

Indian Culture And Heritage

Adopt a Heritage Site

In News

- The Tourism Ministry recently handed over an MoU under the “Adopt A Heritage Project” to Resbird Technologies for development of a mobile audio guide App for five iconic sites.
- The five iconic sites are Amer Fort (Rajasthan), Kaziranga (Assam), Colva Beach (Goa), Kumarakom (Kerala), and Mahabodhi Temple (Bihar).

Adopt a Heritage Scheme

- The '***Adopt a Heritage: Apni Dharohar, Apni Pehchaan***' scheme is an initiative of the Ministry of Tourism, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and the Archaeological Survey of India.
- It was launched in September 2017 on World Tourism Day by President Ram Nath Kovind.
- Under it, the government invites entities, including public sector companies, private sector firms as well as individuals, to develop selected monuments and heritage and tourist sites across India.
- Development of these tourist sites calls for providing and maintaining basic amenities, including drinking water, ease of access for the differently abled and senior citizens, cleanliness, public conveniences and illumination, along with advanced amenities such as surveillance systems, night-viewing facilities, and tourism facilitation centres.
- The sites/monument are selected on the basis of tourist footfall and visibility and can be adopted by private and public sector companies and individuals — known as **Monument Mitras** — for an initial period of five years.
- The Monument Mitras are selected by the oversight and vision committee, co-chaired by the Tourism Secretary and the Culture Secretary, on the basis of the bidder's vision for development of all amenities at the heritage site.
- There is no financial bid involved. The corporate sector is expected to use **corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds** for the upkeep of the site.
- The Monument Mitras, in turn, will get limited visibility on the site premises and on the Incredible India website. The oversight committee also has the power to terminate a memorandum of understanding in case of non-compliance or non-performance.

Buddhist Site Museum At Lalitgiri In Odisha

In News

- One of the earliest **Buddhist settlements in Odisha, Lalitgiri**, where excavations have yielded ancient seals and inscriptions, has been converted into a museum and was inaugurated by the Prime Minister.
- Located in Cuttack district, it will be the third site museum of the Bhubaneswar circle of the Archaeological Survey of India after Ratnagiri and Konarak,
- The museum complex is spread over 4,750 sq. m. The building and auditorium are built over 1,310 sq. m. The complex has been constructed at a cost of ₹10 crore.
- Excavations at Lalitgiri have yielded the remains of four monasteries, showing cultural continuity from the post-Mauryan period till the 13th century CE.

- The centre of attraction is a relic casket containing corporal remains found inside the Mahastupta.
- Huge sculptures of Buddha, architectural fragments of Viharas and Chaityas are arranged period-wise
- The central gallery is designed after a Buddha Mandala with a colossal Buddha image at the centre and six Bodhisattva images surrounding it

Heritage Park for Hindus, Buddhists in Elum Valley in Pak

In News

- The **Khyber Pakthunkhwa** province plans to construct a heritage park in Elum Valley, which carries a historical significance to both the Hindus and the Buddhists, to promote religious tourism.
- Elum Valley is located between the Swat and Buner districts in the province and it has been a site of divinity and pilgrimage for both the Hindu and the Buddhist communities.
- According to Hindu belief, Lord Ram spent time meditating there during his 14 years of exile, while Buddhists believe it to be the site where a previous incarnation of Lord Buddha gave up his life.

Hornbill Festival 2018

In News

- Union Home Minister recently inaugurated the hugely popular Hornbill Festival, coinciding with Formation Day of Nagaland. The festival, named after a bird, is a spectacular event showcasing rich ancient culture & civilizational unity of people of Nagaland.
- It is celebrated every year in the **first week of December**.
- The festival is **held at the Naga Heritage Village in Kisama**, which is around 12 km from the capital city Kohima and is enveloped with green valleys and pretty hills.
- The Government of Nagaland has taken the festival to other parts of the State where mini-Hornbill Festivals are celebrated from time to time.
- The colourful festival is also one of the major crowd-pullers for the state and falls in what is believed to be the best time to visit Nagaland.
- During the daytime, the entire village echoes with the thumping of drums and folk songs. In addition to all these, war dance performances and head-hunting rituals are organised for the entertainment of people.
- Competitions are held every day during the festival, where a number of brave hearts try their luck at **Bhut jholokia** (one of the hottest varieties of chilli) eating contest.
- After the sun goes down, Kohima Night Bazaar takes over the streets and a number of food and handicraft stalls start setting up their shops. And then comes the very famous rock and metal festival wherein some of the best bands of the state perform for the audience.

Dwijing Festival

In News

- The third edition of the 12-day Dwijing Festival, a river tourism project of the Assam government was recently held in the **Chirang district**.

- With the target of promoting river tourism in the rural areas of the Bodoland Territorial Council and the State, the festival was **initiated in the year 2016-17 under the moniker of AIE River Winter Festival**.
- It is being organised jointly by **Assam Tourism Development Corporation** and **Bodoland Tourism**.
- **Dwijing means river bank** and the festival covering areas around the river Aie will focus on business and income generation for the local people through rural tourism
- **The river Aie, meaning Mother**, originates from the Himalayas of Bhutan flowing through Chirang and Bongaigaon districts before meeting the river Brahmaputra. The Aie plays a vital role in the lives of people of the area.
- The festival showcased ethnic trade, cuisine, culture, games and sports, exhibitions, adventure sports, river rafting, helicopter rides and cultural programmes to make it a centre of attraction for the visitors as a New Year event.

Mukhyamantri Tirth Yatra Yojana

In News

- Delhi government has launched the Mukhyamantri Tirth Yatra Yojana, that offers **free travel packages for five religious circuits for senior citizens of Delhi**.
- To facilitate a seamless coordination for the said scheme, the Delhi Tourism and Transportation Development Corporation Ltd (DTTDC) has signed an MoU with Indian Railways and Catering Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), Ministry of Railways.
- The scheme will be for any of the following routes--Mathura-Vrindavan-Agra-Fatehpur Sikri, Haridwar-Rishikesh-Neelkanth, Ajmer-Pushkar, Amritsar-Wagah Border-Anandpur Sahib, and Vaishno Devi-Jammu.
- The scheme will enable 1,100 senior citizens from each of 70 assembly constituencies of Delhi every year to undertake free pilgrimage and overall 77,000 senior citizens will be able to avail this facility.
- Delhi residents above the age of 60 are covered under this scheme. Those selected, will be allowed to be accompanied by an attendant above 20 years of age, whose expenditure will also be borne by the Government.

Society

SDG India Index 2018

Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

In News

- NITI Aayog has released the Baseline Report of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) India Index, which comprehensively documents the progress made by India's States and Union Territories towards implementing the 2030 SDG targets.
- The SDGs are global development goals that address key aspects of universal wellbeing across different socio-economic, cultural, geographical divisions and integrate the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development.

- The SDG India Index is developed in collaboration with the **Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI), Global Green Growth Institute, and United Nations** in India.
- The Index intends to align the SDGs with the Prime Minister's clarion call of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, which embodies the **5 Ps** of the global SDG movement – **people, planet, prosperity, partnership, and peace**.
- The Index is designed to function as a **tool for focussed policy dialogue, formulation and implementation**, moving towards development action pegged to globally recognisable metrics of SDG framework.
- The Index also supplements NITI Aayog's continuous efforts towards encouraging evidence-based policy making by supporting States/UTs to benchmark their progress, identifying priority areas and share best practices.
- It tracks progress of all States and UTs on **62 Priority Indicators** selected by NITI Aayog, which in turn is guided by MoSPI's National Indicator Framework comprising 306 indicators and based on multiple-round consultations with Union Ministries/Departments and States/UTs.
- The Index spans **13 out of 17 SDGs**. Progress on SDGs 12, 13 & 14 could not be measured as relevant State/UT level data were not available and SDG 17 was left out as it focuses on international partnerships.
- A composite score was computed between the **range of 0-100** for each State and UT based on their aggregate performance across 13 SDGs, which indicates average performance of State/UT towards achieving 13 SDGs & their respective targets.
- If a State/UT achieves a score of 100, it signifies that it has achieved the 2030 national targets. The higher the score of a State/UT, the greater the distance to target achieved.
- Classification Criteria based on SDG India Index Score is **Aspirant: 0-49, Performer: 50-64, Front Runner: 65-99 and Achiever: 100**.

Findings

- The **nation as a whole has a score of 58**, showing the country has reached a little beyond the halfway mark.
- **Himachal Pradesh (69), Kerala (69) and Tamil Nadu (68) have emerged as front runners while Assam, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are the laggards**.
- Kerala's overall top rank is attributed to its strong performance in providing good health, reducing hunger, achieving gender equality and providing quality education.
- Himachal Pradesh ranks high in providing clean water and sanitation, reducing inequalities and preserving the mountain ecosystem.
- **Among Union territories, Chandigarh takes the lead with a score of 68** because of its exemplary performance in providing clean water & sanitation, affordable & clean energy, generating decent work & economic growth & providing quality education.

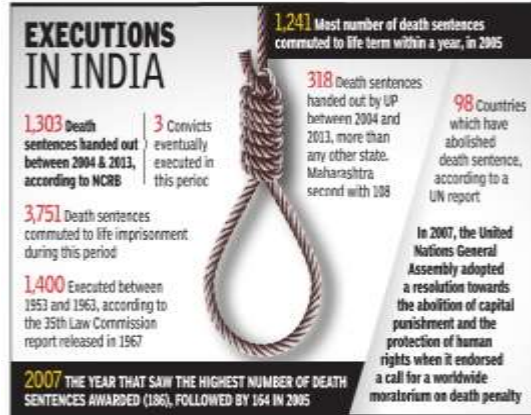
Constitution, Polity, And Governance

The Death Penalty Debate

Syllabus: Indian Constitution - Significant - Provisions

In News

- In questioning the merits of retaining the death penalty, Former Justice Kurian Joseph has re-ignited a debate.
- The law laid down in **Bachan Singh (1980)**, upheld the validity of the death penalty and provided that death penalty should be awarded only in **the rarest of rare cases**.
- Around **59 countries** that still retained the death penalty. India is one of them, even if it does not employ it as frequently as countries such as Iran, China, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the USA.
- Following the gang rape of a young woman in Delhi in December 2012, amendments were made to the IPC adding the death penalty for certain categories of rapes and repeat offenders. This year India introduced the death penalty for those who rape minors. The polarized debate that surrounded Yakub Menon’s execution in 2015 was yet another reminder of the pervasive popularity of the idea.



Arguments In Favour Of Death Penalty

- **India’s peculiar circumstances:** In 1962, the **Law Commission (35th Report)** supported the death penalty stating that India’s particular circumstances were such that it could not experiment with its abolition.
- **Controlling law and order:** In 1991, the Supreme Court cited its use in defending law and order as the reason for its continuance.
- **Problem of terrorism & neighbourhood:** India’s neighbourhood is not peaceful, unlike Scandinavia. On the contrary, every day vested interests attempt to destabilize the very idea of our nation from across every border it shares. Moreover, cases of violent terror are constant reminders of the need to protect national stability by ensuring appropriate responses to such actions and the death penalty forms part of the national response.
- **Moral support for the death penalty:** A punishment cannot be judged by its impact on criminals but by its impact on those who are still innocent.
- **Retributive/Deterrence effect:** Those who defend the death penalty often do it on the basis of retributive justice. Moreover, its alleged usefulness extends from being a potential deterrent to serving as a primordial need for retribution.
- **Limited application:** The judiciary has already circumscribed the application of death penalty by stating that it must only be imposed where the alternative option is unquestionably foreclosed.
- **Rarest of rare cases:** The death penalty is imposed only in rarest of rare cases that shock the conscience of society. This is reflective in the fact that in the **last 13 years, only four** people have been executed.

Arguments Against Death Penalty

- **Introduction:** The death penalty is criticized mainly on three counts *i.e.* **arbitrariness, irreversibility and human rights.**
- **Morality:** The moral foundation of judicial killing has been questioned and it has been judged untenable in many countries.
- **Problems in implementation:** Implementation of the death penalty has also been deeply problematic. As the recent **Death Penalty India Report** by the **National Law University, Delhi** indicates, the structural flaws in our criminal procedure and criminal justice system are most pronounced in death penalty cases.
- **Arbitrary application:** There has been an arbitrary manner/application in which death penalty is awarded by different judges (**judge-centric variations**) and the way public discourse influences such decisions.
- **Pressure of public opinion on judiciary:** In individual cases the decision on death penalty depends on the nature of the crime, its gravity, cruelty and the number of fatalities. But in recent times, public outrage, the need for deterrence, and the clamour for a befitting punishment to render substantial justice have dominated the discourse.
- **Uneven application of the Bachan Singh case:** The Supreme Court itself spoke of the extremely uneven application of the norms laid down in Bachan Singh. The same was also endorsed by the **Law Commission of India** in its **262nd Report** and asserted that there exists no principled method to remove such arbitrariness from capital sentencing.
- **Against reformation:** The death penalty has refused to consider the **Reformative theory of punishment** that focuses on reforming the individual.
- **Lack of deterrence effect:** No study has shown that the death penalty deters murder more than life imprisonment. The evidence is all to the contrary. For deterrence to work, the severity of the punishment has to coexist with the **certainty and swiftness of the punishment.** The death penalty has not deterred terrorism, murder or even theft.
- **Biasness:** Due to biases in criminal investigations, the marginalized, whether by **religious and caste denominations** or class are disproportionately subject to the death penalty.
- **Delay in criminal justice system:** The delays in the criminal justice system disproportionately affect those who suffer the tyranny of the uncertainty of their life.
- **International resolution:** In 2007, the **UN General Assembly** passed a resolution calling for a moratorium on the administration of the death penalty.

Way forward

- The Supreme Court has covered considerable ground in limiting the scope, to the rarest of rare case. Post-appeal reviews and curative petitions are routinely admitted. Review petitions are now heard in open court. The treatment of death row prisoners has been humanized and there is scope for judicial review even against a sovereign decision denying clemency.
- If there still prevails a perception of arbitrariness in the way death sentences are awarded, the only lasting solution is their abolition. The views of the Law Commission and Justice Joseph should not be ignored.

Governor's Rule And President's Rule In J&K

Syllabus: Indian Constitution - Significant - Provisions

In News

VAJIRAM & RAVI

- The Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) will come under President's rule from 19th December 2018. It will be for the first since October 9, 1996, when the Farooq Abdullah led National Conference (NC) took over at the end of six years of direct central rule.
- The J&K has been under central rule **eight times** and moved from Governor's rule to President's rule (after six months) on two of those occasions. This will be the **third time**.

Background

- **Concept of President and PM:** Until March 30, 1965, the state did not have a Governor or Chief Minister; it had a **Sadri Riyasat** (President of the State) and a Prime Minister.
- **Restriction on autonomy:** In 1953, months before J&K's Constituent Assembly ratified the state's accession to the Indian Union, then J&K Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was removed and arrested. In another blow to the state's autonomy, New Delhi renamed the positions of Sadri Riyasat to Governor and Prime Minister to Chief Minister while Abdullah was in jail and his party was running a campaign for self-determination for J&K.
- **Difference in position:** Unlike the Governor, who is the Centre's nominee, Sadri Riyasat was a constitutional position elected by the J&K legislature and drew his powers from J&K's own Constitution. Even after the post was abolished, the centrally nominated Governor continued to enjoy powers that his/her counterparts elsewhere did not. Governor's rule is one of them.

J&K Governor's Position Different From Other Governor

- **Introduction:** In other states, the Centre invokes **Article 356** to impose President's rule; in J&K, under **Section 92 of the J&K Constitution**, the Governor can rule for **six months** with a set of powers, the only requirement being the President's consent.
- **Power with governor:** In Governor's rule, lawmaking power, financial power, budgetary sanction, all these powers are with the Governor. Once President's rule is imposed, lawmaking power is transferred to Parliament, the Budget is also passed by Parliament.
- **Use of Presidential orders:** Although the Centre needs Parliament's approval for extending President's rule but various governments at Center haven't taken that route. They extended it through **Presidential (Executive) orders under Article 370**. Thus, in this respect the state of J&K is put in a status inferior to that of other states.
- **Application of Article 249:** Further on July 30, 1986, the President issued an executive order under **Article 370** extending **Article 249** to J&K, which empowers Parliament to legislate even on a matter in the State List on the strength of Rajya Sabha resolution.
- **Other features:** Further, when President's rule is promulgated, the Governor has to seek clearance for every important decision from the Centre. But when the Governor suspends the Assembly or later dissolves it, he derives powers from the J&K Constitution.

Data Interception Order by MHA

Syllabus: Indian Constitution - Significant - Provisions

In News

- A political storm erupted after the Home Ministry issued a notification authorizing 10 intelligence and security agencies to intercept data on computers, mobile devices and servers used by Indians to implement **Section 69(1) of Information Technology (IT) Act**.

- The authorised agencies are the Intelligence Bureau, Narcotics Control Bureau, Enforcement Directorate, Central Board of Direct Taxes, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, CBI, National Investigation Agency, Research and Analysis Wing, Directorate of Signal Intelligence (in Jammu & Kashmir, the North-East and Assam) and Delhi Police.

- Under the order, an individual who fails to assist these government agencies with technical assistance or extend all facilities can face up to **7 years** of imprisonment or be liable to be fined.

- The Opposition uniting against the move and dubbed it as unconstitutional, undemocratic and an assault on fundamental rights.

New list, old rules

A look at what the fuss over the Home Ministry's order authorising 10 agencies to intercept computer-based information is all about



• Provision for interception of information from computer resources exists since 2000. Sec.69(1) of the Information Technology Act, 2000 allowed this in the interest of the country's sovereignty and integrity, security of the state, friendly relations with foreign States, or public order or incitement to offence

• Section 69 was amended in 2008 to enable the Centre and the State governments to "intercept, monitor or decrypt" any information transmitted through, received or stored in a computer

RULES

• Rules were framed in 2009 setting out the procedure and safeguards. Rule 3 says 'the competent authority' (the Home Secretary in the Centre and the States) alone can issue an order for interceptioning

• Rule 4 says the competent

authority may authorise a government agency to carry out the task

• The present order naming 10 agencies has been issued under Rule 4. It does not introduce any new surveillance norm or rule

PROCEDURE

• The agencies also must go only by procedure laid down in the same 2009 Rules for carrying out these tasks.

• Any direction for interception shall contain reasons, and a copy should be to a 'Review

Committee' within seven days. The authority, before issuing the order, should also consider getting the required information by other means

• An interception order will be in force only for a maximum of 60 days. Rules have also been framed outlining the intermediary's responsibilities

• The Review Committee should meet once in two months. It has the power to set aside interception orders and direct the destruction of records if procedure is not followed

Legal Provisions For Interception

- **Telegraph Act:** Lawful interception of phones and computers can be done by the governments at the Centre and in the states under **Section 5(2) of Indian Telegraph Act, 1885**. Further, all copies of the intercepted material must be destroyed as soon as their retention is not necessary under Section 5(2).
- **Rules:** The orders of the competent authority clearing lawful interception are reviewed by a **Review Committee**. Thus, as per **Rule 22 of IT Rules, 2009**, all cases of interception and monitoring or decryption should be placed before review committee headed by the **Cabinet Secretary**, which meets **once in two months** to go through individual instances. At the State level, it is headed by the **Chief Secretary**.
- **Punishment:** If done illegally, it is punishable under **Sections 25 & 26** that provide for imprisonment up to **three years** with or without a fine.

Justification For The Move

- **In consonance with constitutional provisions:** The premise for interception power are exactly the same as defined in **Article 19 (2)** of the Constitution, where the exclusion of the fundamental right of the freedom of expression applied.
- **Process of law:** The government justified the move on the ground that it merely fulfilled a requirement under **Rule 4 of the IT (Procedure and Safeguards for Interception, Monitoring and Description of Information) Rules, 2009**. This stipulates that the government should list the agencies empowered for the purpose of interception, monitoring and decryption of any information generated, transmitted, received or stored in any computer resource.
- **Implementing the law:** Thought the legislation was introduced during the term of the previous government but the list of authorised agencies hadn't been drawn up at the time.

- **Streamline the interception process:** The initiative in no way gave sweeping powers to the government to peek at emails and other online activities. On the contrary, it would help streamline the process of interception sought under **Section 69** of the **Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000**, weeding out any unlawful attempts to do so by government agencies.
- **Existing provisions confer similar right:** The move doesn't confer any new powers on it and adequate safeguards have been provided in the **IT Act, 2000**. Similar provisions and procedures already exist in the **Telegraph Act** along with identical safeguards.
- **Sufficient review mechanism:** The entire process is also subject to a robust review mechanism as in case of Telegraph Act. Every individual case will continue to require prior approval of the Home Ministry (MHA) or state government. MHA has not delegated its powers to any law enforcement or security agency.
- **Right to privacy is not absolute:** In today's times, when fake news and illegal activities such as cyber terrorism on the dark web are on the rise, the importance of reserving such powers to conduct surveillance cannot be undermined.
- **Protecting security of nation:** Many online nefarious activities of anti-national and terrorist organisations actually require a readiness on the online surveillance aspect. Further, the notification was much needed to equip forces in cyber warfare as the country's economy drives along the e-way. Thus, cyber notification was much needed for safety of installation and critical infrastructure from cyber attacks.
- **To overcome practical challenge:** Internet companies like US based Google and WhatsApp express reservation if requests for information in individuals' cases, routed to them through the IT ministry, come from agencies not notified through law or a government rule. Moreover, the notification is also meant to back these agencies to withstand judicial scrutiny of Indian courts.

Concerns

- **Right to privacy:** The order has been perceived as the encroachment upon the right to privacy, which is a fundamental right. Moreover, after the SC's decision in the privacy and Aadhaar cases these legal provisions are untenable. **For example-** in 2015, Andhra Pradesh police registered cases in different police stations on allegations of phone tapping of TDP MLAs. Similarly, in 2013, a Delhi Police constable and three private detectives were charged for obtaining call details records of Arun Jaitley, the then Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha.
- **Impact on freedom of speech:** In the absence of judicial or legislative oversight, such powers result in a chilling effect on the freedom of speech and association and democratic participation.
- **Violation of the legal provisions:** The actual notification itself does not clearly require the Union Home Secretary to pre-approve such surveillance orders. In contrast, the legal regime under the older Telegraph Act and its rules still explicitly requires the appropriate Home secretary to pre-approve wiretapping orders, except in emergency situations.
- **Vague grounds:** Presently, the grounds of surveillance remain as broad and vaguely worded under the Telegraph and IT act.
- **Lack of public debate:** It is also jarring that the notification was not preceded by any public discussion, consultation or parliamentary debate.
- **Lack of external oversight:** Further, current surveillance infrastructure lacks proper transparency and accountability. It is completely under executive control, with no Parliamentary or Judicial oversight, either *ex-ante* or *ex-post*, of surveillance measures. This is in stark contrast to the situation in other countries such as **Germany, South Africa, UK and the US**.

- **Natural justice issue:** Section 69 also falls short of meeting with the principles of natural justice by failing to accommodate pre-decisional hearings. The Section only makes post-decisional hearings before a Review committee possible as a part of its procedure.
- **Lack of statutory basis:** Many agencies listed in the notification, such as the Intelligence Bureau and R&AW lack statutory basis.
- **Police state:** Sweeping powers have been given to government agencies and this will turn India into a police state.
- **Other issues:** The MHA notification did not provide the procedure or the object for such an exercise or the quantum of period for which a person's private data could be intercepted.

Final Analysis

- The MHA notification raises the larger issue that our current communications surveillance and data access laws are contradictory, anachronistic and insufficient to protect privacy, rule of law and institutional accountability in digital India.
- India urgently needs a Privacy Act, which will specifically address issues of surveillance and interception, an issue left unaddressed in the **Draft Data Protection Bill** released by the **Justice Srikrishna Committee**.
- Moreover, all measures within such a framework must pass the **test of proportionality** specified by the Right to Privacy judgment.

Misuse of National Security Act

Syllabus: Indian Constitution - Significant - Provisions

In News

- The detention of a Manipuri journalist under the stringent *National Security Act* for a social media post regarding Manipur Chief Minister (CM) has seen by many as a clear instance of misuse of power and a blatant violation of his rights as a citizen.
- A magistrate granted him bail, noting that his remarks were no more than an expression of opinion against the public conduct of a public figure.
- However, the journalist after being set free was arrested again a couple of days later and detained under the NSA, which provides for **detention for a year** without bail to prevent someone from acting in any manner prejudicial to the security of the state or for the maintenance of public order.

Analysis Of The Arrest Decision

- **Constitutional Rights:** It indicates a dangerous trend among those wielding power to invoke laws aimed at preserving public order and security in a casual or vindictive manner, with utter disregard for constitutional provisions that uphold individual liberty.
- **Not a Proper Use of NSA:** The NSA can be used only against those advocating armed insurrection or violent disaffection. It is shocking that the statutory advisory board held there was sufficient cause for detention, when he posed no threat to public order or security.
- **Question over the legality:** It is questionable whether a person can be detained under the NSA for one year at a go, as its provisions say the detention can only be for **three months** at a time and up to **one year in total**. This position has also been confirmed by the Supreme Court.

- **Role of the Advisory board:** The NSA advisory board consists of three members who are or have been or are qualified to be High court judges. It is not expected to approve detention orders in a routine or mechanical manner.

Way Forward

- At a time when the Law Commission is revisiting **Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code**, which deals with sedition and there is a demand for its repeal, it is disturbing that State governments continue to use it.
- It is even more deplorable that on failing to make the sedition charge stick, a government puts away the same person under the NSA. This is a fit case for judicial review and the protests and the outrage against such move. This will inhibit any future move to throttle free expression by misusing the law.

Judicial Law Making

Syllabus: Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions.

In News

Developments in the aftermath of the Supreme Court's (SC) decision in the Sabarimala case have reignited a national debate on the profound question of the limits of judicial power in a parliamentary democracy.

Justification

- **Filling in legislative gaps:** The Court has justified judicial lawmaking in seeking to fill the gaps in legislation as part of an interpretative exercise exclusively within its writ.
- **Creation of new rights:** The Court's expansive and creative exercise of judicial power has been accepted by the nation primarily because of its stellar contribution towards the broadening of human rights by invoking the **Doctrine Of Progressive Realisation Of Rights**.
- **Protector of constitutional morality:** By reading the **Right to Dignity** into **Article 21** to the pinnacle of the rights hierarchy, the Court has validated its role as the arbiter of constitutional morality.

Arguments Against Judicial Law Making

- **Violation of separation of power:** India faces a widely held perception of judicial overreach and the unsettling of a constitutionally ordained dispersal of power between the three organs of the state.
- **Law making essentially a function of legislature:** Making laws is the function of the legislature and one organ or part of the state should not usurp functions that essentially belong to another.
- **Court should only interpret law:** Role of judges should be limited to only interpretation of law and should leave the law making business to the legislature and the executive.
- **Against democracy:** Since judiciary is a non-elective body, it does not enjoy popular will to make laws.
- **Judicial overreach:** Although the earlier instances of Judicial Activism were connected with enforcing fundamental rights (FR) but nowadays, Judiciary has started interfering in the governance issues as well.
- **No constitutional backing:** Judicial Activism or overreach has no constitutional articles to support its origin.

- **Confusion:** If judges are free to make laws of their choices, it could also lead to uncertainty in the law and chaos as every judge will start drafting his own laws according to his whims and fancies.

Way forward

The judiciary should tread with circumspection when entering into judicial law making and any such step should be as a measure of last resort.

