Project (II) took place: - Project for the Construction of Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (II)
  - **[Maharashtra and Gujarat]** - Project for Renovation and Modernization of Umiam-Umtru Stage-III
  - **Hydroelectric Power Station [Meghalaya]** - Delhi Mass Rapid Transport System Project (Phase 3) (III) [Delhi] - North East Road Network Connectivity Improvement Project (Phase 3)
  - **(I) [Dhubri in Assam and Phulbari in Meghalaya]** - Project for the Construction of Turga Pumped Storage (I) [Purulia in West Bengal] - Project for the Construction of Chennai Peripheral Ring Road (Phase 1) [Tamil Nadu]
  - **- Project for Sustainable Catchment Forest Management in Tripura [Tripura]** In addition, India expressed expectation that ODA loan regarding the dairy development in India will be provided soon and that preparatory surveys on pollution abatement of River Nag at Nagpur in Maharashtra, rural water supply in Madhya Pradesh, landscape community forest and water management in Meghalaya would commence soon. India also welcomed that relevant authorities of India and Japan started discussions for cooperation through ODA loan to promote SDGs in India.
  - **Varanasi convention center** The two sides welcomed the progress of the Project for Construction of the International Cooperation and Convention Center in Varanasi, which is deemed as the symbol of friendship between Japan and India. India appreciated the additional grant aid already provided by Japan.

- **Grant aid for improving traffic congestion and urban environment** India also expressed its appreciation for the signing of the Exchange of Notes for the provision of a grant aid to the Project for Implementation of Advanced Traffic Information and Management System in Core Bengaluru in December 2017.

## India-Japan Cooperation in Railways

- **Mumbai Ahmedabad High Speed Rail** To revolutionize the connectivity in India and introduce the High Speed Rail, India and Japan are cooperating to construct the Mumbai Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (MAHSR). Given the significance of the project, it is being monitored at the apex-level in the form of Joint Committee Meeting (JCM) presently co-chaired by Dr. Rajiv Kumar, Vice-Chairman NITI Aayog, from the Indian side and Dr. Hiroto Izumi, Special Adviser to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, on the Japanese side.
- **The 8th JCM on MAHSR project** held in Delhi on 17 September 2018 confirmed the steady progress of the project and it was also agreed that both sides will continue to advance mutual efforts to facilitate the smooth achievement of the project. Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, Mr. Keiichi Ishii and Parliamentary Vice-Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport & Tourism Mr. Masatoshi Akimoto visited India respectively in December 2017 and in May 2018 from the perspective of MAHSR Project, including station area development such as the approach roads, station plaza and multimodal integration plan.
- **During the summit meeting**, Exchange of Notes and Loan Agreement for the second tranche of Japanese ODA Loan for MAHSR Project were signed, following completion of JICA's Appraisal Mission in September 2018 and signing of the Loan Agreement for the first tranche of Japanese ODA Loan between JICA and DEA on 28 September, 2018.
- **Current status:** National High Speed Rail Corporation Limited (NHSRCL) is the implementing agency of the project. Final Location Survey of the project has already been completed. Based on final alignment, all underground & overhead utilities have been identified. The process of land acquisition has begun between Mumbai & Ahmedabad with target of completion by December 2018. Joint Measurement Survey has been completed for 328 km out of 487km. The entire project, including the High-Speed Rail training institute, has been divided into 26 contract packages, out of which 4 packages are already awarded. Multimodal Transport Integration Plan, an important component for creating a smart and sustainable integrated transport network, is ongoing for all the 12 stations. Memorandum for general consultancy has been signed by JICA with the Ministry of Railways, NHSRCL and JV of Japanese consultants and marks an important development in the project timeline.

## Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC)

- **Western DFC**, a corridor of 1,522 km from Jawaharlal Nehru Port Terminal (JNPT) to Dadri visualized for reducing the congestion in the Mumbai-Delhi route, being executed through JICA funding.
- **Current Status:** DFC has achieved overall 48% physical progress of civil packages and track laying of 802Km has been completed. Approx. 99% land acquisition has been made and tenders have been awarded worth Rs. 33,130 Cr (JPY 523 billion). Trial run of an Indian Railways Freight train was conducted successfully on 15 August 2018 on the 190km long Ateli-Phulera section of the DFC falling on the Jaipur Division of North Western Railway between the National Capital Region (NCR) and Mumbai and thus marked an important milestone in this game-changer project.
- **Future cooperation** (i) **Make in India:** In order to realize the Make in India objectives in MAHSR project, a Task Force comprising DIPP, Embassy of Japan, NHSRCL, MLIT and METI was constituted and recommendations have been agreed for four sub-groups i.e. Civil works, Track Works, Electrical Works (including Signal & Telecom) and Rolling Stock. Six train sets will be done under Make in India out of a total 24 train sets.
- **(ii) Training:** A new High-Speed Rail Training Institute is being built at the National Academy of Indian Railways campus in Vadodara utilizing Japanese ODA Loan through JICA. Two contracts out of total Three have been awarded. Last tender of training institute was invited in July 2018 and is expected to be finalized by December 2018. The construction of Training Institute has started and it is planned to open by December 2020. In order to have sufficient human resources for operation of the important High Speed Rail Project, training of 480 Ministry of Railways and 120 NHSRCL officials for 2018&2019 was agreed during the 7th JCM. Already, 287 young officers of Indian Railways have undergone training in Japan in 2017-18 about High-Speed Rail technology. Government of Japan has offered 20 seats per year for master degree course from the universities of Japan, for serving Indian Railways officials. At present, 17 officers are undergoing the Masters' program in various universities and for the year 2019, applications have been called for 20 seats.
- **(iii) Upgrading infrastructure** and technical cooperation: With Government of India's renewed focus on ensuring safety of Railways, India has been cooperating with Japan to study its best practices in this area. Under JICA technical cooperation, a team of safety experts from Japan had visited Indian Railways to investigate the status of rail welding execution and safety management. "The Project for Capacity Development on Railway Safety" will be taken under Technical Cooperation to

develop the capacities of the Indian Railways and Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Limited with regard to safety of the railway network on track maintenance including rail welding techniques and rolling stock maintenance for improving safety.

## India-Japan Cooperation in "Make in India"

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- **Based on the "Japan-India Investment Promotion Roadmap"** committed between METI and DIPP in September 2017, in addition to opening the JETRO's Business Support Center (BSC) in Ahmedabad, Gujarat in July this year, various investment promotion seminars were held in Japan and India.
- **On 29 October 2018**, private sector investment projects proposed by about 60 Japanese companies were showcased to Prime Minister Modi, which would be facilitated by Invest India and JETRO. These projects include the sectors providing greater impetus to "Make in India" such as automobile, steel, electronics, IoT and AI, chemical, food processing, etc. The total investment is projected to be approximately 280 billion JPY with creation of over 29,000 additional jobs in India.
- **Regarding the Japanese Industrial Townships (JITs)**, METI and DIPP exchanged the progress reports on the implemented actions and major achievements for promotion of JITs including, but not limited to, infrastructure development, promotional activities, fiscal incentives, improvement in Ease of Doing Business and human resource development.
- **As a new initiative**, METI and DIPP decided to cooperate on the development of "Advanced Model Single Window" to streamline administrative procedures in Central and State Governments of India based on the best practices in and outside India and its capacity building, thereby accelerating India's effort to promote Ease of Doing Business in India.
- **"Logistics Data Bank Project"**, a DMIC project which contributes to efficient logistics/supply chain by visualization of international marine container transportation using RFID tag at related port/inland facility, is further contributing to improvement in the business environment.

## India-Japan Cooperation in Skill Development

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- **In order to provide** an enabling framework for augmenting manufacturing base in India by training 30,000 persons over 10 years, in 2016, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and the Ministry of Economy Trade and Industry (METI) signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) on Manufacturing Skill Transfer Promotion Programme, thereby also contributing to flagship initiatives such as "Skill India" and "Make in India". Under the MoC, Japanese companies in India are participating in Skill Development through the establishment of Japan India Institute of Manufacturing (JIM) and Japanese Endowed Courses (JEC).
- **JIMs have already** been established to train future shop floor leaders in Japanese style manufacturing processes and key working methods such as Kaizen and 5S, etc. Five Japanese Companies took the lead by establishing JIMs in 2017 viz., Suzuki (Gujarat), Daikin (Rajasthan), Yamaha (Tamil Nadu), Toyota and Hitachi (Karnataka). In 2018, Ahresty established its JIM in Bawal (Haryana), Toyota Tsusho in Mandal (Gujarat), And Terumo in Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala).
- **JECs have been initiated** in select engineering colleges for training middle management engineers in the manufacturing sector. Meidensha Corporation established the first JEC in power transformation and generation in 2017 followed by Mitsubishi Electric, which has established Factory Automation course in numerous Engineering Colleges across India in 2018.
- **MSDE of India** signed the MoC on Technical Intern Training Programme (TITP) with the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan in October 2017 creating an enabled framework for bilateral cooperation for appropriate implementation of TITP under the revised Technical Intern Training Act of Japan. India completed the first round of accreditation of 23 Sending Organisations in March 2018 that are recognized by the Organization for Technical Intern Training (OTIT) of Japan for accepting interns under the MoC on TITP. From July to September 2018, the first group of 15 Indian interns trained by CII (an accredited Sending Organisation) has been accepted to train on the job in a Japanese company under the TITP framework. As on date, 17 technical interns from India have entered Japan under TITP.
- **Outreach programmes** such as a Workshop on TITP (February 2018) in New Delhi and an India Seminar on TITP in Nagoya (September 2018) have been organized by MSDE along with National Skill Development Corporation and JITCO to showcase India's strength in providing skilled interns to meet Japanese needs and to sensitize relevant stakeholders in India and about the opportunities in TITP.
- **Future Cooperation** (i) Japan and India will continue their efforts on skill development in India through JIM/JEC and thereby further contribute to "Skill India" and "Make in India".

