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# **SUPPLEMENTARY CURRENT AFFAIRS FOR PRELIMS 2019**

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Dear Students,

Hope your preparation is going well. This document has been prepared keeping in mind the pattern of the Current Affairs questions being asked by the UPSC Civil Services Prelims examination. In few questions, the theme is no longer confined to the events of the last one year.

Here, we have tried to summarise important news from PT-365 2018 documents. Given that the examination is quite near, this document intends to help you revise last year's important news in a short time.

Hope this document helps you in boosting your preparation and building up your confidence further as you wind up your preparations.

Best Wishes

Team Vision IAS

## Table of Contents

<b>1. POLITY AND CONSTITUTION</b> _____	<b>3</b>	<b>2.12. African Development Bank (AFDB)</b> __	<b>10</b>
1.1. Departmentally Related Standing Committees _____	3	<b>2.13. Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)</b> _____	<b>10</b>
1.2. CEC Appointment Issues _____	3	<b>2.14. South Asia Cooperative Environment Program (SACEP)</b> _____	<b>11</b>
1.3. Cess as a Revenue Raising Tool _____	3	<b>2.15. Miscellaneous Titbits</b> _____	<b>11</b>
1.4. Arunachal's 2-Tier Panchayati Raj _____	4	<b>3. ECONOMICS</b> _____	<b>12</b>
1.5. Social Audit _____	4	<b>3.1. Information Utility Under Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code</b> _____	<b>12</b>
1.6. Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART) _____	4	<b>3.2. Domestic-Systematically Important Banks</b> 12	
1.7. Inquisitorial System _____	4	<b>3.3. Priority Sector Lending</b> _____	<b>12</b>
1.8. E-Samiksha _____	4	<b>3.4. Chit Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2018</b> ____	<b>12</b>
1.9. International Comparison Program _____	4	<b>3.5. Qualified Institutional Placement (QIP)</b> 13	
1.10. Miscellaneous Titbits _____	5	<b>3.6. Commodity Options</b> _____	<b>13</b>
<b>2. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS</b> _____	<b>6</b>	<b>3.7. Market Infrastructure Institutions</b> ____	<b>13</b>
2.1. India-Pakistan _____	6	<b>3.8. Financial System Stability Assessment (FSSA)</b> _____	<b>13</b>
2.2. India-China _____	6	<b>3.9. Government Abandons Revenue Deficit Targeting</b> _____	<b>13</b>
2.3. Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) _____	6	<b>3.10. Financial Data Management Centre</b> __	<b>13</b>
2.4. UNSC Reform _____	6	<b>3.11. Disinvestment</b> _____	<b>14</b>
2.5. UN Partnership Fund _____	7	<b>3.12. FATCA IGA</b> _____	<b>14</b>
2.6. UN-Habitat _____	7	<b>3.13. Global Foreign Exchange Committee</b> _	<b>14</b>
2.7. Multilateral Export Control Regimes ____	7	<b>3.14. Organic Food</b> _____	<b>14</b>
2.8. Hague Code Of Conduct (HCOC) _____	8	<b>3.15. Seed Industry</b> _____	<b>15</b>
2.9. Nuclear Weapon Prohibition Treaty (NWPT) _____	9	<b>3.16. Negotiable Warehousing Receipts</b> ____	<b>15</b>
2.10. India-Wiesbaden Conference 2018 ____	9	<b>3.17. Codex Alimentarius Commission</b> ____	<b>15</b>
2.11. International Maritime Organisation (IMO) _____	9	<b>3.18. Start-Up Sangam Initiative</b> _____	<b>16</b>



3.19. National Productivity Council _____	16	5.2. National Council of Senior Citizens _____	25
3.20. National Highway Investment Promotion Cell _____	16	5.3. Maharashtra Social Boycott Act _____	25
3.21. PPP Models _____	16	5.4. India Youth Development Index and Report 2017 _____	25
3.22. Central Road Fund _____	17	5.5. Technical Education Quality Improvement Programme (TEQIP) _____	26
3.23. India Road Assessment Programme _____	17	5.6. Madhyamik and Uchchatar Shiksha Kosh _____	26
3.24. International Road Transports (TIR) Convention _____	17	5.7. National Academic Depository (NAD) _____	26
3.25. Rail Development Authority _____	17	5.8. Healthy States, Progressive India Report _____	26
3.26. New Metro Rail Policy 2016 _____	17	5.9. Private Health Care _____	26
3.27. Coastal Economic Zone _____	18	5.10. National Nutrition Strategy _____	27
3.28. UNNATI Project _____	18	5.11. 'Zero Hunger' Programme _____	27
<b>4. ENVIRONMENT _____</b>	<b>19</b>	5.12. India State Level Disease Burden Report _____	27
4.1. Minamata Convention _____	19	5.13. Joint Monitoring Programme 2017 _____	27
4.2. Bonn Climate Meet _____	19	5.14. Echo Clinic _____	28
4.3. Ecosystems Service Improvement Project _____	19	<b>6. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY _____</b>	<b>29</b>
4.4. UN Ocean Conference _____	19	6.1. Stephen Hawking _____	29
4.5. Global Clean Seas Campaign _____	19	6.2. Einstein Ring _____	29
4.6. India State of Forest Report 2017 _____	19	6.3. Mars Orbiter Mission _____	30
4.7. Invasive Alien Species _____	20	6.4. NAVIC or IRNSS (Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System) _____	30
4.8. Bamboo Is No Longer A Tree _____	21	6.5. Copernicus Programme _____	30
4.9. Global Wildlife Program _____	21	6.6. Free Space Optical Communication _____	31
4.10. National Wildlife Action Plan (NWAP) for 2017-2031 _____	21	6.7. Micro-LED: The Next-Gen Display Technology _____	31
4.11. Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas _____	22	6.8. Supercritical CO <sub>2</sub> -Brayton Cycle _____	31
4.12. Biodiversity Heritage Sites _____	22	6.9. Stem Cells Therapy _____	32
4.13. New Wetland Conservation Rules _____	23	6.10. Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Bill _____	32
4.14. Green Buildings LEED for Cities _____	23	6.11. Biosimilar for Cancer _____	32
4.15. Zero Budget Natural Farming _____	23	6.12. Project Dhoop _____	32
4.16. Seed Vault _____	24	6.13. FoSCoRIS System _____	33
4.17. One Planet One City Challenge of WWF _____	24	6.14. Interstitium _____	33
4.18. Earth Overshoot Day _____	24	6.15. Ban on Oxytocin _____	33
4.19. Pacific Shadow Zone _____	24	6.16. E-Cigarettes _____	33
4.20. Artificial Reefs to Save Sinking Islands _____	24	6.17. NTRO Under Intelligence Act _____	34
<b>5. SOCIAL ISSUES _____</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>7. ERRATA (PT-365 2019) _____</b>	<b>35</b>
5.1. The Rights of Persons with Disability Act, 2016 _____	25		

# 1. POLITY AND CONSTITUTION

## 1.1. DEPARTMENTALLY RELATED STANDING COMMITTEES

- It is being suggested that the DRSCs should be revamped to better perform their scrutinising roles.
- 17 DRSCs were first formed in 1993.
- Currently there are 24 DRSCs and each of them have 21 members from Lok Sabha and 10 members from Rajya Sabha.
- In contrast to ad-hoc committees, Standing Committees are **permanent in nature**.
- They have following functions:
  - Examine Bills referred to them
  - Select Specific topics related to the ministries and examine implementation by the Government
  - Examine the budgetary outlays of the department.
  - Bills are referred to them by the Speaker or Chairman of the House
- **Other Important facts-**
  - **All Bills are not referred** to committees, as GST bill was passed without referring to DRSC.
  - Recommendations of the committee are **not binding**.
  - They can reach out to outside experts, but **no internal expertise** is present.
  - It does not consider matters of day to day administration of the ministry.

## 1.2. CEC APPOINTMENT ISSUES

### Issues related to Chief Election Commissioner

- The appointment of CEC and other ECs according to the **Article 324**, shall be done as per the law made by the Parliament in this regard. However, no such law has yet been made which leaves a “gap”. Recently, Supreme Court had asked the centre why no enabling law has yet been framed.
- This leaves the appointment of such a crucial post solely to the executives (President on the advice of PM and Council of Ministers).

#### Constitutional Provisions related to EC

As per the **Article 324** of the constitution, “The Election Commission shall consist of Chief Election Commissioner and such numbers of other Election Commissioners, if any, as the President may from time to time fix and appointment of CEC and other ECs shall, subject to provisions of any law made in that behalf by the Parliament, be made by the President.”

- The constitution has **not prescribed the qualifications** (legal, educational, administrative, or judicial) of the members of election commission.
- The constitution has **not debarred the retiring** Election commissioner from any further appointment by the government.
- There is also **no clarity regarding the power division** between the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners.
- The CEC and the Election Commissioners enjoy the **same decision-making powers** which are suggestive of the fact that their powers are at par with each other.
- Although the proviso to Article 324 (5) of the Constitution safeguards the CEC from arbitrary removal, the same provision is silent about the procedure for removal of the two EC. It only provides that they cannot be removed from office except on the recommendation of the CEC.

## 1.3. CESS AS A REVENUE RAISING TOOL

The Fifteenth Finance Commission commissioned a study on legality of use of surcharge and cess.