Andhra Pradesh, Telangana To Have Separate High Courts

Syllabus: Structure, organization, and functioning of Judiciary and Related Issues

In News

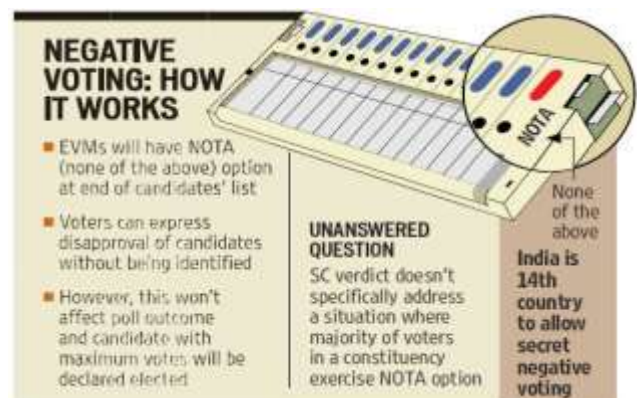
- **Order of the President:** Following a Supreme Court (SC) order to the Centre to notify the bifurcation of the Andhra Pradesh and Telangana High Courts (HC) by January 1, 2019 the President Ram Nath Kovind ordered the separation of the common Hyderabad High Court into the separate High Courts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
- **Legal basis of the decision:** The Presidential notification quoted **Article 214** of the Constitution, which provides for a High Court for each State. The Presidential notification also pointed out that under the **Andhra Pradesh Reorganization Act, 2014**, both States were to have a common High court, till separate ones were formed.
- **The seat of the HC:** The principal seat of the Andhra Pradesh High Court is **Amaravati**, the capital of the State. The High Court in Hyderabad will function separately as the High Court of the State of Telangana.
- **Strength of the HC:** 16 HC judges, including **Justice Ramesh Ranganathan**, who is now the Chief Justice of the Uttarakhand High Court, shall become judges of the Andhra Pradesh HC. While, the new Telangana High Court will have a sanctioned strength of 10 judges

Implementation of NOTA

Syllabus: Elections and Representation of People's Act

In News

- In **People's Union For Civil Liberties v. Union Of India**, the Supreme Court (SC) had ruled that a None of the Above (NOTA) option may be provided in EVMs so that voters are able to exercise their Right not to vote while maintaining their **Right of Secrecy**.
- Earlier, the option was as per **Rule 49-O of Conduct of Election Rules**, whereby the voters were required to register their option of NOTA in a register. But this compromised the secrecy of the voters.



Benefits of NOTA

- **More choice:** By providing NOTA button in the EVMs, accelerated the effective political participation in the present state of democratic system and the voters were empowered. Thus, it ensured wide participation of people.

- **Pressure on political party:** When the political parties realize that a large number of people are expressing their disapproval with the candidates, there will be a systemic change and the political parties will be forced to accept the will of the people and field candidates who are known for their integrity.
- **Against high command culture:** NOTA can also be used as an protest against the high command culture that involves forcing of candidates from top-down.
- **Secrecy of vote ensured:** By implementing the NOTA button on EVMs, the right to vote and right to not to vote have been kept at same pedestal, while maintaining secrecy.
- **International practice:** India became the 12th country to introduce NOTA or a similar option in its electoral proceedings. Other countries which provide this option are- **France, Belgium, Greece, Brazil, and Bangladesh.**

The Question Over Its Significance

- **Clarification by the EC:** The Election Commission of India (ECI) further clarified that if a situation arose where the number of NOTA votes exceeded the number of votes polled by any of the candidates, the candidate with the highest number of votes would be declared winner. This, it said, was in accordance with **Rule 64 of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961.**
- **No impact on result:** The above mentioned provision made the NOTA option almost redundant. While it ensured confidentiality for a voter who did not want to choose any of the candidates and yet wished to exercise her franchise, the provision clarified that a NOTA vote would not have any impact on the election result, which is what interests candidates, political parties and voters.
- **Small share in overall votes:** NOTA polling figures are still small. Therefore in the constituencies the NOTA votes does not make a difference to the election results.
- **No desired impact:** There was a larger perception that NOTA will play a role of cleansing politics. Because if the candidates are not upto the certain standard than the large number of voters may exercise their negativity and by that put pressure in the political process. Though it was a noble idea, unfortunately till now, it did not happen in a very large scale.
- **Wastage of vote:** There is also a view against NOTA that choosing the option meant wasting a vote.

Best Practice

- **Maharashtra SEC:** The State Election Commission (SEC) of Maharashtra was the first to understand the spirit of the judgment. It issued a reasoned order in June 2018 by saying that if it is noticed while counting that NOTA has received highest number of valid votes, then the said election for that particular seat shall be countermanded and fresh elections shall be held for such post.
- **Haryana SEC:** The SEC of Haryana, in an order in November 2018 stated that if all the contesting candidates individually receive lesser votes than NOTA, then not only would none of the contesting candidates be declared as elected, but all such contesting candidates who secured less votes than NOTA shall not be eligible to re-file the nomination/contest the re-election.

Way Forward

- NOTA has a moral dimension but also a long term reformative aspect. Presently, it will only enable a voter not to vote in favour of any candidate. However, this may result in parties nominating better candidates which strengthens the democracy further.

- Moreover, with two SECs showing the way, the remaining SECs and the ECI should follow suit so that political parties are compelled to nominate sound candidates and are forced to accept the will of the people.

EC Wants Capping on Party's Expenditure on Candidates

Syllabus: Elections and Representation of People's Act

In News

- **Introduction:** The Election Commission (EC) has reiterated its position to the Law Ministry that a political party should limit its spending on a candidate during election to not more than **50% or half** of the candidate's expenditure limit.
- **Current position:** While the EC has been unable to cap a political party's expenditure in an election, it has put expenditure limit on candidates *i.e.* **50-70 lakh for each Lok Sabha candidate and Rs. 20-28 lakh for an assembly candidate.**
- **Change in law:** In the past, the Commission had recommended amendments to the **Representation of the People Act** and **Rule 90 of The Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961**, for the same.
- **Rationale:** The EC has identified unchecked money power as one of the biggest concerns and has been rooting for capping party and campaign expenditure to ensure a level playing field for all parties and to check the money power visible during every elections.
- **Implications:** This means if the government accepts the EC recommendations, a political party may not be able to spend more than **Rs. 25-35 lakh** per candidate in case of Lok Sabha elections and not more than **Rs. 10-14 lakh** per candidate in case of assembly elections.

Second Delta Ranking of Aspirational Districts

Syllabus: Government Policies and Interventions For Development In Various Sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

In News

- NITI Aayog has released the Second Delta Ranking of the Aspirational districts Programme (ADP).
- The ranking measures the incremental progress made by 111 aspirational districts between June 1, 2018, and October 31, 2018, across six developmental areas.
- The districts have been ranked in a transparent basis on parameters across **Health & Nutrition, Education, Agriculture & Water Resources, Financial Inclusion, Skill Development and Basic Infrastructure** through key performance indicators.
- The rankings are based on the data that is publicly available through the Champions of Change Dashboard, which includes data entered on a real-time basis at the district level.
- The rankings, for the first time, will also factor in inputs from household survey conducted by NITI Aayog's knowledge partners, namely, **TATA Trust and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF).**
- **Virudhunagar (Tamil Nadu), Naupada (Odisha) and Sidharthnagar (Uttar Pradesh) have emerged as the top three districts in the rankings.**
- Pakur (Jharkhand), Hailakandi (Assam) and Chatra (Jharkhand) are three least improved aspirational districts.

- The aspirational district programme was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in January 2018.
- Of 115 aspirational districts, only 111 participated in the survey. Three districts from West Bengal did not participate, while one district of Kerala could not take part because of floods. The first delta ranking for aspirational districts was released in June 2018.
- It **aims to rapidly transform districts that have shown relatively lesser progress in key social areas and have emerged as pockets of under-development**, thereby posing a challenge to ensure balanced regional development.

Consumer Protection Bill

Syllabus: Government Policies and Interventions For Development In Various Sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

In News

The Consumer Protection Bill will become law once adopted by the Rajya Sabha and will replace the **Consumer Protection Act, 1986**. The legislation had not been amended for 32 years and needs changes to strengthen the consumer rights.

Provisions of the Bill

- **Overall Provisions:** The Consumer Protection Bill provides for recall of faulty products, allows buyers to seek compensation for defective items or deficiency in services and prescribes penalties for manufacturing or selling adulterated items.
- **Jurisdiction clause:** The bill also provides for consumers to file complaints with the Consumer Commissions at the place of residence or work and not from where he purchased product or availed a service, which is the present norm.
- **Constitution of CCPA:** The bill also proposes setting up of a Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA), which will have the power to take *suo moto* cognizance of offence or malpractice and act on consumer complaints to act against the violators. It will also have the power to file **class action complaints** before the consumer disputes redressal commissions in case a large number of people are impacted.
- **Redressal forum:** The new measure provides for protection of consumers' interests and proposes to establish a **Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission** and forums at the district, state and national levels for adjudicating consumer complaints.
- **Consumer protection council:** Consumer Protection Councils will be set up at the district, state, and national level as advisory bodies.
- **Financial jurisdiction enlarged:** The financial jurisdiction of the District Consumers Courts has been increased *i.e.* they can deal with complaints involving **Rs. 1 crore** as against the **Rs. 20 lakh** earlier.
- **Celebrities and Manufacturer's liability:** The bill also has provisions for imposing fines on celebrities for endorsing false or misleading advertisements and penalties including jail term for manufacturers for committing the offence. Moreover, under the clause of product liability, a manufacturer will also be liable to give compensation for products with defects.
- **New technology and consumers:** It is also meant to protect those who use new technologies such as e-commerce and online shopping.

- **Penalties:** The penalty and jail term has been linked to impact of adulterated products on human health with a proposal for **seven years to life imprisonment** and at least **Rs 10 lakh fine** in case of death caused by any adulterated products.

Opposition To The Bill

- **Excessive power to the bureaucracy:** The Bill gives excessive power to the bureaucracy and should have sunset provisions under which the Bill can come to Parliament for amendments.
- **Against federalism:** The Bill has provisions that are against the federal structure as earlier the power to appoint the members of the District forum lied with the State government, which now have been usurped by the Central government.
- **Violation of separation of power:** The Bill empowers the Central government to appoint members to these Commissions. But the Bill does not specify that the Commissions will comprise a judicial member. If the Commissions were to have members only from the executive, the principal of separation of powers may be violated.
- **Lack of clarity over the function:** The State and National Consumer Protection Councils are headed by Ministers in-charge of Consumer Affairs. The Bill does not specify whom the Councils will advise. If the Councils advise the government, it is unclear in what capacity such advice will be given.

Table 2: Comparison of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 with the Consumer Protection Bill, 2018

Provision	1986 Act	2018 Bill
Ambit of law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All goods and services for consideration. Free and personal services are excluded. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All goods and services, including telecom and housing construction, and all modes of transactions (online, teleshopping, etc.) for consideration. Free and personal services are excluded.
Unfair trade practices*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes six types of such practices, like false representation, misleading advertisements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adds three types of practices to the list, namely: (i) failure to issue a bill or receipt; (ii) refusal to accept a good returned within 30 days; and (iii) disclosure of personal information given in confidence, unless required by law or in public interest. Contests/ lotteries may be notified as not falling under the ambit of unfair trade practices.
Product liability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Claim for product liability can be made against manufacturer, service provider, and seller. Compensation can be obtained by proving one of the several specified conditions in the Bill.
Unfair contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defined as contracts that cause significant change in consumer rights. Lists six contract terms which may be held as unfair.
Central Protection Councils (CPCs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CPCs promote and protect the rights of consumers. CPCs established at the district, state, and national level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes CPCs advisory bodies for promotion and protection of consumer rights. Establishes CPCs at the district, state and national level.
Regulator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) to promote, protect, and enforce the rights of consumers as a class. CCPA may: (i) issue safety notices; (ii) pass orders to recall goods, prevent unfair practices, and reimburse purchase price paid; and (iii) impose penalties for false and misleading advertisements.
Passary jurisdiction of Commissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District: Up to Rs 20 lakh. State: Between Rs 20 lakh and up to Rs one crore. National: Above Rs one crore. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District: Up to Rs one crore. State: Between Rs one crore and up to Rs 10 crore. National: Above Rs 10 crore.
Composition of Commissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District: Headed by current or former District Judge and two members. State: Headed by a current or former High Court Judge and at least two members. National: Headed by a current or former Supreme Court Judge and at least four members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District: Headed by a President and at least two members. State: Headed by a President and at least four members. National: Headed by a President and at least four members.
Appointment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selection Committee (comprising a judicial member and other officials) will recommend members on the Commissions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No provision for Selection Committee. Central government will appoint through notification.
Alternate dispute redressal mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mediation cells will be attached to the District, State, and National Commissions.
Penalties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If a person does not comply with orders of the Commissions, he may face imprisonment between one month and three years or fine between Rs 2,000 to Rs 10,000, or both. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If a person does not comply with orders of the Commissions, he may face imprisonment up to three years, or a fine not less than Rs 25,000 extendable to Rs one lakh, or both.
E-commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defines direct selling, e-commerce and electronic service provider. The central government may prescribe rules for preventing unfair trade practices in e-commerce and direct selling.

States' Startup Ranking 2018

Syllabus: Government Policies and Interventions For Development In Various Sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

In News

- The **Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP)** has announced results of the first ever States' Start-up Ranking 2018. DIPP began this exercise from January, 2016.
- The key objective of the exercise was to encourage States and Union Territories to **take proactive steps towards capacity development, strengthening the Start-up ecosystems in the states and to further the spirit of cooperative federalism.**
- Awareness workshops in all States, knowledge workshops in leading incubators, pairing of States for intensive mentoring, international exposure visits to US and Israel and intensive engagement between the States with Start-up India team and video conferencing have helped many States initiate effective measures to support Start-ups.
- States have been identified as leaders across various categories such as **Start-up policy leaders, incubation hubs, seeding innovation, scaling innovation, regulatory change champions, procurement leaders, communication champions, North-Eastern leader, and hill state leader.**
- On the basis of performance in these categories, the States have been recognised as the Best Performer, Top Performers, Leaders, Aspiring Leaders, Emerging States and Beginners.
- The methodology has been aimed at creating a healthy competition among States to further learn, share and adopt good practices.

Rankings

- Best Performer: Gujarat
- Top Performers: Karnataka, Kerala, Odisha, and Rajasthan
- Leaders: Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Telangana
- Aspiring Leaders: Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal
- Emerging States: Assam, Delhi, Goa, Jammu & Kashmir, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and Uttarakhand
- Beginners: Chandigarh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Sikkim, and Tripura
- These results are as much a recognition of the leading states as they are a celebration of efforts made by all the states for helping innovation and entrepreneurship across the length and breadth of the country.

Witness Protection Scheme

Syllabus: Important aspects of governance

In News

- The Supreme Court has approved the Centre's draft witness protection scheme and directed all states and union territories to implement it until Parliament passes a legislation. It shall be a law under **Article 141/142 of the Constitution.**
- This ruling comes in the context of a number of cases of fatal attacks suffered by witnesses in the past. The top court was earlier hearing a petition seeking protection of witnesses in rape cases involving religious leader Asaram, when the matter of a draft scheme had cropped up.

- The objective of this Scheme is to ensure that the **investigation, prosecution and trial of criminal offences is not prejudiced** because witnesses are intimidated or frightened to give evidence without protection from violent or other criminal recrimination.
- The specific provisions for witness protection are already there in the National Investigation Agency (**NIA Act**).

Arguments Put Forward By SC

- **Serious perils:** Court recognized that the right to testify in courts in a free and fair manner without any pressure and threat whatsoever is under serious attack today. If one is unable to testify in courts due to threats or other pressures, then it is a clear violation of **Article 21** of the Constitution.
- **Part of Right To Life:** The court held that the right to life guaranteed to the people of this country also includes in its fold the right to live in a society, which is free from crime and fear, and the right of witnesses to testify in courts without fear or pressure.
- The present legal system takes witnesses completely for granted. They are summoned to court regardless of their financial and personal conditions and are not even suitably remunerated for the loss of time and the expenditure towards conveyance etc.
- The SC bench also noted that one of the main reasons for witnesses to turn hostile is that they are not accorded appropriate protection by the State.

Provisions

- The draft witness protection scheme provides for protection based on the level of threat perception, for a specific duration, subject to review.
- The scheme, formulated by the Union Home Ministry, assigns **three categories of threat perception**:
 - (i) threat to life of witness or family members, during or after investigation or trial;
 - (ii) threat to safety, reputation or property of the witness or family members; and
 - (iii) a moderate threat extending to harassment or intimidation of the witness or family members.
- These witnesses can file an application for protection with a **Competent Authority** which comprises the district and sessions judge, the district police chief, and district prosecution chief.
- On receiving the application, the authority will file a **Threat Analysis Report** from the ACP/DCP in charge of the police station, to gauge the presence and extent of the threat, and decide the types of protection that can be provided.
- Depending upon the urgency in the matter owing to imminent threat, the Competent Authority can pass orders for interim protection of the witness or his family members during the pendency of the application.
- The Authority will be required to dispose an application seeking protection **within five days** from the date of receipt of the Threat Analysis Report.
- The Witness Protection Order passed by the Competent Authority shall be implemented by the **Witness Protection Cell** of the state or Union Territory. It also puts the overall responsibility for implementing the order on the head of the police of the state and Union Territory. If the order is for change of identity or relocation, it shall be implemented by the Home department concerned.
- There shall be a Fund, namely, the **Witness Protection Fund** from which the expenses incurred during the implementation shall be met.

- The protection measures ensure that the witness is not exposed to any confrontation with the accused and also provides for close-proximity protection.
- The measures also include monitoring of phone calls, e-mails, installation of CCTV cameras in their houses, concealment of their identities and relocation to a new place.
- In case the witness has lodged a false complaint, the State Legal Service Authority can initiate proceedings for recovery of the expenditure incurred from the Witness Protection Fund.
- In case the witness or the police authorities are aggrieved by the decisions of the Competent Authority, a review application may be filed within 30 days of passing of the orders by the Competent Authority.
- The ability of a witness to give testimony in a judicial setting or to cooperate with law enforcement and investigations without fear of intimidation or reprisal is of utmost importance and the scheme will bolster the state's efforts to uphold the rule of law.

Final Analysis

- In its minutiae the scheme appears workable, but its efficacy will be confirmed only with the passage of time. The scheme is to be funded by budgetary support from State governments and donations. This is at variance with the Law Commission's recommendation in 2006 that the Centre and the States share the cost equally.
- The basic features such as in camera trial, proximate physical protection and anonymising of testimony and references to witnesses in the records are not difficult to implement. The real test will be the advanced forms of identity protection: giving witnesses a new identity, address and even parentage with matching documents. All this needs to be done without undermining their professional and property rights and educational qualifications.
- The introduction of the scheme marks a leap forward. Until now, there have been *ad hoc* steps such as those outlined for concealing the identity of witnesses in anti-terrorism and child-centric laws. A few dedicated courtrooms for vulnerable witnesses, mostly child victims, are also functional. However, expanding such facilities and implementing a comprehensive and credible witness protection programme will pose logistical and financial challenges. Moreover, the witness protection scheme must scale beyond high-profile cases and there is also a need to that the states must implement Supreme Court guidelines on police reforms.
- But at the same time the formalization of a witness protection scheme is a landmark moment with the potential to improve India's low conviction rates and could help strengthen India's tottering criminal justice system.

Social Justice

Draft National Child Protection Policy

Syllabus: Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

In News

- The **Ministry of Women and Child Development** has developed the Draft National Child Protection Policy and placed it on its website and invited comments from various stakeholders.
- This will be the **first policy dedicated to the protection of children**, an area that until now was only a part of the broader *National Child Policy, 2013*.

- In the wake of sexual abuse cases of more than 30 girls in a shelter home in Muzzafarpur, the Supreme Court had asked the Centre to frame a national policy on protection of children.
- India is a young nation, with a **child population of more than 472 million** and protection of this 40% of the young population is **not only a matter of their human rights but also an investment towards building a robust nation**.
- The Constitution of India recognizes children as equal right holders and grants highest priority for their protection and well-being.
- India is also a **signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)** and accordingly has a strong legal framework to protect children which include the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015 and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012.

Provisions of Draft Policy

- The policy **will apply to all institutions and organisations** (including corporate and media houses), **government or private sector**.
- All organisations must have a code of conduct based on **zero tolerance of child abuse and exploitation**. It requires organisations to lay down that employees don't use language or behaviour that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate.
- Institutions should also designate a staff member to ensure that procedures are in place to ensure the protection of children as well as to report any abuse.
- Any individual who suspects physical, sexual or emotional abuse must report it to the helpline number 1098, police or a child welfare committee.
- The document also comprises a list of behaviours towards children that are punishable by law, including the POCSO and JJ Acts.
- Organisations must establish and strengthen monitoring mechanisms to ensure that industry/subsidiaries are not using child labour in any form.
- Institutions and organizations must ensure stringent background check (including police verification) of all employees - regular or contractual; volunteers and others who may come in contact with children.
- Institutions and organizations must train all employees on child rights, provisions of POCSO Act, JJ Act and other legislations for children and ensure that corporal punishment, bullying and any other form of abuse is prevented.
- Crèches/ mobile crèches for employee's children including those on daily wages/contractual basis if the number of employees is fifty or above otherwise appropriate space and facility for baby care to be provided for mothers with infants

Missing Elements

- Unlike the National Child Policy, 2013, the latest document doesn't talk about children who may need additional special protection measures: including those affected by migration, communal or sectarian violence, children forced into begging or in conflict with the law, and those infected with HIV/AIDS.
- The document needs to define what child protection is, as well as what it means by institutions or organisations.

- While it talks about organisations laying down a code of conduct, it doesn't explain what exactly is acceptable behaviour, such as conduct of teachers in schools.

Way Ahead

- The norms should be designed in such a way that organisations can customise their policies according to the nature of their work, thereby, giving them a sense of ownership on safeguarding children's rights.
- A policy has four aspects — **creating awareness, prevention, reporting and responding**. This document needs to go into all these aspects, especially a reporting structure involving various nodal bodies and a monitoring mechanism for implementation of the guidelines.
- All children deserve a happy childhood and the opportunity to lead a dignified life safe from violence, exploitation, neglect, deprivation and discrimination and this policy will go a long way in creating such an ecosystem.

Guidelines For Setting Up Of Crèches At Workplaces

Syllabus: Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections

In News

- The Centre has prepared the guidelines for setting up of crèches at workplaces, which prescribe trained personnel to man the facility as well as infrastructure requirements and safety norms.
- In March this year, Parliament passed the **Maternity Benefit Amendment Act, 2017**, enhancing paid maternity leave from a period of 12 weeks to 26 weeks. The law is applicable to **all institutions with 10 or more employees**. It also makes it **mandatory for every organisation with 50 or more employees to have a crèche**.

Guidelines

- The guidelines recommend that a **crèche be either at the workplace or within 500 metres of it**. Alternatively, it could also be in the beneficiaries' neighbourhood.
- The facility should be **open for 8 to 10 hours** and if the employees have a shift system, then the crèche should also be run accordingly.
- A crèche must have a **minimum space of 10 to 12 sq ft per child** to ensure that she or he can play, rest and learn. There should be no unsafe places such as open drains, pits, garbage bins near the centre.
- The crèches should have at least **one guard**, who should have undergone police verification. There should also be at least **one supervisor** per crèche and a **trained worker** for every 10 children under three years of age or for every 20 children above the age of three, along with a helper. The crèche staff should be **paid at least minimum wages**.
- It also recommends that no outsiders such as plumbers, drivers, electricians be allowed inside the crèche when children are present.
- A **crèche monitoring committee** with representations from among crèche workers, parents and administration should be formed. Further, there should also be a **grievance redressal committee** for inquiring into instances of sexual abuse.
- The guidelines are **not mandatory but are a yardstick for NGOs and organisations for setting up of creches**.

Global Gender Gap Report 2018

Syllabus: Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections

In News

- The World Economic Forum has released the Global Gender Gap Report 2018. It has been **published annually since 2006 by the WEF.**
- The report benchmarks 149 countries on their progress towards gender parity across four thematic dimensions: **Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment.**

Global Findings

- The **world has closed 68 per cent of its gender gap** and at the current rate of change, it will take 108 years to close the overall gender gap and 202 years to bring about parity in the workplace.
- Despite the global gender gap narrowing slightly in 2018, **proportionately fewer women than men are participating in the labour force or in political life.**
- Overall, the economic gender gap narrowed in 2018; however, access to health and education, and political empowerment suffered reversals.
- Women are under-represented in growing areas of employment that require **STEM** (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) skills and knowledge.
- Infrastructure needed to help women enter or re-enter the workforce – such as childcare and eldercare – is under-developed and unpaid work remains primarily the responsibility of women.
- The corollary is that the substantial investments made by many economies to close the education gap are failing to generate optimal returns in the form of growth.
- The global list was **topped by Iceland having closed more than 85.8 per cent of its overall gender gap.** Iceland holds the top spot in the index for the 10th consecutive year.
- **Nordic countries Norway (2nd, 83.5 per cent), Sweden (3rd, 82.2 per cent), and Finland (4th, 82.1 per cent) dominated the top slots.**
- Other countries in the top-10 include Nicaragua (5th, 80.9 per cent), Rwanda (6th, 80.4 per cent), New Zealand (7th, 80.1 per cent), the Philippines (8th, 79.9 per cent), Ireland (9th, 79.6 per cent) and Namibia (10th, 78.9 per cent).
- **South Asia was the second-lowest ranking region in the index,** with only 65 per cent of its gender gap now closed. However, it is worth noting that, from a low base, South Asia has made the fastest progress on closing its gender gap of any world region over the past decade.

Indian Findings

- India has been **ranked 108th** in the index, same as 2017. It maintains a stable ranking this year, but its gap is directionally larger this year, with a **33 per cent gap yet to be bridged.**
- India **continues to rank third-lowest in the world on health and survival,** remaining the world's least-improved country on this sub index over the past decade. In fact, India actually widens the gender gap on this sub index this year.
- Interestingly, India **has the second-largest artificial intelligence (AI) workforce but one of the largest AI gender gaps,** with only 22 per cent of roles filled by women. It ranks 142nd out of 149 countries in the economic opportunity and participation subindex.

- However, on the positive side, India has slightly improved in WEF's wage equality for similar work indicator, where it stood at 72nd place. The country has also **closed its tertiary education enrolment gap for the first time in 2018 and has managed to keep its primary and secondary gaps closed for the third year running.**
- India needs to make improvements across the board, from women's participation to getting more women into senior and professional roles.

Way Ahead

- Gender parity is fundamental to whether and how economies and societies thrive. Ensuring the full development and appropriate deployment of half of the world's total talent pool has a vast bearing on the growth, competitiveness and future-readiness of economies and businesses worldwide.
- The economies that will succeed in the fourth industrial revolution will be those that are best able to harness all their available talent.
- Proactive measures that **support gender parity and social inclusion and address historical imbalances** are therefore essential for the health of the global economy as well as for the good of society as a whole.

Reasons for Gender Pay Gap in India:

1. Occupational segregation:

- Preference is given to male workers while recruiting or promoting to senior roles.
- The rate of female participation in the paid labour market is generally low, and is primarily concentrated in rural areas in the agricultural sector.
- Women's participation is also higher in light industries and the unorganized sector, where the wages are usually lower.

2. Cultural barriers:

- Women are not promoted to seek gainful employment outside their home.
- Due to role stereotyping, childcare, cooking etc. is viewed primarily as a women's job.
- It leads to interrupted careers of women (career-breaks women take for certain personal and societal reasons)

3. Education and training:

- Biased socialisation processes do not encourage women to pursue higher education or to upgrade their skills.
- The literacy rate for women in India is far lower than the rate for men, and it has been observed that many girls drop out of school and fail to fully complete their education.

4. **Unpaid work:** According to the Human Development Report 1995, women spend about two-thirds of their working time on unpaid work, while men spend only one-fourth of their time towards unpaid labour.

Way Forward

- Introduction of women friendly policies in organisations on voluntary basis can help in improving the situation. E.g. - Very recently, Tata Sons announced a seven months' maternity leave for its women with an extension of up to 18 months.
- Leadership intent to engage women, especially returning women, is crucial. This is 'inclusion in action'.

- Training the hiring team on how to assess women on breaks, how to identify potential and to match the same with the right job is essential.
- Having a clear strategy in place, as well as policies that direct and guide are also critical. But, most important is the realisation that women are a crucial talent pool that needs to be engaged at all life-stages.
- It is also the responsibility of women to stay up-to-date of these changes, and upskill themselves constantly, especially when they need to take career breaks. Women must identify a re-entry path. It could be through an internship (there are many such internships being offered – primary among them being the Tata SCIP programme) or through a second-career programme of a company.