- (ii) **Japan and India** will promote skill training such as Japanese language, including for caregivers from North East who visit Japan for training under TITP (Technical Intern Training Program), which contributes to enhancing cooperation between the two countries under the Asia Health and Wellbeing Initiative.
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- **India-Japan Cooperation on Digital Partnership** To leap ahead together in the era of technology and to tap into the synergies and complementarities between Japan's "Society 5.0" and India's flagship programmes like "Digital India", "Smart City" and "Start-up India" for promoting "Ease of Living", the two nations will cooperate in areas of next generation technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), and Internet of Things (IoT), etc. In this regard, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), Japan and Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY), India have held 6 rounds of Joint Working Group (JWG) meetings till 2018 and Ministry of Communications (MOC), India and Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC), Japan signed a Joint Minutes on cooperation in ICT sector under the fifth meeting of India-Japan JWG in 2018.
  - **In this context, the two Prime Ministers have welcomed a holistic "India-Japan Digital Partnership" (I-JDP)**, which was signed as a Memorandum of Cooperation between MeitY India and METI, Japan, to further the existing areas of cooperation as well as to explore opportunities of new initiatives in ICT (Information and Communications Technologies) , with a special emphasis on "Digital Technologies" and also, expand the scope of India-Japan "Start-up Hub".
  - **Start-up Hub between India and Japan:** In pursuance of realizing the commitment of the two Prime Ministers as reflected in the Joint Statement of the India-Japan Annual Summit 2017 to establish an India-Japan Startup-hub, both sides signed the Joint Statement on Japan-India Startup Initiative during the visit of METI Minister Seko to India in May this year that included the establishment of a Startup Hub in Bengaluru stationed at JETRO as an interface between respective startups and firms for more collaboration such as by identifying selected Indian start-ups for Japanese market and for potential Japanese investors. Also, online platform of Japan-India Startup Hub established by Invest India will serve the same.
  - **Talent Facilitation:** The exchange of talents between India and Japan is essential to synergize the competitiveness and experience of industries in both countries. To realize this, I-JDP will consider initiating and also expanding already existing mechanisms for facilitating training opportunities and Internship programs, organizing Job Fairs (Japan career fair), introducing the Start-Up Program for highly skilled Indian professionals (namely Japanese "Green Card" and Highly Skilled Professional VISA), expanding JEC Courses to IT and electronics firms.
  - **Cooperation in R&D:** To promote linkages between NITI Aayog, spearheading the National Programme for AI Research in India, and METI, focusing on promoting emerging technologies under "Society 5.0", India and Japan signed an overarching Statement of Intent between NITI Aayog and METI on Artificial Intelligence with provision of exploring possibilities for specific institutional cooperation such as between Artificial Intelligence Research Centre of National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology in Japan and IIT Hyderabad in India.
  - **Projects in ICT areas** having Security dimension: Realizing the need for an advanced and a secure technology, under this partnership, India and Japan will consider cooperating in the areas of security of digital infrastructure of future networks, framework for Telecom Security etc. Both leaders welcomed the initiation for laying the submarine optical fiber cables for connecting Chennai and the Andaman islands by Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) of India and NEC of Japan, and both side will further cooperate in the development of submarine cable projects in view of their strategic importance.
  - **Electronics Ecosystem:** India and Japan would establish a partnership mechanism between both sides on Electronics Manufacturing including collaboration between Indian and Japanese companies in Electronics System Design, related Software technologies and electronics manufacturing for long tail market.
  - **Digital Corporate Partnership:** India and Japan will aim at promoting corporate and business linkages in the field of IT between India and Japan through initiatives such as matching events, dispatching business missions and BSNL, a Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) under the Ministry of Communications India and NTT-AT of Japan signed the MoU on cooperation in Telecommunication. National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) from the Indian side and Prefecture Government of Hiroshima have established the first "IT Corridor" in Japan to "co-create for global markets leveraging Japanese ecosystem strengths on the hardware side and Indian ecosystem on the software side".

## Cooperation between India and Japan on Agriculture, Food Processing, Food Safety, Forestry, and Fisheries

- **A: Agriculture** 1. Joint Working Group based on the MOC between MAFF and MoAFW (i) Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) signed on 11 November 2016 (when the Prime Minister Modi visited Japan) (ii) The 1st Joint Working Group (JWG) was held on 6 November 2017 (after the World Food India (WFI) 2017)
- **A. Identified three areas of cooperation:** a) Agricultural productivity b) Food processing c) Fisheries

- **iii) "The Program for Promoting Investment into India by Japan in the field of Agriculture and Fisheries"** - Based on the discussion at the 1st JWG, (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) and Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare (MoAFW)) deliberated the way to promote the investment into India on agriculture and fisheries and signed "The Program for Promoting Investment into India by Japan in the Field of Agriculture and Fisheries" on 29 October 2018.
- **(iv) ISE Food's Telangana Mega Project** supported by the Japan-India Food Business Council was registered as the first investment case for the Programme.
- **2. Indo-Japan Agricultural Center of Excellence** | MAFF and MoAFW discussed as to how Japan can contribute to improve agricultural productivity by using Japanese technologies. | One idea is to set up Indo-Japan Agricultural Center of Excellence where Japanese technologies are showcased, spread, and products made with these technologies are sold.
- **3. Research Cooperation** (i) MOU on Joint Research between Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences (JIRCAS) and Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) was signed on 9 February 2018 (ii) First kick-off meeting was held on 15 June 2018 in Karnal and discussed the cooperation on (a) development of low-cost subsurface drainage and irrigation technology in salt-affected fields for sustainable agricultural production, and (b) development of regionally-adopted salt-tolerant crop.
- **B: Food processing** 1. World Food India 2017 Japan participated in the WFI 2017 as a partner country and Mr. Taniai, State Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan led the Japanese delegation. Approximately 60 Japanese companies participated in the event.
- **2. MOC between MAFF and MoFPI** (i) MOC between MAFF and MoFPI was signed and exchanged in the presence of two leaders of Japan and India on 29 October 2018.
- **3. MOU between MoFPI and Japanese companies** (i) Signed the first MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) between Ministry of Food Processing Industry (MoFPI) and a Japanese company (ISE Food) on 13 March 2018. (ii) Signed MOUs between MoFPI and Japanese companies (Kagome and Nissan Steel) on 29 October 2018.
- **4. Food companies associations for studying Indian Market in Japan** (i) MAFF is promoting the development of Global Food Value Chain (GFVC) and organised the India Sub-committee of the Public-Private Council for Promoting GFVC in March 2018. Approximately 400 companies are the members of the Council. (ii) The Japan India Food Business Council was launched in May 2018.
- **C: Food safety** MOC between FSSAI and the Japanese Government Signed MOC between Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and Food Safety Commission, Consumer Affairs Agency, Ministry Health, Labor and Welfare and MAFF of Japan on 29 October 2018.
- **D: Forestry** Joint Working Group based on the MOC between MAFF and MoEF&CC (i) MOC between MAFF and Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) was signed on 11 December 2015.
- **I Identified seven areas of cooperation** a) Human resource development and institutional exchange between training institutes b) Sustainable forest management c) Enhancement of forest conservation and forest disaster prevention d) Conservation of biodiversity e) Effective utilization of forest resources f) Enhancement of relevant policies on forests, forestry and technologies g) Research and development in forestry sector (ii) During the 3rd JWG on 23 July 2018 "Roadmap for India-Japan forest and forestry cooperation" from 2018 to 2022 was agreed upon
- **E: Fisheries** (1) Concurred on Sanitary Certificate Covering Fish and Fishery Products for export to India for Human Consumption in March 2018. (2) Concurred on Certificate Covering Prawn Feed/ Shrimp Feed/ Fish Feed for export from Japan to India in October 2018.
- **F: Cooperation between MAFF and State Governments, and some activities by private companies** (1) Andhra Pradesh State (AP state) (a) Between MAFF and AP state, MOC in the field of Agricultural and Food related industry was signed on 30 July 2016. (b) Between MAFF and AP state, MOC on designing of the Master Plan was signed on 25 Feb 2018. • Study for making the Master Plan on Cold-Chain in AP state commenced from July 2018.
- **(2) Maharashtra State (MH state)** (a) Between MAFF and MH state, MOC signed on 29 October 2018 (3) Uttar Pradesh State (UP state) (a) Between MAFF and UP state, MOC was signed on 26 October 2018
- **G. Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)** (1) "Andhra Pradesh Irrigation and Livelihood Improvement Project (Phase2)" Between JICA and Ministry of Finance (MoF), LA was signed on 13 December 2017. (2) "Project for Improvement of Himachal Pradesh Forest Ecosystems Management and Livelihoods"
- **Between JICA and Embassy of India, LA was signed on 29 March 2018.** (3) "Project for Livelihood Improvement in Dairy Sector through Cooperatives" JICA started preparatory survey in July 2018.