### Why has Cess become contentious?

- The share of cess and surcharges as a percentage of tax revenues has increased over the years for the Centre.
- Both these levies go to the consolidated fund of India and do not form part of the divisible pool.

### Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 271** - Surcharge on certain duties and taxes for purposes of the Union Notwithstanding anything in Articles 269 and 270, Parliament may at any time increase any of the duties or taxes referred in those articles by a surcharge for purposes of the Union and the whole proceeds of any such surcharge shall form part the Consolidated Fund of India.

### Cess and surcharge

Cess	Surcharge
It is earmarked for a specific purpose	It can be used for any purpose
If the purpose gets fulfilled, the cess is removed.	There are no such restrictions.

Applicable on total payable tax (including surcharge). However, there can be exceptions like Krishi Kalyan Cess which is applicable on total service value.	Applicable on total service value.
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#### 1.4. ARUNACHAL'S 2-TIER PANCHAYATI RAJ

- Arunachal Pradesh Assembly passed a bill to do away with the **Anchal Samiti** (Intermediate level) and set up a two-tier system in the state.
- According to the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution, states are required to constitute Panchayats at **three tiers**, i.e., Village, Intermediate and District except the States having a population of less than 20 lakhs, which may not constitute a Panchayat at Intermediate level.

**States/UTs with 2-Tier government**  
Goa, Manipur, Sikkim, D& N Haveli, Daman & Diu and Lakshadweep do not have intermediate level.

#### 1.5. SOCIAL AUDIT

- Meghalaya became the **first state in India to operationalise a social audit law**- 'The Meghalaya Community Participation and Public Services Social Audit Act, 2017'
- Social audits refer to a **legally mandated process** where potential and existing beneficiaries evaluate the implementation of a programme by comparing official records with ground realities.

Audit of local self-government institutions is a **States subject** and the primary (external) audit of PRIs and ULBs is with the **State Local Funds Audit Department (LFAD)**, or with the designated auditors as specified in the State laws.

#### 1.6. COUNCIL FOR ADVANCEMENT OF PEOPLE'S ACTION AND RURAL TECHNOLOGY (CAPART)

- It **chaired by the Union Minister for Rural Development**, was launched for sustainable development of rural areas.
- It is an autonomous body registered under the Societies Registration Act 1860.
- It works as a nodal agency for catalyzing and coordinating the emerging partnership between voluntary organizations and the Government.

#### 1.7. INQUISITORIAL SYSTEM

- The government is considering revisiting the **Malimath Committee report** on reforms in the criminal justice system (CJS).
- One of the important recommendations of the committee is borrowing from inquisitorial system in countries such as Germany and France.
- It is a **legal system** where the court or a part of the court is actively involved in investigating the facts of the case.
- This is opposed to an **adversarial system**, usually followed in India, where the role of the court is primarily that of an impartial referee between the prosecution and the defence.

#### 1.8. E-SAMIKSHA

- E-Samiksha is an **online monitoring and compliance mechanism** developed by Cabinet secretariat with technical help from National Informatics Centre.
- It is used for **tracking the progress on projects & policy initiatives** and follow up actions of various ministries by cabinet secretary and Prime Minister on a **real-time basis**.
- Central government departments have been asked to work out specific targets to be achieved by 2022 which will be monitored by PM under **e-Samiksha platform**.

#### 1.9. INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON PROGRAM

- India is participating in the current phase of International Comparison Programme (ICP) with reference to 2017.
- ICP is a global statistical initiative led by **World Bank** under the auspices of the **United Nations Statistical Commission**.
- It supports inter-country comparisons of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and its components, in terms of PPP (Purchasing Power Parity).
- The data collection of prices in rural and urban areas will be taken up by **Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MOSPI)** all over the country.



### 1.10. MISCELLANEOUS TITBITS

- Educational trusts and societies seeking minority status will now be required to **register as non-governmental organisation with the NITI Aayog**, whether they are seeking government aid or not.
- The Government introduced a new app called **UPaAI (unified planning and analysis interface)** or ‘solution’ in English, which will help the members of parliament to track the development work in their states. It will be monitored by PMO.
- A new training programme **Comprehensive Online Modified Modules on Induction**

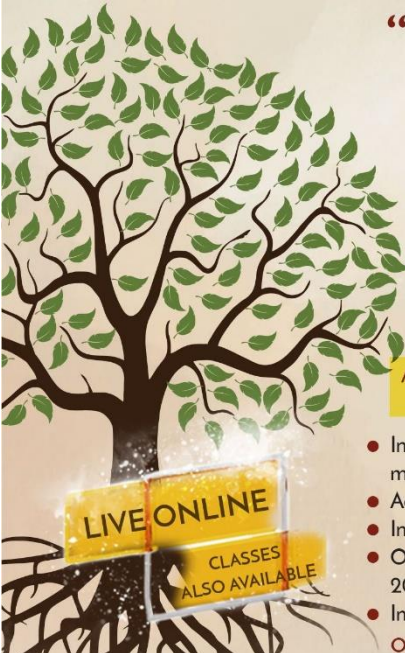

Training (COMMIT) for State Government officials has been launched.

- The COMMIT programme has been developed by DoPT **in collaboration with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**. It will supplement the existing ITP (Induction Training Program) launched in 2014-15 for newly recruited state Government officials to develop in them Generic & Domain specific competencies.
- **Access to Justice Project for Marginalized Persons** is being implemented by **Department of Justice and United Nation Development Programme (UNDP)**.

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<b>15 May</b>	<b>15 May</b>	<b>15 May</b>			<b>15 May</b>

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## 2. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### 2.1. INDIA-PAKISTAN

The International Court of Justice said that India should have been granted consular access to Kulbhushan Jadhav as per the Vienna Convention.

#### Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, 1963

- It defines the guidelines for consular relations between the independent countries.
- A **consul normally operates** out of an embassy in a different country and performs two functions: (1) protecting the interests of the country and the countrymen of the consul, and (2) furthering the commercial and economic relations between the two countries.
- They are afforded most of the same privileges, including a variation of diplomatic immunity called consular immunity, but these protections are not as extensive.

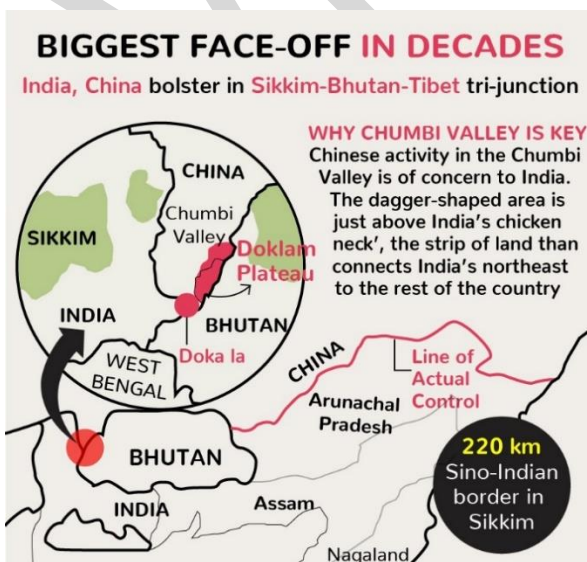
#### Related information - Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, 1961

- It is an international treaty of 1961 which gives a **framework for diplomatic relations** between independent countries.
- It **specifies the privileges of a diplomatic mission** that enable diplomats to perform their functions without fear of coercion or harassment by the host country. It forms the legal basis for diplomatic immunity.

India is a party to both the above conventions.

### 2.2. INDIA-CHINA

Putting behind the Doklam standoff, India and China agreed to move forward in their ties.



#### About Doklam

- It is a strategically vital 269 square km patch of Bhutan's territory that Beijing laid claim to in the 1980s.
- It is an area with a plateau and a valley, lying between **Tibet's Chumbi Valley** to the north, **Bhutan's Ha Valley** to the east and India's Sikkim state to the west.
- This was the **first time that India used troops to protect Bhutan's territorial interests.**

#### Important passes along India-China border (from west to east)

- J & K - Aghil Pass, Chang La
- Himachal Pradesh - Shipki La
- Uttarakhand - Thaga La, Niti Pass, Lipu Lekh
- Sikkim - Nathu La, Jelep La
- Arunachal Pradesh - Bum La, Diphu Pass

### 2.3. MEKONG GANGA COOPERATION (MGC)

India has been calling for expanding the areas of cooperation among the member countries of the Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) bloc.

- MGC is an initiative by six countries – India and five ASEAN countries, namely, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam for cooperation in tourism, culture, education, as well as transport and communications.
- It was launched in 2000.

### 2.4. UNSC REFORM

India has demanded transparency in the UN Security Council reform process at the plenary meeting of the UN General Assembly.

#### What is UNSC Reform agenda?

It entails discussions on following areas (has been on continuous annual consideration since 1993):

- Categories of membership
- The question of the veto held by the five permanent members
- Regional representation
- Size of an enlarged Council and its working methods and
- The Security Council-General Assembly relationship.

#### G-4 Nations

- It comprises of Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan and they support each other's bids for permanent seats on the UNSC.



### Uniting for Consensus (UfC) or Coffee Club

- UfC is a movement to counter the bids for permanent seats proposed by G-4.
- It demands that a consensus must be reached first on the form and size of the Security Council before expanding it.
- It is led by Italy and includes Pakistan, South Korea, Canada, Argentina and some other countries.