J&K Becomes First State to Criminalise 'Sextortion' by Public Servants

Syllabus: Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections

In News

- The administration led by the Governor in J&K has amended two state laws to **introduce a fresh offence called sextortion**, making sexual exploitation of women by people in positions of authority, having a fiduciary relationship or public servants a criminal offence.
- With the approval of amendments to **Jammu and Kashmir Prevention of Corruption Act and Ranbir Penal Code and Evidence Act, J&K would become the first state in the country to have an explicit law banning sexual exploitation of women.**
- The two new Bills — Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill, 2018, and Jammu and Kashmir Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018 — were approved by the State Administrative Council (SAC) led by Governor Satya Pal Malik.
- The administration has passed these amendments in the wake of a recent order that the Jammu and Kashmir High Court passed earlier this year in October. In its order, the court directed the administration to look into the possibility of introducing new laws or amendments to existing laws to criminalise “sextortion”.
- The court’s rationale lay in the belief that sextortion lies at the intersection of sex and extortion under the overarching ambit of corruption. Instead of money, sex is the currency of the bribe. In other words, sextortion is nothing but an institutionalised system of blatant abuse of power.
- The underlying idea is the element of quid pro quo where the perpetrator demands and accepts the sexual favour in exchange for a benefit that he is empowered to withhold or confer. The imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim allows the perpetrator to exert psychological pressure, which most significantly is not very different from that of monetary corruption
- As per the amendments, any person in a position of authority or in a fiduciary relationship, or a public servant who abuses such position or fiduciary relationship to employ physical or non-physical form of coercion to extort, request or demand sexual favours from any woman in exchange for some benefits or favours that such person is empowered to grant or withhold shall be guilty of offence of sextortion.
- Moreover, the law makes it abundantly clear that **it shall be no defence that the sexual benefit was derived with the consent of the victim.**
- Punishment for the offences ranges from three to five years of rigorous imprisonment with a fine. Also, these amendments clearly state that the offence is **non-bailable and not compoundable.**

No Religious Minority Tag To Lingayat/Veerashaiva Community

Syllabus: Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections

Background

- The Union government has **rejected the recommendation of the State government to grant religious minority status to Lingayat and Veerashaiva communities**. The centre reiterated its earlier stand that these communities are part of the Hindu religion ever since 1871 census and do not form another religion of their own. Rationale for rejection of the demand:
- **Other justification:** If Lingayats/Veerashaivas were to be treated as a separate religion by providing separate code other than Hindu, all members of the Scheduled Caste (SC) professing the said religion would lose their status as SC along with the consequential benefits available to them.
- Lingayats and Veerashaivas have been demanding status of a separate religion for a long time. The movement for a separate religion tag, which was started as far back as 1942, was resurrected in 2017. In August 2017, through a massive rally in Bidar, the Lingayats demanded a minority status for their community similar to Sikhism or Buddhism as they believe they are distinct from Hindu religion.
- In December 2017, a seven-member expert committee under **Nagmohan Das** was formed to study five separate demands, three of which were for a separate minority religion status for Lingayats.
- In January 2018, the committee recommended 'religious minority tag' for Lingayats. It concluded that Lingayat religion is different from Hindu religion.
- Post which, in March, 2018 the Karnataka state cabinet decided to recommend to the centre grant of religious minority tag for Lingayat and Veerashaiva community.

Lingayats and Veershaivas

- Lingayats are followers of 12th-century social reformer **Basavanna** and his vachana (verses) philosophy while Veerashaivas are a **sub-sect of Lingayats who preceded Basavanna**.
- It was Basavanna and his contemporary Sharanas who launched a very strong spiritual, social and religious rebellion against **Brahminical hegemony**.
 - Sharanas rejected the Vedas, Shastras, Smritis and Upanishads.
 - They denounced temples and idol-worship.
 - They rejected discrimination based on Caste and Gender.



- In order to take the social movement closer to the people, Basavanna and all the other Sharanas voiced their concerns in simple Kannada vachanas so that even lay people could comprehend them.
- **Veerashaivas worship Lord Shiva**, the one mentioned in Hindu mythology; but the Shiva that Basavanna referred to in his vachanas (verses) is not the Hindu god Shiva but the ishtalinga (formless God), which people of the community wear around their neck.
- **Veerashaivism has its roots in the Vedas and Agamas**, and they do not worship any god other than Shiva. They accept Vedic texts, caste and gender discrimination. The sub-sect can be found spread across states of Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

A Note On Minorities In India

- The Constitution of India does not define the word ‘minority’. However, Articles 29 and 30 of the constitution of India stand guarantee to the interest and protection of minorities in India.
- Article 29 states “Any Section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof, having a distinct language, script or culture of its own, shall have the right to conserve the same”.
- Article 30 provides for the right of the minorities” based on religion or language, to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice”.
- By combining these two articles together, it can be inferred that the Indian constitution safeguards the interests of three different categories of minorities, based on language, religion and culture.
- The communities notified as minority communities by the Government of India, are Sikhs, Muslims, Christians, Zoroastrians, Buddhists, and Jains.

Transgender Rights Bill

Syllabus: Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections

In News

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016, which **aims at defining the transgender people and prohibiting discrimination against them**, has been passed with 27 amendments in the Lok Sabha.

Provisions of the Bill

- The passed bill removes the reference to a transgender person as one who is neither wholly female or male; a combination of female and male; neither female nor male; or whose sense of gender does not match the gender assigned at birth.
- It now states that a transgender person is one whose gender does not match the gender assigned at birth. It includes trans-men and trans-women, persons with intersex variations, and gender-queers. It also includes persons having socio-cultural identities as kinnar, hijra, aravani, and jogta
- It defines a person with intersex variations as a person who at birth shows variations in his or her primary sexual characteristics, external genitalia, chromosomes, or hormones from normative standard of male or female body.
- A transgender person **may make an application to the District Magistrate for a certificate of identity**, indicating the gender as ‘transgender’. After the issue of a certificate of identity, a transgender person may apply for a revised certificate only if the individual undergoes surgery to change their gender either as a male or a female.
- It removes the earlier threshold of 100 or more people and states that **every establishment must designate a complaint officer**.
- It prohibits any person or establishment from discriminating against a transgender person, including unfair treatment or denial of service.
- The government will cover medical expenses by an insurance scheme for sex reassignment surgery, hormonal therapy, laser therapy or any other health issues of transgender persons.
- A **National Council for Transgender persons** will be set up to advise the central government on policies and legislation related to transgender persons. It will also be empowered to redress the grievances of transgender persons.

Grievances

- Transgender people will be subject to certification by a District Screening Committee to be acknowledged as transgender, and those wishing to identify as either a man or a woman will need to go through gender affirmation surgery (popularly known as sex reassignment surgery, or SRS). This completely violates the Supreme Court judgment which states that the only thing needed to acknowledge a person's gender identity is their word for it.
- Furthermore, the presence of screening committees and the need for medical certification open up a space where a transgender person's very identity is subject to doubt until approved by external gatekeepers, which is inherently problematic. It will also inevitably lead to more discrimination and harassment by people empowered to screen and scrutinise trans people's lives.
- The bill both infantilises trans people and places them in harm's way by insisting that **when a parent or immediate family member is unable to take care of a transgender** – no age qualification is provided in the law – **they should be sent to a rehabilitation centre**. In a country where cisgender people (people who identify with the same gender identity they were assigned at birth) are free to live where they please, this is a brazen way to **control the movements of trans people and make them subjects of care which they may not want or need**.
- It also **criminalises whoever compels or entices a transgender person to indulge in the act of begging**. It betrays an ignorance of the way certain transgender communities (like hijras and kinnars) are structured, functioning on traditional systems such as badhai and mangti. This can be counterproductive since transgender people do not have access to employment in the way that other Indians do.
- Moreover, the bill is **problematically silent on the the matter of reservation** for transpersons in jobs and education sector.
- It **does not mention any punishments for rape or sexual assault** of transpersons as according to Sections 375 and 376 of the Indian Penal Code, rape is only when a man forcefully enters a woman. In terms of protection, the Bill offers a measly six months to two years imprisonment for those found guilty of atrocities against transpersons as mentioned in the Bill.

Partners' Forum

Syllabus: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

In News

- **Ministry of Health** in association with the **Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH)**, organised a two-day international conference – **Partners' Forum** in New Delhi, bringing together about 1500 participants from across 85 countries.
- This is the 4th in a series of global high-level multi-country, multi-stakeholder events aimed at sustaining global momentum for issues related to **health of women, children and adolescents**.
- The invited countries have been selected from across all regions and income levels and include countries that are currently chairing key global and regional bodies (e.g. G7, G20, BRICS, etc.).

Partners' Forum

- Partners' Forum is a global health partnership, launched in September 2005, to accelerate efforts to reduce child and maternal mortality, improve adolescent, child, newborn and maternal health.
- This partnership is an alliance of more than 1,000 plus members, across 10 constituencies in 92 countries: academic, research and teaching institutions; donors and foundations; health care

professionals; multilateral agencies; non-governmental organizations; partner countries; global financing mechanisms and the private sector.

- It aims to unite the partners around common strategies so that every woman, child and adolescent – no matter where they live – can **survive, thrive and transform the world**.
- PMNCH's mission is to support the global health community to work successfully towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly the health related SDGs as articulated in the Strategy for Women's Children's and Adolescents' Health in support of **Every Woman Every Child (EWEC) movement**.
- A big focus of the forum will be to share stories of how countries are successfully collaborating across sectors and stakeholders to fast-track improvements.
- A set of 12 case studies will be launched at the event showcasing the power of partnership, cross-sectoral action, accountability and political leadership across partner countries.
- One such success story chosen from India is **Mission Indradhanush**, an unprecedented collaboration between India's Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and 11 other ministries to increase immunization coverage among children and pregnant women to 90% by 2020.

International Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Day

Syllabus: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

In News

- 2014 onwards **Universal Health Coverage Coalition** began to celebrate 12 Dec' as UHC Day, to commemorate the UN's landmark decision and hold leaders accountable to their promise of health for all.
- In **2017**, United Nations proclaimed 12 December as International Universal Health Coverage Day (UHC Day), making it **an official UN-designated day**.
- The day aims to mobilize diverse stakeholders to call for stronger, more equitable health systems to achieve universal health coverage, leaving no one behind. It has become the annual rallying point for the growing global movement for health for all.
- Every year on this day people across the world raise their voices to share stories of millions of people still waiting for health, call on leaders to make bigger and smarter investments in health and remind the world that health for all is imperative for the world we want.

Why Universal Health Coverage?

- **Health is a human right, not a privilege.** Access to quality health services should never depend on race, gender, age, ability, wealth or citizenship. Universal health coverage leaves no one behind.
- No one should go bankrupt when they get sick. Everyone should be able to get the health care they need without being pushed into poverty or giving up other life necessities to pay for it.
- **Good health transforms societies** and when people are healthy, families, communities and economies can reach their full potential.
- Achieving UHC will accelerate efforts to end extreme poverty, reduce burdens of infectious and non communicable diseases, promote economic growth and job creation, achieve gender equality and **realize all the Sustainable Development Goals**.

National Medical Devices Promotion Council

Syllabus: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

In News

- To give a fillip to the medical device sector, which is a sunrise sector, a **National Medical Devices Promotion Council** will be set up under the **Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP)** in the Ministry of Commerce & Industry.
- The Council will be headed by Secretary, DIPP. Apart from the concerned departments of Government of India, it will also have representatives from health care industry and quality control institutions.

About Medical Device Industry

- The Medical Devices Industry (MDI) plays a critical role in the healthcare ecosystem and is indispensable to achieve the goal of health for all citizens of the country.
- The medical devices industry in India is currently valued at \$5.2 billion and growing at 15.8 percent annually. India is among the top 20 global medical devices market and is poised to grow to **\$50 billion by 2025** led by a growing middle class, health insurance penetration and expansion of hospitals, leading to greater need for sophisticated medical devices and better healthcare.
- However, the **medical devices market is dominated by imported products, which comprise about 80 % of the market**. While there are around 800 medical device manufacturers in India, only 10 percent of them have a turnover in excess of Rs 50 crore, most of them are involved in manufacturing low-end products such as consumables and disposables, very few manufacture and export high-value implants and equipment.
- Whereas, in China local companies contribute around 70-80 percent, and even multinational companies have made the country as their manufacturing hub.
- As Indian manufacturing companies and startups move towards creating innovative products, the setting-up of the Council will spur domestic manufacturing in this sector.

Objectives

- It will act as a facilitating, promotional & developmental body for the Indian MDI.
- Hold periodic seminars, workshops and all related networking activities to garner views of the industry and understand best global practices in the sector.
- Render technical assistance to the agencies and departments concerned to simplify the approval processes involved in medical device industry promotion & development.
- Enable entry of emerging interventions and support certifications for manufacturers to reach levels of global trade norms and lead India to an export driven market in the sector.
- Drive a robust and dynamic Preferential Market Access (PMA) policy, by identifying the strengths of the Indian manufacturers and discouraging unfair trade practices in imports; while ensuring pro-active monitoring of public procurement notices across India to ensure compliance with PMA guidelines of DIPP and DoP.
- Undertake validation of Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs) and other such entities within MDI sector, which add value to the industry strength in manufacturing to gain foothold for new entrants.

- It is hoped that similar to Pharmexcil (set up in 2004) that helped Indian pharmaceutical exports grow significantly, the Medical Devices Promotion Council will similarly help realise the vision for India to be among the **top 5 medical devices manufacturing hubs worldwide**.

Ujjwala Sanitary Napkins Initiative

Syllabus: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

In News

- The Ujjwala Sanitary Napkins initiative by three oil marketing companies – **IOCL, BPCL and HPCL** – was recently launched by Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister in **Odisha**.
- The **Central scheme** will be a counter to the Odisha government's Khushi scheme, in which sanitary napkins are provided free of cost to female students of government and government-aided schools in the state.
- As per the **National Family Health Survey (NFHS) report, the overall use of sanitary napkins in Odisha is 33.5 per cent**. Hence the initiative emphasizes on the need to make the use of sanitary napkins a mass movement.
- The three companies will set up **100 manufacturing units at the Common Service Centres (CSC)** covering 93 Blocks across 30 districts of Odisha. CSCs are facilities set up to deliver the Central government's e-services in rural and remote locations.
- The mission, which forms part of the CSR initiative of OMCs in Odisha, is **aimed to educate women on female hygiene and health, improve accessibility to low cost eco-friendly sanitary pads and boost rural employment and economy**.
- At least 10 Ujjwala beneficiary women will get employment at each CSC. Each facility will have a capacity to produce 1,200-2,000 pads per day and will have a sterilisation room to ensure that the napkins are sterilised before they are packed for use by rural women.
- The CSCs are also being provided with raw material, enough to make 45,000-50,000 pads. These napkins will be priced at ₹40 per pack, each containing eight pads. The pads will be made of virgin wood pulp sheet, non-woven white sheet and a gel sheet which are all biodegradable in nature and will leave minimal carbon footprint.

Oxytocin Ban Quashed By Delhi HC

Syllabus: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

In News

- The Delhi High Court has quashed the government's decision to ban private companies from making and selling Oxytocin in the country, which had come into effect from July 1 this year.
- The Health Ministry had called for a ban on the private production of the drug to prevent its misuse in cattle and poultry which can cause infertility in dairy animals, its abuse in young girls to advance puberty, and to induce ripening in fruits and vegetables.
- To cater to domestic supplies, the Centre had appointed a public sector unit Karnataka Antibiotics & Pharmaceuticals Ltd (KAPL).

About Oxytocin

- Oxytocin is a hormone produced **by the hypothalamus and secreted by the pituitary gland** of mammals during sex, childbirth, lactation or social bonding. It also helps with male reproduction and is also called the **love hormone**.
- It is chemically synthesised and sold by pharmaceutical companies across the world in the form of an injection or a nasal solution.
- It is used as a life saving drug during childbirth because it can contract the uterus and induce delivery, stem postpartum bleeding, and promote the release of breast milk.

The Issues

- The government's move had gynaecologists raising an alarm on the possibility of hospital supplies of this critical drug being hit by the ban on private producers. They also cautioned against depending on a single company, albeit a PSU, who had not made the product earlier.
- The court observed that the government's decision to allow only a single, state-run entity — with no prior experience in manufacturing Oxytocin — to make and sell the drug, was fraught with potential adverse consequences.
- The risk of such a consequence can be drastic as the scarcity of the drug, or even a restricted availability can cause **increase in maternal fatalities during childbirth**, impairing lives of thousands of innocent young mothers. It could also lead to **price hike** due to monopolistic tendencies.
- However, even if the ill-effects of oxytocin are real, a ban is not the answer. Oxytocin is simply too important to Indian women, 45,000 of whom die due to causes related to childbirth each year.
- So critical is its role in maternal health that the World Health Organization recommends it as the drug of choice in postpartum haemorrhage.
- Further, much is unknown about the ill-effects of oxytocin on cattle. There was no scientific basis, and insufficient data to support the conclusion that the drug's existing availability or manner of distribution posed a risk to human life.
- In a Lok Sabha answer in 2015, the National Dairy Research Institute was quoted as saying there was no evidence that oxytocin led to infertility. Further a 2014 study by researchers at the National Institute of Nutrition concluded that oxytocin content in buffalo milk did not alter with injections.

Global Nutrition Report (GNR) 2018

Syllabus: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

In News

- The GNR for the year 2018 was released recently. GNR was conceived following the first **Nutrition for Growth Initiative Summit (N4G)** in 2013 as a mechanism for tracking the commitments made by 100 stakeholders spanning governments, aid donors, civil society, the UN and businesses.
- Malnutrition is a universal issue holding back development with unacceptable human consequences. Yet the opportunity to end malnutrition has never been greater. The **UN Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016–2025** and the Sustainable Development Goals (**SDGs**) provide global and national impetus to address malnutrition and expedite progress.

- The report collates existing data, presents new innovations in data and conducts novel data analysis, focusing on five areas: **the burden of malnutrition, emerging areas in need of focus, diets as a common cause of malnutrition in all its forms, financing of nutrition action, and global commitments.**
- Around the world, malnutrition has become a problem that **costs a staggering \$3.5 trillion** per year, with *obesity alone costing \$500 billion per year.*

Highlights Of The Report

Alarming Figures

- The burden of malnutrition across the world remains unacceptably high and progress unacceptably slow. Malnutrition is responsible for more ill health than any other cause.
- Children under five years of age face multiple burdens: **150.8 million are stunted, 50.5 million are wasted and 38.3 million are overweight.** Meanwhile 20 million babies are born of low birth weight each year.
- Overweight and obesity among adults are at record levels with **38.9% of adults overweight or obese**, stretching from Africa to North America, and increasing among adolescents.
- **Women have a higher burden than men when it comes to certain forms of malnutrition.** One third of all women of reproductive age have anaemia and women have a higher prevalence of obesity than men. Millions of women are still underweight.
- Several countries are on course to meet at least one of the globally adopted nutrition targets set for 2025, but most are off-track and none are making progress on the full suite of targets.
- Of the 141 countries with consistent data on three forms of malnutrition – childhood stunting, anaemia in women of reproductive age and overweight among women – 88% (124 countries) experience a high level of at least two types of malnutrition, with 29% (41 countries) experiencing high levels of all three.

Ray Of Hope

- Yet significant steps are being made to address malnutrition. Globally, stunting among children has declined and there has been a slight decrease in underweight women.
- Many countries are set to achieve at least one of the targets set by the global community to track progress on nutritional status to 2025.
- There has been an increase in the number and breadth of national nutrition policies and nutrition targets, with the outstanding challenge being the financing and action to deliver them.
- Donors have met the funding commitment made at the Nutrition for Growth Summit in 2013, but globally there is still a significant financing gap.
- The level of knowledge on what it takes to deliver results has never been greater. The global community and national stakeholders have never been better placed to deliver results, with more governance, policies, actions, plans and targets.
- Advances in data are enabling the progress in understanding the nature of the burden of malnutrition in all its forms and its causes and therefore guide and inspire action and improve the ability to track progress.

Indian Scenario

- The health, longevity and well-being of Indians has improved since Independence and the high levels of economic growth over the past two-and-half-decades have made more funds available to

spend on the social sector. Yet, the reality is that **a third of the world's stunted children under five** — an estimated 46.6 million who have low height for age — live in India.

- Further, **a quarter of the children who display wasting** (low weight for height) also inhabit in India.
- In India, **two out of five children are stunted**, which is far higher than the global average of 21%.
- District-level data show high and very high levels of stunting mainly in central and northern India (more than 30% and 40%, respectively), but less than 20% in almost the entire south.
- This shows the **important role played by political commitment, administrative efficiency, literacy and women's empowerment in ensuring children's health**.
- Among the factors affecting the quantity and quality of nutrition are **maternal education, age at marriage, antenatal care, children's diet and household size**.

Way Ahead

- Break down silos between malnutrition in all its forms. The data shows that different forms of malnutrition coexist but are being tackled at different rates, vary between populations, and overlap with each other in various ways. Therefore, they **require integrated approaches and cohesive work to address them**.
- **Prioritise and invest in the data needed and capacity to use it**. Designing actions that result in impact is impossible without adequate knowledge of who is affected by malnutrition and why. Governments, international organisations, research organisations and academic institutions must continue this ongoing data revolution in nutrition.
- **Scale up financing for nutrition – diversify and innovate to build on past progress**. Without adequate and appropriate funds invested towards all forms of malnutrition, it is not possible to make progress.
- **Galvanise action on healthy diets** – engage countries all over to address this universal problem. Governments and business need to implement a holistic package of actions to ensure that food systems and food environments are delivering healthy diets that are affordable, accessible and desirable for all.
- **Make and deliver better commitments to end malnutrition in all its forms** – an ambitious, transformative approach will be required to meet global nutrition targets. Only commitments designed for impact that signatories consistently report on and deliver will be fit for purpose to end malnutrition in all its forms.

FSSAI Launches Campaign To Eliminate Trans Fats

Syllabus: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

International Relations

In News

- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has launched a new mass media campaign calling for the elimination of industrially produced trans fats in the food supply.
- It is a follow-up to an earlier campaign called **Eat Right**, which was launched in July 2018. As part of the campaign, edible oil industries took a pledge to reduce trans fat content by 2 % by 2022. Later, food companies also took a pledge to reformulate packaged foods with reduced levels of salt, sugar and saturated fat.

- Currently, the permitted levels of trans fats in vegetable oils and hydrogenated vegetable oils is 5 %, a percentage that **FSSAI wants to bring down to less than 2 % by 2022**, albeit in a phased manner.

Background

- Called **Heart Attack Rewind**, the 30 second public service announcement (PSA) - the first mass media campaign of its kind – will support FSSAI's global target of eliminating trans fats in India by the year 2022, a year ahead of the global target by the World Health Organization (WHO).
- In May 2018, WHO launched a comprehensive plan to eliminate industrially-produced trans fats from the global food supply by 2023. **REPLACE** provides a roadmap about how countries can remove and replace all trans fats from their food supplies with the intention to eradicate it from the globe.
- Since then, a lot of countries have made efforts to reduce the levels of trans fats and in some cases, have completely banned them.

About The Campaign

- The campaign will concentrate on the demand side (consumers), who in turn, will push the supply side (food manufacturers) to come up with various strategies in order to reduce and later replace trans fats.
- It warns citizens about the health hazards of consuming trans fat and offers strategies to avoid them through healthier alternatives.
- The messages are personalised, and urge people to check the labels before buying food so that they make informed choices.
- It will be broadcast in 17 languages for a period of four weeks on major digital platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Hotstar, and Voot.
- Additionally, the campaign will also be placed on radio channels and outdoor hoardings in Delhi/NCR along with a corresponding social media campaign.

About Trans Fat

- Trans fats are made by **adding hydrogen to liquid vegetable oils to make them more solid, and to increase the shelf life of foods**. They are largely present in Vanaspati, margarine and bakery shortenings, and can be found in baked and fried foods.
- Since they are easy to use, inexpensive to produce, last a long time, and give foods a desirable taste and texture, they are still widely used despite their harmful effects being well-known.
- Trans fats raise bad (LDL) cholesterol levels and lower good (HDL) cholesterol levels. Eating trans fats increases the risk of developing heart disease and stroke. It's also associated with a higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes.
- Globally, trans fats intake leads to more than 500,000 deaths of people from cardiovascular disease every year.

Shiksha Setu App

Syllabus: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

In News

- Haryana Government has developed a mobile app called Shiksha Setu in order to streamline the education process and help students.

- The launch of this app would **bring transparency in the Department and college administration and enable better connectivity between students, parents, teachers and administration.**
- Attendance of students would be online and it could be updated within 15 days only and thereafter no change would be possible in it.
- Through this app, students and teachers would get instant updates of important notices, circulars and other programmes.
- Apart from this, students would also get instant information of assignments and notifications.
- The students can also pay their fee online through this app and college administration can also check whose fee is pending and how much fee has been collected.
- During admissions, the students would be able to check through the app the status of seats or course in every college in the state.
- Students would also be able to get all information of scholarships such as details of scholarships, eligibility conditions and details of applying students.
- Directions have been issued to Principals of all government colleges to inspire students and teachers in their respective colleges to download and use the app.

International Relations

State Visit of Prime Minister of Bhutan to India

Syllabus: India and its neighbourhood- relations

In News

- Prime Minister of Bhutan, Dr. Lotay Tshering paid a State visit to India from 27-29 December, 2018.
- The State visit took place during the Golden Jubilee year of the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between India and Bhutan.

Key Highlights

- This was Prime Minister Dr. Lotay Tshering's first overseas visit after assuming the office in November 2018.
- During the visit, the two sides discussed the Government of India's development assistance package for **Bhutan's 12th Five Year Plan** for the period 1 November 2018 to 31 October 2023.
- Indian PM conveyed that India will provide **grant assistance of INR 4500 Crore** towards Bhutan's 12th Five Year Plan, and a **transitional Trade Support Facility** of INR 400 Crore over a period of five years to strengthen bilateral trade and economic linkages.
- Both sides reiterated their commitment to jointly develop **10,000 MWs of hydropower generating capacity in Bhutan** and in this regard discussed the **Sankosh Hydropower Project**.
- The two Prime Ministers expressed satisfaction at the progress of the 720 MW **Mangdechhu hydro-power project** in Bhutan.
- They welcomed the mutually beneficial understanding reached between the two sides on the **tariff for the export of surplus power** from Mangdechhu project in Bhutan to India.
- Both sides also expressed satisfaction that **Ground-Station being built by ISRO in Bhutan** to reap the benefits of the South Asian Satellite is soon going to be completed.

India – Bhutan Relation

- **Diplomatic relations** between India and Bhutan were **established in 1968** with the appointment of a resident representative of India in Thimphu.
- The basic framework of India- Bhutan bilateral relations was the ***Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation*** signed in 1949 between the two countries, which was revised in February 2007.
- The India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty not only reflects the contemporary nature of our relationship but also lays the foundation for their future development in the 21st century.
- The treaty commits both countries to cooperate closely with each other on issues relating to their national interests and not allow the use of their territories for activities harmful to the national security and interest of the other.
- There are a number of institutional mechanisms between India and Bhutan in areas such as *security, border management, trade, transit, economic, hydro-power, development cooperation, water resources*. There have been regular exchanges at the Ministerial and official's level, exchanges of parliamentary delegations to strengthen partnership in diverse areas of cooperation.

Hydropower Cooperation

- Hydropower projects in Bhutan are an example of win-win cooperation providing a reliable source of inexpensive and clean electricity to India and generating export revenue for Bhutan thus cementing economic integration.
- So far Government of India has constructed three Hydroelectric Projects (HEPs) in Bhutan totalling 1416 MW (336 MW **Chukha** HEP, 60 MW **Kurichhu** HEP and 1020 MW **Tala** HEP) which are operational and exporting surplus power to India (about three-fourth of the power generated is exported and rest is used for domestic consumption).
- Hydropower exports provide more than 40% of Bhutan's domestic revenues and constitute 25% of its GDP.
- The ongoing cooperation between India and Bhutan in the Hydropower sector is covered under the 2006 Agreement on Cooperation in Hydropower and the Protocol to the 2006 agreement signed in March 2009.
- Under this Protocol, Government of India has agreed to assist Royal Government of Bhutan in developing a minimum of 10,000 MW of hydropower and import the surplus electricity by the year 2020.
- Currently, there are three Inter-Governmental (IG) model HEPs viz. 1200 MW **Punatsangchhu-I**, 1020 MW **Punatsangchhu-II** and 720 MW **Mangdechhu** under construction.
- In April 2014, an Inter-Governmental Agreement was signed between India and Bhutan for development of four more HEP's of capacity 2120 MW (600 MW **Kholongchhu**, 180 MW **Bunakha**, 570 MW **Wangchu** and 770 MW **Chamkarchu**) under the Joint Venture Model.

Bilateral Trade

- The India-Bhutan Trade and Transit Agreement 1972 established a free-trade regime between the two countries. The Agreement also provides for duty-free transit of Bhutanese exports to third countries.
- In 2015, bilateral trade reached Rs 8,550 cr. Imports from India accounts for 79% of Bhutan's total imports and Bhutan's exports to India constitutes 90% of its total exports.