## India-Japan Security and Defence Cooperation



- **India and Japan** have made significant progress in the last decade in fostering joint efforts towards shared security since the announcement of the India-Japan Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation in 2008. Both countries desire to further deepen bilateral security and defence cooperation through established mechanisms, including the Annual Defence Ministerial Dialogue, Defence Policy Dialogue, the national Security Advisors' Dialogue, Staff-level dialogue between each service and bilateral dialogue between Coast Guards, as well as exercises between each of three Services and exercises between the Coast Guards. Both countries attach importance to the Malabar exercise, regular Passage Exercises (PASSEX) and other joint exercises including the first counter terrorism exercise between the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) and the Indian Army as well as Japan Air Self-Defense Force's (JASDF) participation as observer in Cope India and welcome increased cooperation with like-minded countries.
- **Maritime security** cooperation between India and Japan through enhanced exchanges in expanding maritime domain awareness (MDA) and mutual logistics support in the Indo-Pacific Region contributes to regional peace and stability. During the 13th Summit, the two Prime Ministers welcomed the signing the Implementing Arrangement for Deeper Cooperation between the Indian Navy and the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) and commencement of negotiations for the Acquisition, Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA). These two documents will enhance the strategic depth of the relationship. Cooperation between India and Japan on defence equipment and technology holds immense scope and potential for future bilateral collaborations.
- **Enabling Framework** Defence cooperation between India and Japan flows from the Joint Declaration Security Cooperation 2008 and the Memorandum on Defence Cooperation and Exchanges concluded in 2014.
- **The Agreement concerning** the Transfer of Defence Equipment and Technology and Agreement concerning Security Measures for the Protection of Classified Military Information also concluded in 2015 have further built on this edifice.
- **The Implementing Arrangement** for Deeper Cooperation between the Indian Navy and JMSDF was signed in October 2018.
- **It will establish** the means and framework for information sharing and conduct of joint exercises and other maritime engagements for the enhancement of Maritime Security and MDA, including the exchange of shipping information.
- **Current Status** At the apex level the Annual Defence Ministerial Meeting was commenced in May 2006, with the last meeting held in India in August 2018. The Defence Policy Dialogue (DPD) was commenced in April 2007 in Tokyo; the 6th edition of DPD and 5th edition of 2+2 Dialogue was held in New Delhi in June 2018.
- **Service Staff** Talks between each of three services are in place. The 7th Indian Navy-to- JMSDF Staff talks were held in January 2018 in Delhi and the 2nd Indian Air Force-to-JASDF Staff Talks was held in June 2018 in Delhi. The 5th Indian Army-to-Japan JGSDF Staff Talks will also be held in India in early 2019. The 17th Indian Coast Guard(ICG) and Japan Coast Guard (JCG) high level meeting was held in New Delhi in January 2018.

## Joint Exercises:

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- **India and Japan** have a high frequency of Indian Navy-to-JMSDF exercises with the Trilateral Malabar Exercise being the most significant engagement. Malabar 2018 was conducted off Guam in June 2018 and witnessed significant participation from all the participants. The bilateral maritime exercise JIMEX-18 was held off Visakhapatnam in October 2018, after an interlude of 5 years . with the participation of Japan's helicopter destroyer Kaga. PASSEX are regularly conducted during the visit of Indian Naval ships and JMSDF ships to each other's ports in India and Japan. PASSEX were held in September 2017 off Western India, October 2017 off Western Kyushu, Japan, November 2017 in the Sea of Japan, January 2018 off Mumbai and May 2018 off Visakhapatnam and September 2018 off the Gulf of Aden.
- **The first Air** anti-submarine (ASW) exercise between Indian Navy P-8I and JMSDF P-3C was held off Goa in October 2017, during the return transit of the JMSDF aircraft deployed to the Gulf of Aden for anti-piracy operations. This was followed by an Air ASW exercise between JMSDF P-1 and Indian Navy P-8I in May 2018 off Goa.
- **India and Japan** will conduct the first Counter Terrorism exercise between the JGSDF and the Indian Army in November 2018. The Indian Army also participated as observers in the Japan and U.S. Common Integration Emergency Drill (TREX-17) held in November 2017, and the Indian Navy took part in the mine and explosive ordnance exercise held in July 2018. There also exist a large number of Subject Matter Expert Exchanges amongst all three services in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HA/DR), peacekeeping, helicopter aircrew and meteorology. A joint exercise off the coast of Chennai between the ICG and JCG was held in January 2018.

## Defence Equipment and Technology Cooperation

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- **Defence Expo 18 at Chennai** in April 2018 witnessed participation from the Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Agency (ATLA), Ministry of Defense, Japan.
- **The Joint Working Group on Defence Equipment and Technology Cooperation (JWG-DETC)** constituted in 2014 has met on four occasions with the 4th JWG-DETC held in New Delhi in July 2018. Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and ATLA signed the Project Arrangement Concerning the Cooperative Research on the Visual SLAM Based GNSS Augmentation Technology for UGV/Robotics in July 2018.
- **The first-ever Defence Industry Forum** between India and Japan was organised along with the 3rd JWG-DETC in Tokyo in September 2017. This was followed by a similar initiative on the sidelines of the 4th JWG-DETC wherein a Business-to-Business interaction with Japanese defence companies visiting Indian defence industries at Bengaluru and Mumbai under the auspices of Department of Defence Production (DDP) and ATLA was held.

## India-Japan Cooperation in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

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- **As two of the most disaster prone countries** in the world, India and Japan have been cooperating in the field of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in the implementation and follow-up of the Sendai Framework. In January 2018, Japan participated along with 20 other countries in an international workshop hosted by India as a follow up to the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR) held in New Delhi in November 2016 where Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi announced that India would be willing to partner with other countries and stakeholders to develop a coalition for disaster resilient infrastructure.
- **An important milestone** in India-Japan cooperation in the field of DRR came during the visit of PM Abe to India in September 2017 for the India-Japan Annual Summit when the two sides concluded a bilateral MoC between Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, and the Cabinet Office, the Government of Japan, on cooperation in DRR, Prevention, Response, Recovery and Reconstruction. From the Indian side, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is the nodal agency for implementation of the MoC.
- **Under the MoC**, the first Japan-India Workshop on DRR was held in New Delhi in March 2018 with six well-considered sessions such as – Preparedness, Early Warning System and Approaches by Private Sector. At the workshop, apart from sharing Japan's approach of "Build Back Better", it also showcased its technologies in early warning systems and shared its own experience in disaster-preparedness. Based on the workshop, Earthquake Early Detection and Warning System, Disaster Risk Assessment particularly with regards to earthquakes and sharing of experiences and good practices on public awareness (e.g. through mock exercises) were identified as concrete action points to take the India-Japan cooperation in this field forward.
- **Second workshop** was held in Tokyo on 15 October 2018. The workshop focused on three topics; (i) Exercise and training, (ii) meteorological hazard, in view of several critical flooding's happened in both countries in 2018, and (iii) early warning system from policy and technology perspectives.
- **Japan's ODA** relevant to DRR: Apart from the above, Japan has been extending its assistance to India through resilient infrastructure development as well as technical cooperation on natural disaster management in forested areas and sustainable development of mountainous highways.

## India-Japan Science & Technology and Academic Cooperation

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- **Enabling Framework** India-Japan Science & Technology (S&T) cooperation was formalized through an Inter-Governmental Agreement signed in 1985. Bilateral S&T cooperation was further promoted in 1993 with the establishment of the India-Japan Science Council (IJSC), which has till date organized 19 meetings, supported 250 joint projects, 1600 exchange visits of scientists, 65 joint seminars/workshops and 9 Asian Academic seminars and 10 Raman-Mizushima lectures.
- **In 2006**, DST initiated a value based partnership on the principles of 'reciprocity and co-funding with the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) and Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) through Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). Since then several Institutional Agreements/MoUs in the areas of Life Sciences, Material Sciences, High Energy physics, ICT, Biotechnology, Healthcare, Heavy Ion Radiotherapy, Methane Hydrate, Robotics, Alternative Sources of Energy, Marine and Earth Sciences and Technology, Peaceful uses of Outer Space have been signed between the Science Agencies of both countries.

## Recent Initiatives

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- **India-Japan Joint Laboratories** in the area of ICT ("Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence and Big Data Analytics") "Architecting Intelligent Dependable Cyber Physical System Targeting IoT and Mobile Big Data Analysis" between The University of Tokyo and IIT Bombay; "Data Science-based Farming Support System for Sustainable Crop Production under Climatic Change" between The University of Tokyo and IIT Hyderabad; and "Security in the Internet of Things Space" between Kyushu University and IIT Delhi.
- **Initiation of DST-JSPS Fellowship Programme for young researchers.** · MoU for second phase of Indian Beam Line at KEK Tsukuba for advanced materials research.
- **Under Science and Technology Research Partnership for Sustainable Development (SATREPS) Program,** a project "Smart Cities Development for Emerging Countries by Multimodal Transport System Based on Sensing, Network and Big Data Analysis of Regional Transportation" was launched in 2017.
- **Under the "Japan-Asia Youth Exchange Program in Science"** (Sakura Science Plan), 655 students and supervisors visited Japan from April 2017 through March 2018. 39 students selected by DST who are INSPIRE scholarship awardees, also visited Japan under this Program in May 2018.
- **Setting up the DBT-AIST Advanced International Laboratory for Advanced Biomedicine (DAILAB)** at Tsukuba, Japan and Six SISTERS (Satellite International Institutes for Special Training Education and Research) for drug development and therapeutic diseases in India.
- **Ministry of Earth Sciences, Govt. of India (MoES)** and Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology (JAMSTEC) signed an MoC for collaboration in broad areas under Ocean and Earth Science and Technology in November 2016.
- **A Joint Research Contract between DBT and AIST** to establish a "DBT-AIST International CENTER for Translational & Environmental Research (DAICENTER)" was during the Summit in India in September 2017.
- **The MoC between the National Institutes for Quantum and Radiological Science and Technology (QST)** and Tata Medical Center, Kolkata in the field of heavy ion radiotherapy was signed in September 2017.
- **Based on the MoU concerning cooperation** in the field of space signed between Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) in November 2016, ISRO and JAXA held the second Joint Working Group in September 2018 to discuss cooperation areas.
- **ISRO and JAXA signed the Implementation Arrangement (IA)** concerning Pre-Phase A Study and Phase A Study of Joint Lunar Polar Exploration Mission in December 2017, and ISRO and JAXA have successfully completed the feasibility study report in March 2018.
- **ISRO and JAXA signed the Implementation Arrangement (IA)** concerning cooperation on validations, improvement, and applications of rainfall products using satellite images and ground measurements in June 2018.
- **Department of Space (DOS) of India,** ISRO, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) of Japan and JAXA co-hosted the 24th Session of the Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum (APRSAP-24) in Bengaluru in November 2017 where the Joint Statement was adopted.