## 2.5. UN PARTNERSHIP FUND

India has pledged an additional USD 100 million towards the **UN partnership fund** at the 2017 UN Pledging Conference for Development Activities.

- The first project from the fund is being executed in partnership with seven Pacific Island countries. The fund has also identified 15 more projects.
- India is also contributing USD 10.582 million to various other UN programmes.

The **India-UN Development Partnership Fund (UNDPF)** is a dedicated facility within the **United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation** established in 2017.

It supports Southern-owned and led, demand-driven, and transformational sustainable development projects across the developing world, with a focus on least developed countries and small island developing states.

United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), hosted by **UNDP since 1974**, was established by the UN General Assembly with a mandate to advocate for and coordinate South-South and triangular cooperation (collaboration and partnerships between South-South-North countries) on a global and UN system-wide basis.

## 2.6. UN-HABITAT

India has been unanimously elected as the president of the UN-Habitat. On behalf of India, Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation Minister will preside over the deliberations of the 58-member Governing Council (GC) of the UN-Habitat for the next two years.

### About UN Habitat

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) is the United Nations agency for human settlements and sustainable urban development.

- It was established in 1978 as an outcome of the First UN Conference on Human Settlements and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat I) held in Vancouver, Canada in 1976.
- UN-Habitat maintains its headquarters at the United Nations Office at **Nairobi, Kenya**.

- It is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all.
- It is a member of the United Nations Development Group.
- The mandate of UN-Habitat derives from the Habitat Agenda, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in Istanbul, Turkey, in 1996.
- Since the UN-Habitat came into being in 1978, it is the third time that India has been elected to lead this organisation after 2007 and 1988.

## 2.7. MULTILATERAL EXPORT CONTROL REGIMES

India recently became member of Wassenaar Arrangement and Australia Group.

There are four Multilateral Export Control Regimes. India is a member of 3, except the Nuclear Suppliers Group. While China is not a member of any export control regimes except NSG.

### 1. Wassenaar Arrangement

- It is a multilateral export control regime (MECR) to **promote transparency and greater responsibility** in transfers of Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies.
- It was established in 1996 as a successor to Cold War Era Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls and is headquartered in Vienna, Austria.
- It has 42 members with India being the newest entrant. All the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council barring China are signatories of the WA.
- It works according to **Wassenaar Control List** under which members agree to exchange information on sensitive dual-use goods and technologies and report on such transfers and denials of controlled items to non-participants.

- India had declared a Special Chemicals, Organisms, Materials, Equipment and Technologies (**SCOMET**) list.
- Through SCOMET list India listed its dual use technologies under its Foreign Trade Policy to make India's export controls in line with the Wassenaar Arrangement.

### 2. Australia Group (AG)

- It was **formed in 1985** in response to use of chemical weapons by Iraq in Iran-Iraq war of 1984.



- It is a **Multilateral Export Control Regime** and an informal forum of 43 countries (Including EU) which, through the harmonisation of export controls, seeks to ensure that **exports do not contribute to the development of chemical or biological weapons.**
  - Coordination of national export control measures also assists member countries to fulfil their obligations under the **Chemical Weapons Convention** and the **Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.**
  - It issues **Australia group Common Control Lists** related to chemical weapon precursors, Dual- Use chemical and biological related technologies, Human and Animal pathogens etc.
3. **Missile Technology Control Regime**
- It is an informal and voluntary partnership among 35 countries to prevent the proliferation of missile and unmanned aerial vehicle technology capable of carrying above 500 kg payload for more than 300 km.
  - It was established in April 1987 by the G7 countries- Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.
4. **Nuclear Suppliers Group**
- It is a group of nuclear supplier countries that seeks to contribute to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons through the implementation of two sets of Guidelines for nuclear exports and nuclear-related exports.
  - The guidelines also contain the so-called “Non-Proliferation Principle,” adopted in 1994, whereby a supplier, notwithstanding other provisions in the NSG Guidelines, authorises a transfer only when satisfied that the transfer would not contribute to the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

#### Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)

- It is a multilateral treaty that bans chemical weapons and requires their destruction within a specified period of time.
- It was adopted in 1992 by **UN Conference on Disarmament** and came into force in 1997
- It is implemented by the **Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)** headquartered in Hague.
- **India is a signatory to CWC since 1993** and destroyed its stockpile of Chemical weapons by

2009 becoming third country (after South Korea and Albania) in the world to do so.

- **Egypt, North Korea, Palestine and Sudan** are the only countries that have not signed to the convention.
- **CWC prohibits:**
  - Developing, producing, acquiring, stockpiling, or retaining chemical weapons.
  - The direct or indirect transfer of chemical weapons.
  - Chemical weapons use or military preparation for use.
  - Assisting, encouraging, or inducing other states to engage in CWC-prohibited activity.
  - The use of riot control agents “as a method of warfare.”

#### Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC or BWC)

- It is a **legally binding treaty** that outlaws biological arms.
- It was adopted by UN in 1972 and came into force in 1975.
- It bans-
  - The development, stockpiling, acquisition, retention, and production of
    - ✓ Biological agents and toxins "of types and in quantities that have no justification for prophylactic, protective or other peaceful purposes;"
    - ✓ Weapons, equipment, and delivery vehicles "designed to use such agents or toxins for hostile purposes or in armed conflict."
  - The transfer of or assistance with acquiring the agents, toxins, weapons, equipment, and delivery vehicles described above.
- India signed the convention in 1973 and ratified it in 1974.

#### 2.8. HAGUE CODE OF CONDUCT (HCOC)

- **HCOC or International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation** was established in 2002.
- HCoC is a voluntary, legally non-binding international confidence building and transparency measure that seeks to prevent the proliferation of ballistic missiles that are capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction (WMD).
- Code is meant **to supplement the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR).**
- Under the Code, States make politically binding commitments to curb the proliferation of WMD-capable ballistic missiles and to exercise maximum restraint in developing, testing, and deploying such missiles

- Code is an agreement between States on how they should “conduct” their trade in missiles and does not call for the destruction of any missiles.
- **India joined the HCOC** on 1 June 2016 and total number of signatories of HCOC is 138.
- China, Pakistan, Israel and Iran are not its member

## 2.9. NUCLEAR WEAPON PROHIBITION TREATY (NWPT)

Over 120 countries in the United Nations voted to adopt the first-ever global treaty to ban nuclear weapons.

### Details

- The new treaty outlaws the **entire range of activity relating to the production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons.**
- The most central provision is Article 1(d) which **categorically prohibits the use of nuclear weapons** or a threat to that effect, under all circumstances.
- The treaty will be open for signature to all States at UN Headquarters in September and enter into **force 90 days after it has been ratified by at least 50 countries.**
- India and other nuclear-armed nations: the United States, Russia, Britain, China, France, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel had not participated in the negotiations.

### India's Position

- **India also maintained that the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament (CD)** is the single multilateral disarmament negotiation forum.

### Conference on Disarmament

- It was formed in 1979 as the single multilateral disarmament negotiation forum of the international community.
- It is the successor to the Ten-Nation Committee on Disarmament (TNDC), Geneva, 1960; the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament (ENDC), Geneva, 1962-68; and the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (CCD), Geneva, 1969-78.
- The CD and its predecessors have negotiated multilateral arms control, nonproliferation, and disarmament agreements such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Environmental Modification and Seabed treaties, the Biological and Toxic Weapons Convention (BTWC), etc.
- India is one of its 65 members

## 2.10. INDIA-WIESBADEN CONFERENCE 2018

India hosted the India-Wiesbaden Conference, 2018 with the theme- **Securing Global Supply Chains through Government-Industry Partnerships towards Effective Implementation of UNSC Resolution 1540.**

### Details

- The conference was held in cooperation with Ministry of External Affairs, Government of Germany and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA).
- The Conference provides an opportunity to participants to **share experiences** on their export control systems and to identify legal & technical assistance, action plans & challenges in national implementation of UNSC 1540.
- Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) is the industry partner for the event.

**UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)** is an Office of the United Nations Secretariat established in January 1998 as the Department for Disarmament Affairs

- Its goal is to promote nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and the strengthening of the disarmament regimes in respect to other weapons of mass destruction, chemical and biological weapons.
- It also promotes disarmament efforts in the area of conventional weapons, especially landmines and small arms, which are often the weapons of choice in contemporary conflicts.

## 2.11. INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANISATION (IMO)

India has been re-elected to the Council of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) under Category “B” for two years (2018-19).

### International Maritime Organisation

- IMO is a specialized **United Nations agency** which is committed towards **safe, secure and efficient shipping** on clean ocean and plays an important role to create fair, effective and universally accepted regulatory framework.
- It is headquartered in **London**, United Kingdom, the IMO has **172 Member States and three Associate Members.**

### India and IMO

- India was one of the earliest members of IMO and has ratified over 34 IMO conventions and protocols and joined as a member state in 1959.

- India serves IMO with **expert manpower** whenever required. For example, Indian auditors serve **Voluntary IMO Member State Audit Scheme (VIMSAS)**.