- More than one-third of Bhutan's exports to India is electricity. Other items of export include minerals such as ferro-silica (the Bhutanese have been complaining that these exports have been declining) cement and dolomite.
- Recently there has been growing exports of cardamom and Bhutan is also keen to sell off-season vegetables in neighbouring Indian markets.
- Planning is underway to build a **mini dry port in the border town of Phuentsholing** to promote exports that are plagued by logistical difficulties due to the difficult terrain and poor connectivity.
- Bhutan sources the majority of its import requirements from India. **Bilateral trade is conducted in Indian Rupees**, which is **fully convertible** to Ngultrum at par.

Border Management

- There is a Secretary-level mechanism on border management and security related matters. There is also a **Border District Coordination Meeting Mechanism** between the bordering States and the Royal Government of Bhutan to facilitate coordination on border management and other related matters.
- Bhutan is concerned of the Chinese intrusions at the border and tri junctions as was the case in Doklam. India as per the friendship treaty between the two countries has assured of full cooperation and both sides after the Doklam issue have agreed to a greater border management and defense cooperation.
- China sees border with Bhutan as the vulnerable outlet that can be used to potentially threaten India. Bhutan knows Chinese intentions and is worried about its sovereignty hence have sought for special vigil at the border through India's help.

Assessment

- Bhutan has been India's longstanding and a special ally. From cultural ties to security both the countries share deep indivisible ties.
- Bhutan's support is a key for India to counter Chinese influence in the region. Although both India and China had agreed to maintain status quo in the region but recent reports of Chinese military build-up near the strategic Doklam area is a cause of concern for India and also for Bhutan.
- One of the goals of Chinese through Doklam was to create a rift between the long standing relationship of India and Bhutan. Therefore Indo-Bhutan friendship is important in view of the changing geopolitical situation of the region.

India-Bhutan Treaty Of Friendship

- The India-Bhutan treaty of friendship was signed in Darjeeling August 8, 1949.
- The treaty commits both countries to cooperate closely with each other on issues relating to their national interests and not allow the use of their territories for activities harmful to the national security and interest of the other.
- According to the treaty the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the Kingdom of Bhutan agreed on:
 - Reaffirming their respect for each other's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.
 - Recalling the historical relations that have existed between our two countries.
 - Recognizing with deep satisfaction the manner in which these relations have evolved and matured over the years into a model of good neighbourly relations.

- Being fully committed to further strengthening this enduring and mutually beneficial relationship based on genuine goodwill and friendship, shared interests, and close understanding and cooperation.
- Desiring to clearly reflect this exemplary relationship as it stands today.
- And having decided, through mutual consent, to update the 1949 Treaty relating to the promotion of and fostering the relations of friendship and neighborliness between India and Bhutan.
- The treaty has been revised in 2007 and gives Thimphu more freedom to pursue its foreign policy and in the purchase of non-lethal military equipment as long as such decisions do not damage India's vital strategic interests.

State Visit of President of the Republic of Maldives to India

Syllabus: India and its neighbourhood- relations.

In News

- The President of the Republic of Maldives, **Mr Ibrahim Mohamed Solih**, paid a State Visit to India from 16-18 December 2018.
- This was President Solih's first visit abroad after assuming the office of President of the Republic of Maldives on 17 November 2018.

Key Highlights

- In an important gesture, President Solih **stayed in the Rashtrapati Bhawan** as a special guest of Indian President. This demonstrates the close ties between India and the Maldives, and the warmth and mutual respect between the two governments.
- The two sides signed the following Agreements/MoUs/Joint Declaration of Intent during the visit:
 - Agreement on the Facilitation of Visa Arrangements
 - Memorandum of Understanding on Cultural Cooperation
 - Memorandum of Understanding for Establishing Mutual Cooperation to Improve the Ecosystem for Agribusiness;
 - Joint Declaration of Intent on Cooperation in the field of Information & Communications Technology and Electronics.
- The two sides also agreed to work together to create institutional linkages and to establish a framework of cooperation in areas such as - *Health cooperation issues particularly cancer treatment, Mutual Legal Assistance on Criminal Matters, Investment promotion, Human Resource Development, Tourism*
- The Indian Prime Minister also announced **provision of financial assistance up to US\$ 1.4 billion** in the form of *budgetary support, currency swap and concessional lines of credit to fulfil the socio-economic development programmes of the Maldives.*
- Government of India decided to **provide 1000 additional slots** over next 5 years for training and capacity building in diverse fields including judicial, policing and law-enforcement, audit and financial management, local governance, community development, IT, e-governance, sports, media, youth and women empowerment, leadership, innovation & entrepreneurship, art & culture.

Analysis

- During the visit, India announced a US\$1.4 billion (S\$1.7 billion) loan to the Maldives. This was **mainly to help the Solih government pay Maldives' Chinese debt** of around US\$1.5 billion (S\$1.8 billion). Most such loans were taken during Abdulla Yameen's tenure (2013-2018) as the President of the Maldives.
- During his term, Maldives became a **part of the One Belt One Road project** and also signed a **free trade agreement with China**. Both of these initiatives attracted China to make large-scale investments, through high interest-bearing loans to the Maldives pushing the island nation into a debt.
- The Maldivian President's visit was very **successful in terms of re-establishing the India-Maldives relationship**, which was strained during Yameen's tenure.
- India's economic assistance to Maldives is a sign of closer friendship and strategic acumen. Obviously, this visit would be closely watched and the agreements and the MoUs must have been carefully read by China, which does not want to lose its strategic footprint in the Maldives.

State Visit of President to Myanmar

Syllabus: India and its neighbourhood- relations.

In News

- The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, paid a State Visit to Myanmar from 10-14 December 2018.
- Through this visit, the President reaffirmed India's commitment to developing its important partnership with Myanmar.
- This is a country where *India's "Act East" and "Neighbourhood First" policies intersect*; it is also the only ASEAN member state that is both a land and maritime neighbour of India.

Key Highlights

- President U Win Myint and President Kovind witnessed the signing of **MoUs between the two sides in the areas of judicial and educational cooperation**.
- The Indian side also **handed over the first 50 units of prefabricated houses** built in Rakhine State under the Rakhine State Development Programme funded by the Government of India.
- Furthermore, both sides agreed to sign at the earliest the MoU for Cooperation on Combating Timber Trafficking and Conservation of Tigers and Other Wildlife and the MoU on Bilateral Cooperation for Prevention of Trafficking in Persons; Rescue, Recovery, Repatriation and Re-integration of Victims of Trafficking, on which negotiations are nearing completion.
- President Kovind formally dedicated the **Advanced Centre for Agricultural Research and Education** and the **Rice Bio Park** - that have been set up with the assistance of Indian Government in the precincts of Yezin Agricultural University - to the people of Myanmar.
- The Government of India appreciated the **Government of Myanmar's announcement to grant Tourist Visa on Arrival**, starting from 1 December 2018, to Indian citizens who intend to visit Myanmar.
- With regard to the **Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project**, both sides welcomed the signature of the **MoU on appointing a port operator**, which would enable the Sittwe Port and Paletwa IWT infrastructure to be used commercially for the development of the surrounding areas.

- Both sides expressed their willingness to operate a **coordinated bus service between Mandalay and Imphal (Transit at Tamu/ Moreh Border)** in order to enhance and facilitate the contact of the people between Myanmar and India across the border.
- It was agreed that negotiations on **Operation of Coordinated Passenger Bus Service** between the two countries would further be undertaken by relevant authorities of both sides.
- The Myanmar side expressed appreciation to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) for completing projects to preserve and restore **stone inscriptions and temples of King Mindon and King Bagyidaw of Myanmar in Bodh Gaya.**
- The two leaders also welcomed the plans for ASI to start work in the near future to restore and **conserve up to 92 pagodas in the historic city of Bagan.**
- The Indian side informed that, as a preparatory step to relocation of its Embassy to the capital, India intended to set up an **Interim Liaison Office in Nay Pyi Taw** as soon as discussions on the formalities of opening the office and leasing property were completed with the Myanmar authorities.

India – Myanmar Relation: Importance and Challenges

Importance:

- Being a nascent multicultural democracy, Myanmar naturally wants to learn from India's experience of institution building and national consolidation. A close coordination to **ensure security in the areas along our border**, and sensitivity to each other's strategic interests, will serve the interests of both our countries. Cross border insurgent groups are common security threat and thus require greater collaboration.
- Myanmar is also India's bridge to the larger ASEAN market and an integral part of Prime Minister Modi's "Act East Policy". **The Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project**, which will open the waterways for transport of goods in the region, forms an important part of Delhi's connectivity aims. It would invigorate the economic development of India's underdeveloped North Eastern region by transforming it into an economic hub.
- India's commitment for investment in transnational highway connectivity projects would give a boost to infrastructure development in Northern and Western Myanmar. India is concerned about China's strategic forays into Myanmar and the Indian Ocean. A democratic Myanmar under Suu Kyi too wants to curtail the pervasive Chinese presence fostered during the junta regime. Thus it signifies a meeting of minds.
- The two governments have also been on the same page in regard to forging **regional and sub regional cooperation**. They favour a strong United Nations as a key factor in tackling global challenges and advocate **UN reform**, including expansion of the Security Council in order to make it more representative, credible and effective. India greatly appreciates Myanmar's consistent support for the former's bid for permanent membership of Security Council.
- Myanmar has been consistently appreciative of India's deepening engagement with ASEAN, particularly its assistance to CLMV countries. Further, convergence in developmental domain has driven both countries towards strengthening sub regional cooperation through BIMSTEC and MGC.

Challenges

- **Insurgency and volatility** in north and west Myanmar may derail India's infrastructure push for regional connectivity which may prove to be a drag on the still unfolding Act East policy. Over decades of closer ties with the military junta, **China has emerged as the single largest investor in Myanmar.** Although the situation appears to reverse under the new regime, still China will

remain the most significant player for the time being.

- The rising **Buddhist Nationalism** in Myanmar is a threat to the already fragile inter-community relations. The persecution and resultant migration of ethnic **Rohingyas** threaten the stability of Rakhine state, the home to Sittwe and Kaladan projects. It also threatens to compromise the efficacy of BIMSTEC as Bangladesh is bearing the brunt of Rohingya influx. Despite successful elections the military still controls key government positions which signify that the democratic transition is still a work in progress. The **inordinate delay in project execution** by Indian agencies undercuts Myanmar's confidence in Indian capabilities making them susceptible to further Chinese inroads.

Nepal Bans Use of Indian Currency Notes Above Rs 100

Syllabus: India and its neighbourhood- relations.

In News

- The Nepal government has banned the use of Indian currency notes of Rs 2,000, Rs 500 and Rs 200 denominations.
- The government has asked the people to refrain from keeping or carrying Indian bank notes higher than Rs 100 denomination as it has not legalised them.
- The Indian government had introduced new banknotes of Rs 2,000, Rs 500 and Rs 200 denominations after the demonetisation of old notes worth Rs 500 and 1,000 in 2016.

Reasons

- According to the government officials of Nepal, India has, so far, **not issued a Fema notification** as per the Foreign Exchange Management Act. Only when India issues such notification, these notes will be legal in Nepal.
- However, many analysts are contending that Nepal has taken this step to register its frustration with Indian government over **failure to facilitate the collection and deposit of Indian bank old series notes** of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 denominations that are already in stock of the Central Banks, other banks/ financial institutions and general public in Nepal.

Possible Impact Of This Move

- The decision will adversely affect **Nepalese labourers working in India** as well as **Indian tourists visiting Nepal**. India is Nepal's largest trade partner and supplies the majority of its consumer goods.
- Indian currency is extensively used by Nepalese people and businesses for their savings and transactions. Hence, this could also affect the **trade ties between these two countries**.

2018 Bangladesh Election

Syllabus: India and its neighbourhood- relations.

In News

- Single-phase general election was held in Bangladesh on December 30 to elect a new parliament.
- Bangladesh's Ruling coalition led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina (Awami League) is set for an unprecedented, third consecutive term after securing a landslide victory.

Electoral System of Bangladesh

- Bangladesh has a **unicameral Parliament**, also known as the **Jatiya Sangsad**, comprises of 350 seats.
- 300 of these MPs are elected from single-member constituencies for a five-year term through a first-past-the-post system.
- The **50** remaining seats, **reserved for women**, are populated by allocating to each party the number of seats in proportion to the number of MPs they managed to elect.
- Premiership is awarded to the party or alliance holding the majority in Parliament.
- The **prime minister acts as the head of the government**; Bangladesh's presidency is only a ceremonial one, elected by the Jatiya Sangsad.
- While Bangladesh is a **Muslim-majority country**, **secularism** is one of the four fundamental principles of its Constitution.
- Minorities form around 10 percent of Bangladesh's 16.47 crore population. Hindus make up about 8-9 percent, Christians about 0.5 percent, while the remaining are Buddhists.

Key Highlights

- This was the country's **11th National Parliamentary Election** in which the Hasina-led ruling coalition won **288 seats of the country's 300 seats**, while opposition alliance got seven seats. Other parties won 3 seats.
- The ruling coalition also bagged more than 80% of votes, **making it the strongest government in South Asia**.

Why Was This Election Important

- Bangladesh is a Muslim-majority nation of more than 160 million people and faces issues ranging from possibly devastating **climate change, Islamist militancy, endemic poverty and corruption**.
- The country has recently been in the international spotlight as **hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims have fled there from neighbouring Myanmar**.
- Bangladesh has emerged as the world's second-largest garment exporter, after China.
- Although, many critics claim that Hasina has **grown intolerant of dissent** and shows no willingness to relinquish power, but she has **presided over a buoyant economy** and **made significant progress in reducing poverty**. She won praise for opening the country's doors to Rohingya refugees fleeing persecution in Myanmar.
- Hasina is also viewed by some — **including in neighboring India** — as an ally against the potential spread of Islamist extremism in Bangladesh.

Analysis

- Hasina's Awami League fared even better than it did in the last national poll in 2014, when the opposition boycotted the elections and many seats were contested by a single candidate.
- As a result, many analysts as well as the opposition alliance of Bangladesh have **condemned the vote** as "farcical", marred by violence, intimidation and vote rigging claims.
- **At least 47 candidates** from the main **opposition alliance withdrew** before polling closed, alleging vote rigging and intimidation.
- The Bangladesh National Party (BNP) led by Khaleda Zia, which did not take part in the 2014 election, had to participate in this election with the knowledge that there will be no level playing

field. *Non-participation meant that the party would lose its registration.* It really did not have an alternate option.

- Experts contend that there was sporadic violence in the run-up to the elections, which was a tactic aimed at **forewarning opposition supporters to stay away from the vote.**
- Overall they claim that, in Bangladesh, **“the development story is an upward curve, and the democracy story is a downward curve.**

Impact on India

- Bangladesh and India share a 4,000-km long border that has been marred by ethnic conflicts.
- Its location is strategically important for India, and China has time and again tried to woo Dhaka. Overall, Bangladesh is a key component of India's "Look East" policy.
- **Under Hasina's regime**, New Delhi has seen improved bilateral ties and boundary disputes have been settled amicably, while strong security cooperation has been established and significant progress has been made in settling differences over the Teesta River water sharing.
- On the other hand, **Zia had a strained relationship with India** during her two tenures as prime minister. Her party has been called anti-India by critics and her government was accused of harbouring anti-India elements on Bangladeshi soil.
- Hence, it can be assumed that India-Bangladesh relationship would attain a new dimension under the newly elected government, which is so far the strongest government in the country as far as people's mandate is concerned.

Britain's 'Golden Visa'

Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

In News

- There has been confusion among the investors regarding the golden visa scheme of Britain.
- Earlier the Britain's government had announced the suspension of the scheme due to money laundering fears, and then changed its mind.

Key Highlights

- On December 6, government announced that the **tier 1 investor visa** would be suspended until new rules were put in place in 2019.
- But just a few days later, on December 12, the UK's Home Office announced it was not going to suspend the visas.

What Are Golden Visas

- Also known as Tier 1 visas, they provide a **faster route for wealthy investors** coming from outside the European Union and Switzerland to settle in Britain.
- To qualify, foreign nationals must put down a minimum of 2 million pounds (around \$2.5 million) as an investment in Britain. Such an investment in United Kingdom bonds, share capital or companies allows investors to apply for permanent residency within five years.
- For a £5 million investment, they can apply for permanent residency after three years.
- An investment of £10 million can open the door to permanent residency after two years.
- This scheme was introduced in 2008 **to attract wealthy foreign nationals willing to invest large amounts of capital in Britain.**

- The visa program has been especially popular among Russian oligarchs and wealthy people from China and the United Arab Emirates.

Criticism Of This Scheme

- The scheme has long been **criticised by anti-corruption groups** like Transparency International and Global Witness as it provides a safe passage for Russian oligarchs, money launderers and organised crime groups.
- Earlier, in 2014, the government's Migration Advisory Committee filed a report that said the scheme **brought limited economic benefits** because most of the investors had bought fixed-interest loan securities known as gilts, meaning that they were effectively loaning the government money instead of investing in the country.
- The National Crime Agency estimated that **£100 billion in "dirty money"** was being funneled into Britain each year, mainly from Russian, Nigeria, Pakistan and the Far East.

Way Ahead

- The Home Office of Britain is poised to conduct an investigation before reintroducing it with stricter regulations.
- Under the new rules, visa applicants will have to provide audits of all their financial and business interests using firms registered in the United Kingdom, and show that they have had control of their funds for at least two years.
- Changes will also be introduced to increase the benefits of the investment to British companies.

US Proposes Changes to H1B Visas

Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

In News

- The Trump administration has proposed major changes to the H-1B application process with the aim of awarding the visa to the most skilled and highest paid foreign workers.
- This step is in line with the aim of current government to reform a popular American work visa program.

Key Highlights

- Under a new proposed merit-based rule companies employing foreign workers on the H-1B visa — under the Congressional mandated annual caps -- would have to electronically register with the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) during a designated registration period.
- Under the new rule, the USCIS would also reverse the order by which it selects H-1B petitions under the H-1B cap and the advanced degree exemption.
- This proposed change would increase the chances that beneficiaries with a master's or higher degree from a US institution of higher education would be selected under the H-1B cap and that H-1B visas would be awarded to the most-skilled and highest-paid beneficiaries.
- Also, electronic registration would reduce overall costs for petitioners and create a more efficient and cost-effective H-1B cap petition process for the agency.
- The proposed rule would help alleviate massive administrative burdens on the USCIS since the agency would no longer need to physically receive and handle hundreds of thousands of H-1B petitions and supporting documentation before conducting the cap selection process.

New Peace Agreement on Yemen

Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

Context

- The ceasefire between **Yemen's Houthi rebels** and **forces loyal to President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi** in the port city of Hodeida came into existence on December 18.
- The agreement was reached in UN-mediated talks held in Stockholm.

Key Highlights

- The agreement includes **three provisions**: *a ceasefire along the Hodeidah front and the redeployment of armed forces out of the city and its port; an agreement on prisoner exchange; and a statement of understanding on the Yemeni city of Taiz.*
- According to the agreement, all combatants should withdraw from Hodeida in 21 days.
- UN observers will set up a monitoring team of government and rebel representatives to oversee the truce.

What Triggered The Truce

- UN Special Envoy for Yemen Martin Griffiths managed to bring the two sides together for a week of talks in Rimbo, Sweden, which resulted in the announcement of a break-through agreement.
- At the time of the negotiations, the city was almost in the hands of the Saudi-led coalition. The coalition had blockaded the port, the main conduit for humanitarian aid to enter Yemen, for months, and the fighters, mostly UAE soldiers, were battling the rebels.
- But **Saudi Arabia came under increased global pressure** to stop fighting in Yemen after the **murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi** inside its consulate in Istanbul triggered a global outcry.
- In the meantime, **humanitarian situation in Yemen also worsened**. The widespread damage caused to infrastructure by the coalition airstrikes and lack of supplies of food and medicines due to the blockade have pushed Yemen into a humanitarian catastrophe.
- About 12 million people are at the risk of starvation if aid does not reach them fast. The country has also seen a massive cholera outbreak.
- With the UN also pushing for talks, the Yemeni government backed by Saudi Arabia gave the green light for talks.

Analysis

- The ceasefire is a highly significant development given that **Hodeidah's port is the entry point** for most of Yemen's food imports, commercial goods and humanitarian aid; currently the country relies on imports for some 90 percent of its food and basic commodity needs.
- This also marks the **first time that Houthi forces have agreed to withdraw** from one of the conflict's most significant front lines.
- However, various points in the agreement are **vaguely worded and open to different interpretations** by the warring parties.
- For example, it talks of "the mutual redeployment of forces from the city of Hodeidah and the ports of Hodeidah."

- Houthis interpret this as removing military presence but not withdrawing, while the other side think that the Houthis should withdraw fully. This will be a key point of contention in the coming months.
- Furthermore, the **timeline of implementation** is unreasonably tight and it might not be enough for the Houthis to withdraw. It is also unclear to what authority they are supposed to handover the city.
- Another challenge is the fact that Houthi forces and their affiliates have become **highly entrenched in Hodeidah**.
- Local security forces - such as the police - are full of **Houthi partisans and sympathisers**. **Dismantling these unofficial networks to re-balance civilian power** will be difficult and will need to be approached carefully.
- Also, the agreement failed to reach an agreement on two other key issues: the **reopening of Sanaa International Airport and the reunification of Central Bank of Yemen**.
- To ensure and sustain peace in Yemen, peace agreements must serve the interests of the Yemenis and reflect their local dynamics and structures.
- In this sense, the Stockholm Agreement should be seen as a good start, but the hard work of securing peace in Yemen is only beginning.

About Yemen Crisis

- The conflict has its roots in the failure of a political transition supposed to bring stability to Yemen following an Arab Spring uprising that forced its longtime authoritarian president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, to hand over power to his deputy, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, in 2011.
- As president, Mr Hadi struggled to deal with a variety of problems, including attacks by jihadists, a separatist movement in the south, the continuing loyalty of security personnel to Saleh, as well as corruption, unemployment and food insecurity.
- The Houthi movement, which champions Yemen's Zaidi Shia Muslim minority, took advantage of the new president's weakness by taking control of their northern heartland of Saada province and neighbouring areas.
- Alarmed by the rise of a group they believed to be backed militarily by regional Shia power Iran, Saudi Arabia and eight other mostly Sunni Arab states began an air campaign aimed at restoring Mr Hadi's government.

Australia Recognises West Jerusalem as Israeli Capital

Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

In News

- Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison has confirmed that his government will recognise West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.
- However, Australia's embassy **would not move from Tel Aviv**, until a peace settlement was achieved.
- In 2017, US President Donald Trump **reversed decades of American foreign policy** by recognising the ancient city as Israel's capital. The US embassy was relocated from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in May 2018.

Importance of Jerusalem

- The city is sacred to all three of the great monotheistic religions. Christians, Jews, and Muslims all revere the city and see religious significance there.

- The city has been at the center of conquerors for centuries. The Romans, Crusaders, Ottomans, and the British Empire all once sought for control of the city.
- Since the creation of the modern state of Israel, both the Israeli leadership and their Arab neighbours have laid claim to the historic city.
- In the centre of the Old City is a hill with great significance to both Jews and Muslims. The hill is known to Jews as Har ha-Bayit or Temple Mount. To Muslims around the world, the hill is known as al-Haram al-Sharif or The Noble Sanctuary. Muslims revere two holy sites on the hill - the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Asqa Mosque.
- Christians revere the city for its connection to Jesus Christ who they believe preached, died and was later resurrected there.

Visit of the Foreign Minister of Denmark to India

Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

In News

- The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Mr. Anders Samuelsen, visited India on 17- 18 December 2018 for the 2nd Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) between India and Denmark.
- This commission was established pursuant to the agreement signed on 6 February 2008.

Key Highlights

- External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj and the Danish Foreign Minister co-chaired the 2nd JCM.
- The Ministers reviewed the current state of bilateral relations and expressed satisfaction with the enhanced bilateral ties in areas such as renewable energy, environment, agriculture and food processing, urban development, science and technology and shipping.
- All the sectoral Joint Working Groups that had been set up since the 1st JCM have met during this year. Both sides also agreed to setting up of a **JWG on digitization for mutually beneficial cooperation**.
- A **Protocol on Consultations between the Foreign Ministers of India and Denmark** was signed and an **MoU between National Institute of Wind Energy and Denmark Technical University** was also exchanged.

39th GCC Summit

Syllabus: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements.

In News

- 39th Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit was held in Saudi Arabia's capital Riyadh. It was inaugurated by King Salman Bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia.
- The 40th Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit will be held in the United Arab Emirates.

Key Highlights

- The Qatari Emir Tamim Bin Hamad al-Thani didn't attend the summit despite having been officially invited by the Saudi King.

- In June 2017, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE and Bahrain collectively severed ties with Doha, accusing it of supporting terrorism, and imposed an air/land/sea embargo on Qatar, which vociferously denies the allegations.
- The summit ended with 'Riyadh Declaration', which included 72 items covering matters related to the Gulf countries, the region and the world.
- Through the declaration, the members sought to remove obstacles ahead of the **common Gulf market** to ensure the **economic unity till 2025** and quickly complete the procedures to implement Joint Gulf military command.
- It was noted that GCC would combat radicalism, be loyal to the superiority of law and operate together with the international partners to fight terrorism.
- GCC declaration also emphasized that it would continue to support fellow states, the Palestinian cause, and Yemen.

About GCC

- The GCC, established in 1981 in Abu Dhabi, comprises **Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE**.
- It is basically a political and economic alliance of six countries in the Arabian Peninsula which promotes economic, security, cultural and social cooperation among member countries.
- The presidency shifts among the six members based on the Arabic alphabet.
- Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain have constitutional monarchies while Saudi Arabia and Oman have absolute monarchies, and the United Arab Emirates has federal monarchy.

India-GCC Relations

- The Gulf constitutes the “**immediate**” **neighbourhood** of India separated only by the Arabian Sea. India, therefore, has a vital stake in the stability, security and economic well being of the Gulf.
- The GCC has emerged as a major trading partner of India. It has vast potential as India's investment partner for the future. The GCC's substantial oil and gas reserves are of utmost importance for India's energy needs. The GCC countries are collectively host to a large Indian expatriate community.
- India's **economic linkage** with the GCC have increased steadily, especially due to growth in oil imports. The bilateral two-way trade during 2015-16 was US\$ 97.46 billion, registering a decline of about 27% over the previous year.
- From the **strategic point of view**, India and GCC share the desire for political stability and security in the region. The GCC States are going through important changes and transformation; the process of understanding and integration is coming of age.
- India and GCC signed a **Framework Agreement for enhancing and developing economic cooperation** between the two sides in New Delhi in August 2004. Two rounds of talks for finalizing aspects like tariff rules, rules of origin, etc have been held. The **India-GCC FTA is under negotiation**.

Factors Hindering the Relationship:

- First, in recent times, **India's relationship with Iran** has made the GCC countries apprehensive.
- Second, **Pakistan** has taken advantage of its religious affinity and close relationship with the

Gulf countries for depicting India as an anti-Muslim country.

- Third, **excessive dependence on the US** on political and security matters has dwarfed the engagement of Gulf States with other powers.
- Fourth, **India's close ties with Israel**, particularly the Indo-Israeli defence cooperation, have been resented by the GCC countries.

Global Compact for Migration

Syllabus: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements.

In News

164 countries has adopted the historic **Global Compact for Migration**. It is considered as a blueprint for helping millions of migrants worldwide achieve a life of safety and dignity.

Key Highlights

- The **Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)** was agreed upon at an intergovernmental conference in Marrakech, Morocco.
- It is a **non-binding agreement**, which aims to better manage migration at local, national, regional and global levels, including reducing the risks and vulnerabilities the migrants or refugees face at different stages of their journey.
- The compact is comprised of 23 objectives. These include : collecting adequate data; ensuring all migrants have legal proof of identity; saving lives and establishing coordinated international efforts on missing migrants; strengthening the transnational response to smuggling and trafficking; managing borders in an integrated manner; and giving migrants access to basic services.
- The compact also includes a follow-up and review mechanism.
- While acknowledging states' shared responsibilities, the compact reaffirms their sovereign right to determine their national migration policies and to govern migration within their jurisdictions.
- It also stresses that the compact's implementation will account for different national realities, capacities and levels of development; and will respect national policies and priorities.