## Research & Academic partnerships

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- **Memorandum for an Internship Program** between OMRON Corporation, the Graduate School of Information Science and Engineering of Ritsumeikan University, and the Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad was signed in November, 2017.
- **Hiroshima University signed agreements,** memorandums and annexure with eight india institutes as follows:
  - **1. Annexure to Memorandum of Understanding** between the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research through the CSIR—Central Electronics Engineering Research Institute (CSIR-CEERI), Pilani, India and Hiroshima University, Japan Concerning International Collaboration on Research, Academic and Educational Exchange (December 2017).
  - **2. Agreement on Academic and Educational Exchange** and Memorandum to Academic and Educational Exchange Agreement between Hiroshima University, Japan and Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani, India (BITS-P)(December 2017).

- **3. Agreement on Academic and Educational Exchange** and Memorandum to Academic and Educational Exchange Agreement between Hiroshima University, Japan and Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, India (IIT BOMBAY) (January 2018)
- **4. Memorandum to Academic and Educational Exchange Agreement** between Hiroshima University, Japan and Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology, Shibpur, India (January, 2018).
- **5. Memorandum on Student Exchange** between Hiroshima University, Japan and CSIR-Central Mechanical Engineering Research Institute (CSIR-CMERI) (January 2018).
- **6. Memorandum of Agreement** for Student Exchange between Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad (IIMA) and Hiroshima University, Japan (April 2018).
- **7. Memorandum of Agreement** on Academic and Educational Exchange between Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, India and Hiroshima University Japan (May 2018).
- **8. Memorandum of Understanding** on Academic and Educational Exchange between Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad, India and Hiroshima University, Japan (October, 2018.)

## · Department of Mechanical Engineering, Department of Nuclear System Safety Engineering

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- **Department of Mechanical Engineering**, Department of Nuclear System Safety Engineering, Nagaoka University of Technology signed two Agreements of Academic and Research Collaboration respectively with Department of Mechanical Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology, Tirupati (January 2018) and School of Engineering Discipline of Metallurgy Engineering and Material Science, Indian Institute of Technology Indore (July 2018)
- **Nagasaki University** signed three Letters of Intent (Lols) with All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Indian Institute of Science (IISc), and Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IIT Delhi) respectively for education and academic research cooperation in July 2018.
- **Memorandum of Understanding** Between Shizuoka University, Japan and National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPER), S. A. S. Nagar was signed in October 2018.
- **Hokkaido University** signed four Academic Exchange Agreements and Memorandums of Understanding on Student Exchange respectively with Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (January 2018), Indian Institute of Technology Madras (March 2018), Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad (April 2018), and Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (October 2018).
- **MoU between CSIR, India and Research Centre for Advanced Science and Technology (RCAST)**, University of Tokyo for R&D cooperation in areas such as Mechatronics including Robotics, Surface Engineering, Energy Storage (especially solar to chemical), and Optoelectronics was signed in October 2018.
- **MoU between Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR)**, India and Hiroshima University for research partnerships was signed in October 2018.
- **Memorandum of Understanding** on Further Cooperation toward Indo-Japan Global Startup between Nagasaki University and IIITDM was signed in October 2018.
- **Agreement for Cooperation between Institute of Innovative Research, Tokyo Institute of Technology, Japan** and Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR), India was signed in October, 2018.
- **MoC between the National Institute of Polar Research (NIPR)** of Japan and the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research of India on Polar Research (NCPOR) was signed in October 2018.
- **Future Initiatives** Both sides propose to establish Joint research in areas like climate prediction, ocean prediction and few others. Regarding the India-Japan Joint Research Laboratory Programme in the field of ICT between JST and DST, both sides are considering some activities to further continue the collaboration. Regarding the joint lunar polar exploration mission between ISRO and JAXA, both sides will continue the joint study to start the development immediately with the target of launching the mission in early 2020s.

## Promotion of Japanese Language Education in India

- **In view of the persistent demand for Japanese language knowing professionals since the past few years**, Prime Ministers of India and Japan recognized the importance of expanding Japanese language education in India for achieving wider and closer cooperation in different domains.
- **2. Memorandum of Cooperation in the field of Japanese Language Education in India** was signed during the visit of the Japanese Prime Minister to India on 14 September 2017. This Memorandum of Cooperation provides for establishing a Japanese Language Teachers' Training Centre, training of 1000 Japanese language teachers and establishing of 100 new Japanese language courses, in the next 5 years.
- **3. The activity is jointly steered by the Ministry of External Affairs and the Embassy of Japan in India** with the support of Japan Foundation, Ministry of Human Resource Development, UGC, JNU-HRDC, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Ministry of Health, Family and Welfare, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and CSIR.
- **4. In pursuance of the aims of the Memorandum, the Japanese Language Teachers' Training Centre** was established in New Delhi on July 23, 2018 at its temporary location in the Human Resource Development Centre (HRDC) of the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). The centre was inaugurated by Gen. (Dr.) V.K. Singh, Minister of State for External Affairs and Ambassador of Japan in India Mr. Kenji Hiramatsu. The ceremony was attended by JNU Vice Chancellor Professor. Jagadesh Kumar and other senior officials from the Indian side. From the Japanese side, Executive Vice President of Japan Foundation, Mr. Tomoyuki Sakurai and other senior officials attended the event.
- **5. The first training programme of 360 hours, that spread over a period of 3 months commenced on 23 July 2018** for the Japanese language knowing trainees having N3 level of JLPT (Japanese Language Proficiency Test), completed successfully on 12 October 2018. This course covered beginners and intermediate-level Japanese learners, used different teaching methods and classroom teaching practices. A total of 25 trainees passed this course. Further, a 5-day training course and a 2-day training course were conducted at Shantiniketan from 12 – 16 September 2018 and at Bengaluru from 26-27 October 2018 respectively.

## Department of Agricultural Research & Education (DARE), Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare

- **The (DARE) was established in the Ministry of Agriculture in December, 1973.** The (DARE) coordinates and promotes agricultural research & education in the country. It has the following four autonomous bodies under its administrative control:
- **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) Central Agricultural University (CAU), Imphal** Dr Rajendra Prasad Central Agricultural University, Pusa, Bihar Rani Laxmi Bai Central Agricultural University, Jhansi, UP DARE provides the necessary government linkages for the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), the premier research organisation for co-ordinating, guiding and managing research and education in agriculture including horticulture, fisheries and animal sciences in the entire country. With over 97 ICAR institutes, 53 agricultural universities, 6 Bureaux, 18 National Research Centres, 25 Project Directorates, and 89 All India Coordinated Research Projects spread across the country this is one of the largest national agricultural research systems in the world.
- **Apart from ICAR DARE** has three more autonomous body, viz. the Central Agricultural University, Imphal Dr Rajendra Prasad Central Agricultural University, Pusa, Bihar and Rani Laxmi Bai Central Agricultural University, Jhansi under its administrative control. The Central University, are wholly financed by the Government of India.
- **DARE is the nodal agency** for International Cooperation in the area of agricultural research and education in India. The Department liaises with foreign governments, UN, CGIAR and other multilateral agencies for cooperation in various areas of agricultural research. DARE also coordinates admissions of foreign students in various Indian agriculture universities/ ICAR Institutes.

## Agrinnovate India

- **Agrinnovate India** Limited a registered Company under the Companies Act, 1956 (No. 1 of 1956) is owned by Government of India in Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE). It aims to work on the strengths of DARE's Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and promote the development and spread of R&D outcomes through IPR protection, commercialization and forging partnerships both in the country and outside for the public benefit.
- **The Company** has been set up with an authorized share capital of Rs. 100 crore, with an initial paid up capital of Rs. 50 crores. The initial paid up capital would be met by DARE/ICAR from its budgetary allocations, without recourse to any additional funds from the Government

## Indian Council of Agricultural Research

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- **The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) is an autonomous organisation under the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE), Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India.** Formerly known as Imperial Council of Agricultural Research, it was established on 16 July 1929 as a registered society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 in pursuance of the report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture. The ICAR has its headquarters at New Delhi.
- **The Council is the apex body for co-ordinating, guiding and managing research and education in agriculture** including horticulture, fisheries and animal sciences in the entire country. With 99 ICAR institutes and 65 agricultural universities spread across the country this is one of the largest national agricultural systems in the world.
- **The ICAR has played a pioneering role in ushering Green Revolution and subsequent developments in agriculture in India** through its research and technology development that has enabled the country to increase the production of foodgrains by 4 times, horticultural crops by 6 times, fish by 9 times (marine 5 times and inland 17 times), milk 6 times and eggs 27 times since 1950-51, thus making a visible impact on the national food and nutritional security. It has played a major role in promoting excellence in higher education in agriculture. It is engaged in cutting edge areas of science and technology development and its scientists are internationally acknowledged in their fields.

## Agricultural Scientists Recruitment Board

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- **The Agricultural Scientists Recruitment Board (ASRB) was established on 1 November 1973** as an independent recruitment agency in pursuance of the recommendations of the Gajendragadkar Committee. Mandate» Recruitment to posts in the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) of the ICAR and to such other posts and services that the President, ICAR, may specify from time to time.»
- **Rendering such other assistances to the Council in personnel matters, including promotion,** as may be required by the President, ICAR.» Advising the Council on disciplinary matters relating to personnel recruited through ASRB or appointed by the Council in consultation with the Board.» Recruitment to entry level scientific positions of the ARS through an All-India Competitive Examination.»
- **Induction of existing scientists of the ICAR to ARS under the initial constitution of ARS.»** Assessment for merit promotion and grant of advance increments to scientists of the ARS.» To conduct National Eligibility Test, which is a prerequisite for the initial recruitment as Assistant Professor/Lecturer in the State Agricultural Universities.» Recruitment to posts in the Combined cadres of Administrative Officers/Finance & Accounts Officers of the ICAR which are required to be filled by direct recruitment.