#### Important Conventions

- **International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments (BWM)**: It came into force in September 2017 and aims to prevent spread of harmful aquatic organisms from one region to another by establishing standards for management of ships' ballast water and sediments.
- **International Convention on Civil Liability for Bunker Oil Pollution Damage (BUNKER)**: It aims to provide adequate, prompt and effective compensation to the people who are affected by the damages caused due to oil spills from the ships carrying oil in their bunkers.
- **International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974**: It aims to specify minimum standards for construction, equipment and operation of ships, compatible with their safety.

#### India's Maritime Initiatives

- Ratified **SOLAS Convention** for safety of merchant ships.
- Took active initiative in High Risk Area in Indian Ocean along with IMO and Contact Group on Piracy on the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS).
- It has also deposited with the ILO, instrument of ratification of the **Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention (revised), 2003** and **Maritime Labour Convention, 2006**.

## 2.12. AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (AFDB)

The 52nd Annual Meetings of the African Development bank was held in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

- This was the first time that the Annual Meetings of AfDB were being held in India.

#### About AfDB

- The African Development Bank Group (AfDB) or Banque Africaine de Developpment (BAD) is a **multilateral development finance institution**.
- It was founded in 1964 and comprises three entities: The African Development Bank, the African Development Fund and the Nigeria Trust Fund.
- Its **mission is to fight poverty and improve living conditions** on the continent through promoting the investment of public and private capital in projects and programs that are likely to contribute to the economic and social development of the region.

- The meeting in Gandhinagar is the fourth time that the Annual Meetings of AfDB are being held outside Africa.
- The next meeting of AfDB is scheduled to be held in Busan, South Korea in 2018.
- **India joined the African Development Bank (AfDB) in 1983**. It is a non-regional member of the Bank.

## 2.13. INDIAN TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION (ITEC)

India has been involved in capacity-building and offering technical assistance to developing countries in the Global South under the **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)**.

#### About ITEC

- It was instituted by a decision of the Indian Cabinet on 15 September 1964 as a bilateral programme of assistance of the Government of India.
- DPA-II Division of Development Partnership Administration (DPA) in the Ministry of External Affairs is the nodal division for handling all capacity building programmes.
- The program has five components: Training in India of ITEC nominees; project and feasibility studies and consultancy services for a country's particular needs or projects; deputation of Indian experts in whatever needed capacity abroad; and aid for disaster relief.
- The ITEC programme, along with its sister programme SCAAP (Special Commonwealth African Assistance Programme) and Technical Cooperation Scheme of Colombo Plan, is a visible symbol of India's role and contribution to South-South cooperation.

#### Related info

##### Colombo Plan

- The Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic and Social Development in Asia and the Pacific was conceived at the Commonwealth Conference held in Colombo, Sri Lanka in January 1950 and was launched on 1 July 1951.
- It was **established by** Australia, Canada, India, Pakistan, New Zealand, Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom and currently has expanded to include 26-member countries including non-Commonwealth countries and countries belonging to regional groupings such as ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations) and SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation).



- It is a partnership concept of **self-help and mutual-help** in development aimed at socio-economic progress of its member countries.

## 2.14. SOUTH ASIA COOPERATIVE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM (SACEP)

An MoU has been approved by Cabinet between India and SACEP for cooperation on the response to Oil and Chemical Pollution in the South Asian Seas Region.

### About SACEP

- It is an inter-governmental organization, established in 1982 by the governments of South Asia to promote and support protection, management and enhancement of the **environment in the region**.
- It also serves as the secretariat of South Asian Seas Programme (SASP).
- The Governments of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are the members of SACEP.

### South Asian Seas Programme

It is one of the 18 Regional Seas Programmes of UNEP. The South Asian Seas Action Plan was adopted in March 1995 and today enjoys the unqualified support of the region's five countries (Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka).

## 2.15. MISCELLANEOUS TITBITS

- Jordan has recently launched the **Aqaba process** to promote deradicalisation in which India is an active participant.
- Recently, a tripartite MoU was signed between India, Russia and Bangladesh for development of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant on Padma river in Bangladesh. It is the first nuclear reactor in Bangladesh and will be built by Russia's **State Atomic Energy Corporation Rosatom** and the **Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL)** will assist in construction, installation and infrastructural assignments. It is the **first initiative under an Indo-Russian deal** to undertake atomic energy projects in third country.
- Australia abolished the subclass **457 visa category**, popular among skilled overseas workers, especially Indians. It has been replaced by **Temporary Skill Shortage (TSS)** visa which would help enable hiring of overseas employees.
- Recently, North Korea and South Korea signed **Panmunjom Declaration** which envisages denuclearisation of Korean peninsula, a peace treaty, reunion programs for families and creation of a demilitarised zone.

# फाउंडेशन कोर्स सामान्य अध्ययन 2020

प्रारंभिक एवं मुख्य परीक्षा

## इनोवेटिव क्लासरूम प्रोग्राम के घटक



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### 3. ECONOMICS

#### 3.1. INFORMATION UTILITY UNDER INSOLVENCY AND BANKRUPTCY CODE

National e-Governance Services Ltd (NeSL) became **India's first information utility (IU)** for bankruptcy cases under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code 2016.

##### What is Information Utility?

- It is an information network which would store financial data like borrowings, default and security interests etc. of firms.
- It is mandatory for financial creditors to provide financial information to the information utility. Hence, database and records maintained by them would help lenders in taking informed decisions about credit transactions.
- Information available with the utility can be used as evidence in bankruptcy cases before the National Company Law Tribunal

#### 3.2. DOMESTIC-SYSTEMATICALLY IMPORTANT BANKS

- RBI listed HDFC as Domestic – Systematically Important Bank (DSIB).
- DSIBs are also referred to as “**Too Big To Fail**” (TBTF) because of their size, cross-jurisdictional activities, complexity and lack of substitute and interconnection.
- Banks whose assets cross **2% of the GDP** are considered DSIBs. If these banks fail, they can have a disruptive effect on the economy.
- They are domestically identified by Central Banks of a country and globally by **BASEL committee on banking supervision**.

#### 3.3. PRIORITY SECTOR LENDING

- Recently, RBI has revamped PSL norms for MSMEs.

Banks	PSL Norms
Domestic scheduled commercial banks and Foreign banks with 20 branches and above	40 percent of Adjusted Net Bank Credit or Credit Equivalent Amount of Off-Balance Sheet Exposure, whichever is higher.
Foreign banks with less than 20 branches	40 percent of Adjusted Net Bank Credit or Credit Equivalent Amount of Off-Balance Sheet Exposure, whichever is higher; to be achieved in a phased manner by 2020.

- Categories under priority sector: 1. Agriculture, 2. Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises; 3. Export Credit; 4. Education; 5. Housing; 6. Social Infrastructure; 7. Renewable Energy; and 8. Others
- From now on, all loans to micro small and medium enterprises (MSME) will henceforth qualify as priority sector lending against the earlier criteria of loans up to 10 Cr.
- From FY 2018-19 the foreign banks with 20 branches and above will have to ensure that:
  - Minimum 8% of Adjusted Net Bank Credit (ANBC) or Credit Equivalent Amount of Off-Balance Sheet Exposure (CEOBE), whichever is higher, is earmarked for lending to the small and marginal farmers.
  - Minimum 7.5 per cent of ANBC or CEOBE, whichever is higher, is earmarked for lending to micro-enterprises.
- The loan limits per borrower for Micro/ Small and Medium Enterprises (Services) has been removed for classification under priority sector.
- Moreover, RBI allows trading in **Priority Sector Lending Certificates (PSLCs)** whereby banks can buy and sell such credits to manage their priority sector lending requirements.

#### 3.4. CHIT FUNDS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2018

- The Bill makes amendments to the Chit Funds Act, 1982, to facilitate orderly growth of the Chit Funds sector thereby enabling greater financial access of people.
- A chit fund is a type of saving scheme where a specified number of subscribers contribute payments in installment over a defined period.
- **Regulation:** being part of the Concurrent List of the Indian Constitution; both the centre and state can frame legislation regarding chit funds.
- RBI does not regulate the chit fund business. However, RBI can provide guidance to state governments on regulatory aspects like creating rules or exempting certain chit funds.
- SEBI regulates collective investment schemes. However, the **SEBI Act specifically excludes chit funds**.

### 3.5. QUALIFIED INSTITUTIONAL PLACEMENT (QIP)

- The SBI raised Rs. 15000 cr. through Qualified Institutional Placement.
- A QIP is a **capital raising tool** wherein a listed company can issue equity shares, fully and partly convertible debentures, or any security (other than warrants) that is convertible to equity shares.

### 3.6. COMMODITY OPTIONS

- Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) allowed commodity exchanges to introduce options trading for commodities which register high trade volumes.
- **Gold options were launched for the first time** in India on Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX) becoming the first commodity that the SEBI has approved for options trading in 14 years.
- The **National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange Ltd.** unveiled India's first agri-commodity option in guar seed designed as a **hedge for farmers to safeguard their price risk.**

- **Options:** are **derivative contracts** (which derive its value from some other asset e.g. Stock Options or Commodity Options) that give the buyer the right but not the obligation to buy or sell a specific asset at a specified price in future.
- **Call Option:** A Call is an options contract that gives the buyer the right to buy the underlying asset at the strike price at any time up to the expiration date
- **Put Option:** A put option is an option contract giving the owner the right, but not the obligation, to sell a specified amount of an underlying security at a specified price within a specified time.