Need for Global Pact

- Cross-border migration is, by its very nature, an international phenomenon and that effective management of this global reality requires international cooperation to enhance its positive impact for all.
- According to the UN, there were **258 million international migrants** in the world in 2017, increasing almost 50 percent since 2000.
- The number of migrants, representing **3.4 percent of the world's population**, is increasing faster than the global population, driven by economic prosperity, inequality, violence, conflict and climate change.
- According to UN data, around 80 percent of the world's migrants move between countries in a safe and orderly fashion. But more than 60,000 people have died on the move since year 2000.

Analysis

- Emerging in the wake of Europe's 2015 refugee crisis, it draws on a range of existing international instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to which the vast majority of member states are signatories.

- However, the adoption of the United Nations' global migration compact **has sparked turmoil**, particularly among members of the European Union. Many U.N. member states have declared that they do not intend to sign it. The United States became the first to withdraw.
- These countries have termed this pact as an effort by the United Nations to advance **global governance at the expense of the sovereign right of states**.
- They also contend that the compact **does not sufficiently distinguish between legal and illegal migration**, that it **mixes up the rights of asylum seekers with those of economic migrants**, or even stipulates the number of migrants that each member state will need to accept.
- According to analysts, the compact have **some inherent weaknesses**, such as not sufficiently demonstrating that it will be relevant and actionable in member states with such contrasting migration features and policy approaches.
- Doubts also persist on the **levels of financial resources** that will be allocated to implement such a nonbinding and largely aspirational policy framework.

Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)

Syllabus: Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.

In News

- States-parties to the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to **Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention** (RevCon) have failed to adopt the report by consensus.
- It was due to disagreements over language around Syrian chemical weapons use, the joint-investigative mechanism and attribution for chemical weapons attacks.

About OPCW

- The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is the implementing body for the **Chemical Weapons Convention**, which entered into force on 29 April 1997.
- It has 193 member states which share a goal of preventing chemistry from ever again being used for warfare, thereby strengthening international security.
- To this end, the Convention contains four key provisions:
 - Destroying all existing chemical weapons under international verification by the OPCW.
 - Monitoring chemical industry to prevent chemical weapons from re-emerging.
 - Providing assistance and protection to States Parties against chemical threats.
 - Fostering international cooperation to strengthen implementation of the Convention and promote the peaceful use of chemistry.
- In 2013, the organisation was awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize** “for its extensive efforts to eliminate chemical weapons”.

International Whaling Commission (IWC)

Syllabus: Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.

In News

- Japan is considering a withdrawal from the International Whaling Commission in order to resume commercial whaling.

- Its possible withdrawal highlights domestic political frustration with the IWC's moratorium on commercial whaling, which has been in place since 1986.

Reasons For Withdrawal

- Japan was infuriated in September when anti-whaling nations, including Australia and the US, along with the EU, **rejected its proposal** for reform of the IWC.
- Japan claims that its plan would have created a **new committee to set catch limits** for "sustainable" whaling.
- Japan also argues that the IWC has **departed from its original purpose** as a body to manage whale stocks and become **solely dedicated to conservation**.
- Japan insists whale stocks have now recovered sufficiently to allow commercial hunting to resume.

Analysis

- Many countries have termed this step against the fight for the welfare of these majestic mammals.
- After the withdrawal, Japan would no longer be part of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW). Hence, it **cannot pursue scientific whaling** and there will be no more whales killed in the Southern Ocean Sanctuary by Japan.
- Currently, Japan uses a *clause in the IWC moratorium* allowing it to conduct so-called "**research hunts**" in the Southern Ocean and then sell the resulting whale meat.
- However, the problem is that for whaling in the Japanese Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), the scientific evidence suggests that stock levels are low, and do not show the levels of robust recovery seen elsewhere.
- So, while there is a gain for whales in the Southern Ocean, the **threat to northern Pacific populations increases**.
- **Environmental governance would also take a hit**. By remaining in the ICW until now, Japan has faithfully followed international protocol, including the decision by the International Court of Justice in 2014 following the challenge by Australia to Japan's "scientific whaling".
- **Norway and Iceland** both catch whales **in defiance of the IWC moratorium**. They are founders of the **North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission**, an alternative management body for whaling.
- Japan is a leading voice among pro-whaling countries, its withdrawal may inspire **other countries, such as South Korea and Russia, to follow suit**.

About IWC

- The IWC was set up under the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW) which was signed in Washington DC in December 1946.
- its purpose is to provide for the proper conservation of whale stocks and thus make possible the orderly development of the whaling industry.
- It introduced a moratorium on commercial whaling in 1986 after some species had been fished to near extinction.
- The commission, with 89 member governments, banned commercial whaling in 1986.

Economic Growth and Development

Centre Gives More Power To SFIO

Syllabus: Indian Economy and Issues relating to mobilization of resources.

In News

- To rein in wilful defaulters and prevent high profile economic offenders like Nirav Modi and Vijay Mallya from leaving the country, the Centre has allowed the Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO) powers to request **look-out circulars (LoCs)** against loan defaulters.
- The Parliament has also passed the **Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill, 2018**, giving authorities powers to attach and confiscate the proceeds of crime and properties of economic offenders, like bank fraudsters or loan defaulters fleeing the country.

About SFIO and LOC

- **Introduction:** The SFIO is a statutory body, under the **Ministry of Corporate Affairs** and investigates matters related to serious fraud in a company.
- **Power to arrest:** The SFIO also enjoys the power to make arrests under **Section 212 (8)** of the **Companies Act, 2013**.
- **About LOC:** These LoCs were **valid only for one year** until the agency seeking the LoC specified a longer duration. The agency seeking the extension of LoCs after one year will have to inform Indian Check Posts (ICP) with valid documentation. LoCs are broadly classified into **three categories** and can be changed by the agency at any stage.
- **Three types of LOCs:** The **first LoC** says that the alleged criminal should be detained if he tries to leave India. The **second LoC** says that only action to be taken when offender reached any port to leave India is to simply inform the CBI and let him travel. The **third LoC** category is mostly used for terror suspects with immediate arrest.

Rationale For Grant Of Such Power

- **Background:** Earlier, an LoC to keep watch on the arrival or departure of Indians or foreigners could only be issued at the request of the **Home Ministry, External Affairs, Custom and Income Tax, CBI, DRI, Intelligence Bureau (IB), Regional Passport Offices (RPOs) and state police authorities**. However, more white collar crime in recent years has meant commensurately greater involvement of the SFIO in criminal investigations. Moreover, the Home Ministry has recently also empowered the **chairman or managing director and CEOs of all public sector banks (PSBs)** to request LoCs against bank fraud suspects and loan defaulters.
- **Prevention of accused fleeing:** The SFIO, often begins investigations soon after a crime is detected, ahead of the CBI or Customs. The SFIO had investigated several wilful defaulters such as Jatin Mehta, Vijay Mallya or Nirav Modi before the CBI and other agencies stepped in. Had SFIO been empowered to seek an LOC, the escape from the country of these accused could conceivably have been prevented.
- **Logical step:** Giving the SFIO similar powers was the next step as it was argued that the LoCs sought by CEOs of public sector bank can be challenged in court in the absence of an FIR or investigations against the suspects.

Way forward

- The common thread running through the recent cases of financial fraud is that these economic offenders not only gamed the system, but also how brazen violations of rules and non-payment of statutory dues were flagged off by some of the agencies, yet the escape route was open.
- Therefore, India's investigation agencies and financial regulators need to work more closely and share information at an early stage without indulging in oneupmanship. For this the **Regional Economic Intelligence Council**, which is a designated platform for sharing of information between various law enforcement agencies should be used.
- The quality of economic investigation and regulation is a key factor in fostering an enabling environment for investment and for the emergence of a competitive industry.

SEBI's New Norm For Credit Rating Agencies

Syllabus: Indian Economy and Issues relating to mobilization of resources.

In News

- After the IL&FS crisis, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) is now trying to increase the level of scrutiny on credit rating agencies (CRA) that failed to warn investors about it.
- SEBI has come out with new guidelines to improve the quality of disclosures made by CRA.

SEBI's Norm For Credit Rating Agencies

- **Information on liquidity situation:** The CRA will have to inform investors about the liquidity situation of the companies they rate through parameters such as their cash balance, liquidity coverage ratio, access to emergency credit lines, asset-liability mismatch etc.
- **Additional information:** CRAs will now also be required to furnish information whether the rating is factoring in support from a parent, group or government, with an expectation of infusion of funds towards timely debt servicing. They are required to name of such entities, along with rationale for such expectation.
- **Information on historical rating:** Further, rating agencies will have to disclose their own historical rating track record by informing clients about how often their rating of an entity has changed over a period of time.
- **Consolidation of rating:** When subsidiaries or group companies are consolidated to arrive at a rating, list of all such companies, along with the extent (e.g. full, proportionate or moderate) and rationale of consolidation, will be required to provide by CRAs.
- **Disclosure of ratings:** All CRA would require furnish data on sharp rating actions in investment grade rating category, to stock exchanges and depositories for disclosure on website on **half-yearly basis, within 15 days** from the end of the half-year.
- **Enhanced standards for CRA:** SEBI has been working hard to improve transparency and credibility among rating agencies for some time now, including through a **circular issued in November 2016** calling for enhanced standards for rating agencies.



Final Analysis

- **Positive step:** While rating agencies already make at least some of these disclosures one way or the other, mandating the formal disclosure of these facts is still welcome. The ready availability of information can help investors make better decisions.

- **Need for resolving structural issue:** The latest regulations can only help to a certain extent as a lot of the problems with the credit rating industry have to do with structural issues rather than the lack of formal rules.
- **Issuer pays model:** The primary structural issue is the flawed **issuer-pays model** where the entity that issues the instrument also pays the ratings agency for its services. This often leads to a situation of **conflict of interest**, with tremendous potential for rating biases.
- **Need for removal of market barrier:** The credit rating market in India has high barriers to entry, which prevent competition that is vital to protecting the interests of investors. Better disclosures can increase the amount of information available to investors, but without a sufficient number of alternative credit rating providers, quality standards in ratings will not improve.
- **Resolving other issues:** Structural reform should aim to solve another severe problem plaguing the industry, which has to do with **rating shopping** and the **loyalty of credit rating agencies** in general.
- **Final aim:** Rating agencies will have to come up with lucrative business models that put the interests of investors above those of borrowers. Such a change requires a policy framework that allows easier entry and innovation in the credit rating industry.

RBI Makes LEI Mandatory

Syllabus: Indian Economy and Issues relating to mobilization of resources.

In News

- **Introduction:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to make **Legal Entity Identifier (LEI) code** mandatory for all market participants regulated by the central bank.
- **About LEI:** The LEI is a **20 character unique identity code** assigned to entities who are parties to a financial transaction. Globally, use of LEI has expanded beyond derivative reporting and it is being used in areas relating to banking, securities market, credit rating and market supervision.
- **Purpose of LEI:** The LEI code has been conceived of as a key measure to improve the quality and accuracy of financial data systems for better risk management post the global financial crisis.
- **Applicability:** Thus, all participants, other than individuals, undertaking transactions in the markets regulated by the RBI government securities markets, money markets (markets for any instrument with a maturity of one year or less) and non-derivative forex markets (transactions that settle on or before the spot date) shall obtain LEI codes by the due date. Thus, the transactions undertaken on **recognised stock exchanges** are outside the purview of the LEI requirement.



Proposal For Conversion Of J&K Bank Into A PSU

Syllabus: Indian Economy and Issues relating to mobilization of resources.

In News

- The **State Administrative Council (SAC)** under the chairmanship of J&K Governor Satya Pal Malik approved a proposal for treating Jammu and Kashmir Bank (J&K Bank) Ltd. as a public sector undertaking.
- Thus, it will be accountable to the state legislature and the Finance Department will be required to place the bank's annual report before the Assembly.
- The SAC also approved a proposal that provisions of the **J&K Right to Information Act, 2009**, shall be applicable to the bank just like other state-owned undertakings. It will have to follow guidelines of the **Central Vigilance Commission**.

About J&K Bank

- **Introduction:** It was incorporated on October 1, 1938 as a limited liability company to offer banking facilities in the state. The bank is licensed as an old private-sector bank under **Section 22 of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949**.
- **Registered as a state government company:** Classified as a state government company, it is registered with Registrar of Companies, Jammu. It launched a public issue in 1998 and is listed on both the Bombay and National stock exchanges. While RBI as the regulator supervises J&K Bank, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) audits the books of banks.
- **Unique feature:** It is the only bank in India in which a state government holds a **majority stake (59.3%)**, but is not considered as a PSU. In all public sector banks, the majority stake is held by the Centre. As per the **Banking Companies (Acquisition & Transfer of Undertakings) Act**, the central government holding in public-sector banks **cannot drop below 51%**. This unique status needs to be seen in the context of **Article 370** of the Constitution, which gives special autonomous status to the state of Jammu & Kashmir.
- **Important function:** J&K Bank is the largest employer among all state-promoted entities. Among the 10 PSUs out of 30 that earned profit, J&K Bank accounted for Rs 416 crore (50% of the total profits of all PSUs). Till 2011, J&K Bank was the sole banker to the state government. In fact, **akin to RBI** for all other states and the Centre, J&K Bank was the **lender of last resort in the state**. Thus, the bank performed the role of a commercial bank, a developmental financial institution, financial services provider as well as a central bank.
- **Loss of status:** It lost some of this status in **April 2011**, when Omar Abdullah was Chief Minister; the state government gave RBI the mandate to carry out general banking business of the state and be the sole agent for investment of state funds.

Reason For The Said Move

- **Enhancing public trust:** The State government holds a majority stake of 59.3% in J&K Bank. A need was felt that it should have the character of a PSU, which is subject to general supervision and access for enhanced transparency in transaction of business to promote public trust.
- **Promoting good governance:** Extension of the RTI Act and CVC guidelines is only aimed at promoting good governance and transparency in the functioning of the bank.
- **Non-interference:** The purpose of the SAC decision is not to question the day to day activities of the bank management but a step towards strengthening better corporate governance.
- **Corporate governance issues:** There were complaints that the bank was not responding to RBI queries on time and its internal checks and balances had weakened.

Challenges

- **A part of Union list:** *Prima facie*, given the existing laws, treating J&K Bank as a PSU faces a couple of obstacles. According to **Article 246** of the **Seventh Schedule**, banking as a subject comes under the **Union list**.
- **RBI purview not state governments:** Changing its character to that of a J&K PSU will be akin to empowering the state to have powers over banking. According to provisions of the Banking Regulations Act, applicable to Jammu & Kashmir since 1956, J&K Bank is licensed as an old private-sector bank and comes under the regulatory purview and supervision of RBI. Making it a PSU and bringing it under state legislature could be seen as being in contravention to these provisions.
- **Possible challenge by minority shareholders:** As on December 31, 2017, in J&K bank, foreign portfolio investors and foreign institutional investors held 15.98%, Indian mutual funds 4.98%, Indian residents 12.69 per cent, insurance companies 2.76%, and NRIs a little less than 1%. The move to treat it like a PSU could be challenged by the minority shareholders and they may even exit, leading to a fall in share prices.
- **Other criticism:** The Governor, who is a caretaker administrator did not have the people's mandate to take such major decisions with far-reaching implications. Moreover, the timing of the move, when there is no elected government in place, and particularly a day after the Assembly was dissolved, has also been questioned.
- **Fear of political interference:** J&K Bank has an emotional connect with people in the state. In existence even before Independence, it has been a part of their lives for generations. Once it becomes a PSU, there are concerns that it will be open to interference by the political executive on not just recruitment, but also lending and loan settlement.

Way forward

The right approach would have been to bolster the corporate governance framework, such as strengthening the audit board and getting better professionals.

RBI's Monetary Policy Review

Syllabus: Indian Economy and Issues relating to mobilization of resources.

In News

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) kept key policy rates unchanged as inflation eased significantly and pushed for steps to boost loan offtake while signalling that there is no liquidity crunch in the non-banking financial sector, obviating the need for opening up the tap for the sector immediately.

RBI Policy Instance

- **Maintained Repo rate:** While keeping the Repo rate (the rate at which RBI lends funds) steady at **6.50 per cent**, the central bank has decided to maintain the stance of calibrated tightening.
- **Reduction in SLR requirement:** The central bank also slashed the statutory liquidity ratio *i.e.* mandatory investment in government bonds by **150 basis points to 18 per cent** of total deposits over the next six quarters starting from January 2019.
- **Easing inflation concerns:** The RBI Governor said that the inflation projections have been revised downwards significantly and some of the risks have been mitigated, especially of crude oil prices. Therefore, the central bank also cut its inflation projection to 2.7-3.2 percent by March 2018 from its earlier view of 3.9-4.5 per cent.

- **Risk of inflation:** However, it also forecast inflation picking up again to 3.8-4.2 per cent in the first half of fiscal 2019-20, with risks tilted to the upside as several uncertainties still cloud the inflation outlook.
- **Growth projections:** The RBI retained the GDP growth to 7.4 per cent for the year 2018-19 even as the government last week announced that the growth slowed down to 7.1 per cent year on year in the second quarter of 2018-19, after four consecutive quarters of acceleration.

Bidders To Face Jail Term For Backing Out Of Insolvency Process

Syllabus: Indian Economy and Issues relating to mobilization of resources.

In News

- **Introduction:** The government and the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) are looking at using provisions of the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code (IBC) against Liberty House and other companies, which have gone back on their plans to take over companies through the resolution process and derailing the entire process.
- **Example of company's withdrawal:** The plan could include **Adani Wilmar**, which pulled out of a deal to buy Ruchi Soya after the committee of creditors backed it. **Liberty House** has backed off from the resolution process of Adhunik Metals and Amtek Auto, citing various issues.
- **Section 74, IBC:** Lenders are also looking to invoke **Section 74** of the IBC against Liberty House, which provides for a penalty and a possible jail term.
- **Planned provision:** Apart from invoking Section 74 of the IBC, the government is also looking for imposition of a maximum **Rs. 1 crore penalty**.



Banks Request For Deposit Up To 1% Of Loan Amount From Bidders Going In Appeal

Syllabus: Indian Economy and Issues relating to mobilization of resources.

In News

- There have been several delays in the resolution of stressed assets due to repeated appeals by bidders under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC). To curb this, banks have requested the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) to introduce deterrent provisions in IBC rules.
- This suggestion comes in the backdrop of recent cases where some bidders, to put a spoke in a rival's acquisition plans, went on appeal after the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) declared the rival as the successful bidder for a stressed asset. There have also been cases of promoters of stressed companies opting for an appeal after the NCLT's announcement of the successful bidder.

Suggestion By The Bankers

- **Rationale:** Where bank claims amounting to about Rs. 50,000 crore have been admitted by the NCLT, a delay in resolution can cost the lenders almost Rs. 14 crore a day in foregone interest. Further, resolution of stressed assets within the IBC timelines is important so that lenders can write back the provisions, strengthen the capital adequacy and lend to other assets.

- **Data in support:** ICRA, in a report said lenders to the **12 large companies** in RBI's initial list of June 2017, which were referred to NCLT are estimated to have lost out on about Rs. **4,000 crore** in additional income due to the delays in the resolution process beyond the **270 days period**. (There is a 270 day timeframe within which the resolution process is required to be completed under IBC.)



- **Security deposit:** The banks have suggested that bidders should be asked to cough up **0.5-1 per cent of the loan** owed by a company undergoing resolution as a deposit with the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) each time they go on appeal.
- **Cues from DRAT appeals:** The **deposit to make an appeal** suggestion probably stems from such a provision in the **Recovery of Debts Due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993. Section 21** of this Act says that where an appeal is made by any person from whom debt is due to a lender, it shall not be entertained by the **Debt Recovery Appellate Tribunal (DRAT)** unless the person has deposited with the Tribunal **75 per cent** of the amount of debt due from him.
- **Deterrence:** If the requirement of putting money on the table is incorporated in the IBC rules, it will deter repeated appeals by some bidders and promoters of stressed companies who are bent on delaying or derailing the resolution process. If the appeal is successful, the deposit will get adjusted towards the settlement of dues of the company being acquired. Otherwise, it will get forfeited. Such a provision will deter the tendency to appeal at the drop of a hat.

Bimal Jalan Panel on RBI Reserves

Syllabus: Indian Economy and Issues relating to mobilization of resources.

In News

- **Introduction:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has formed an expert committee under former governor **Bimal Jalan (Committee on Economic Capital Framework)** to decide the appropriate level of reserves that the regulator should hold. This comes more than a month after the bank's central board proposed the panel's formation following a dispute between then governor Urjit Patel and the government over that and various other issues, which eventually led to his departure.
- **Panel members:** The **six member panel** has former deputy RBI governor Rakesh Mohan as its vice chairman and comprises economic affairs secretary Subhash Chandra Garg, RBI central board members Bharat Doshi and Sudhir Mankad and deputy governor NS Vishwanathan.
- **Function of the committee:** It will review the need and justification of various provisions, reserves and buffers that RBI has maintained for contingency purposes and suggest an adequate level of risk provisioning. The committee will also propose a suitable profits distribution policy taking into account all the likely situations of the RBI, including the situations of holding more provisions than required and the RBI holding less provisions than required.
- **Final analysis:** Any decision should be taken keeping in mind RBI's long-term view for all periods, including high growth, low growth, forex inflows and outflows and have forethought in approaching the reserves matter.

Issue About GDP Back Series Data

Syllabus: Indian Economy and Issues relating to growth.

In News

Three years after the shift to the **new base year of 2011-12**, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and NITI Aayog, released the back series detailing growth numbers for 2005-06 to 2011-12. The re-estimation of the GDP using 2011-12 as the base year lowers the average growth during UPA regime from previous estimates while growth during NDA is pegged higher than during UPA.

Background/ Need For The Back Series

- **Lack of MCA-21 data:** When the CSO moved to a new base year of 2011-12 for national accounts in January 2015, it was faced with a peculiar situation. The CSO faced issues in evaluating GDP with the new base year for years preceding 2011-12 due to lack of availability of the **MCA-21 database**.
- **About MCA-21:** MCA-21, an e-governance initiative of the **Ministry of Company Affairs** was launched in 2006, to allow firms to electronically file their financial results.



- **Three changes for GDP calculation:** Three changes that have occurred in the revision that was first announced in 2015: **first**, in the base year (the use of 2011-12 base year from 2004-05); **second**, in the methodology from **GDP at factor cost to GDP at market price** (this is the international norm and the basis of the current government’s claim that this is what CSO has followed) and **third**, in the method of estimating company output/revenue, which has been done in a much more detailed manner using new data collected by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA 21) in addition to the **volume index of Index of Industrial Production (IIP)** and **establishment based dataset of Annual Survey of Industries (ASI)**.

Finding Of The Newly Released Back Series Data

- **Lowering of the growth rate:** The back series released has trimmed the growth numbers for the UPA government’s nine years (2005-06 to 2013-14), with the Indian economy growing at an **average 6.7%** in four years of the UPA’s first term (2005-06 to 2008-09) as well as the UPA’s second term (2009-10 to 2013-14), which are lower than the earlier estimates of 8.1% and 7.0% (2004-05 base) respectively.
- **Increase in growth during 2014-18:** These growth rates compare with an average 7.4% growth rate (2011-12 base year) seen during the first four years of the present NDA government.

Positive Features About The New Series Data

- **Wide coverage:** The new method is statistically more robust as it tries to relate the estimates to more indicators such as **consumption, employment and the performance of enterprises** and also incorporates factors that are more responsive to current changes, unlike the old series that usually took 2-3 years to register an underlying change.
- **A regular exercise:** Backcasting or reworking past national accounts statistics based on the latest base year, is a regular exercise that governments carry out. Mainly done to enable precise comparison and analysis, it is a difficult exercise prone to contestation as it involves the inclusion of newer data sources, exclusion of outdated ones and making some subjective assumptions in the process.

- **Expert driven calculation of data:** Any criticism of the data has to take into account the fact that it has been generated by a thoroughly professional organisation, the CSO and the methods have been scrutinised by experts, including past chief statisticians and the Advisory Committee on National Accounts Statistics.
- **International accepted methodology:** The method of computation reflects the latest **United Nations System of National Accounts**. The use of the gross value added in the new series data instead of gross domestic product at factor cost is internationally accepted norm. Moreover, it make India's GDP data globally comparable.

The Grey Areas

- **Conflict in GDP findings:** Three months ago, the **Committee on Real Sector Statistics** submitted its report to the **National Statistical Commission (NSC)** offering an alternative. It stated that the economy grew at a faster pace under the UPA government from 2004-05 to 2013-14, compared with the average growth during the first four years of the current government. The average GDP at market prices was 8.37% during UPA-I (2004-05 to 2008-09), and 7.69% during UPA-II (2009-10 to 2013-14). The government had, at that time, termed the estimates as unofficial.
- **Not enough explanation for use of particular database:** There is not enough explanation for the choice of datasets and proxies, especially those datasets that didn't exist before 2011-12. Though the CSO release mentioned usage of several proxies, there were no details about why those were selected over other datasets. For instance, for years preceding 2006, when the MCA-21 database did not exist, the CSO has used ASI data for estimating manufacturing growth whereas economists say there could have been other indicators for the same metric.
- **Role of NITI Aayog:** The role of the NITI Aayog in the release of the statistical exercise of CSO, which comes under **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)**, has also been questioned as it brought political considerations into the fray.
- **Use of volume data:** Also, the use of volume data for calculation of the back series, which could have potentially underestimated growth, has been questioned by the economists. The big difference between the **volume index approach** and the **financial data approach** is that the financial data captures changes in quality which the volume approach does not. So if a substantial part of the growth has been coming from quality, then if one take the volume approach he would underestimate the growth.
- **Consonance with other data:** The high growth as evidenced by the new series data is not in consonance with the slowing growth trends in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP). Slower industrial production recently is also suggested by other indicators. In no year between 2004-05 and 2013-14 did bank credit grow less than 14% (range 14.1 to 37%). Moreover, since then, in no year has bank credit grown faster than 10.9% (range 8.2% to 13.9%). **Plant load factor (PLF**, or the ratio of actual energy produced to maximum possible energy that could have been produced) averaged 68.5% from 2004-05 to 2013-14. By contrast, the PLF from 2014-15 to 2017-18 has been 57%. Moreover, it is the much lower job growth in the non-agricultural sector that really shows the difference in the real economy.

Final Analysis

- It cannot be denied that this government has managed to bring a section of the informal economy into the formal fold. As a result, the share of organised private sector output has increased in relation to the informal sector, reducing inaccurate estimates for the latter. It is, hence, plausible, as the new series suggests, that the size of the service sector economy was overstated in the past.

- Moreover, India's economic statistics have been considered reliable, more so than China's. While the Centre is right in arguing that changes in methodology are required to align India's systems with global standards, frequent chopping and changing of data, cannot do India's image much good.
- Further, a basic question that remains unaddressed is why a change in base year should sharply affect GDP growth rates, when it should, in principle, only alter absolute GDP levels. A consistent application of either the MCA or ASI database should not lead to a swings in industry growth rates. The CSO and NITI Aayog need to look into such issues.
- There is little doubt that India needs to invest more in data collection and integration and do informal sector surveys more frequently. Robust, updated data are, in fact, insurance against politicians hijacking what is essentially an economic exercise. Thus, the issue of data unreliability must be seriously addressed as decision making in a modern economy is increasingly data dependent.

ILO's Global Wage Report 2018

Syllabus: Indian Economy and Issues relating to employment.

In News

The International Labour Organisation has released Global Wage Report 2018-19. It puts into sharp relief one of the biggest drags on global economic momentum - slowing wage growth.

Report Findings

- Global wage growth in real terms (adjusted for price inflation) in 2017 fell to its lowest rate since 2008 – to 1.8% in 2017 from 2.4% in 2016 - far below levels before the global financial crisis. The findings are based on data from 136 countries.
- In advanced G20 countries, real wage growth declined from 0.9 per cent in 2016 to 0.4 per cent in 2017. By contrast, in emerging and developing G20 countries, real wage growth fluctuated between 4.9 per cent in 2016 and 4.3 per cent in 2017.
- In the last 20 years, average real wages have almost tripled in emerging and developing G20 countries, while in advanced G20 countries they have increased by just 9 per cent. But, in many low- and middle-income economies, wage inequality remains high and wages are frequently insufficient to cover the needs of workers and their families.
- The report observes that the acceleration of economic growth in high-income countries in 2017 was led mainly by **higher investment spending rather than by private consumption**.
- The **intensification of competition in the wake of globalisation**, accompanied by a worldwide decline in the bargaining power of workers, has **resulted in a decoupling between wages and labour productivity**.
- The obvious impact of this low pace has been on global economic growth with consumption demand hurt by restrained spending by wage-earners.