## The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (Amendment) Bill, 2017

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- **The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (Amendment) Bill, 2017** was introduced in Lok Sabha on July 18, 2017 by the Minister of Tourism and Culture, Dr. Mahesh Sharma. The Bill amends the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.
- **Construction in 'prohibited areas':** The Act defines a 'prohibited area' as an area of 100 meters around a protected monument or area. The central government can extend the prohibited area beyond 100 meters. The Act does not permit construction in such prohibited areas, except under certain conditions. The Act also prohibits construction in 'prohibited areas' even if it is for public purposes.
- **The Bill amends this provision** to permit construction of public works in 'prohibited areas' for public purposes.
- **Definition of 'public works':** The Bill introduces a definition for 'public works', which includes the construction of any infrastructure that is financed and carried out by the central government for public purposes. This infrastructure must be necessary for public safety and security and must be based on a specific instance of danger to public safety. Also, there should be no reasonable alternative to carrying out construction in the prohibited area.

- **Procedure for seeking permission** for public works: As per the Bill, the relevant central government department, that seeks to carry out construction for public purposes in a prohibited area, should make an application to the competent authority.
- **If there is any question** related to whether a construction project qualifies as 'public works', it will be referred to the National Monuments Authority. This Authority, will make its recommendations, with written reasons, to the central government. The decision of the central government will be final. If the decision of the central government differs from that of the Authority, it should record its reasons in writing.
- **This decision should be communicated by the competent authority**, to the applicant, within 10 days of receiving it.
- **Impact assessment of proposed public works:** The Bill empowers the National Monuments Authority to consider an impact assessment of the proposed public works in a prohibited area, including its (i) archaeological impact; (ii) visual impact; and (iii) heritage impact.
- **The Authority will make a recommendation**, for construction of public works to the central government, only if it is satisfied that there is no reasonable possibility of moving the construction outside the prohibited area.



## National Agriculture Market

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- **National Agriculture Market (NAM)** is a pan-India electronic trading portal which networks the existing APMC mandis to create a unified national market for agricultural commodities.
- **The NAM Portal** provides a single window service for all APMC related information and services. This includes commodity arrivals & prices, buy & sell trade offers, provision to respond to trade offers, among other services. While material flow (agriculture produce) continue to happen through mandis, an online market reduces transaction costs and information asymmetry.
- **Agriculture marketing** is administered by the States as per their agri-marketing regulations, under which, the State is divided into several market areas, each of which is administered by a separate Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) which imposes its own marketing regulation (including fees). This fragmentation of markets, even within the State, hinders free flow of agri commodities from one market area to another and multiple handling of agri-produce and multiple levels of mandi charges ends up escalating the prices for the consumers without commensurate benefit to the farmer.
- **NAM addresses these challenges** by creating a unified market through online trading platform, both, at State and National level and promotes uniformity, streamlining of procedures across the integrated markets, removes information asymmetry between buyers and sellers and promotes real time price discovery, based on actual demand and supply, promotes transparency in auction process, and access to a nationwide market for the farmer, with prices commensurate with quality of his produce and online payment and availability of better quality produce and at more reasonable prices to the consumer.

## Objectives of NAM

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- **A national e-market platform for transparent sale transactions** and price discovery initially in regulated markets. Willing States to accordingly enact suitable provisions in their APMC Act for promotion of e-trading by their State Agricultural Marketing Board/APMC.
- **Liberal licensing of traders / buyers** and commission agents by State authorities without any pre-condition of physical presence or possession of shop /premises in the market yard.
- **One license for a trader valid** across all markets in the State. Harmonisation of quality standards of agricultural produce and provision for assaying (quality testing) infrastructure in every market to enable informed bidding by buyers. Common tradable parameters have so far been developed for 69 commodities.
- **Single point levy of market fees**, i.e on the first wholesale purchase from the farmer.
- **Provision of Soil Testing Laboratories** in/ or near the selected mandi to facilitate visiting farmers to access this facility in the mandi itself. M/s. Nagarjuna Fertilizers and Chemicals Ltd. is the Strategic Partner (SP) who is responsible for development, operation and maintenance of the platform.
- **The broad role** of the Strategic Partner is comprehensive and includes writing of the software, customizing it to meet the specific requirements of the mandis in the States willing to integrate with NAM and running the platform

## Transport / Tourism / Urban development The Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Amendment Bill, 2017



- **The Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Amendment Bill, 2017** was introduced by the Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs, Mr. Narendra Singh Tomar, in Lok Sabha on July 31, 2017. The Bill amends the Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Act, 1971. The Act provides for the eviction of unauthorised occupants from public premises in certain cases.
- **Residential accommodation:** The Bill defines 'residential accommodation occupation' as the occupation of public premises by a person on the grant of a license for such occupation. The license must be given for a fixed tenure, or for the period the person holds office. Further, the occupation must be allowed under the rules made by the central, state or union territory government, or a statutory authority (such as Parliament Secretariat, or a central government company, or premises belonging to a state government).
- **Notice for eviction:** The Bill adds a provision laying down the procedure for eviction from residential accommodation. It requires an estate officer (an officer of the central government) to issue a written notice to a person if he is in unauthorised occupation of a residential accommodation. The notice will require the person to show cause of why an eviction order should not be made against him, within three working days. The written notice must be fixed to a conspicuous part of the accommodation.
- **Order of eviction:** After considering the cause shown, and making any other inquiries, the estate officer will make an order for eviction. If the person fails to comply with the order, the estate officer may evict such person from the residential accommodation, and take possession of it. For this purpose, the estate officer may also use such force as necessary.
- **Payment of damages:** If the person in unauthorised occupation of the residential accommodation challenges the eviction order in any court, he will pay damages for every month of such occupation.

## Transport / Tourism / Urban development The Central Road Fund (Amendment) Bill, 2017

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- **The Central Road Fund (Amendment) Bill, 2017** was introduced in Lok Sabha on July 24, 2017 by the Minister of Road Transport and Highways, Mr. Nitin Gadkari. The Bill amends the Central Road Fund Act, 2000. The Act regulates the Central Road Fund (CRF), that is credited with the cess collected on high speed diesel oil and petrol. This collected amount is then released to National Highways Authority of India, and to the state/union territory governments for the development of national and state highways. The Bill seeks to allocate a share of this cess towards the development of inland waterways.
- **Inclusion of inland waterways:** The Bill defines national waterways as those that have been declared as 'national waterways' under the National Waterways Act, 2016. Currently, 111 waterways are specified under the 2016 Act.
- **Utilisation of fund:** Under the 2000 Act, the fund can be utilised for various road projects including: (i) national highways, (ii) state roads including roads of inter-state and economic importance, and (iii) rural roads. The Bill provides that in addition to these the fund will also be used for the development and maintenance of national waterways.
- **Powers of central government:** Under the Act, the central government has the power to administer the fund. The central government will make decisions on the: (i) investments on national highways and expressways projects, (ii) raising funds for the development and maintenance of national highways, and rural roads, and (iii) disbursement of funds for national highways, state roads and rural roads. The Bill provides that central government will make all the above decisions for national waterways as well.
- **Allocation of cess:** Under the Act, the cess on high speed diesel oil and petrol is allocated towards different types of roads. The Bill seeks to decrease the allocation of cess towards the development and maintenance of national highways from 41.5% to 39%. It allocates 2.5% of the cess towards the development and maintenance of national waterways.
- **As per the financial memorandum** of the Bill, at the current rate of levy of this cess, the share allocated towards waterways will amount to around Rs 2,000 crore per annum. The remaining cess amount will continue to be used for the development of other roads such as national highways, state highways, etc.



## Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA)

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- **Background:** In October 2015, soon after the Central government announced new rules for adoption and made it mandatory for all homes to be linked to the Child Adoption Resource Authority (CARA), which would be the only body in the country authorised to process adoptions, the Missionaries of Charity sought de-recognition of its homes.
- **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.
- **CARA primarily** deals with adoption of orphan, abandoned and surrendered children through its associated /recognised adoption agencies.
- **Facts for Prelims:** Missionaries of Charity is a Roman Catholic religious congregation established in 1950 by Mother Teresa.

## Vigilance Awareness Week

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- **The theme of the vigilance awareness** this year is "Eradicate Corruption- Make a New India."
- **During the week-long** Vigilance Awareness campaign, various activities like seminars, debates and essay competitions will be organized in the Ministry to sensitize and motivate its officers and staff to remain vigilant and transparent in their work in order to eradicate corruption in all spheres of life.
- **Background:** The Central Vigilance Commission aims to promote integrity, transparency and accountability in public life. As part of its efforts to promote probity in public life and to achieve a corruption free society, CVC observes Vigilance Awareness Week every year. The observation of Vigilance Awareness Week creates greater awareness among public and encourages all the stakeholders to collectively participate in prevention of and fight against Corruption.
- **About CVC:** It is the apex vigilance institution. It was created via executive resolution (based on the recommendations of Santhanam committee) in 1964 but was conferred with statutory status in 2003.
- **It submits its report to the President of India.** Composition: Presently, the body consists of central vigilance commissioner along with 2 vigilance commissioners.
- **Appointment:** They are appointed by the President of India on the recommendations of a committee consisting of Prime Minister, Union Home Minister and Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha (if there is no LoP then the leader of the single largest Opposition party in the Lok Sabha).
- **Term: Their term is 4 years or 65 years, whichever is earlier.** Removal: The Central Vigilance Commissioner or any Vigilance Commissioner can be removed from his office only by order of the President on the ground of proved misbehavior or incapacity after the Supreme Court, on a reference made to it by the President, has, on inquiry, reported that the Central Vigilance Commissioner or any Vigilance Commissioner, as the case may be, ought to be removed.