#### Difference between Options and Futures

- Under both futures and options, an investor enters into a contract to buy (or sell) an asset at a pre-determined price within a certain time frame.
- However, under a future, an investor is obligated to buy or sell (as the case maybe) within the time frame while under options, he has the option not to.

### 3.7. MARKET INFRASTRUCTURE INSTITUTIONS

- SEBI constituted a committee under former RBI deputy governor **R. Gandhi** to review the norms for **Market Infrastructure Institutions (MII)**.
- Market Infrastructure Institutions (MII) are systemically important for the country's

financial development and serve as the infrastructure necessary for the securities market. They include stock exchanges, depositories and clearing corporations.

### 3.8. FINANCIAL SYSTEM STABILITY ASSESSMENT (FSSA)

- As part of Financial Sector Assessment Programme (FSAP), the IMF and WB has released the Financial System Stability Assessment (FSSA) and Financial Sector Assessment (FSA) for the Indian financial system.
- **Financial Sector Assessment Programme** is a joint program of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, which undertakes a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of a country's financial sector.
- It was launched in 1999 in the wake of the Asian financial crisis.

### 3.9. GOVERNMENT ABANDONS REVENUE DEFICIT TARGETING

- Budget 2018 proposed to stop setting targets on revenue deficit reduction from next year by bringing adequate amendments into the FRBM Act.
- **Revenue Deficit** refers to the excess of revenue expenditure over revenue receipts or the extent of borrowings used for revenue expenditure. It signifies if the day to day expenditure of the government can be met by its day to day income. **FRBM Act 2003** called for bringing this deficit to **absolute zero by 2008-09**
- **NK Singh (FRBM Review) Committee** recommended that government should focus on Public debt to GDP ratio as a medium-term anchor for fiscal policy in India.
- By comparing what a country owes with what it produces, the **debt-to-GDP ratio** indicates its ability to pay back its debts

### 3.10. FINANCIAL DATA MANAGEMENT CENTRE

- Government approved the creation of **Financial Data Management Centre (FDMC)** that would subsequently collect raw data directly from various financial regulators
- Creation of FDMC under the aegis of FSDC was first mooted by a committee headed by Ajay Tyagi. The same was echoed by the Finance Minister in Budget 2017-18.

- Such a data repository would serve to assist the **Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC)** in conducting research on systemic risk and system-wide trends

### 3.11. DISINVESTMENT

- Recently, a high-powered Committee has been set up to expedite strategic disinvestment of state-owned companies.
- **Disinvestment** refers to the government selling or liquidating its assets or stakes in PSE (public sector enterprise).
- **Strategic Disinvestment** is the sale of substantial portion of the Government shareholding of a central public sector enterprise (CPSE) of up to 50%, or such higher percentage along with transfer of management control.
- The **Department for investment and public asset management (DIPAM)** under Ministry of finance is the nodal agency for disinvestment
- Disinvestment proceeds can help the government fund its fiscal deficit.

#### National Investment Fund (NIF)

- It was constituted in 2005, to channelize the proceeds from disinvestment of Central Public Sector Enterprises
- It is a '**Public Account**' under the Government Accounts and the funds would remain there until withdrawn/invested for the approved purposes.
- The corpus of NIF was to be of a **permanent nature** and NIF was to be **professionally managed** to provide sustainable returns to the Government, without depleting the corpus.
- NIF can be used for following purposes
  - Subscribing to the shares being issued by the CPSE on rights basis
  - Preferential allotment of shares of the CPSE to promoters
  - Recapitalization of public sector banks and public sector insurance companies
  - Investment by Government in RRBs/IIFCL/NABARD/Exim Bank
  - Equity infusion in various Metro projects
  - Investment in Bhartiya Nabhikiya Vidyut Nigam Limited and Uranium Corporation of India Ltd.
  - Investment in Indian Railways towards capital expenditure.

### 3.12. FATCA IGA

- India and United States signed Inter Governmental Agreement (IGA) to implement the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) to Promote Transparency on Tax Matters.
- FATCA aims to obtain information on accounts held by U.S. taxpayers in other countries

### 3.13. GLOBAL FOREIGN EXCHANGE COMMITTEE

- India will soon get a seat in the newly constituted **Global Foreign Exchange Committee (GFXC)**.
- Global Foreign Exchange Committee is **forum of central bankers** and experts working towards promotion of a robust and transparent **forex market**.
- It has been established under the aegis of **BIS**.
- It comprises of public and private sector representatives from the foreign exchange committees of 16 international forex trading centres.

#### Bank of International Settlements (BIS)

- Headquartered at Basel it is the bank to central banks and aims to support global financial and monetary stability.
- It is owned by 60-member central banks representing countries from around the world.
- Founded in 1930 it is world's oldest financial organisation.

### 3.14. ORGANIC FOOD

- Recently, FSSAI issued regulation on organic food in country.
- FSSAI has defined
  - **Organic Agriculture:** A system of farm design and management to create an eco-system of agriculture production without the use of synthetic external inputs such as chemicals, fertilisers, pesticides and synthetic hormones or genetically modified organisms.
- **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006** was enacted to:
  - Consolidate multiple laws in the country relating to food safety and establish a single point reference system.
  - **Establish the FSSAI**, which formulates standards for food and regulates their manufacture, storage, and distribution, among others.



- **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW)** is the administrative Ministry for the implementation of FSSAI.
- The FSSAI along with the State Food Safety Authorities is responsible for monitoring and verifying the relevant requirements under the Act and its enforcement Mandatory labeling of Organic food
- The Act **does not apply to any** farmer, fisherman, farming operations, crops, livestock, aquaculture, supplies used/produced in farming, products of crops produced by a farmer/fisherman at initial production level.
- **Approval authority:** Organic food products should carry a certification mark or a quality assurance mark given by
  - National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP)
  - Participatory Guarantee System for India (PGS-India)
  - Voluntary logo from the FSSAI that marked its produce as 'organic.'
- **The Seeds Act, 1966:** Regulate the quality of certified seeds.
- **The Seeds Control Order, 1983:** regulates and licenses the sale of seeds;
- **New Policy on Seed Development 1988:** emphasis on import of seeds, export earnings and increasing farm income.
- **The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act, 2001** (PPVFR Act): protects the intellectual property rights of plant breeders.
- **National Seed Policy 2002** based on Varietal Development, Seed Production, Seed Distribution and Marketing by encouraging private sector as key actor, Infrastructure facility, Establishment of National Gene Fund.
- **National Seed Plan 2005:** Calls for a synergetic approach between agricultural educational institutions, Seed Companies and state government.

### 3.15. SEED INDUSTRY

- Recent reports highlighted that the Indian seed market achieved a growth rate of around 17% during 2009-2016.

#### Seed Industry in India

- India is the fifth largest seed market across the globe.
- The seed market is majorly contributed by non-vegetable seeds such as corn, cotton, paddy, wheat, sorghum, sunflower and millets.
- The production of seed passes through generation system; Breeder Seed-----Foundation Seed-----Certified Seed.
- Breeder Seeds are produced by Indian Council of Agricultural Research and Foundation and Certified Seeds are produced by National Seed Corporation (Miniratna).

#### Seed Replacement Ratio (SRR)

- It is a measure of how much of the total cropped area was sown with certified seeds in comparison to farm saved seeds.
- It represents the access of farmers to quality seed and directly proportional to productivity of farming.

#### Policy Initiatives

- Currently, the seed sector is governed by;

### 3.16. NEGOTIABLE WAREHOUSING RECEIPTS

- **Ministry of Food Processing Industries** has launched negotiable warehousing receipts in electronic format that farmers can use to avail of bank credit easily and without fear of losing or misusing it.
- Warehouse Receipts are documents issued by warehouses to depositors against the commodities deposited in the warehouses, for which the warehouse is the bailee.
- Warehouse Receipts may be **either non-negotiable or negotiable**. NWRs can be traded, sold, swapped and used as collateral to support borrowing.
- It is defined in the Warehousing (Development and Regulation) Act, 2007.
- NWR was launched first in 2011 and are regulated by the Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA).

### 3.17. CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

- Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) adopted three Codex standards for black, white and green pepper, cumin and thyme in Geneva.
- The Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) is an **intergovernmental body** with over 180 members, within the framework of the Joint Food Standards Programme.



- It was established by the **Food and Agriculture Organization** of the United Nations (FAO) and the **World Health Organization (WHO)** in 1963 with the purpose of protecting the health of consumers and ensuring fair practices in the food trade.
- Codex food safety standards are also referred in the **WTO's Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures (SPS Agreement)**.

### 3.18. START-UP SANGAM INITIATIVE

- Start-up Sangam initiative was launched by **Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas**.
- It was launched for bringing in **innovations and disruptions in the technology** in heavy oil and gas industry.
- Under the initiative a **corpus of 320 crore** has been put together by contribution of various PSUs like - India Oil Corporation, ONGC, and Engineers India etc.
- It will be used to fund more than 30 start ups for the next three years.
- The selected start-ups will work in various energy fields such as converting **waste plastics to petroleum fuels, solar stove, and multi-purpose fuel from agricultural waste biomass and leak detectors for liquefied natural gas (LNG) cylinders** etc.
- It is expected to **reduce fuel import dependence** through innovations in alternative fuels.