Gender Pay Gap

- The report finds that globally women continue to be paid approximately 20 % less than men.
- In high-income countries, it is at the high end of the pay scale where the gender pay gap is wider; while in low- and middle-income countries, the gender pay gap is wider amongst the lower paid workers.
- Using empirical evidence, the report also shows that traditional explanations such as **differences in the levels of education between men and women, who work in paid employment**, play a

limited role in explaining gender pay gaps. In many countries, women are more highly educated than men but earn lower wages, even when they work in the same occupational categories

- Another factor which weighs on the gender wage gap is **motherhood**. **Mothers tend to have lower wages compared to non-mothers**. This may be related to a host of factors, including labour market interruptions, reductions in working time, employment in more family-friendly jobs with lower wages, or stereotypical promotion decisions at enterprise level.
- The **lack of programmes supporting women's return to work after childbirth** also contributes to the wage penalty that women face when resuming work after a prolonged period of absence from the labour market.

Way Forward

- The report **emphasizes the importance of good data and highlights the need in many countries for better data** on the distribution of wages. In particular, low- and middle-income countries have very limited statistics on the average wages of women and men.
- Further, it recommends **going beyond summary measures to inspect in more detail the respective wage structures of women and men**, analyse gender pay gaps in more homogeneous subgroups of wage earners and calculate factor-weighted gender pay gaps which control for some of the major composition effects.
- Countries should also look into possible ways to address the undervaluing of women's work in highly feminized occupations and industries, including by raising wages in the latter. Eliminating this bias is not only a way to narrow the gender pay gap directly, it is also a condition to reducing occupational segregation, for example by attracting more men into the education and health sectors
- **More equitable sharing of family duties between women and men**, as well as adequate childcare and eldercare services, would in many instances lead to women making different occupational choices. Adequate company policies on flexible working-time arrangements would also help.
- Accelerating progress will **require both political commitment and social transformation**. While public policies to enhance education, labour and social protection, and to improve social infrastructure, are necessary to close the gender pay gap, their effectiveness depends at least in part on shifting social norms and gender stereotypes.
- Hence measures to reduce or eliminate gender pay gaps **should be embedded in a broader overall gender equality policy**.

Tax on Angel investment

Syllabus: Government Budgeting.

In News

- Many tax laws in India seem to be framed on the premise that every citizen is guilty of tax evasion unless he proves otherwise. The **angel tax provisions** contained in **Section 56(2) of the Income Tax Act** fall squarely in this category.
- The levy is back in the news after scores of domestic start-ups have complained about tax notices. The Centre has now gone into damage-control mode, promising that angel tax demands would not be raised on genuine start-ups and coercive measures would be in abeyance, while an expert committee reviews these rules.

About The Provision

- Meaning of Angel tax:** Angel tax is a term used to refer to the income tax payable on capital raised by unlisted companies *via* issue of shares where the share price is seen in excess of the fair market value of the shares sold. Thus, the section states that when any closely-held company issues shares to domestic investors at a price higher than its fair market value, the excess must be characterised as other income and taxed at **30 per cent**. The tax was introduced in the 2012 to **arrest laundering of funds**. It has come to be called angel tax since it largely impacts angel investments in start-ups.



- FMP determination:** Fair market value is to be determined only through book value or discounted cash flow methods, failing which the assessing officer must be satisfied with it.

The View Against Such Tax

- Not conducive:** In a country like India that relies so heavily on its start-up ecosystem to innovate, create jobs and drive the next leg of economic growth, it is a moot question why a tax on angel investments must even exist in the first place.
- No profit generation:** Further, treating the equity capital received by a business as income for tax purposes is plainly wrong, as accounting income arises only when the business uses this capital to create a product which yields a profit.
- Issue of valuation:** The share issued to an investor has to be valued to decide whether the price is in excess of fair value. The industry has demanded that the discounted cash flow (DCF) method of valuation be used to calculate angel tax instead of the net asset value (NAV) method, though even that may not capture the true value of a start-up. The valuation of a start-up is usually based on a commercial negotiation between the company and the investor. However, since start-ups operate in a highly uncertain environment, many companies are not always able to perform as per their financial projection. Equally, some companies exceed the projection by a long mile if they are doing well.
- Fear of misuse:** Further, the valuation of a business is an issue best left to a venture and its investors. Expecting new-age start-ups to use textbook valuation methods and seek their assessing officer's blessings every time they raise funds is draconian and opens the doors to misuse.
- Relocation of start-ups:** This tax on domestic investors gives home grown start-ups every incentive to offshore their holding company and source capital through circuitous routes to subvert this rule.
- Problem with the conditions:** For start-ups to get exemption from this tax, they are required to jump through multiple hoops. The government issued a notification in April 2018 to give exemption to start-ups under Section 56 of the Income Tax Act, where the total investment including funding from angel investors did not exceed **Rs. 10 crore**. The investor is also required to have a minimum returned income of **Rs. 25 lakh** or **net worth of Rs. 2 crore** and the start-up needs to meet the DIPP's definition of an innovative start-up. The final approval for the tax exemption is to be given by an **Inter-Ministerial board**. Given this battery of conditions, it is no surprise that **only two start-ups have so far qualified**.

Final Analysis

Overall, the angel tax provisions make a mockery of the government's thrust on Start Up India, Stand Up India and ease of doing business. It is ironic that while developed economies in the Euro zone and the US woo angel investors with tax rebates and capital gains tax exemptions, India should be tying such investors and the ventures they bet on, in swathes of red tape.

Lowering of GST Rates

Syllabus: Government Budgeting.

In News

- **Introduction:** The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council cut the rates on **17 items and six types of services** during its **31st meeting**, leaving only one common use item *i.e.* cement in the 28% bracket.
- **Slashing of the GST rates:** Seven items that saw tax rates being slashed from the 28% bracket are certain vehicle parts used in agriculture, monitors and TVs up to 32 inches, retreaded tyres, power banks, digital cameras, videogame consoles (all from 28% to 18%) and parts and accessories for the carriages for disabled persons (from 28% to 5%). The GST rate on cinema tickets above Rs. 100 was cut from 28% to 18% and on tickets up to Rs. 100 from 18% to 12%.
- **Single appellate panel:** The GST Council took decision aimed at putting to rest a large part of the confusion surrounding the applicability of the tax. At the moment, each State has an **Advance Ruling Authority (ARAs)** that can issue a ruling on any issue pertaining to GST rates and their applicability. Often, different ARAs deliver conflicting judgements. The GST Council has decided to create a Centralised ARA that will provide a ruling in such cases.

Analysis Of The Decision

- **Trend:** The reductions show two clear trends *i.e.* a number of goods and services are being pushed into lower category of tax slabs and the **peak rate of 28%** is on its way to being rendered almost irrelevant.
- **Rate cut post revenue stabilization:** It also indicates that the process of rate rationalisation would continue where necessary in the GST stabilisation phase.
- **Rate prior to GST:** With this round of rate reductions, the GST rates on virtually every product is lower or equal to the indirect tax impact prior to GST.
- **Improve compliance:** Worries that a reduction in the number of items in the 28% slab would lead to a significant dent in collections are misplaced. Lower rates will improve compliance. It will boost not just GST collections but also revenues in direct taxes as the levy creates multiple audit trails in the income and production chain that have the potential to tap untaxed income.

COMPLETE LIST OF GST RATE CUTS		
<p>28% to 18%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Pulleys, transmission shafts and cranks, gear boxes etc., falling under HS Code 8483 > Monitors and TVs of up to screen size of 32 inches > Re-treaded or used pneumatic tyres of rubber > Power banks of lithium-ion batteries. Lithium-ion batteries are already at 18%. This will bring parity in GST rate of power bank and lithium-ion battery > Digital cameras and video 	<p>camera recorders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Video game consoles and other games and sports requisites falling under HS code 9504 <p>28% to 5%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Parts and accessories for the carriages for disabled people <p>18% to 12%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Cork roughly squared or debagged > Articles of natural cork > Agglomerated cork <p>12% to 5%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Natural cork > Walking stick > Fly ash blocks 	<p>5% to Nil</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Vegetables (uncooked or cooked by steaming or boiling), frozen, branded and put in a unit container > Vegetable provisionally preserved (for example by sulphur dioxide gas, in brine, in sulphur water or in other preservative solutions), but unsuitable in that state for quick consumption <p>GST on solar power generating plant and other renewable energy plants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > GST rate of 5% rate has been prescribed on renewable energy devices & parts for their manufacture (bio gas plant/solar power based devices, solar power generating system (SGPS) etc) (falling under chapter 84, 85 or 94 of the tariff). Other goods or services used in these plants attract applicable GST
REDUCTION IN GST RATES/EXEMPTIONS ON SERVICES		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > GST rate on cinema tickets above ₹100 shall be reduced from 28% to 18% and on cinema tickets up to ₹100 from 18% to 12% > GST rate on third-party insurance premium of goods carrying vehicles shall be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reduced from 18% to 12% > Services supplied by banks to Basic Saving Bank Deposit (BSBD) account holders under Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) shall be exempted > Air travel of pilgrims 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> by non-scheduled/charter operations, for religious pilgrimage facilitated by the Government of India under bilateral arrangements shall attract the same rate of GST as applicable to similar flights in economy class (i.e. 5%)

- **Reduced burden on common people:** The changes are welcome and are an important step in reducing the indirect tax burden on people. Once the latest reductions take effect, it would mean the Council has reduced the rates on nearly 360 items since GST was rolled out.
- **Fiscal implication:** The revenue impact of the rate cuts over the full fiscal year would be **Rs. 5,500 crore**.
- **Removal of confusion:** The Centralized Appellate Authority would aid in resolving the worries of taxpayers present pan-India in cases of varied rulings in different states.

Final Analysis

- The GST Council deserves praise for being consistent in its attempt over 18 months to iron out flaws in GST architecture. Lower taxes, in fact, will help the economy improve, thereby boosting revenues in the long run. GST Council should proceed on this path to compress the number of tax slabs and make the system simpler.
- Further, a comprehensive GST calls for widening the base to include sectors such as petroleum, real estate and electricity, to raise transparency within the sectors in those that use them as inputs. It will complete the credit chain and make production more efficient.
- The dispute resolution mechanism needs to be strengthened, given the contrary advance rulings in different states. An **audit manual** to ensure uniform practices across states also makes eminent sense.
- But at the same time the frequent tweaks to the structure and an impression that rates can be altered by lobbying the powers-that-be, risk ruining the promise the GST held for investors wary of India: a predictable, simple and stable tax regime.

Revamping India's Customs Architecture

Syllabus: Effects of liberalization on economy

In News

- After rolling out the most comprehensive indirect tax reform *i.e.* the goods and services tax the government is set to unleash the next generation of changes to the customs duty architecture to speed up India's trade and improve the ease of doing business.
- The purpose is to work towards getting into the **top 50 ranking** of the **World Bank's Ease of Doing Business**. In the **'trading across borders'** category, India leapt to **80th rank from 146th**.
- Already as part of the **National trade facilitation programme**, the cabinet secretary has written to ports to streamline their infrastructure for smooth and speedier cargo movement. Port IT systems are being integrated with the customs portal.

Proposed Changes

- **Introduction:** It seek to do away with face to face contact with tax officials, automate the release of goods and ensure e-traceability of shipments, measures that can substantially reduce corruption and allow faster movement of merchandise.
- **Faceless interface:** The proposed faceless assessment is a situation where the goods landing at some port can be assessed in other places and shipments in one category, say motorcars, can be assessed at one location, allowing

Customised Reforms
CBIC moves to ease trade, improve ease of doing business

Faceless assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goods in one port can be assessed at another place Goods of one category can be assessed at one location System can be used for automated release of cargo 	Ease of business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanding E-Sanchit facility to exporters Providing seamless & paperless experience to exporters Port IT systems being integrated with customs portal
Tax Refunds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of data analytics to check attempts to evade GST 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 95% of I-GST refunds of ₹47,161 crore disposed of 96% of input tax credit refunds cleared

We want to go in for something which will be radically different from what we have been doing
S. Ramesh, CBIC chief

development of specialisation and expertise. Thus, it will not require physically get in touch with the local customs.

- **Automated release of cargo:** The faceless interface would also be used for automated release of cargo, which will allow an importer or an agent to receive an email or an SMS alert that the goods are ready for collection, without having to interact with any customs officer at the port. This would be done for low risk and trusted traders and low risk commodities.
- **Online uploading:** The Custom department also proposes to expand the **E-Sanchit facility**, which allows importers to upload all documents online to exporters.
- **Collaboration:** The government also plans to bring **export promotion councils** and the **Directorate General of Foreign Trade** on board the customs portal to make the whole experience seamless and paperless for exporters.

Impact

- **Overall benefits:** These are some of the best practices of the **World Customs Organisation** and the scope for rent seeking will absolutely vanish and speed of clearance will go up manifold. It will also lower the costs, improve business efficiency and shore up revenues for the government.
- **Benefits of centralisation:** For starters, assessments of import consignments will be centralised. It is an established principle that centralisation of assessment improves efficiency and reduces disputes over product categorisation. The idea is also to ensure that the same product is given the same tax treatment across locations. Incorrect classification also results in revenue losses for government.
- **Removal of arbitrariness:** The proposed changes also involve doing away with face to face interaction between tax officials and importers. This will end the scope for arbitrariness and rent-seeking opportunities. There is a need to move away from physical checks to electronic filings and riskbased physical checks of goods.

Final Analysis

- India is a signatory to **WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement** for cross border commerce in goods and has also improved its ranking to 80th in the 'trading across borders' category of the World Bank's Doing Business (DB) rankings. But there is no room for complacency.
- The time-release study 2018 showed that the average time taken to clear import consignments stood at around **144 hours in 2018**, compared to the **target of 72 hours** proposed in the National Trade Facilitation Action Plan. Similarly, the average time taken to clear export consignment is **about 84 hours**, against the target of **48 hours**.
- Further, India's customs officials need intensive training to implement these reforms. In the mid-term, India should also restart the reform to lower peak customs to 7% from 10%, instead of raising tariff walls that breed domestic inefficiency.

Review of FDI Press Note for E-commerce Sector

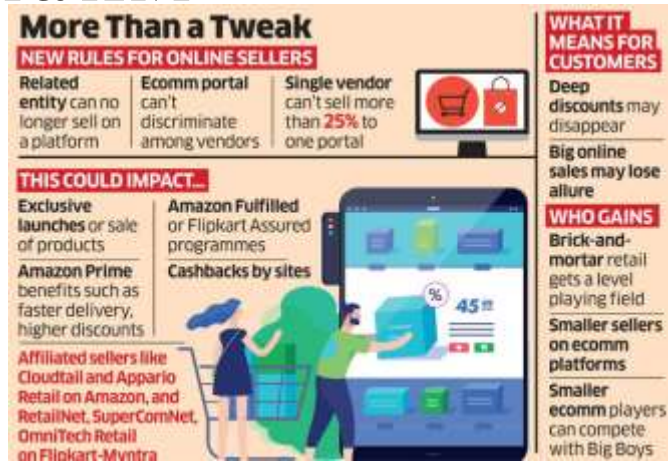
Syllabus: Effects of liberalization on economy

In News

In a major jolt to Walmart and Amazon, the government announced changes to the foreign direct investment policy for the e-commerce sector. The new norms will come into effect from **February 1, 2019**.

Background

- **2017 Policy:** The 2017 Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Policy Circular clearly stated that 100% FDI under an automatic route is permitted only in the **e-commerce marketplace model** and not in the **inventory-based one**. Earlier, even though the e-commerce companies called themselves the marketplace but many of them were actually dependent on inventory-based sales for a sizeable part of their businesses.
- **Meaning of different models:** Further, as per the 2017 policy, the **inventory-based model** of e-commerce is when the inventory of goods and services is owned by the e-commerce entity and sold to consumers directly. The **marketplace model** is when an e-commerce company simply provides an information technology platform in order to act as a facilitator between the buyer and the seller. Further, the sales value for one vendor or their group companies, was restricted to **25% of sales value a year**. But as it turned out, companies like Amazon and Flipkart found a way around these restrictions by setting up multiple entities through which sales on their platform could be routed.
- **Flipkart deal:** The noise around this started to amplify post the Flipkart-Walmart deal. There was a feeling that small and medium-sized sellers and traders were hurt and were crowded out on the big ecommerce sites. Further, Policy makers believe that despite drafting the regulations announced through **Press Note 3**, they were being circumvented.



Provisions Under New Press Note

- **Control over inventory:** The e-commerce marketplace entities cannot exercise ownership or control over inventory. Further, it says that the inventory of a vendor will be deemed to be controlled by ecommerce marketplace entity if more than **25% of purchases** of such vendor are from the marketplace entity or its group companies. This will prevent any brand or supplier aligning exclusively with one marketplace, as is usually the case with mobiles or white goods. Thus, the new FDI rules state that an online marketplace cannot sell products from a vendor in which they have a stake.
- **Ban on selling at platforms:** The new guidelines explicitly state that an entity having equity participation by e-commerce marketplace entity or its group companies will not be permitted to sell its products on the platform run by such a marketplace entity. The wording of the clause is clearly meant to plug the loopholes of the earlier policy.
- **Ban on exclusivity clause:** The new policy also specifies that an e-commerce marketplace entity will not mandate any seller to sell any product exclusively on its platform only. The intention of this clause is to ensure that the e-commerce marketplace player doesn't arm twist a vendor into exclusive arrangements.
- **Prevent preferential treatment:** The e-commerce marketplaces or entities in which they have direct or indirect equity participation or shared control have to provide services to vendors on the platform at arm's length and in a fair and non-discriminatory manner. This could put to an end selective promotional schemes such as cashbacks or faster delivery, which will be deemed unfair and discriminatory under the new policy. Thus, the policy also prohibits e-commerce platforms from giving any preferential treatment to any supplier.

- **Cashback offers:** The guidelines state that cashbacks provided by group companies of the ecommerce entity should be **fair and non-discriminatory**, adding that providing a service to any vendor in terms of cashbacks should be made available to other vendors in similar circumstances.
- **Submission of certificate:** Besides e-commerce marketplace entity will also be now required to furnish a certificate along with a report of statutory auditor to Reserve Bank of India, confirming compliance of all the guidelines by **September 30 every year** for the preceding financial year.

Positive Impact

- **Remove confusion:** The measures will wipe out confusion and the communication gap in the e-commerce policy and will further promote investment into the sector.
- **Plugging loopholes:** The updated norms for foreign direct investment in ecommerce will not impact the stability and predictability of the country's regulatory environment as there is no change in law and it merely plug the loopholes in the current law.
- **Solve the long pending grievance:** India's retailers have repeatedly complained that e-commerce companies were violating the ban on **business to consumer (B2C) e-commerce**. The current policy allows 100% FDI under the automatic route in **business-to-business (B2B) e-commerce** but prohibits any foreign investment in B2C ecommerce.
- **Better implementation:** The changes were aimed at better enforcement of the policy as enunciated by **Press Note 3 of 2016**, which had banned FDI in the inventory model of ecommerce and laid down the conditions for ecommerce marketplaces. FDI is only allowed in the marketplace model, offering a platform for vendors to sell to customers.
- **Fair competition:** The move to tighten the noose around major e-commerce players will culminate into a fair market competition.
- **Help local players:** The norms, will help protect domestic players such as Reliance that are eyeing a share of the e-commerce market in the country. Thus, Indian companies would get opportunities similar to what Chinese companies had received initially, which led to the building of Chinese giants such as **Alibaba, Tencent, and JD**.

Negative Impact

- **Abrupt policy change:** The move has rattled top global retailers such as Walmart and Amazon, who have made significant investments in the country, as they grapple with the abrupt policy change and jobs in the sector could also be at risk. Further, this is detrimental to the concept of ease of doing business.
- **Not possible to offer consumer friendly initiatives:** The key differentiators such as online exclusive brands, cashbacks and priority deliveries, among others, may not be possible anymore. As the cashback offer will become expensive to execute for platforms, especially in terms of providing logistics and wallet services that have to be made equally available to all vendors.
- **Difficulty in implementing exclusivity clause:** The ban on exclusivity may be difficult to implement where a seller wants exclusivity. Further, once there is an exclusive arrangement, it is difficult to judge if this was mandated by the marketplace entity or the seller.
- **Difficulty in monitoring:** Some of the changes are prescriptive and can be difficult to monitor, especially for small and mid-size ecommerce players.
- **Impact on private label:** For Flipkart and Amazon, private labels (the product brand owned by e-commerce companies themselves and sold on online platform) contribute around **10% of the business** and is growing as a category with a wider assortment and attractive price points as these marketplaces control the full spectrum *i.e.* from contract manufacturing to logistics and pricing. But

with new norms, the in-house brands may face the heat. **For example-** Amazon's in-house brands include Symbol, Mix, Amazon Basics. Flipkart has SmartBuy, MarQ, Perfect Homes. Over the past two years, these companies have been investing in the private label business to reduce dependence on third-party brands, so that they have a better negotiating power with other brands.

- **No justification for banning private labels:** It is hard to justify why online stores should not be allowed to display their own labels, when offline ones are allowed to do so.
- **Guidelines are discriminatory:** Since such restrictions do not apply to brick-and-mortar sales, the guidelines are discriminatory against e-commerce.

Way forward

- The best way to do that in the age of globally mobile capital is to allow shares with **differential voting rights**, not to carve out sanctuaries of protection within an economic sector. The Centre should also promote easy access to finance. Thus, allowing online start-ups to retain control in the face of expansion and capital infusion.
- Moreover, the policy goes against the government's initial assurance of minimum government, maximum governance. As for anti-competitive practices such as deep discounts, the marketplace can provide its own checks and balances. The **Competition Commission of India** can step in to check such practices.
- Further, there is a need to have a policy on e-commerce, which will give a road map for what the private sector and the government want.

Agriculture

Need For Climate Smart Agriculture

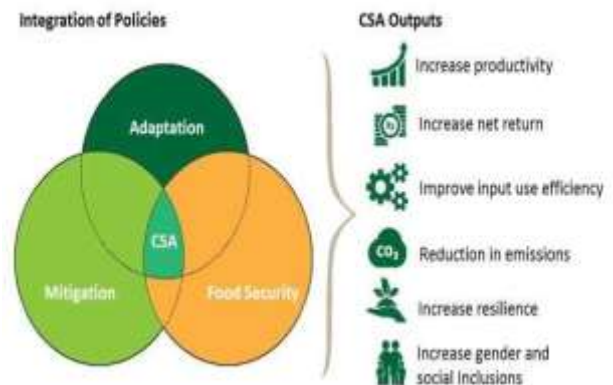
Syllabus: Major crops and cropping patterns in various parts of the country

In News

- The pervasiveness of climatic aberrations and the associated socio-economic vulnerability are now widely recognised and experienced across the globe.
- The **Sixth Assessment Report** by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on Global Warming at **1.5°C** distinctly propagates the need to strengthen and enhance existing coping capacity and to remain committed to the objectives of the **Paris Agreement**.

Impact Of Climate Change On Agriculture

- **Increased vulnerability:** With increasing global warming and consequent changes in climate has made indigenous populations and local communities dependent on agricultural or coastal livelihoods very vulnerable to the climate impacts.
- **India particularly vulnerable:** India, with its diverse agro-climatic settings, is one of the most vulnerable countries. Its agriculture ecosystem, distinguished by high monsoon dependence and with **85% small and marginal landholdings** is highly sensitive to weather abnormalities.
- **Direct impact on agriculture:** Research is also confirming an escalation in heat waves, in turn affecting crops, aquatic systems and livestock.



- **Impact on Income:** The **Economic Survey 2017-18** has estimated farm **income losses between 15% and 18%** on average, which could rise to **20%-25% for unirrigated areas** without any policy interventions. These projections underline the need for strategic change in dealing with climate change in agriculture.

Solution/Steps Needed

- **Introduction:** There is a need to foster the process of climate adaptation in agriculture, which involves reshaping responses across both the micro and macro level decision making culture.
- **At micro level:** The traditional wisdom, religious epics and various age-old notions about weather variations still guide farmers' responses, which could be less effective. Corroborating these with climate assessments and effective extension and promoting climate resilient technologies will enhance their pragmatism.
- **Management practices:** Climate exposure can be reduced through **agronomic management practices** such as inter and multiple cropping and crop-rotation; shift to non-farm activities; insurance covers; up-scaling techniques such as solar pumps, drip irrigation and sprinklers. Several studies indicate increasing perceptions of the magnitude of climate change and the need for farmers to adapt.
- **Increasing awareness:** The **NSS 70th round** indicates that a very small segment of agricultural households utilised crop insurance due to a lack of sufficient awareness and knowledge. Hence there is an urgent need to educate farmers, reorient **Krishi Vigyan Kendras** and other grass root organisations with specific and more funds about climate change and risk coping measures.
- **At macro level:** The climate adaptations are to be mainstreamed in the current developmental framework (which is still at a nascent stage, as acknowledged in the Economic Survey 2017-18). Though programmes of the government document the likely consequences of climate change, they lack systematic adaptation planning and resource conservation practices. Mainstreaming adaptation into the policy apparatus has the potential to improve the resilience of several development outcomes.
- **Other key interventions:** Expansion of extension facilities, improving irrigation efficiency, promotion of satellite-enabled agriculture risk management, creating micro-level agro-advisories, providing customised real time data and capacity building of stakeholders are some initiatives towards building greater resilience in agriculture.

Steps Taken By Government

- **Indirect steps:** Interventions such as the **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, Soil Health Card, Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana, National Agriculture Market** and other rural development programmes are positive interventions that can address the vulnerability of farmers and rural households.
- **Direct steps:** There are also exclusive climate and adaptation schemes being operationalised such as the **National Innovations on Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA), the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA), the National Adaptation Fund** and the **State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC)**.

Way Forward

- It is desirable to have a cultural change wherein some of the components under existing schemes can be converged with major rural developmental programmes, which will further enhance their effectiveness at the grass-root level. A study by the Centre for Science and Environment provides insights into the development of SAPCCs across selected States.

- The SAPCC is an important platform for adaptation planning but it needs to evolve further in terms of climate-oriented regional analysis to capture micro-level sensitivity and constraints. Moreover, convergence of climate actions with ongoing efforts and several Central schemes with similar mandates is a must. Greater expertise and consultations are required for a systematic prioritisation of actions and fiscal prudence for building climate resilient agriculture.

KALIA Scheme

In News

- Chief Minister of Odisha has launched the **Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation (KALIA) scheme** amounting to over 10,000 crore to provide financial assistance to farmers of the State. It is expected to benefit 30 lakh farmers. The assistance is for five cropping seasons spanning three years from 2018-19 to 2021-22.
- This is a progressive and inclusive scheme that will cover both the landholders and the landless, those who have taken loans and those who have not.
- The scheme envisages the well-being of farmers through **five kinds of government intervention** — financial support to small and marginal farmers for cultivation, livelihood support for landless households, monetary help for vulnerable agriculture households and landless labourers, life insurance cover, and interest-free crop loan.
- Around 30 lakh small and marginal farmers will each be given Rs 5,000 as financial support for the rabi and kharif seasons to buy seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and labour. The total annual expense for this will be Rs 3,016 crore.
- As many as 10 lakh landless households will get Rs 12,500 as assistance per year for alternate livelihood activities such as goat rearing, fisheries, duck rearing, mushroom cultivation and bee-keeping.
- Landless agriculture labourers, who have been deprived of livelihood options due to old-age, disability or disease, will get Rs 10,000 per family per year for sustenance. Deserving candidates will be identified by the gram panchayats
- The scheme also promises life insurance cover of Rs 2 lakh and additional personal accident cover of Rs 2 lakh to around 57 lakh cultivators and landless agricultural labourers. Moreover, crop loans of up to Rs 50,000 will henceforth be free of interest.

Technology

Beidou Goes Global

Syllabus: Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life

In News

- China's home grown satellite navigation system Beidou, has launched its global service ahead of the previous roll-out target of 2020 as the country looks to challenge the dominance of America's Global Positioning System (GPS).
- Beidou, the Chinese name for the **seven stars** that make up the Big Dipper, offers a worldwide location service with an **accuracy of 5 metres within the Asia-Pacific region and 10 metres in other parts of the world**. Its velocity accuracy is 0.2 metres per second, while its timing accuracy stands at 20 nanoseconds.