## Gujarat's first Mega Food Park

- **Promoted by M/s Gujarat Agro Infrastructure Mega Food Park Pvt. Ltd** the Park is located at Village Shah and Vasravi, Taluka Mangrol, District Surat. It will provide direct and indirect employment to 5,000 persons and benefit about 25,000 farmers.
- **About Mega Food Parks:** Ministry of Food Processing Industries is implementing Mega Food Park Scheme in the country. The Scheme of Mega Food Park aims at providing a mechanism to link agricultural production to the market by bringing together farmers, processors and retailers so as to ensure maximizing value addition, minimizing wastages, increasing farmers' income and creating employment opportunities particularly in rural sector.
- **These food parks** give a major boost to the food processing sector by adding value and reducing food wastage at each stage of the supply chain with particular focus on perishables. A maximum grant of ₹50 crore is given for setting up a MFP, in minimum 50 acres of contiguous land with only 50% contribution to the total project cost.
- **Mode of operation:** The Scheme has a cluster based approach based on a hub and spokes model. It includes creation of infrastructure for primary processing and storage near the farm in the form of Primary Processing Centres (PPCs) and Collection Centres (CCs) and common facilities and enabling infrastructure at Central Processing Centre (CPC).
- **The PPCs are meant** for functioning as a link between the producers and processors for supply of raw material to the Central Processing Centres. CPC has need based core processing facilities and basic enabling infrastructure to be used by the food processing units setup at the CPC. The minimum area required for a CPC is 50 acres.
- **The scheme** is demand-driven and would facilitate food processing units to meet environmental, safety and social standards.
- **Facts for Prelims:** Gujarat's 2nd Mega Food Park has been sanctioned by the Ministry in Mehsana District of Gujarat.

## Namami Gange programme

- **Namami Gange programme** About Namami Gange Programme: Namami Gange programme was launched as a mission to achieve the target of cleaning river Ganga in an effective manner with the unceasing involvement of all stakeholders, especially five major Ganga basin States – Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar and West Bengal.
- **The programme envisages:** River Surface Cleaning, Sewerage Treatment Infrastructure, River Front Development, Bio-Diversity, Afforestation and Public Awareness.
- **Implementation:** The program would be implemented by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), and its state counterpart organizations i.e., State Program Management Groups (SPMGs).
- **In order** to improve implementation, a three-tier mechanism has been proposed for project monitoring comprising of a) High level task force chaired by Cabinet Secretary assisted by NMCG at national level, b) State level committee chaired by Chief Secretary assisted by SPMG at state level and c) District level committee chaired by the District Magistrate.
- **The program emphasizes** on improved coordination mechanisms between various Ministries/Agencies of Central and State governments.

## Currency swap agreement between India and Japan

- **Currency swap agreement between India and Japan** Key facts: The Agreement shall aid in bringing greater stability to foreign exchange & capital markets in India. The facility will serve as a second line of defence for the rupee after the \$393.5 billion of foreign exchange reserves that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has at its disposal.
- **Under the arrangement**, India can acquire dollars from Japan in exchange for rupees. Conversely, Japan can also seek dollars from India in exchange for yen. The arrangement will be used only when required, and will help meet short-term liquidity mismatches.

- **Significance of the agreement:** The currency swap agreement is an important measure in improving the confidence in the Indian market and it would not only enable the agreed amount of capital being available to India, but it will also bring down the cost of capital for Indian entities while accessing the foreign capital market.
- **The swap arrangement** should aid in bringing greater stability to foreign exchange and capital markets in India. With this arrangement in place, prospects of India would further improve in tapping foreign capital for country's developmental needs. This facility will enable the agreed amount of foreign capital being available to India for use as and when the need arises.
- **What is this Currency Swap Arrangement (CSA)?** This is an arrangement, between two friendly countries, which have regular, substantial or increasing trade, to basically involve in trading in their own local currencies, where both pay for import and export trade, at the pre-determined rates of exchange, without bringing in third country currency like the US Dollar.
- **In such arrangements** no third country currency is involved, thereby eliminating the need to worry about exchange variations.

## India's first container movement on inland waterways

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- **Significance:** This would be the country's first container movement on inland vessel post-independence.
- **Facts for Prelims:** PepsiCo (India) will move 16 containers – equivalent to 16 truckloads- filled with food and snacks in the vessel MV RN Tagore which will reach Varanasi in 9-10 days. MV RN Tagore will make its return journey with fertilizers belonging to IFFCO that will be procured from its Phulpur plant near Allahabad.
- **The government** is developing NW-1 (River Ganga) under Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP) from Haldia to Varanasi (1390 Km) with the technical and financial assistance of the World Bank at an estimated cost of Rs 5369 crore. The project would enable commercial navigation of vessels with capacity of 1500-2,000 DWT. States covered under NW-1: States: Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal.
- **Benefits of container movement on inland waterways:** Container cargo transport comes with several inherent advantages. Even as it reduces the handling cost, allows easier modal shift, reduces pilferages and damage, it also enables cargo owners to reduce their carbon footprints.
- **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.

## CSIR develops Less Polluting Firecrackers

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- **Technical Details:** These crackers have unique property of releasing water vapour and /or air as dust suppressant and diluent for gaseous emissions and matching performance in sound with conventional crackers.
- **SWAS** crackers eliminates usage of (KNO<sub>3</sub>) Potassium nitrate and Sulphur with consequent reduction in particulate matter (30-35%) SO<sub>2</sub> and NO<sub>x</sub>. It has matching sound intensity with commercial crackers in the range of 105-110 dBA. SWAS has been tested for shelf life upto 3 weeks with consistent performance.
- **STAR** eliminates usage of KNO<sub>3</sub> and S with consequent reduction in particulate matter (35-40%), SO<sub>2</sub> and NO<sub>x</sub>. It has matching sound intensity with commercial crackers in the range of 105-110 dBA.
- **SAFAL** has minimal usage of aluminium (only in flash powder for initiation) with consequent significant reduction in particulate matter (35-40 %) compared to commercial crackers. It has matching sound intensity with commercial crackers in the range of 110-115 dBA.
- **Benefits:** Indian Fireworks industry is over 6000-crore worth of annual turnover and provides employment opportunities to over 5 lakh families directly or indirectly. This endeavour of CSIR aims at addressing the pollution concerns at the same time protecting the livelihoods of those involved in this trade. These Firecrackers are not only environment friendly but 15-20 % cheaper than the conventional ones.

## Crime and Criminal Tracking Network System (CCTNS)

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- **What is CCTNS project?** Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS) is a project initiated in June 2009 which aims at creating a comprehensive and integrated system for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of policing at the Police Station level.
- **This will be done** through adoption of principles of e-Governance, and creation of a nationwide networked infrastructure for evolution of IT-enabled state-of-the-art tracking system around "investigation of crime and detection of criminals". CCTNS is a Mission Mode Project (MMP) under the National e-Governance Plan of Govt. of India.
- **What it does?** The Project will interconnect about 15000 Police Stations and additional 5000 offices of supervisory police officers across the country and digitize data related to FIR registration, investigation and charge sheets in all Police Stations.
- **It will not only automate** Police functions at Police station and higher levels but will also create facilities and mechanism to provide public services like registration of online complaints, ascertaining the status of case registered at the police station, verification of persons etc.
- **In 2015**, an additional objective of establishing a basic platform for an Inter-operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS) was added to the Project.
- **Benefits:** The Full implementation of the Project with all the new components would lead to a Central citizen portal having linkages with State level citizen portals that will provide a number of citizen friendly services like Police Verification for various purposes including passport verification, reporting a crime including cyber-crime and online tracking of the case progress etc.
- **The project** will enable National level crime analytics to be published at increased frequency, which will help the policy makers as well as lawmakers in taking appropriate and timely action, it will also enable Pan-India criminal/accused name search in the regional language for improved inter-state tracking of criminal movement. This would lead to development of a national database of crimes and criminals.

## India's largest Dry Dock at Cochin Shipyard:

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- **Context:** India's largest Dry Dock will be built at Cochin Shipyard. With this Cochin Shipyard will be able to build specialized and technologically advanced large vessels.
- **Significance:** The Dry Dock will give an impetus to "Make in India" initiative under Sagarmala and raise India's share in global shipbuilding to 2%. India currently occupies 0.66% share in global shipbuilding market.

## WHO's First Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health:

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- **Context:** The first Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health will be held at WHO Headquarters in Geneva.
- **Organizers:** The conference is being held in collaboration with UN Environment, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the Secretariat of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Climate and Clean Air Coalition to Reduce Short-Lived Climate Pollutants (CCAC) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).
- **Participants** will include Ministers of Health and Environment and other national government representatives; representatives of intergovernmental agencies, health professionals, other sectors (e.g. transport, energy, etc.), as well as from research, academia and civil society.