### 3. 19. NATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY COUNCIL

- It is an autonomous organization under the administrative control of the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion to promote productivity culture in India.
- Established as a registered society in 1958 by the Government of India, it is a tri-partite non-profit organization with equal representation from the government, employers and workers' organizations, apart from technical and professional institutions including members from local productivity councils and chamber of commerce on its Governing Body.
- It provides training, consultancy and undertakes research in the area of productivity.

- It carries out the programmes of the Tokyo based Asian Productivity Organization (APO), an inter-governmental body of which the Government of India is a founder member.
- It has been appointed as one of the National Monitoring and Implementation Unit (NMIU) for the implementation of Lean Manufacturing Competitiveness Scheme under National Manufacturing Competitiveness programme.

### 3.20. NATIONAL HIGHWAY INVESTMENT PROMOTION CELL

- National Highways Authority of India has created the **National Highways Investment Promotion Cell (NHIPC)**.
- The cell will engage with global institution investors, constructions companies, developers and fund managers in order to build investor participation in road infrastructure projects.

### 3.21. PPP MODELS

- PPP Models Used Under Road Construction in India
  - **BOT (Build-Operate-Transfer):** The private partner is responsible to design, build, operate (during the contracted period) and transfer back the facility to the public sector. The government starts paying to the private party after the commercial launch of the project. DBFOT (Design-Build-Finance- Operate-Transfer) is one of its variants.
  - **BOT-Toll:** Similar to BOT, the only difference is that the private party is allowed to recover its investment through toll collection. In this case, government does not pay anything to the private party.
  - **Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) model:** Procurement of raw material and construction costs are met by the government. The private sector's participation is limited to the provision of engineering expertise.
  - **Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM):** It is a mix of BOT and EPC models. The government will contribute the 40% cost of the project in the first five years through annual payments. The remaining 60% is paid after the completion of the project as variable annuity depending upon value of the assets created.

### 3.22. CENTRAL ROAD FUND

- The Lok Sabha passed the Central Road Fund (Amendment) Bill, 2017.
- The Bill seeks to amend the Central Road Fund Act, 2000 to allocate a share of cess towards the development of **inland waterways**.
- The Central Road Fund (CRF) is a **non-lapsable fund** created under Central Road Fund Act 2000.
- It is credited with the **cess collected on high speed diesel oil and petrol**.

### 3.23. INDIA ROAD ASSESSMENT PROGRAMME

- Recently International Road Assessment Programme has launched India Road Assessment Programme (India-RAP) that will rate highways' safety levels and seeks to eliminate the most unsafe roads
- **International Road Assessment Program (IRAP)** is a charity which is dedicated towards preventing road accidents and making roads safe.
- The IndiaRAP programme is being supported by FedEx Express and will be hosted by the Asian Institute of Transport Development.
- It will provide road safety rating by using **IRAP's evidence based Star Rating methodology and investment planning tools** which will provide a simple and objective measure of **the level of safety**. (1 being worst and 5 being best rated roads).
- **IndiaRAP** will seek to eliminate one and two star rated roads and promote construction and design of safe and smart roads in the country.

### 3.24. INTERNATIONAL ROAD TRANSPORTS (TIR) CONVENTION

- India ratified **United Nations TIR** convention in June, 2017 becoming its 71st signatory
- TIR stands for Transports Internationaux Routiers or **International Road Transport**
- It is an **international transit system** under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)
- It facilitates **seamless movement of goods** within and amongst the parties to the Convention
- The TIR system **secures customs duties and taxes and provides a robust guarantee**

**mechanism**, thereby reducing **trade transaction costs**, and **facilitating higher growth** of intra-regional and inter-regional trade.

### 3.25. RAIL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

- Government has approved to setup a Rail Development Authority (RDA) based in Delhi
- It will act within the parameters of the Railway Act 1989 and make recommendations to the Railway Ministry on passenger and freight fares.
- It will be an independent body. The provisions of a separate budget, and the appointment and removal process would help maintain its independence.
- **Regulatory functions:** pricing of services commensurate with costs, protection of consumer interests, ensuring competition, creating a positive environment for investment, and providing a framework for non-discriminatory open access to the dedicated freight corridor.
- **Developmental functions:** promote efficiency and economy and absorption of new technology, market development, benchmarking of services against international norms, and human resources development.
- **Composition of the authority**
  - It will have a chairman and three members with a fixed term of five years each.
  - The Central government will appoint the chairman and members by choosing from a panel of names recommended by the search and selection committee chaired by cabinet secretary.

### 3.26. NEW METRO RAIL POLICY 2016

- Union Cabinet approved the New Metro Rail Policy which focuses on compact urban development, cost reduction and multi-modal integration
- It makes PPP (Public Private Partnership) component mandatory for availing central assistance for new metro projects.
- It mandates **Transit Oriented Development (TOD)** to promote compact and dense urban development along metro corridors.
- New metro projects will be approved in line with global best practices, on the basis of

- 'Economic Internal Rate of Return of 14%', a change from the existing 'Financial Internal Rate of Return of 8%.
- The policy also makes it mandatory for state governments to set up a statutory body called as **Unified Metropolitan Transport Authority**.

### 3.27. COASTAL ECONOMIC ZONE

- Recently, government has given the approval for setting up India's first mega coastal economic zone (CEZ) at Jawaharlal Nehru Port (JNPT) in Maharashtra.
- The CEZ will stretch along north Konkan region spread across Nashik, Thane, Mumbai, Pune and Raigarh.
- This is the part of setting up of 14 mega CEZs under the **National Perspective Plan of the Sagarmala Programme**.
- **Coastal Economic Zone** is conceptualised as a spatial-economic region which could extend along **300-500 km of coastline** and around **200-300 km inland** from the coastline. Each CEZ will be an agglomeration of coastal districts within a State.

### 3.28. UNNATI PROJECT

- Under Project UNNATI 86 out of 116 initiatives have been implemented for various major ports.
- It was launched by Ministry of Shipping with following objectives:
  - Benchmark operational and financial performance of the 12 major ports with selected Indian private ports and best-in-class international ports for identifying improvement areas.
  - Undertake capability maturity assessment for key processes and functional capabilities and identify gap and areas for further strengthening
  - Detailed deep-dive diagnosis and root cause analysis for the identified opportunity areas in each of the 12 major ports to understand underlying reasons for performance bottlenecks.
  - Develop practical and actionable solutions on the basis of root cause findings, and develop a comprehensive improvement roadmap for each of the 12 major ports.

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<b>11 June</b> 1 PM	<b>6 July</b>

- Approach is to build fundamental concepts and analytical ability in students to enable them to answer questions of Preliminary as well as Mains examination
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## 4. ENVIRONMENT

### 4.1. MINAMATA CONVENTION

Recently, the Union Cabinet approved the proposal for ratification of Minamata Convention on Mercury enabling India to become a Party of the Convention.

- The approval entails ratification of the Minamata Convention on Mercury along with flexibility for continued use of mercury-based products and processes involving mercury compound up to 2025.
- The first Conference of the Parties (CoP) under the Minamata Convention took place in Geneva, Switzerland in 2017 which India attended as observer.

#### Details about the convention

- The Minamata Convention on Mercury is **first global legally binding** treaty to protect human health and the environment from the **adverse effects of mercury**.
- It was agreed in Geneva, Switzerland in January 2013 and came into force in August, 2017.
- The Minamata Convention requires party nations to reduce and where feasible eliminate the use and release of mercury from emissions, mining, general usage etc.
- The Convention also addresses interim storage of mercury and its disposal once it becomes waste, sites contaminated by mercury as well as health issues.

### 4.2. BONN CLIMATE MEET

- The 23rd meeting of the Conference of the Parties (**COP-23**) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (**UNFCCC**) concluded in Bonn, Germany.
- **Other Initiative Started during the COP-23**
  - **Powering Past Coal alliance:** It is initiated by the UK and Canada. 15 countries have joined an alliance to phase out coal-based power by 2030.
  - **Below 50 initiative:** It was launched by World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD). The goal is to create the demand and market for those sustainable fuels that produce at least 50% less CO<sub>2</sub> emissions than conventional fossil fuels.

### 4.3. ECOSYSTEMS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

- India signed **Global Environment Facility (GEF) Grant** agreement with the World Bank for “**Ecosystems Service Improvement Project**”.
- **Aim:** To protect, restore and enhance India’s forest cover and help in maintaining ecological balance
- The Project will be implemented in the states of **Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh** for 5 years by **MOEFCC**

### 4.4. UN OCEAN CONFERENCE

- Recently, **first United Nations Ocean Conference** was held in New York, co-sponsored by Fiji and Sweden under the theme, “**Our oceans, our future: partnering for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14**”.

#### Global Ocean Commission

It is an international initiative that was launched in 2013. It raises awareness and promotes action to address the degradation of the ocean and help restore it to full health and productivity. Its focus is on the high seas, the vast ocean areas **that lie beyond the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs)** of individual states.

### 4.5. GLOBAL CLEAN SEAS CAMPAIGN

Recently Indonesia declared a “Garbage emergency” as part of Global Clean Seas campaign.