- It started serving China in 2000 and the Asia-Pacific region in 2012, while outside of China, **Pakistan is the first country** to use the BeiDou system.
- The US GPS offers accuracy to within centimetres, but concerns over Washington's ability to shut off service during wartime, prompted China, Russia and other nations to develop their own system.
- Similar to the origins of GPS, Beidou started in 1994 as an air defence system with the goal of boosting the country's space programme, while freeing up the People's Liberation Army from its reliance on the American-built system.
- By the end of 2018, there were a total of 33 BDS satellites operating in orbit for BeiDou. This included 15 BDS-2 satellites and 18 BDS-3 satellites.
- The navigation system now serves not only China's civil aviation and maritime needs, but is also used in global search and rescue, telecommunications and mass consumer applications for navigation.
- China plans to launch another 11 BDS-3 satellites and one BDS-2 satellite in the coming two years to form a complete global network, which will further enhance the global service performance.

Floating Nuclear Power Plant

Syllabus: Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life

In News

Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life

- Russia's state-run Atomic Energy Corporation, ROSATOM has developed the **world's first floating nuclear power plant**.
- Named after 18th-century Russian scientist Mikhail Lomonosov, it is called **Akademik Lomonosov** and will primarily be used to power oil rigs as Russia pushes further north into the Arctic to drill for oil and gas.
- The ship holds two reactors with two 35 megawatt nuclear reactors that are similar to those used to power icebreaker ships.
- It will replace a coal-fired power plant and an aging nuclear power plant Bilibino, supplying over 50,000 people with electricity and reducing carbon footprint in the Arctic by around 50,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions each year.
- It will also make it possible to supply electricity to hard-to-reach areas, regardless of transport infrastructure, landscape, and cost of fuel delivery.
- For fossil fuel-based electricity generation, up to 40 per cent of the cost is attributed to the price of coal, oil or gas, as well as to the cost of their delivery. This figure is even higher for especially remote locations.
- The small size, lightweight, and fixed cost of the plant eliminate many such challenges. The small nuclear reactor can operate non-stop without the need for refuelling for three to five years, thereby considerably reducing the cost of electricity generation.
- The reactor has the potential to work particularly well in regions with extended coastlines, power supply shortages and limited access to electrical grids.
- Moreover, no spent nuclear fuel or radioactive waste will be left behind as it will be taken to the special storage facilities.

Criticisms

- Greenpeace has referred to the vessel as **Chernobyl on ice** and a **nuclear Titanic** bound for catastrophe.
- The 1986 Chernobyl disaster was a catastrophic nuclear accident that occurred in April 1986, at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant in Ukraine.
- One of the major concerns with the power plant is that it has a flat-bottomed hull so that it can get close to the shoreline and it has no self-propulsion, making it more vulnerable to storms.
- The efforts of Greenpeace compelled Russia to change its plan to stock the power plant in St Petersburg and send it to Pevek.

ROSATOM

- ROSATOM is the only company in the world to offer integrated clean energy solutions across the nuclear supply chain and beyond, including the design, build and operation of nuclear power stations, uranium mining, conversion and enrichment, the supply of nuclear fuel, decommissioning, spent fuel storage and transportation and safe nuclear waste disposal.
- Globally, the company has the second biggest uranium reserves, has 40 per cent of the world's enrichment market, and is the world's biggest builder of the latest generation nuclear power stations and \$133 billion 10-years export order book.
- **Headquartered in Moscow**, it also works in the segments of wind generation, nuclear medicine, and energy storage.

Hongyun Project

Syllabus: Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life

In News

- China has successfully launched the first satellite of its Hongyun project, which seeks to create a network of communication satellites on the low Earth orbit in order to provide stable internet connection to the country's remote regions.
- The satellite was launched from a Long March 11 carrier rocket from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in north-western China.
- The mission of the satellite is to **verify low-orbit broadband communication technologies** to be used on the Hongyun satellite constellation.
- Weighing 247 kilograms, the satellite works in a **sun-synchronous orbit** about 1,100 kilometres above earth. It is powered by solar arrays and has a design life of one year, but is expected to operate longer.
- Announced by China Aerospace Science and Industry Corp. (CASIC) in September 2016, the Hongyun project has the **goal of building a space-based communications network of 156 communications satellites into low Earth orbit, at an altitude of 160 to 2,000 km**. Each satellite of the network will be able to **transmit 500 megabytes of data per second**. It will become operational in 2022.
- The concept of running a low-cost, high-performance satellite network to provide space-based communications and internet services has become popular globally among industry players.
- Currently, many tech companies, including Google, SpaceX, OneWeb and Telesat, have already launched plans to use satellites to provide free internet access.

- When the Hongyun project is complete, it **will cover the whole world and offer round-the-clock communication services to users in polar regions**, who now have difficulties accessing telecommunication and internet services, even from on board an aircraft or a ship or in a remote area.
- The Hongyun system **will feature lower production and operational costs and fewer occurrences of data transmission delays** compared with existing communication satellite networks.
- It will achieve global coverage with communications, navigation, remote sensing and other functions, supplying application demands, including sensor data acquisition, industrial Internet of Things, and remote control of unmanned vehicles.

Navic Powered Gadgets For Tamil Nadu Fishermen

Syllabus: Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life

In News

- Eighty fishing boat groups were recently provided with 200 ISRO developed satellite enabled communication devices by the Tamil Nadu government that will provide them real-time alerts on cyclone and weather updates.
- During cyclone Ockhi last year, several fishermen went missing and the government had faced criticism that timely updates about the storm were not communicated to them to enable them to return home.
- The devices that are the size of a soap box and are Bluetooth enabled are basically receivers, which emit a beep signal when alerts are received. The alerts can be accessed by downloading the NavIC App in android phones and would come in very handy for those who go for deep sea fishing.

IRNSS

- IRNSS also called NavIC is an **independent regional navigation satellite system** being developed by India. It provides **position, navigation and timing services over India and its neighbourhood**.
- The system at present consists of a **constellation of seven satellites**, with two additional satellites on ground as stand-by.
- It is designed to provide accurate position information service to users in India as well as the region extending **up to 1500 km from its boundary**, which is its primary service area. It is expected to provide a position accuracy of better than 20 m in the primary service area.
- It provides two types of services, namely, **Standard Positioning Service (SPS)** which is provided to all the users and **Restricted Service (RS)**, which is an encrypted service provided only to the authorised users.

National Children's Science Congress (NCSC)

Syllabus: Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life

In News

- The 26th **National Children's Science Congress (NCSC)** was recently held in **Odisha** with over 700 children from India and 10 ASEAN and five Gulf countries participating in it.

- NCSC is a nationwide Science Communication programme **started in the year 1993**. It is a programme of **National Council for Science and Technology Communication (NCSTC)**, Department of Science and Technology, New Delhi.
- It is a forum for children of the **age-group of 10-17 years**, both from formal school system as well as from out of school, to exhibit their creativity and innovativeness and more particularly their ability to solve a societal problem experienced locally using by method of science.
- Around 56% of the participants in the NCSC this year are girls while attempts are being made to bridge the rural-urban gap with 40% of the children hailing from rural areas.
- The theme for this year's NCSC was **Science, Technology and Innovation for a Clean, Green and Healthy Nation**, which has been aptly chosen as environment and health have emerged as two major concerns of our times.

About National Council for Science and Technology Communication

- NCSTC is mandated to communicate Science and Technology to masses, stimulate scientific and technological temper and coordinate and orchestrate such efforts throughout the country.
- It is devoted towards societal upliftment through the dissemination of scientific knowledge in an informed manner and builds programmes with the help of different media which percolate down to every nook and corner of the society.
- It focuses on outreach activities, training in Science and Technology communication, development, production & dissemination of S & T software, incentive programmes, and field based Sci-Com projects, research in S&T communication, international co-operation, motivating students and teachers, environment awareness and programmes with a special component exclusively for women.

Digital Sky Platform launched

Syllabus: Awareness in the fields of IT

In News

- The Civil Aviation Ministry has **started the registration process for drone operators** in the country, to be done through a portal called **Digital Sky**.
- The government, in August, had put in place regulations for operations of remotely piloted aircraft, to come into effect from December 1.
- Under these norms, drone users will be **required to do one-time registration of their drones**. They will **also need to register the pilots of drones as well as their owners**.
- For drones of micro size and above categories, operators are required to register on the Digital Sky portal whereas Nano drones can start flying legally from the day of the announcement.
- To get the permission to fly, RPAS (remotely piloted aerial system) or drone operators or remote pilots will have to file a flight plan.
- Flying in the green zones will require only intimation of the time and location of the flights via the portal or the app. Permissions will be required for flying in yellow zones and flights will not be allowed in the red zones.
- The location of these zones will be announced soon and permission will be made available digitally on the portal.

- To prevent unauthorised flights and ensure public safety, **any drone without a digital permit will not be able to take off.**
- The drone industry is an industry of the future. With the development of this platform, India will be taking lead in this sector and will be working with countries around the world to develop common, scalable standards. It has a large potential for Make in India and also to export drones and services from India.

Exseed Sat-1

Syllabus: Awareness in the fields of Space

In News

- India's **first privately built satellite Exseed Sat-1** was recently launched into polar orbit by SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket.
- With this launch, Mumbai-based **Exseed Space has become the first private commercial organisation in India to have a satellite in space.**
- It develops small satellite platforms with primary focus on assembly, integration, testing and operation of satellites with the ultimate goal to **democratise space exploration.**
- The company is working toward setting up India's first contract satellite manufacturing facility. Once operational, the facility will cater to the growing global demands of manufacturing Cubesats, Nano-sats & Micro-sats.
- ISRO has been encouraging private players to form a small consortium to undertake satellite and rocket manufacturing work so that it can focus on R&D.
- Costing Rs 2 crore, it was built in just 18 months by a team of eight scientists. It weighs only one kilo, and has dimensions that are no bigger than a tissue box. However, it will play a large role in India's communication systems.
- It is expected to have a life of two years, depending upon how long the battery lasts and when the satellite de-orbits naturally.
- It is an amateur (ham) radio, the kind of communication system that functions perfectly irrespective of the terrestrial systems.
- An amateur radio operator or Ham is someone who uses equipment at an amateur radio station to engage in a two-way personal communication with other amateur operators on radio frequencies assigned to the amateur radio service.
- **It looks to serve the amateur radio community, and will help in coordinating messages among them and help the country in time of emergencies and natural disasters.** At the same time, it will be used **for commercial purposes, agricultural solutions and communication.**

Crew Interactive Mobile Companion (CIMON)

Syllabus: Awareness in the fields of Space

In News

- A small robot **CIMON endowed with artificial intelligence (AI)** has been launched on a two-day trip to the International Space Station aboard SpaceX's Dragon cargo capsule.
- **No other AI-equipped machine** has ever flown to space before.

- Weighing about 5 kilograms, the 3D-printed robot designed jointly by the German space agency DLR, Airbus and IBM can converse with people and knows who it's talking to, due to the facial-recognition software.
- It doesn't process commands itself, but instead communicates with a ground-based cloud computer — **IBM's natural-language-processing computer Watson**.
- The astronaut assistant is mobile. Once aboard the ISS, it will be able to fly around, by sucking air in and expelling it through special tubes. With its ability to float around, CIMON could save astronauts a lot of time during experiments and help them perform more efficiently.
- The mission is a technology demonstration of what a future AI-based assistant on the International Space Station or on a future, longer term exploration mission would look like.
- It'll be a while before intelligent robots are ready to do any real heavy lifting in the final frontier — say, helping astronauts repair damaged spacecraft systems or treating sick crewmembers. But the mission could help pave the way for significant developments in the future.
- Having AI, the knowledge base and the ability to tap into it in a way that is useful for the tasks required to be done in space is critical for having humans further and further away from the planet.

GSAT-7A

Syllabus: Awareness in the fields of Space

In News

- ISRO has recently launched its military communication satellite GSAT-7A from Sriharikota, Andhra.
- Second in the family of military satellites (GSAT-7 was for the Indian Navy) weighing 2250 kg, GSAT-7A has a **mission life of eight years**. It has been built to provide communication capability to the Indian Air Force in the **Ku-band**, over the Indian region.
- The GSLV-F11 space vehicle will release it to an eventual geostationary orbit of 36,000 km from Earth. However, it will become fully functional after a month of testing payloads. GSLV F-11 with **indigenous cryogenic upper stage** has a total of three stages.
- The satellite is expected to add a new space-based dimension to the way IAF interlinks, operates and communicates with its aircraft as they fly and with command centres on ground.
- The IAF has several platforms (aircrafts) which have capabilities of communication through satellite. The communication to the platform through the satellite will be made possible with this launch.
- It is designed to expand the communication capabilities of the Indian Air Force by connecting many of the ground radar stations, airbases and aircrafts operated by the IAF, and is also expected to boost some of their network dependant warfare and drone capabilities.
- It will be a major booster and force multiplier for the IAF as such systems will help achieve full network centrality in a network centric warfare.

GSAT-11 Launched

Syllabus: Awareness in the fields of Space

In News

- ISRO's heaviest and most-advanced high throughput communication satellite GSAT-11 has been successfully launched from a European spaceport - **Arianespace in South America**.

- The 5854-kg satellite adds 40 more transponders, 32 in the Ku band and eight in the Ka band being introduced newly in an Indian satellite.
- The spacecraft has the **highest number of five communication antennas ever used in an ISRO satellite and largest solar panels and payload panels.**
- It is a fore-runner in a series of **advanced communications satellite with multi-spot beams** covering Indian mainland and islands.
- The satellite will **boost the broadband connectivity to rural and inaccessible Gram Panchayats** in the country coming under the Bharat Net Project, which is part of Digital India Programme.
- It will act as a forerunner to all future high throughput communication satellites and will also provide a platform to demonstrate new generation applications.
- By enabling rural high-speed connectivity the HTS satellite also promises to **bridge the urban-rural digital divide.**

Chang'e-4 Moon Mission

Syllabus: Awareness in the fields of Space

In News

- China has launched the Chang'e-4 moon mission (named after an ancient lunar goddess), successfully sending it into a lunar transfer orbit to make **the first ever attempt at a landing on the far side of the Moon.**
- The vast majority of the **far side of the Moon never faces the Earth due to tidal locking**, and humanity's first glimpse of that hemisphere did not come until the Soviet Luna 3 mission sent back images in 1959.
- The topography of the far side is far more rugged and variable than the near side, which is marked with vast, smooth basaltic seas or mare, which can be seen from Earth with the naked eye. The far side contains few such maria and the Chang'e-4 mission may bring insight into this mystery.
- The mission will target an area within the **South Pole-Aitken Basin (SPA)**, a huge, ancient and scientifically significant impact crater on the far side of the Moon. It has a diameter of around 2,500 kilometres and could contain exposed material from the Moon's mantle.
- A lunar far side landing is unprecedented, hence innovative solutions are needed to facilitate communications for sending commands to the spacecraft and aiding landing, and receiving telemetry and the all-important science data.

Objectives

- With the Moon shielding the spacecraft from Earth's interference, Chang'e-4 will be able to **carry out unprecedented radio observations at low frequencies not possible on Earth due to its atmosphere.**
- The imaging spectrometer will allow an **analysis of the composition of the lunar surface**, while the radar will be **capable of bringing insights into the layers, and therefore the history, and other geological features below the surface.**
- The ASAN instrument will tell scientists about **how the solar wind interacts with the Moon**, and the German LND payload will help in understanding processes on the lunar surface mixing processes while also being sensitive to possible lunar water.

- Meanwhile, **the cameras will return clear, high-resolution images from the lunar far side**, comparable to those from Chang'e-3 on the near side.
- Investigation of the composition of areas of the SPA could **reveal clues to the history of the moon and development of the wider solar system**.
- Furthermore, China is also developing the capabilities required for putting astronauts on the lunar surface, including massive launch vehicles and new generation crewed spacecraft.

Cell-by-Cell DNA Science is Breakthrough of 2018

Syllabus: Awareness in the fields of Bio-Tech

In News

- The US journal Science has coined as Breakthrough of the Year for 2018 **new technologies that reveal how DNA cues individual cells to grow through time**.
- Scientific papers have been published this year on how a flatworm, a fish, a frog, and other organisms begin to make organs and appendages.
- International researchers are hard at work, looking for ways to apply these techniques to human cells -- how they mature, regenerate, and what goes wrong when cancer, diabetes or even physical malformations occur.
- Among the projects underway is an international consortium called the **Human Cell Atlas**, which is identifying every human cell type, where each type is located in the body, and how the cells work together to form tissues and organs.
- According to experts these methods **will transform science over the coming decades, allowing an ever clearer picture of the processes behind ageing, healing, and disease**.
- A combination of technologies is revealing when genes in individual cells switch on, cueing the cells to play their specialized parts.
- **The result is the ability to track development of organisms and organs in stunning detail, cell by cell and through time**.
- Modern methods build on the 2002 Nobel Prize-winning work of John Sulston, who mapped the development of the roundworm *Caenorhabditis elegans* by painstakingly watching larvae mature cell by cell through microscopes.
- With today's technologies, the cells that comprise *C.elegans* have been mapped again using tag-analyze-assemble methods based on gene expression patterns within each cell.

Environment and Biodiversity

UN Momentum For Change Climate Action Award

In News

- Indian group **Help Us Green** is one of the fifteen game-changing initiatives that were recently awarded the **UN 'Momentum for Change' climate action award** at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 24).
- These projects showcase how ideas, big and small, are successful in tackling climate change.

- Winning activities include a mobile app that promotes the fight against food waste and hunger worldwide to an entire government that is taking 100% responsibility for its greenhouse gas emissions.
- 15 game changing initiatives are:
 - Climate-Efficient School Kitchens and Plant-Powered Pupils | Germany: Two initiatives which are providing healthy, climate-friendly meals in German schools
 - Santiago Biofactory | Chile: is transforming Santiago's three wastewater treatment plants into "biofactories" that convert wastewater and sewer sludge, a wastewater treatment by-product, into clean energy
 - Composting Waste Treatment: An Ecological Solution to Poverty and Climate Change | Haiti: Sustainable Organic Integrated Livelihoods (SOIL) is building composting toilets in Haiti
 - Sri Lanka Mangrove Conservation Project | Sri Lanka: is helping Sri Lanka become the first nation in history to preserve and replant all of its mangrove forests.
 - Creating the Greenest Football Club in the World - Forest Green Rovers | United Kingdom
 - Monash's Net Zero Initiative | Australia: Australia's largest university, has committed to reach net zero emissions by 2030 for all four of its Australian campuses
 - Klimanjaro – Climate Neutral Supply Chain | Norway: Fjordkraft, the second largest electricity retailer in Norway, is using its purchasing power to inspire all its suppliers to be climate neutral by 2019.
 - Carbon Neutral Government Program | Canada: In 2010, British Columbia became the first government at the provincial, territorial, or state level in North America to take 100% responsibility for the greenhouse gas pollution from all 128 of its public-sector organizations.
 - "Yalla Let's Bike" Initiative | Syria: Women are defying traditional gender roles and combatting overcrowded streets by promoting cycling as a healthy and sustainable mode of transportation in the war-ridden city of Damascus.
 - Women Leading a Food Sharing Revolution! | UK, Sweden, USA: Women are leading a food revolution with OLIO, the world's only neighbor-to-neighbor food sharing app
 - HelpUsGreen | India: Women are creating compost from ceremonial flowers and simultaneously cleaning up the River Ganges.
 - Feminist Electrification: Ensuring Pro-Women Outcomes in Rural Energy Access | Haiti: Energy poverty, a lack of access to modern energy services, is disproportionately affecting women in rural areas. This project is meeting this challenge head on by approaching all its energy access projects with a gender lens, referring to this as "feminist electrification."
 - Rwanda Green Fund – FONERWA | Rwanda: The Rwanda Green Fund (FONERWA) is investing in public and private projects that drive transformative change. It is one of the first national environment and climate change investment funds in Africa.
 - The MAIS Program | Brazil: is helping family agricultural operations adapt to climate change in the Jacuípe Basin, Brazil's semi-arid region. It is one of the first ever climate smart agricultural programmes to mainstream climate disruptive technologies among farmers in Brazil.
 - Catalytic Finance Initiative | Global: Bank of America is working with partners to mobilize approximately USD 10 billion for innovative and high-impact climate mitigation and sustainability-focused investments.

- Help Us Green has come up with the world's first profitable solution to the monumental temple waste problem: **flowercycling**.
- It has specifically been identified for its **potential to clean up river Ganga and empower thousands of women in Uttar Pradesh by giving them a secure life** by engaging them into an eco-friendly recycling works round the year.
- Women working with Help Us Green collect floral-waste daily from temples. The waste is up-cycled to produce **organic fertilizers, natural incense and biodegradable packaging material**.
- Till date, 11,060 metric tonnes of temple-waste has been flowercycled and 110 metric tonnes of chemical pesticides that enter the river through temple waste have been offset.
- In the process the income of 73 manual scavenger families has increased at least six-fold. A total of 365 families have been impacted through increased living standards and stable incomes.
- By 2021, it plans to expand to Bangladesh and Nepal and has aims to provide livelihoods to 5,100 women and recycle 51 tonnes of temple waste daily. Further, it is in talks with the government to scale up across the country.

Momentum for Change

- Momentum for Change is an initiative spearheaded by the **UN Climate Change** secretariat to shine a light on the enormous groundswell of activities underway across the globe that are moving the world towards a highly resilient, low-carbon future.
- **Areas of Focus include** – Planetary Health, Climate Neutral Now, Women for Result, Financing our Climate friendly Investments, Urban Poor, ICT solutions.
- It recognizes innovative and transformative solutions that address both climate change and wider economic, social and environmental challenges.
- These solutions are called **Lighthouse Activities**. They are some of the most practical, scalable and replicable examples of what people, businesses, governments and industries are doing to tackle climate change.

India Water Impact Summit 2018

In News

- The India Water Impact Summit 2018 jointly organized by the **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) and the Centre for Ganga River Basin Management and Studies** was recently held in New Delhi.
- The Summit is an annual event where stakeholders get together to discuss, debate and develop model solutions for some of the biggest water related problems in the country.
- This year the discussions were on **rejuvenation of the Ganga River Basin**. Multi-country dialogue on the subject, with showcasing of technological innovations, research, policy frameworks and funding models from India and abroad were held.

The focus was on three key aspects:

- **Spotlight on 5 states:** Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Delhi and Bihar. The objective was to showcase the efforts and works going on within the respective states.
- **Ganga Financing Forum:** Introduction of the inaugural Ganga Financing Forum that will bring a number of institutions to a common knowledge, information and partnership platform.

- **Technology and Innovation:** Implementation of the pilot/demonstration programme known as the Environment Technology Verification (ETV) process. This will provide an opportunity to technology and innovation companies from around the world to showcase their solutions for addressing the problems prevalent in the river basin.
- The efforts may take various forms including data collection (sensors, LIDAR, modelling etc), hydrology, e-flows, agriculture, waste water and more.

National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG):

- National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) was registered as a society in August 2011 under the Societies Registration Act 1860.
- It acted as implementation arm of National Ganga River Basin Authority(NGRBA) which was constituted under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act (EPA),1986.
- NGRBA has since been dissolved with effect from the 7th October 2016, consequent to constitution of **National Council for Rejuvenation, Protection and Management of River Ganga (referred as National Ganga Council)**.
- NMCG has a two tier management structure and comprises of Governing Council and Executive Committee. Both of them are headed by Director General, NMCG.

MNRE Conferred SKOCH Award**In News**

- **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy** has been recently conferred the SKOCH Award for National Significance.
- The Ministry was selected considering its purpose and **critical role played in installing about 73 GW renewable energy** capacity in the country. With 21 per cent of total installed capacity, within the year renewable energy grossed a figure of providing one billion units of electricity in the country.
- Presently, India is ranked fourth in the world in wind energy capacity and fifth in total solar and renewable power capacity.

SKOCH Awards

- The SKOCH awards celebrate human excellence and agents of change in Indian society. The Awards are based on the philosophy of **spearheading positive socio-economic changes through recognising persons who have contributed immensely to salutary transformations in society and governance by displaying exemplary leadership abilities**.
- They are the **highest independently instituted civilian honours in India** since 2003, when these were instituted.

SKOCH Group

- SKOCH Group is a think tank dealing with socio-economic issues with a focus on inclusive growth since 1997.
- The repertoire of services includes field interventions, consultancy, research reports, impact assessments, policy briefs, books, journals, workshops and conferences.

In News

- The first International Conference under the aegis of **National Hydrology Project**, Union Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation was recently organised by **Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) at Indian School of Business (ISB), Mohali**.
- The theme of the conference was **Sustainable Water Management** which deals with promoting integrated and sustainable development and management of water resources.
- The aim of the Conference is to foster the participation of and dialogue between various stakeholders so as to promote sustainable policies for water management, to create awareness of water-related problems, motivate commitment at the highest level for their solution and thus promote better management of water resources at local, regional, national and international levels.

Ground Water Extraction**In News**

- The Central Ground Water Authority of the Union Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation has **notified revised guidelines for ground water extraction**.
- The guidelines were revised in the wake of the directions issued by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) to address various shortcomings in the existing guidelines of ground water extraction.
- The revised guidelines, which will be effective from June 1, 2019, *aim to ensure a more robust ground water regulatory mechanism in the country*.

Guidelines

- One of the important features of the revised guidelines is the introduction of **the concept of Water Conservation Fee (WCF)**. The WCF payable varies with the category of the area, type of industry and the quantum of ground water extraction.
- It is designed to **progressively increase** from safe to over-exploited areas and from low to high water consuming industries as well as with increasing quantum of ground water extraction.
- Through this design, the high rates of WCF are expected to discourage setting up of new industries in over-exploited and critical areas as well as act as a deterrent to large scale ground water extraction by industries, especially in over-exploited and critical areas.
- Other salient features of the revised guidelines include **encouraging use of recycled and treated sewage water** by industries.
- **Provision of action against polluting industries**, mandatory requirement of digital flow meters, piezometers and digital water level recorders (with or without telemetry depending upon quantum of extraction), **mandatory water audit by industries abstracting ground water 500 m³/day** or more in safe and semi-critical and 200 m³/day or more in critical and over-exploited assessment units.
- **Mandatory roof top rain water harvesting except for specified industries** and measures to be adopted to ensure prevention of ground water contamination in premises of polluting industries/projects.

Exemptions

- As per the revised guidelines, exemption from requirement of NOC has been given to *agricultural users, users employing non-energised means to extract water, individual households (using less than 1 inch diameter delivery pipe) and Armed Forces Establishments during operational deployment* or during mobilization in forward locations.
- Other exemptions (with certain requirements) have been granted to **strategic and operational infrastructure projects** for Armed Forces, Defence and Paramilitary Forces Establishments and Government water supply agencies.

Ground Water Extraction Scenario in India

- Ground water extraction in India is **primarily for irrigation in agricultural activities**, accounting for nearly 228 BCM (Billion Cubic Meter), which amounts to 90% of the annual ground water extraction.
- The remaining 10% of extraction (25 BCM) is for drinking & domestic as well as industrial uses. Industrial use is estimated to account for only about 5% of the annual ground water extraction in the country.
- **India is the largest user of ground water in the world**, extracting ground water to the tune of 253 bcm per year, which is about 25% of the global ground water extraction.
- **Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA)**, constituted **under the Environment (Protection) Act of 1986** has the mandate of regulating ground water development and management in the country.

Eco-Sensitive Zone

In News

The Supreme Court has directed the Centre to declare "at the earliest" 10 km area around 21 National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries in the country as **Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) to protect wild birds and animals**.

Who decides the ESZ?

- The Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) notifies areas close to National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries as ESZ, aimed at creating "shock absorbers" for protected animals and birds by regulating and managing activities there.
- It can direct that certain industries and operations are not carried out, or subjected to safeguards, in ESZs.

More Details Of The Order

- The 21 National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries, without ESZ are in Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.
- **There are 662 national parks and wildlife sanctuaries in the country**. The proposals for declaring areas around these National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries as Eco Sensitive Zone have been received from state governments/UT Administrations for 641 National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries. No proposals have been received in respect of 21 National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries.
- The Centre has accepted and notified ESZs for 289 National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries as on November 2018, and draft notifications for 206 were ready.

- Some **prominent national Parks and wildlife sanctuaries without operational ESZs** include Pobitora Sanctuary of Assam, Hemis High Altitude National Park and Kishtewar National Park of Jammu and Kashmir, Jogimatti Sanctuary of Karnataka, Deolgaon Rehekuri Sanctuary of Maharashtra, Sirohi National Park of Manipur, Baghmara Pitcher Plant Sanctuary of Meghalaya, Fakim Sanctuary of Nagaland and Pilibhit Sanctuary of Uttar Pradesh.