- **Background:** The conference responds to a World Health Assembly mandate to combat one of the world's most significant causes of premature death, causing some 7 million deaths annually. Air pollution in most cities exceeds recommended WHO Air Quality levels and household air pollution is a leading killer in poor rural and urban homes. Up to 1/3 of deaths from stroke, lung cancer and heart disease are due to air pollution

## Security / Law / Strategic affairs The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Ordinance, 2018

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- **The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Ordinance, 2018** was promulgated on September 19, 2018. Note that the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2018 was introduced and passed in Lok Sabha on December 28, 2017 and is currently pending in Rajya Sabha.
- **The Ordinance makes** all declaration of talaq, including in written or electronic form, to be void (i.e. not enforceable in law) and illegal. It defines talaq as talaq-e-biddat or any other similar form of talaq pronounced by a Muslim man resulting in instant and irrevocable divorce. Talaq-e-biddat refers to the practice under Muslim personal laws where pronouncement of the word 'talaq' thrice in one sitting by a Muslim man to his wife results in an instant and irrevocable divorce.
- **Offence and penalty:** The Ordinance makes declaration of talaq a cognizable offence, attracting up to three years imprisonment with a fine. (A cognizable offence is one for which a police officer may arrest an accused person without warrant.) The offence will be cognizable only if information relating to the offence is given by: (i) the married woman (against whom talaq has been declared), or (ii) any person related to her by blood or marriage.
- **The Ordinance** provides that the Magistrate may grant bail to the accused. The bail may be granted only after hearing the woman (against whom talaq has been pronounced), and if the Magistrate is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for granting bail.
- **The offence** may be compounded by the Magistrate upon the request of the woman (against whom talaq has been declared). Compounding refers to the procedure where the two sides agree to stop legal proceedings, and settle the dispute. The terms and conditions of the compounding of the offence will be determined by the Magistrate.
- **Allowance:** A Muslim woman against whom talaq has been declared, is entitled to seek subsistence allowance from her husband for herself and for her dependent children. The amount of the allowance will be determined by the Magistrate.
- **Custody:** A Muslim woman against whom such talaq has been declared, is entitled to seek custody of her minor children. The manner of custody will be determined by the Magistrate.

## Security / Law / Strategic affairs The Personal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018

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- **The Personal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018** was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Minister for Law and Justice, Mr. Ravi Shankar Prasad, on August 10, 2018. It seeks to amend five Acts. These are: (i) the Divorce Act, 1869, (ii) the Dissolution of Muslim Marriage Act, 1939, (iii) the Special Marriage Act, 1954, (iv) the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, and (v) the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956.
- **These Acts contain provisions** related to marriage, divorce, and separation of Hindu and Muslim couples. Each of these Acts prescribe leprosy as a ground for seeking divorce or separation from the spouse. The Bill seeks to remove this as a ground for divorce or separation.

## Security / Law / Strategic affairs The Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Bill, 2018

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- **The Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Bill, 2018** was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Minister of State for Home Affairs, Mr. Hansraj Ahir, on August 9, 2018. The Bill amends the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993. The Act provides for a National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), State Human Rights Commissions (SHRC), as well as Human Rights Courts.
- **Composition of NHRC:** Under the Act, the chairperson of the NHRC is a person who has been a Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The Bill amends this to provide that a person who has been Chief Justice of India, or a Judge of the Supreme Court will be the chairperson of the NHRC.
- **The Act provides** for two persons having knowledge of human rights to be appointed as members of the NHRC. The Bill amends this to allow three members to be appointed, of which at least one will be a woman. Under the Act, chairpersons of various commissions such as the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, and National Commission for Women are members of the NHRC.
- **The Bill** provides for including the chairpersons of the National Commission for Backward Classes, the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights, and the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities as members of the NHRC. Chairperson of SHRC: Under the Act, the chairperson of a SHRC is a person who has been a Chief Justice of a High Court. The Bill amends this to provide that a person who has been Chief Justice or Judge of a High Court will be chairperson of a SHRC.
- **Term of office:** The Act states that the chairperson and members of the NHRC and SHRC will hold office for five years or till the age of seventy years, whichever is earlier. The Bill reduces the term of office to three years or till the age of seventy years, whichever is earlier. The Bill also allows for the reappointment of chairpersons of the NHRC and SHRCs.
- **Powers of Secretary-General:** The Act provides for a Secretary-General of the NHRC and a Secretary of a SHRC, who exercise powers as may be delegated to them. The Bill amends this and allows the Secretary-General and Secretary to exercise all administrative and financial powers (except judicial functions), subject to the respective chairperson's control.
- **Union Territories:** The Bill provides that the central government may confer on a SHRC human rights functions being discharged by Union Territories. Functions relating to human rights in the case of Delhi will be dealt with by the NHRC.



## Security / Law / Strategic affairs The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Bill, 2018

- **Highlights of the Bill** The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 states that adoption of a child is final on the issuance of an adoption order by the court. The Bill provides that instead of the court, the district magistrate will issue such adoption orders.
- **The Bill seeks to transfer** all pending matters related to adoption before any court to the district magistrate having jurisdiction over the area.
- **Key Issues and Analysis** Currently, there are 629 adoption cases pending in various courts. In order to expedite adoption proceedings, the Bill transfers the power to issue adoption orders to the district magistrate. An issue to consider is whether the level of pendency justifies shifting the load to the district magistrate.
- **Adoption of a child** is a legal process which creates a permanent legal relationship between the child and adoptive parents. Therefore, it may be questioned whether it is appropriate to vest the power to issue adoption orders with the district magistrate instead of a civil court.

## Ministry of Railways rolls out All-India Unreserved Mobile Ticketing facility (UTS on Mobile)

- **The facility of booking unreserved tickets**, including season tickets and also platform tickets is available through the 'UTSONMOBILE' app available for Android, IOS and Windows phones.
- **Booking of unreserved tickets** on all non-suburban sections across all Zonal Railways has been made available from 1st November to enable seamless booking of unreserved tickets all over Indian Railways
- **Ministry of Railways** has introduced Unreserved Mobile Ticketing with a view to promote three C's- Cashless transactions (Digital payment), Contact less ticketing (no need to physically visit the point of sale) and Customer convenience and experience. As a big leap, booking of unreserved tickets on all non-suburban sections across all Zonal Railways has been made available from 1st November to enable seamless booking of unreserved tickets all over Indian Railways which will obviate the need for passengers to wait in queues for purchasing the tickets.
- **A pilot project** for booking of unreserved tickets through mobile phone was commenced in December, 2014 on select stations on Central Railway to provide customers the convenience of booking of unreserved tickets without having to stand in queues.
- **Gradually**, unreserved Mobile ticketing was extended to all suburban sections in metropolitan cities of Chennai, Delhi, Kolkata and Secunderabad between 2015 and 2017 along with the facility of paperless ticketing. The facility of booking unreserved tickets, including season tickets and also platform tickets is available through the 'UTSONMOBILE' app available for Android, IOS and Windows phones.
- **The process of ticket booking** involves downloading the application and registration by furnishing the requisite details. After successful registration, the user is given user-ID and password through which the user can log-in and book ticket through this application within the ticketing area and outside the Geo-fenced area (geofenced area is station premises and train route within which ticket cannot be booked. Ticketing area is outside the geofenced area as defined in the application). Initially, the payment could be made only through R-Wallet. Subsequently, the facility of making payment through all types of digital modes i.e. debit card, credit card, net-banking, UPI and other e-wallets has been introduced through payment aggregators viz. Paytm, Mobikwik and Freecharge, in line with Government's directives to promote all digital modes of payments. The daily average number of passengers booking tickets through this app has increased from approximately 5400 in year 2015 to 4.70 lakh in October, 2018.
- **The UTSONMOBILE** was also introduced on Non-Suburban sections in 2015 initially on Delhi-Palwal section of Northern Railway which was subsequently extended to other non-suburban sections of Northern, South Central, Southern, South Western, East Coast, South East Central and South Eastern Railways.



- **Benefits of the App:** Mobile Ticketing shall promote 3C's- Cashless transactions, Contact less ticketing and Customer convenience. Seamless booking of unreserved tickets all over Indian Railways.
- **Obviate the need for passengers** to wait in queues for purchasing the tickets and enhance the experience for booking unreserved tickets – journey, season tickets, platform tickets. Environment friendly. About the App
- **'UTSONMOBILE'** application available for Android, IOS, Windows phones. Can be downloaded from Google play or window store. Application 'in house' developed by Indian Railway- CRIS.

## Opening Ceremony: INDO - Japan joint military exercise DHARMA GUARDIAN 2018

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- **Exercise DHARMA GUARDIAN - 2018**, a joint military exercise between Indian & Japanese Armies, commenced at Counter Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School, Vairengete, Mizoram, India on 01 November 2018.
- **The Japanese contingent** is being represented by 32nd Infantry Battalion, while the Indian side is being represented by 6/1 Gorkha Rifles. Approximately one platoon strength each of both the battalions is participating in this exercise.
- **The opening ceremony** was given a patriotic start by contingents of both the countries singing their respective national anthems.
- **Being first of its kind**, the 14 days long joint exercise is being conducted from 01 Nov 2018 to 14 Nov 2018. The exercise will consist of a balance of indoor classes and outdoor training activities. The objective of this exercise is to build and promote army to army relations in addition to exchanging skills and experiences between both the armies. Due emphasis will be laid on enhancing tactical skills to fight against global terrorism and on increasing interoperability between forces of both countries which is crucial for the 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. The exercise will contribute immensely in developing mutual understanding and respect for each other's military.