#### About Clean Seas Campaign

- It is a global UN Environment initiative launched in 2017 to increase global awareness of the need to reduce marine plastic litter.
- The campaign is inspired from Mumbai’s Versova beach clean-up programme of Afroz Shah who also received Champions of the Earth award for the same. Champions of the Earth award was launched in 2005 and is UN’s highest environmental honour.

### 4.6. INDIA STATE OF FOREST REPORT 2017

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) released the biennial India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2017, prepared by Forest Survey of India (FSI).



**Forest Survey of India**

- It is a national organization, under **MoEFCC**, responsible for assessment and monitoring of the forest resources of the country regularly.
- It is also engaged in providing the services of training, research & extension.

**Key findings**

- **Forest cover:**
  - **India is ranked 10th in the world**, with 24.4% of land area under forest (21.53%) and tree cover. The target is to achieve 33% of area under forest cover.
  - There is an increase of 1% (8,021 sq km) in the total forest and tree cover of the country, compared to the previous assessment in 2015.
  - The **maximum increase in forest cover has been observed in Very Dense Forest (VDF)** followed by increase in forest cover in open forest (OF).
  - The agro-forestry and private forestry has also shown expansion. There is also an increase in timber production in 'Trees outside Forests' (TOF) category.
- **Forest cover in states:**
  - 15 states/UTs have above 33% of geographical area under forest cover.
  - 7 States/UTs have more than 75% forest cover: Mizoram, Lakshadweep, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Manipur.
  - The three leading States with maximum Forest cover (in terms of area): Madhya Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.
  - States with highest Forest cover in terms of percentage geographical area: Lakshadweep (90.33%), Mizoram (86.27%) and Andaman & Nicobar Islands (81.73%)
- **Global trend:**
  - India has shown an increasing trend in the forest and tree cover, in comparison to the global trend of decreasing forest cover during the last decade.
  - As per the latest FAO report, India is placed 8th in the list of top ten nations reporting the greatest annual net gain in forest area.
- **Carbon stock:** There is an increase in the carbon stock of India bringing it to total 7083 million tonnes.
- **Forest fires:** In most of the years, maximum number of forest fires occurs in open forest(OF) followed by Moderately Dense Forests (MDF). However, in 2012 and 2016

(severe fire years), the proportion of forest fires in MDF and VDF were higher compared to OF.

- **Mangrove:** Total mangrove forests have increased by 181sq kms. 7 out of the 12 mangrove states have shown an increase in mangrove cover and none of them show any negative change.
- **Bamboo Cover:** There has been an increase of 1.73 million ha in bamboo areas.
- **Water bodies inside forests** - The report observes that water bodies inside forest cover have increased by 2,647 sqkms during the last decade. Almost all the states have shown a positive change in water bodies.

**4.7. INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES**

Recently, **National Conference on the Status of Invasive Species in India** was organised by Zoological Survey of India and the Botanical Survey of India in which ZSI announced a list of alien invasive animal species.

**Findings of Zoological Survey of India:**

- **ZSI** has made a list of 157 species of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) out of which 58 are found on land and freshwater habitat and 99 are found in marine ecosystem.
- Common Alien Animal Species found in India are –
  - **African Apple Snail** – found in Andaman and Nicobar Island, now spread across the whole country
  - **Papaya Mealy Bug** – massively affected papaya crop in Assam, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu
  - **Cotton Mealy Bug** – threat to cotton crops in Deccan
  - **Amazon sailfin catfish** – responsible for destroying fish population in wetlands
  - **Orange Cup-Coral** – originated in Indo-East Pacific, now also found in Andaman and Nicobar Island, Gulf of Kutch, Kerala and Lakshadweep.
  - **Primrose Willow** -It is an aquatic plant native to Central and South America. It flourishes in sandy and mineral rich soil of wetlands. First seen in Karbi Anglong district of Assam and is now spreading in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, the Andaman & Nicobar Islands and West Bengal.

**Steps taken to control Invasive Alien Species (IAS)**

- **Article 8(h) of CBD and Aichi Target 9** aim to control or eradicate alien species which threaten ecosystems, habitats and species.
- **Global Invasive Species Program** is supporting to

implement **Article 8(h) of CBD** with IUCN as partner organization and also working to address the global threat to IAS.

- **IUCN's Invasive Species Specialist Group** has also been working to promote and facilitate the **exchange of IAS information and knowledge** across the globe and ensure linkages between policy making and flow of knowledge.
- **IUCN** has also developed a number of global databases which provide critical information on IAS such as **Global Invasive Species Database** and the **Global Register of Introduced and Invasive Species**.

#### 4.8. BAMBOO IS NO LONGER A TREE

Recently, President has cleared an ordinance amending the Indian Forest Act (IFA) 1972, to exempt bamboo grown in non-forest areas from the definition of trees.

- The amendment aims to **exempt bamboo grown in non-forest areas** from definition of tree, thereby dispensing with the requirement of felling/transit permit for its economic use.
- Bamboo, though, taxonomically a grass, was defined as a tree under the Indian Forest Act, 1927 which meant that the felling and transit of bamboo grown on forest as well non-forest land for economic use required permit. This was a major impediment for bamboo cultivation by farmers on non-forest land.
- However, bamboo grown in the forest areas shall continue to be governed by the provisions of Indian Forest Act, 1927.
- The amendment will greatly aid the **National Agro-Forestry & Bamboo Mission (NABM)**.

##### **National Agro-Forestry & Bamboo Mission (NABM)**

- It envisages promoting holistic growth of bamboo sector by adopting area-based, regionally differentiated strategy and to increase the area under bamboo cultivation and marketing.
- It is being implemented by the Department of Agriculture & Cooperation (DAC), Ministry of Agriculture as a sub scheme under the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH).

##### **The International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR)**

- INBAR connects a global network of partners from the government, private, and not-for-profit sectors in over 50 countries to define and implement a global agenda for sustainable development through bamboo and rattan.
- India is a Founding Member.

#### 4.9. GLOBAL WILDLIFE PROGRAM

Recently, India hosted Global Wildlife Program during which India's National Wildlife Action Plan

(NWAP) for the period 2017-2031 and Secure Himalaya were released.

##### **Global Wildlife Program**

- **"Global Partnership on Wildlife Conservation and Crime Prevention for sustainable development"** program also known as **Global Wildlife Program (GWP)** was launched in response to increasing crime against animals in natural habitat.
- It works towards **wildlife conservation and sustainable development** by fighting against illicit trafficking in wildlife through a holistic comprehensive approach.
- India is a partner country of Global Wildlife Program along with other Asian and African countries.

**Implementing Agencies:** World Bank Group, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) & Asian Development Bank (ADB).

**Other Collaborating Partners:** International Consortium to Combat Wildlife Crime (ICWC), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Secretariat, World Wildlife Fund (WWF), International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), TRAFFIC, WildAid.

##### **Priorities of Global Wildlife Program**

- Promoting community-based resource management, achieve biodiversity goals and tourism development
- Increasing knowledge sharing and enhance collaboration,
- Implement monitoring and evaluation framework
- Promote donor cooperation and ensure proper monitoring of international fund

##### **Secure Himalaya**

- The Ministry of Environment, forest and climate change **in collaboration with UNDP** has launched a six-year project to ensure conservation of biodiversity, land and forest resources in the high Himalayan ecosystem spread over four states in India.
- The project aims to: Sustain critical ecosystem services, Conserve vulnerable snow leopards and other endangered species and Improve knowledge, advocacy and information systems.

#### 4.10. NATIONAL WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN (NWAP) FOR 2017-2031

- **Important Components of NWAP 2017-2031**
  - strengthening and promoting the **integrated management of wildlife and their habitats**
  - adaptation to **climate change** and promoting integrated sustainable management of **aquatic biodiversity** in India

- promoting **eco-tourism, nature education and participatory management**
- strengthening **wildlife research** and monitoring of **development of human resources** in wildlife conservation
- **enabling policies and resources** for conservation of wildlife in India.
- The plan has adopted the **Landscape approach** rather than the earlier strategies more concentrated on national parks and wildlife sanctuaries.
- **The Landscape approach** is based on the importance of conservation of uncultivated flora and undomesticated fauna that had ecological value irrespective of their place of occurrence.
- Plan also highlights role of **private sector** in the wildlife protection by ensuring adequate fund flow from the **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) fund**.
- It also emphasizes upon preservation of **genetic diversity** and sustainable utilization of species and ecosystem.

#### 4.11. IMPORTANT BIRD AND BIODIVERSITY AREAS

Recently, BirdLife International has recognised three new sites in Goa and nine in Kerala as “Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas”.

- Newly identified IBAs of Kerala: Achencoil Forest Division; Anamudi Shola National Park; Camel’s Hump Mountain, Wayanad; Kurinjimala Wildlife Sanctuary; Malayattoor Reserve Forest; Mankulam Forest Division; Mathikettan Shola National Park; Muthikulam-Siruvani; Pampadum Shola National Park
- **In Goa:** Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary, Navelim Wetlands and Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Kerala IBAs are home to **three critically endangered species (IUCN status)**
  - White-rumped Vulture
  - Indian Vulture
  - Red-headed Vulture
- Goa harbours a good population of the **lesser adjutant** and the **Nilgiri wood pigeon**.
- The updated list has been published by the **Bombay Natural History Society**
- Site under **Important Bird and Biodiversity Area** does not ensure that the site gets legal protection or becomes inaccessible to people.