About ESZ:

- **ESAs are defined as those areas ‘that are ecologically and economically important**, but vulnerable even to mild disturbances, and hence demand careful management’. Therefore ‘ecologically and economically important’ areas are those areas that are biologically and ecologically ‘rich’, ‘valuable’ and or ‘unique’, and are largely irreplaceable if destroyed.
- **Section 3 of the Environment (Protection) Act 1986 (EPA) gives power to the Central Government i.e. the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests to take all measures that it feels are necessary for protecting and improving the quality of the environment and to prevent and control environmental pollution.** To meet this objective, the Central Government can restrict areas in which any industries, operations or processes or class of industries, operations or processes shall not be carried out or shall be carried out subject to certain safeguards. **Thus the government came up with the concept of Eco Sensitive Zones.**
- There are three important categories of attributes that need to be considered in defining the ecological salience/significance/sensitivity of an area: physico-climatic features (geo-climatic features), biological features and social relevance (including cultural, economic and historical importance) of the area.
- All these may be grouped as (a) **abiotic attributes**, (b) **biotic attributes** and (c) **anthropological or socio-cultural attributes.**

India, Nepal, Bhutan Plan Joint Task Force To Protect Wildlife**What is the Plan?**

The governments of India, Nepal and Bhutan are actively considering having a joint task force for allowing free movement of wildlife across political boundaries and checking smuggling of wildlife **across the Kanchenjunga Landscape**, a trans-boundary region spread across Nepal, India and Bhutan.

Need for Joint Task Force

- The landscape stretches along the southern side of Mount Kanchenjunga covers an area of 25,080 sq km spread across parts of eastern Nepal (21%), Sikkim and West Bengal (56%) and western and south-western parts of Bhutan (23%).
- Other than seven million people, the Kanchenjunga Landscape is also home to 169 species of mammals and 713 species of birds.
- **According to the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)**, a regional knowledge development and learning centre, 1,118 sq km of riverine grassland and tree cover were lost in the landscape between 2000 and 2010.
- 74 % of the area was converted into rangeland and 26% to agricultural land.

- Studies by the ICIMOD suggest that between 1986 and 2015, as many as 425 people were killed by elephants (an average of 14 human deaths every year) and 144 elephants were killed between 1958 and 2013 (an average of three elephants every year).
- Every few months there were cases of elephants, rhino and gaurs and other mammals crossing over political boundaries, triggering panic among locals across the border and also posing danger to the wildlife.

- **South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN) is an inter-governmental wildlife law enforcement support body of South Asian countries namely - Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.** SAWEN was officially launched in January, 2011 in Paro Bhutan.
- It promotes regional cooperation to combat wildlife crime in South Asia. It focuses on policy harmonization; institutional capacity strengthening through knowledge and intelligence sharing; and collaboration with regional and international partners to enhance wildlife law enforcement in the member countries. SAWEN operates its activities from the Secretariat based in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Centre To Give Indian Forest Act A Facelift

In News

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has started the process of “comprehensively amending” the backbone of forest governance in India—the **Indian Forest Act, 1927 (IFA)**.

Highlights

- The process would involve the examination of all the sections of the Act. The obsolete provisions will be weeded out and provisions fit for the present will be introduced.
- The amendments will also include definitions of terms like forests, pollution, ecological services etc.
- There is **no definition of forest** in any Indian law pertaining to forest or its governance. According to the 1996 Supreme Court order, the dictionary definition of the word forest is taken to be the legal definition too.
- The legal definition of forests will have huge ramifications on the conservation of forests as well as the implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and **Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006**.
- The amendments will include changes to punishments and fines prescribed in the IFA, incorporate provisions related to carbon sequestering, ecological services etc.

What the Supreme Court Had Said

- The word forest must be understood according to its **dictionary meaning**. This description covers **all statutorily recognised forests**, whether designated as **reserved, protected or otherwise** for the purpose of Section 2(i) of the Forest Conservation Act (1980).
- The term forest land, occurring in Section 2, will not only include forest as understood in the dictionary sense, but also any area recorded as forest in the government record irrespective of the ownership,” the apex court had said in its order dated December 12, 1996.
- Many reports like the **MB Shah report of 2010 and the TSR Subramanian report of 2015**, have talked about amending the IFA.

Indian Forests Act, 1927

- **The Indian Forest Act, 1927 was largely based on previous Indian Forest Acts implemented under the British.** The most famous one was the Indian Forest Act of 1878.
- Both the 1878 act and the 1927 sought to consolidate and reserve the areas having forest cover, or significant wildlife, to regulate movement and transit of forest produce, and duty leviable on timber and other forest produce.
- It also defines the procedure to be followed for declaring an area to be a Reserved Forest, a Protected Forest or a Village Forest.
- It defines what is a forest offence, what are the acts prohibited inside a Reserved Forest, and penalties leviable on violation of the provisions of the Act.

Tiger Conservation

In News

According to the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), India saw 92 tiger deaths in 2018, with Madhya Pradesh topping the list at 23, and Maharashtra ranking second.

Analysis

- In most of the states, the specific reason behind a majority of tiger deaths could not be ascertained. In a few cases, the reason is based on opinion or circumstances but the forest department in every state should focus on a holistic mortality investigation.
- It is necessary to know the accurate reason of death to identify the pattern and work on minimizing mortality.
- Veterinarians are unable to diagnose the cause of death if the carcass is decomposed. Timely detection of carcass is necessary.

Battle For Space

- Tigers have lost more than 93% of their historical range, according to WWF, due to habitat degradation.
- As forest covers across the globe continue to shrink, humans and tigers have been left to compete for space to survive.
- The fallout has been calamitous for all wildlife globally. **WWF's 2018 Living Planet Index shows an overall decline of 60% in the population of vertebrates between 1970 and 2014.**
- **Linear infrastructure development** has emerged as the single-largest threat to the demographic viability of tigers, as per a study published in February by non-profit Wildlife Conservation Trust.
- Simply put, more tigers equals more opportunity for conflict with people. Add to that increasing human populations in India and it is no surprise that human-tiger conflict (HTC) will increase.
- Hence, as India's conservation efforts become ever more successful, there must be an **increased focus on managing HTC** (e.g. tiger-proof livestock enclosures and livelihoods programmes that reduce human and livestock dependency on forests where tigers occur), first with measures to prevent it from happening and second with measures to rapidly address conflict when it does happen.
- Tigers are definitely **indicators of the amount of protection** (in wildlife areas) and the **health of the primary ecosystem**. They also have an umbrella effect in terms of conservation.

- By conserving tigers, we will end up conserving species that need areas which are similar to what tigers need. So a lot of species benefit, indirectly, from tiger conservation.

Way Forward

- If the tiger and other species that form its ecosystem have to be saved in India, the effort has to continue to intensify and involve everyone from conservationists and forest departments to citizens and the media.
- We need to ensure that a **proper zonation is done** where development and wildlife conservation have boundaries.
- A big threat that looms over conservation activities is **wildlife trade**. Tiger activists were driven up the wall earlier this year when China decided to ease a 25-year-old ban on the trade of tiger bones and rhino horns. After a global outcry, the decision to ease this ban was postponed.

IN BRIEF

▶ Started in 1973, Project Tiger has been largely successful. **India had 2,226 tigers as per the 2014 All India Tiger Estimation**—a near 60% jump in population compared with 2006, and an increase of around 30% from 2010.

▶ However, human-tiger conflict is on the rise. On 2 November, **Avni, an alleged man-eater tigress was shot down** by a sharp shooter after a failed plan to capture her.

▶ Experts have called for **proper zonation when it comes to development near ecologically sensitive areas**. Tiger corridors, too, need to be preserved.

Emergency Campaign Launched To Save The Great Indian Bustard**In News**

Wildlife organisations have got together to launch a campaign to save the Great Indian Bustard which in recent years has come **under the critically endangered list**.

Conservation Effort

- The wildlife organisations that have launched the campaign are **The Corbett Foundation in collaboration with Conservation India and Sanctuary Nature Foundation**.
- **The campaign aims at highlighting the overhead power transmission lines that result in the death of these low flying birds with a limited field of vision**. This is the primary threat to the survival of the species especially in the Great Indian Bustard Habitat.
- The campaign petitioned the Ministry of Power and Ministry of New and Renewable Energy for action to be taken to place these power transmission lines underground.
- The Wildlife Institute of India's Endangered Species Recovery Program recommended this solution. The campaign also draws attention to the ecological importance of grasslands which are tragically designated as wastelands.

Need For Conservation

- With the total global population of the Great Indian Bustard reaching an all time low at **fewer than 150 individuals**, this campaign is the need of the hour.
- Many experts believe that these birds might be the first species to become extinct in Independent India. This grassland species is extinct from 95% of its range now.
- **Rajasthan is the last stronghold of the Great Indian Bustard**. Fewer than 150 birds survive, of which about 100 live in the Thar Desert.
- **Gujarat** has the next largest population of the bird – between 10 and 25 individuals.

India's Second Biennial Update Report (BUR)**In News**

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister has approved Submission of India's second Biennial Update Report (BUR) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) towards fulfilment of the reporting obligation under the Convention.

Salient Features

- The scope of BUR is to provide an **update to India's first BUR to UNFCCC**.
- The BUR contains **five major components** — *National Circumstances; National Greenhouse Gas Inventory; Mitigation Actions; Finance, Technology and Capacity Building Needs and Support Received and Domestic Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) arrangements.*
- In 2014, a total of 26,07,488 Gigagram (Gg) CC-2 equivalent (around 2.607 billion tonnes of CC-2 equivalent) of GHGs were emitted from all activities (excluding Land use, land-use change, and forestry (LULUCF)) in India.
- The net national GHG emissions after including LULUCF were 23,06,295 Gg CO₂ equivalent (around 2.306 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent).
- Out of the total emissions, **energy sector** accounted for 73%, **Industrial Process and Product Use (IPPU)** 8%, **agriculture** 16% and **waste sector** 3%.
- About 12% of emissions were offset by the carbon sink action of forestland, cropland and settlements

Background

- **India is a Party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**.
- The Convention, in accordance with its Article 4.1 and 12.1, enjoins upon all Parties, both developed country Parties and developing country Parties to furnish information, in the form of a National Communication regarding implementation of the Convention.
- Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC in its sixteenth session decided that developing countries, consistent with their capabilities and the level of support provided for reporting, should also submit biennial update reports containing updates of national greenhouse gas inventories and information on mitigation actions, needs and support received.
- It was decided that Biennial Update Reports shall be submitted every two years

REDD+ Has Failed To Achieve Its Objectives**In News**

A new study by Delhi-based non-profit **Centre for Science and Environment (CSE)** has revealed that **Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+)** - the programme initiated by the United Nations in 2005 to mitigate climate change through enhanced forest management in developing countries - **has largely failed to achieve its objectives**.

Highlights Of The Report Titled 'Rethinking REDD+'

- Large-scale finance for REDD+ has been a major issue as **carbon markets have not materialised** and international funding commitments for REDD+ have been much lower than expected.
- REDD+ implementation costs have been high and benefits for local communities from REDD+ projects have been minimal.

- The report is an assessment of the REDD+ implementation experiences in India, Kenya and Tanzania.
- It highlights the need to rethink the REDD+ mechanism based on these experiences and the findings emerging from new research on the potential of forests to mitigate climate change.

About REDD+

- Since its formalisation in 2006, REDD+ had emerged as the most prominent global mechanism to integrate the role of forests in climate change. It was touted as a win-win situation for biodiversity conservation, carbon sequestration and local livelihoods.
- More than 300 REDD+ initiatives have taken off since 2006. The mechanism has been enshrined in **the Paris Agreement of 2015**, and its implementation is transitioning from smaller, isolated projects to larger, jurisdictional programmes with support from bilateral and multilateral agencies.
- However, **the CSE report reveals that the performance of REDD+ in halting or reversing deforestation remains questionable.**

COP24: Long-Term Vision For Climate Finance Missing At Katowice

In News

After two weeks of crunch negotiations the 197 parties gathered in **Katowice, Poland**, for the United Nations COP24 climate change conference, adopted a “robust” set of implementing guidelines for the 2015 Paris agreement. It was aimed at keeping global warming well below 2^o C compared to pre-industrial levels

What Was Agreed At COP24?

- **Countries settled on most of the tricky elements of the “rulebook” for putting the 2015 Paris agreement into practice.**
- This includes how governments will measure, report on and verify their emissions-cutting efforts, a key element because it ensures all countries are held to proper standards and will find it harder to wriggle out of their commitments.

Why Did It Take So Long?

- **There was a row over carbon credits, which are awarded to countries for their emissions-cutting efforts and their carbon sinks, such as forests, which absorb carbon.**
- These credits count towards countries’ emissions-cutting targets. Brazil, which hopes to benefit from its large rainforest cover, insisted on a new form of wording that critics said would allow double counting of credits, undermining the integrity of the system. **This issue has been put off until next year.**

What Was Not Agreed?

- Largely absent from these talks, which had a technical focus, was the key question of how countries will step up their targets on cutting emissions.
- On current targets, the world is set for 3^o C of warming from pre-industrial levels, which scientists say would be disastrous, resulting in droughts, floods, sea level rises and the decline of agricultural productivity.

When Will That Be Agreed

The key deadline is 2020, when countries must show they have met targets set a decade ago for cutting their emissions, and when they must affirm new, much tougher targets.

What Does The Science Say

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the global body of the world's leading climate scientists, warned two months ago that allowing warming to reach 1.5C above pre-industrial levels would have grave consequences, including the die-off of coral reefs and devastation of many species.

How Long Have We Got

If we extrapolate from the IPCC's findings, the world has little more than a decade to bring emissions under control and halve them, which would help to stabilise the climate.

Are We Getting There

- After years in which the world's carbon emissions appeared to be stabilising, they are on the rise again. Coal use continues and oil is still the engine of much of the world's economy. Clean energy is coming on-stream at a faster rate than many predicted, and the costs of it have come down rapidly, but its adoption needs to be speeded up.
- Infrastructure, such as energy generation plants, transport networks and buildings, is a central issue: infrastructure built now to rely on high-carbon energy effectively locks in high emissions for decades to come

Were Countries United At The Talks

- The US, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait joined forces to prevent the conference fully embracing the IPCC's findings, watering down a statement to a weak commendation of the timing of the scientists' report.
- Australia joined with the US in a celebration of coal, and Brazil signalled its climate scepticism under Jair Bolsonaro by withdrawing its offer to host next year's talks.
- But the EU, a handful of other developed countries and scores of developing nations including the poorest and most vulnerable affirmed that they would strive to meet the IPCC's advice on limiting warming to no more than 1.5C.

What Happens Next

- The UN will meet again next year in Chile to thrash out the final elements of the Paris rulebook and begin work on future emissions targets.
- But the crunch conference will come in 2020, when countries must meet the deadline for their current emissions commitments and produce new targets for 2030 and beyond that go further towards meeting scientific advice.

Security**New Framework to Combat International Terrorism**

Syllabus: Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security.

In News

- UN has launched a new framework to combat the scourge of international terrorism and coordinate efforts across the peace and security, humanitarian, human rights and sustainable development sectors.
- The new framework has been termed as the **UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact**.

Key Highlights

- The framework is an agreement between the UN chief, 36 organizational entities, the International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL) and the World Customs Organisation.
- It aims to better serve the needs of Member States when it comes to tackling the scourge of international terrorism
- The implementation of the framework and monitoring of its implementation will be overseen by the Coordination Committee of the United Nations.
- Currently, this committee is chaired by UN Under-Secretary-General for counter-terrorism, Vladimir Voronkov.
- The UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact Task Force will replace the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, which was established in 2005 to strengthen UN system-wide coordination and coherence of counter-terrorism efforts.

Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT)

- Proposed first by India in 1996 at UN general assembly, the ratification of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism is in a limbo due to opposition from the US and OIS countries.
- The CCIT provides a legal framework which makes it binding on all signatories to deny funds and safe havens to terrorist groups.
- Major objective:
 - To have a universal definition of terrorism that all 193-members of the UNGA will adopt into their own criminal law
 - To ban all terror groups and shut down terror camps
 - To prosecute all terrorists under special laws
 - To make cross-border terrorism an extraditable offence worldwide.

Why CCIT is Facing Opposition?

- Despite India's efforts to push a global intergovernmental convention to tackle terrorism, the conclusion and ratification of the CCIT remains deadlocked, mainly due to opposition from three main blocs – the US, the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC), and the Latin American countries.
- All three have objections over the “definition of terrorism” (the most divisive of the issues) and seek exclusions to safeguard their strategic interests.
- For example, the OIC wants exclusion of national liberation movements, especially in the context of Israel-Palestinian conflict. The US wanted the draft to exclude acts committed by military forces of states during peacetime.
- Although consensus eludes towards adoption of the terrorism convention, but discussions among member states have yielded three separate protocols that aim to tackle terrorism. These are:
 - International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings, adopted on 15 December 1997;
 - International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, adopted on 9 December 1999; and
 - International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, adopted on 13 April

9-Point agenda on Fugitive Economic Offenders

Syllabus: Money-laundering and its prevention

[Also refer the topic *Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill 2018* form July issue of CA magazine]

In News

- India presented a nine-point agenda to G-20 countries.
- It calls for "**strong and active cooperation**" among these countries to comprehensively **deal with fugitive economic offenders**.

Key Highlights

- **Cooperation in legal processes** such as effective freezing of the proceeds of crime, early return of the offenders and efficient repatriation of the proceeds of crime should be enhanced and streamlined.
- It called for **joint efforts by G-20 countries** to form a mechanism that denies entry and safe havens to fugitive economic offenders.
- Principles of *United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC)*, *United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNOTC)*, especially related to 'International Cooperation' should be **fully and effectively implemented**.
- It suggested that the **Financial Action Task Force (FATF)** should be called upon to **assign priority and focus** to establishing international cooperation that leads to timely and comprehensive exchange of information between the competent authorities and financial intelligence units.
- According to it, FATF should be tasked to **formulate a standard definition of fugitive economic offenders**.
- FATF should also develop a **set of commonly agreed and standardized procedures** related to identification, extradition and judicial proceedings for dealing with fugitive economic offenders to provide guidance and assistance to G-20 countries, subject to their domestic law.
- It also advocated **setting up of a common platform** for sharing experiences and best practices including successful cases of extradition, gaps in existing systems of extradition and legal assistance, etc.
- According to the agenda, G-20 forum should consider **initiating work on locating properties of economic offenders** who have a tax debt in the country of their residence for its recovery.

Analysis

- G-20 is an effective platform to wage a war against the menace of money laundering and addressing the issue of fugitive economic offenders.
- India has increased its effort to apprehend a number of such offenders, including Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi. In this context, a global cooperation, in the form of 9-point agenda, would be very helpful for India.
- However, many critics have term this agenda as futile as according to them the **problems lie at home, not abroad**.
- Indian economic offenders **hardly flee to any G-20 nations**. In that case, what is the point to ensure cooperation among these countries.

- And even if they choose G-20 nations, their preferred place is the United Kingdom. In such scenario, the question we Indians should ask is: **what is the problem in getting the UK to extradite our citizens?**
- In India, human right conditions, overcrowding of jails, quality of justice and the quality of investigation by top investigating agencies remain inadequate in the eyes of foreign countries. This makes the **extradition more difficult**.
- Hence, these analysts suggest to **follow our own laws and processes properly so that we are respected by the world as a rule of law state**.

Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)

Syllabus: Security challenges and their management in border areas

In News

- Indian Defence Minister has launched **the Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)**, at Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC) Gurugram.
- The center aims to **‘practicalise’ the interactions at sea** in order to improve maritime security in the region

Key Highlights

- The IFC-IOR aims to engage with partner nations and multi-national maritime constructs to develop comprehensive maritime domain awareness and share information on vessels of interest (i.e. **information on “white shipping”, or commercial shipping**).
- The intention of this collaborative endeavour shall be to secure the global commons for a peaceful, stable and prosperous region towards the well-being of all.
- IFC-IOR will also help foster bonds of trust, camaraderie and partnership; ingredients that are vital for relationships between nations to transcend from being merely transactional to ones that are transformational.
- The information exchange at the IFC-IOR would be initially undertaken by virtual means, using telephone calls, faxes, emails and video conferencing over internet.
- Subsequently, to enable better interaction, quicker analysis of information and provide timely inputs, the IFC-IOR would host Liaison Officers from partner countries.
- Additionally, towards enhancing capability building, the IFC-IOR would undertake conduct of exercises and training capsules in maritime information collation and sharing.

Need For Such Center

- The Indian Ocean Region is vital to world trade and economic prosperity of many nations as more than 75% of the world’s maritime trade and 50% of global oil consumption passes through the IOR.
- However, maritime terrorism, piracy, human and contraband trafficking, illegal and unregulated fishing, arms running and poaching pose myriad challenges to maritime safety and security in the region.
- The scale, scope and the multi-national nature of maritime activities, make it difficult for countries to address these challenges individually. Hence, collaborative efforts between maritime nations in the IOR, is essential.

About Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC):

- Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC) has been established as the nerve centre of the Navy for coastal surveillance and monitoring.
- This center has been commissioned after the glaring gaps in maritime security was brought out by 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks.
- It is located in Gurugram and was made operational in November 2014.
- It is manned by the Navy and function **under the National Security Adviser (NSA)**.

White Shipping Information:

- The seas of the entire world are inter-linked and vessels can sail routinely around the globe in pursuit of cargo.
- Thus a vessel that is in Indian waters today maybe sailing towards a distant destination and similarly several vessels set sail from ports around the globe could be bound for India.
- Having advance information of the vessel, its destination and planned itinerary, etc. is thus extremely helpful towards collating an effective Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) as it can then be properly identified when detected.
- This information is likely to be available with the country from whose port it sails. The information is equally relevant for the destination country and those it passes enroute. Thus mutual exchange of such information, called **white shipping information**.

India Joins Trans Regional Maritime Network

- India has signed an ascension pact to the 30-member Trans Regional Maritime Network.
- This will provide India an access to the information on ships passing through the Indian Ocean Region.
- The pact will give India the access to information on ships which pass through the Indian Ocean region that will greatly help the security forces in keeping a tab on any suspicious activity.
- India already has bilateral **White Shipping Agreements with 36 countries**.
- **Trans Regional Maritime Network (T-RMN)** facilitates information exchange on the movement of commercial traffic on the high seas through the Automatic Identification System (AIS) fitted on merchant ships with more than 300 gross registered tonnage as mandated by the International Maritime Organisation.

Demography along Pakistan Border Changing

Syllabus: Security challenges and their management in border areas

In News

- The Border Security Force (BSF) has flagged concerns over increasing radicalisation of Muslim population in the border district of Jaisalmer in Rajasthan.
- There has been rising prevalence of "Arab customs" even as Hindus and Muslims admit to a shrinkage in dialogue between the communities.
- The BSF "study of demographic pattern in the border areas of Rajasthan and its security implications" has examined demographic changes along the Pakistani border.

Key Highlights

- The study has found a departure from traditional Rajasthani culture in terms of personal grooming such as hairstyles and dress.
- It also found a high 22-25 per cent growth rate in Muslim population as compared to 8-10 per cent of other communities. There is a rise in religiosity with higher attendance of children at mosques for more frequent namaz.
- While **warning of radicalisation**, the study says there is **no evidence of any "anti-national" activity** and there is **no discernible soft corner for Pakistan** among the minority population.
- Also, both communities have not had any problems so far and they conduct business and are cordial to each other
- It also talks about an increase in the membership of Hindu right-wing organisations, which are opposed by Muslims.
- BSF asserts that there is also an aggressive investment in land, which has now become a bone of contention for the Hindu community.
- It has recommended a check on activities of clerics, a task force comprising police, administration, intelligence and BSF, to assess any rise in the communal temperature.

About BSF:

- The Border Security Force (BSF) is a Border Guarding Force of India. Established on December 1, 1965, it is a paramilitary force charged with guarding **India's land border during peace time and preventing transnational crime**.
- It is a Union Government Agency under the **administrative control of Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- It is one of many law enforcement agency of India. It currently stands as the world's largest border guarding force.
- Currently, both the Indo-Pakistan and Indo-Bangladesh borders are guarded by the Border Security Force (BSF).

Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee

In News

News:

- In order to improve 'jointmanship' the three services are taking steps and have agreed on the appointment of a Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (PCCoSC).
- The proposal has been forwarded to the Defence Ministry and is being examined there.

Key Highlights

- The PCCoSC is envisaged as a single-point military adviser to the government.
- The PCCoSC will be a four-star officer, who will be equivalent to chiefs of Army, Airforce, and Navy.
- The Chairman would look into joint issues of the services like training of troops, acquisition of weapon systems and joint operations of the services.
- He would also be in charge of the tri-services command at Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the strategic command of nuclear weapons along with the upcoming cyber and space command.

Facts:

- An expert committee set up under the chairmanship of K Subramanian to look into all aspects of national security; also recommended the appointment of a Chief of Defense Staff.
- The Naresh Chandra Task Force, formed in May 2011 to review the national security management system, recommended the creation of permanent post of chairman, chiefs of staff committee (CoSC).
- Lt Gen (ret'd) D B Shekatkar, who is the Chairman of Committee on Combat Capabilities Enhancement of Armed Forces, in his report is also believed to have also recommended creation of such a post.

Issues With The Current System

- Currently, India follows Joint Chief of Staff (JSOC) model similar to that of USA, with the senior most chief (Army, Navy and Air force) appointed as Chairman JSOC.
- However, the senior most chief usually gets appointed to this post towards the end of his career. As a result, he does not get sufficient time to bring the necessary changes.
- Also, this system is considered to be inadequate since he has dual role as he is also the Chief of his own service. Combined responsibility is not only overwhelming, often resulting in neglect and delay, but it can also place two roles in conflict.
- There is a turf war between the three wings with each seeing things with its own perspective and requirement. Effective coordination among the three is missing.
- In current system, Defense Secretary is responsible for the defense of the country. This invariably leads to greater gap between the civilian and military bureaucracy.

Limitations Of The Proposed System

- Can the proposed PCCoSC bring synergy within the three services when he has no operational powers over the military?
- The current proposal provides the equal voting rights to PCCoSC as the service chiefs. In case of disagreement, MoD will arbitrate. However, if a PCCoSC is to be a "single point advisor", where is the question of two chiefs not agreeing?

Indian Advanced Towed Artillery Gun

In News

- Indian heavy artillery gun – Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System (ATAGS), has advanced to a stage where user-assisted trials of the gun are likely to start by June 2019.
- The ATAGS is a 155mm, 52 calibre gun being developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation in partnership with TATA Power

Firing on all cylinders



- Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System (ATAGS) is a 155mm, 52 calibre gun, developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) in a consortium model

- One prototype has been built in partnership with Tata Power (Strategic Engineering Division) and another with Bharat Forge
- Two guns from each company

are undergoing trials; two more guns to join trials later

- There is a sanction for production of 10 guns as part of the development process

- The gun currently weighs about 18 tonnes while the ideal weight is 14-15 tonnes

- The defence Ministry has approved purchase of 150 guns at an approximate cost of ₹3,365 crore

- The Army is in the process of finalising the Preliminary Specifications Qualitative Requirements (PSQR) which details the essential parameters, which should be ready by July 2019

- The gun is presently undergoing development trials. User assisted trials will begin from May-June 2019

KEY FEATURES

- Electric drive

- High mobility

- Quick deployability

- Auxiliary power mode

- Advanced communication system

- Automated command Control system

- Six round magazine instead of a standard three round magazine

(Strategic Engineering Division), and the other is in collaboration with Bharat Forge.

- The gun has several significant features including an all-electric drive, high mobility, quick deployability, auxiliary power mode, advanced communications system, automated command and control system.
- It also sports a six-round magazine instead of the standard three-round magazine. This necessitates a larger chamber and is a major factor in pushing up the overall weight of the system.

Indian Navy's Deep Submergence Rescue Vessel

In News

- The Indian Navy has inducted its first '**Deep Submergence Rescue Vehicle (DSRV)**' into service.
- With this, the Indian Navy has joined the select league of world navies that have an integral submarine rescue capability.
- The inducted submarine -- a third generation product of Scotland-based JFD, a part of James Fisher and Sons Plc -- has the latest technology and capability
- The Indian DSRV has the capability to rescue personnel from a distressed submarine up to a depth of 650 m and it is the latest in terms of technology and capabilities.
- The DSRV is currently deployed on mother ship INS Sabarmati.
- **INS Nistar** was the first submarine rescuer followed by **INS Nireekshak** which carries out dual role of diving support and submarine rescue vessel.