## Sardar Patel Statue of Unity

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- **October 31, 2018 marks the 143rd birth anniversary of Sardar Patel. Key facts:** At 182 metre, the statue is 23 metre taller than China's Spring Temple Buddha statue and almost double the height of the Statue of Liberty (93 metre tall) in US.
- **Located on the Sadhu Bet island**, near Rajpipla on the Narmada river, the Statue of Unity is located between the Satpura and the Vindhya mountain ranges. The Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Rashtriya Ekta Trust (SVPRET), a special purpose vehicle set up by Modi in 2011, arranged some 129 tonnes of iron implements from nearly 100 million farmers in 169,000 villages across all states to construct the base of the statue in the 'Loha' campaign.
- **The Statue of Unity** was brought to fruition by Padma Bhushan-winning sculptor Ram V Sutar and intricate bronze cladding work was done by a Chinese foundry, the Jiangxi Toqine Company (JTQ).
- **About Sardar Vallabhai Patel:** Sardar Patel is credited with uniting all 562 princely states in pre-independent India to build the Republic of India — hence the name of the statue. The date for the inauguration of the statue (October 31, 2018) also marks the 143rd birth anniversary of Sardar Patel.
- **Role in the Indian National Movement:** In 1917, Sardar Vallabhbhai was elected as the Secretary of the Gujarat Sabha, the Gujarat wing of the Indian National Congress. In 1918, he led a massive "No Tax Campaign" that urged the farmers not to pay taxes after the British insisted on tax after the floods in Kaira. The peaceful movement forced the British authorities to return the land taken away from the farmers. His effort to bring together the farmers of his area brought him the title of 'Sardar'.
- **He actively supported the non-cooperation Movement** launched by Gandhi. Patel toured the nation with him, recruited 300,000 members and helped collect over Rs. 1.5 million.

- **In 1928, the farmers of Bardoli** again faced a problem of "tax-hike". After prolonged summons, when the farmers refused to pay the extra tax, the government seized their lands in retaliation. The agitation took on for more than six months. After several rounds of negotiations by Patel, the lands were returned to farmers after a deal was struck between the government and farmers' representatives.
- **In 1930, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel** was among the leaders imprisoned for participating in the famous Salt Satyagraha movement initiated by Mahatma Gandhi.
- **Sardar Patel** was freed in 1931, following an agreement signed between Mahatma Gandhi and Lord Irwin, the then Viceroy of India. The treaty was popularly known as the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. The same year, Patel was elected as the President of Indian National Congress in its Karachi session where the party deliberated its future path.

## Karnataka launches Samruddhi scheme

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- **About Samruddhi:** It is a rural entrepreneurship programme for Scheduled Castes (ST) and Scheduled Tribes (SC) in Karnataka.
- **Through this rural employment** and skill development programme, the government will partner with private organisations to provide training free of cost. The industry partners would invest up to 10 percent or more in retail management, taxation policies and GST, inventory management, soft skills, logistics, etc."
- **The government** has also set up a seed grant of up to Rs 10 lakh to help the beneficiaries set up their own franchises or retail outlets. It hopes to create 10,000 SC/ST rural entrepreneurs over the next three years.
- **As part of the Samruddhi scheme**, the government will also provide a seed grant to deserving youth to start their own franchises or retail outlets after they receive the required training and certification.
- **Significance of the scheme:** The government is hoping to create around 10,000 entrepreneurs annually in the next three years from among the economically and socially marginalised communities in the State.
- **These entrepreneurs** will in their turn create jobs in rural and semi urban areas, and help push employment and skill development in the State further. The government hopes that this scheme will ultimately benefit aspiring, young citizens from rural and tier II cities and ensure sustainable and all-round development.

## Birthright Citizenship in US

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- **To accomplish** the idea, Mr. Trump would have to find a way around the 14th Amendment to the Constitution.
- **What is the 14th Amendment?** The 14th Amendment, which grants citizenship to anyone born on U.S. soil, was ratified in 1868 after the Civil War so that recently-freed slaves could become citizens.
- **The amendment reads**, "all person born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside."
- **What is birthright citizenship?** Birthright citizenship, or jus soli, a legal term that means "right of the soil," is the right guaranteed by the 14th Amendment, and upheld by the Supreme Court, that says anyone born on U.S soil is automatically a citizen.
- **What's the main contention now?** Some conservatives have long made the argument that the 14th Amendment was meant to apply only to citizens and legal permanent residents, not immigrants who are present in the country without authorization. They say, birthright citizenship was based on a misreading of the amendment, and of an 1898 Supreme Court ruling that they argue pertained only to the children of legal residents.
- **Background:** The U.S. is one of more than 30 other countries that also grant citizenship to children born within their borders. Citizenship policies vary around the world, somewhat based on geography. Countries in Europe or Asia don't have similar policies, but countries further west, including Canada and most South American nations, do.

- **Implications:** Aside from being unconstitutional, such an executive order would exacerbate racial tensions, exploit fears and drive further polarization across the country at a moment that calls for the promotion of unity and inclusion.

## Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC)

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- **About FSDC:** The Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) was constituted in December, 2010. The FSDC was set up to strengthen and institutionalise the mechanism for maintaining financial stability, enhancing inter-regulatory coordination and promoting financial sector development.
- **Composition:** The Council is chaired by the Union Finance Minister and its members are Governor, Reserve Bank of India; Finance Secretary and/or Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs; Secretary, Department of Financial Services; Chief Economic Adviser, Ministry of Finance; Chairman, Securities and Exchange Board of India; Chairman, Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority and Chairman, Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority. It also includes the chairman of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board (IBBI).
- **In May**, the government through a gazette notification, had included ministry of electronics and information technology (MeitY) secretary in the FSDC in view of the increased focus of the government on digital economy.
- **What it does?** The Council deals, inter-alia, with issues relating to financial stability, financial sector development, inter-regulatory coordination, financial literacy, financial inclusion and macro prudential supervision of the economy including the functioning of large financial conglomerates. No funds are separately allocated to the Council for undertaking its activities.

## Commercial papers

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- **What is a commercial paper?** A commercial Paper (CP) is an unsecured loan raised by firms in money markets through instruments issued in the form of a promissory note. CPs can be issued for maturities between a minimum of 7 days and a maximum of up to one year from the date of issue.
- **Why are CPs popular?** Because of surplus liquidity, short-term borrowing rates in money markets have significantly declined post demonetisation and are much lower than the lowest benchmark lending rates of the banks.
- **What are the advantages of issuing CPs?** Apart from being a cheaper source of funds, it helps meet funding requirements relatively quickly for better-rated corporates. Procedural requirements for securing bank facilities and charge creation on assets is not required.
- **What are the key challenges with CPS?** As the CP is an unsecured loan, the investor in commercial papers largely prefers highly-rated corporates or public sector entities in terms of credit rating. Lender appetite is limited to better rated companies.
- **Also commercial paper** markets can be seasonal and vulnerable to liquidity conditions. In case of sudden tightening of liquidity, a firm's ability to secure funding can be challenged. Within the year, liquidity conditions can become tight in certain months such as the end of a quarter, because of advance payment of taxes and the like. At such times, funding costs can also rise for the issue of CPs.
- **Therefore**, commercial papers should not be used as a permanent source of capital and should largely be used to benefit from liquidity conditions and arbitrage in short-term borrowing rates.

## Parker solar probe

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- **Key facts:** The previous record for closest solar approach was set by the German-American Helios 2 spacecraft in April 1976.

- **As the Parker Solar Probe** mission progresses, the spacecraft will repeatedly break its own records, with a final close approach of 3.83 million miles (6.2 million km) from the sun's surface expected in 2024.
- **Parker Solar Probe** is also expected to break the record for fastest spacecraft traveling relative to the sun, also on October 29. The current record for heliocentric speed is 153,454 miles per hour, set by Helios 2 in April 1976.
- **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.

## Living Planet Report 2018

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- **Highlights of the report:** Global wildlife population shrank by 60% between 1970 and 2014. Declines are worst in the tropics, according to the data, as South and Central America saw an 89% decrease. Also, freshwater species saw an 83% drop, threatened by factors including overfishing, pollution and climate change.
- **The report** estimates that only a quarter of the world's land is untouched by humans, who are increasing food production and use of natural resources. Since 1960, the global ecological footprint has increased by more than 190%. Globally, the extent of wetlands was estimated to have declined by 87% since 1970.
- **The two key drivers** of biodiversity loss were the over exploitation of natural resources and agriculture.
- **Threat to soil biodiversity and pollinators:** A key aspect of this year's report is the threat to soil biodiversity and pollinators.
- **Soil biodiversity** encompasses the presence of micro-organisms, micro-fauna (nematodes and tardigrades for example), and macro-fauna (ants, termites and earthworms).
- **The report** notes that India's soil biodiversity is in grave peril. The WWF's 'risk index' for the globe — indicating threats from loss of above-ground diversity, pollution and nutrient over-loading, over-grazing, intensive agriculture, fire, soil erosion, desertification and climate change — shows India among countries whose soil biodiversity faces the highest level of risk.
- **What needs to be done?** To address these challenges, the WWF suggests three necessary steps: "clearly specifying a goal for biodiversity recovery; developing a set of measurable and relevant indicators of progress; and agreeing on a suite of actions that can collectively achieve the goal in the required time frame."
- **The WWF has called for an international treaty**, modelled on the Paris climate agreement, to be drafted to protect wildlife and reverse human impacts on nature.
- **Way ahead:** The current efforts to protect the natural world are not keeping up with the speed of man-made destruction, and that the world is heading for an "ecological credit crunch" far worse than the current financial crisis because humans are overusing the natural resources of the planet.
- **This trend** will continue unless human beings learn to minimise the use of resources and internalise the benefits of recycling/reuse. The nature conservation agenda is not only about securing the future of tigers, pandas, whales and all the amazing diversity of life. It's bigger than that. There cannot be a healthy, happy and prosperous planet with a destabilised climate, depleted oceans and rivers, degraded land and empty forests, all stripped of biodiversity, the web of life that sustains us all.

## INS Tarangini:

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- **Context:** The sail training ship of Indian Navy, INS Tarangini based at Kochi, has returned after a seven month long sailing across the world to a grand reception at naval base, Kochi.
- **The Voyage named “Lokayan 18”** was flagged off on 10 Apr 18 from Kochi. During the voyage, the ship travelled across 15 ports in 13 countries.
- **The ship sailed across the Arabian Sea,** Red Sea, Suez Canal, Mediterranean Sea, Strait of Gibraltar, North Atlantic Ocean, Bay of Biscay, English Channel and North Sea, right up to Norway.