<b>Bird Life International</b>
● UK based, environment conservation, Non-Profit Organisation
● Identifies: <b>Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas</b>
● Each BirdLife Partner is an independent

environmental not-for-profit, or NGO.
● Publishes a quarterly magazine, <b>World Birdwatch</b> .
● Manage Red List of Birds for IUCN.

#### 4.12. BIODIVERSITY HERITAGE SITES

Recently, Ameenpur Lake became the first water body in the country to be declared a Biodiversity Heritage Site.

- It is located on the western fringes of Hyderabad in Telangana state.
- It is a man-made lake and was constructed during the reign of Ibrahim Qutab Shah, who ruled the kingdom of Golconda between 1550 and 1580.

##### Biodiversity Heritage Site (BHS)

- They are well defined areas that are unique, ecologically fragile ecosystems - terrestrial, coastal and inland waters and, marine having rich biodiversity comprising of any one or more of the following components:
  - Richness of wild as well as domesticated species or intra-specific categories.
  - High endemism,
  - Presence of rare and threatened species, keystone species, species of evolutionary significance,
  - Wild ancestors of domestic/ cultivated species or their varieties, past pre-eminence of biological components represented by fossil beds and
  - Having significant cultural, ethical or aesthetic values and are important for the maintenance of cultural diversity, with or without a long history of human association with them.
- Under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002 (BDA) the **State Government in consultation with local bodies** notifies Biodiversity Heritage Sites (BHS).
- Further, the State Government in consultation with the Central Government may frame rules for the management and conservation of BHS.
- The State Governments shall frame schemes for compensating or rehabilitating any person or section of people economically affected by such notification.

##### Other Biodiversity heritage sites

Name	Region	Importance
Nallur Tamarind Grove	Bengaluru	It is popularly believed to be a relic of the Chola Dynasty.



Hogrekan	Chikmagalur	The area has unique Shola vegetation and grass land and has a link with adjoining Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary and Yemmedode Tiger Reserve and serving as "Wildlife Corridor" between Kudremukha and Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary.
University of Agricultural Sciences, GKVK Campus, Bengaluru	Bengaluru	The GKVK campus is considered one of the greenest areas in Bengaluru.
Ambaraguda	Shimoga	It is located between Sharavathi Wild Life Sanctuary and Someshwara Wildlife Sanctuary. It has Shola vegetation which is primitive vegetation in the Western Ghat and also has grasslands.
Glory of Allapalli	Gadchiroli (Maharashtra)	It is a reserved forest being preserved as natural forest having biological, ethnical and historical values.
Tonglu under the Darjeeling Forest Division	BHS (West Bengal)	Darjeeling Conservation Areas
Dhotrey under the Darjeeling Forest Division	BHS (West Bengal)	Darjeeling Conservation Areas
Dialong Village	Tamenglong (Manipur)	---

#### 4.13. NEW WETLAND CONSERVATION RULES

Recently, Central government notified **Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017**.

##### Provision under the new rules

- **Definition of wetlands:** They are defined as "an area of marsh, fen, peatland or water; whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres.
- **Decentralisation of Power:** Under the new rules, the central government has empowered the states and union territories to identify and manage their wetlands.

- **Constitute State Wetlands Authority** in each State and union territories that will be headed by the State's environment minister.
- **Setting Up National Wetlands Committee:** it will replace Central Wetlands Regulatory Authority (CWRA), to monitor implementation of these rules and advise the Central Government on appropriate policies and action programmes for conservation and wise use of wetlands
- **Banned activities:** Certain activities are banned in notified wetland like setting up of industries, dumping of solid, electronic, hazardous and construction wastes, poaching of animals, conversion of wetland area into non-wetland purposes, encroachment and even construction of any permanent structure will also be banned at the notified wetlands.

#### 4.14. GREEN BUILDINGS LEED FOR CITIES

The **LEED for Cities** and **LEED for Communities** frameworks recently completed one year in December, 2017.

##### LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)

- It is an international certification run by U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), which **provides a framework to building owners and operators** for identifying and implementing **practical green building solutions**.
- It concentrates its efforts on improving performance across **five key areas** of environmental and human health: **energy efficiency, indoor environmental quality, materials selection, sustainable site development and water savings**.

#### 4.15. ZERO BUDGET NATURAL FARMING

In a first of its kind move, Andhra Pradesh government is supporting Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) through self-help groups to improve livelihood of farmers and fight climate change in drought-prone regions.

##### Zero Budget Natural Farming

- It is a natural farming technique developed by **Subhash Palekar** in which farming is done without use of chemicals and without using any credits or spending any money on purchased inputs.

- ZBNF reduces the cost of production down to zero due to utilisation of all the natural resources available in and around the crops. Farmers use earthworms, cow dung, urine, plants, human excreta and other biological fertilizers for crop protection.
- Under this **inter-cropping** is practised.
- **Contours and bunds** to preserve rain water as it promotes maximum efficacy for different crops.
- ZBNF also includes **replenishing water bodies** such as farm ponds to ensure water availability during dry spells.

#### 4.16. SEED VAULT

- The Svalbard Global Seed Vault in Norway completed 10 years of its official opening.
- **India's seed vault** is situated at Chang La, Ladakh. Built jointly by the Defence Institute of High Altitude Research (DIHAR) and the National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR) in 2010 under the aegis of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), this permafrost seed bank is the second largest in the world.
- Presently, the only other facility in India for long-term storage of seeds is the one set up by Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) New Delhi.

#### 4.17. ONE PLANET ONE CITY CHALLENGE OF WWF

Recently 3 Indian cities have been selected as national finalists in the 2017-18 edition of WWF's One Planet City Challenge (OPCC).

- World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) works in collaboration with **ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability** (a global network of more than 1,500 cities, towns and regions committed to building a sustainable future) to mobilize cities to participate in the One Planet City Challenge.
- Earlier known as the Earth hour, it invites cities to report ambitious & innovative climate action and to demonstrate how they are delivering on the the 2015 Paris Agreement.
- India became its part in 2012 and was the first developing country to join this initiative.

The three cities are Panaji, Pune and Rajkot.

#### 4.18. EARTH OVERSHOOT DAY

- In 2018, **Earth Overshoot Day** fell on August 1, whereas it fell on August 2 for 2017.
- It is the date when humanity annual demand on nature exceeds what Earth can regenerate over the entire year.
- It is calculated by **WWF and Global Footprint Network**.
- **World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)**- Switzerland based International **NGO**, estd. in 1961 and engages in conservation of wildlife and natural habitat
- **Global Footprint Network**- It is an **international nonprofit organization** founded in 2003 to enable a sustainable future where all people have the opportunity to thrive within the means of one planet.

#### 4.19. PACIFIC SHADOW ZONE

According to a recent research paper it was found that at around 2km below the surface of the Indian and Pacific Oceans there is a 'shadow zone'.

**What is a Shadow Zone?**

- It is an area of **almost stagnant water** which is sitting between rising currents caused by the **rough topography and geothermal heat source** and shallower **wind-driven current** closer to the surface in the North Pacific.
- Carbon-14 dating has proved that there is oldest water in the North Pacific Ocean. The trapped water also traps nutrients and carbon which have a direct impact on the capacity of the ocean to modify climate over centennial time scales.

#### 4.20. ARTIFICIAL REEFS TO SAVE SINKING ISLANDS

- Tamil Nadu govt in collaboration with IIT Madras have been restoring **Vaan Island in Gulf of Mannar** by deploying artificial reefs near vulnerable islands.
- The project has been funded by **NAFCC** of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Chang.
- **Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve** is the **first marine biosphere reserve in Asia**.

## 5. SOCIAL ISSUES

### 5.1. THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITY ACT, 2016

- The Rights of Persons with Disability Rules, 2017 were notified to supplement the provisions of the Rights of Persons with Disability Act, 2016.
- It replaces the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995.
- The Act is in line with the principles of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** and aims at encouraging establishments to have a disabled friendly workplace. **India has ratified the convention.**
- Persons with "**benchmark disabilities**" are defined as those certified to have at least 40 per cent of the disabilities mentioned in the Act.
- Other provisions include, increased types of **disabilities** (from 7 to 21), right to children (6 to 18 years) to avail free education, reservation in government and certain obligations imposed on **private establishment** also.
- It creates institutions such as **Central & State Advisory Boards, National and State Fund, Special Courts** and **penalties** for offences committed against persons.

### 5.2. NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SENIOR CITIZENS

- Recently, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has organised second meeting of **National Council of Senior Citizens (NCSrC)**.
- It was originally known as National Council for Older Persons (NPOP) and was renamed in 2012.
- It is chaired by the Minister of Social Justice & Empowerment and have to meet at least **twice a year**.
- It is the **highest body to advise** the Central and State Governments on issues related to the welfare of senior citizens and enhancement of their quality of life.

### 5.3. MAHARASHTRA SOCIAL BOYCOTT ACT

The Maharashtra government's Prohibition of Social Boycott Act got the assent of the President.

- Maharashtra is the first state in the country to formulate such a law which is against the parallel justice system of the gaviks or jati panchayats. This Act can lead to other states following this step.
- It provides for prohibition of social boycott of a person or group of persons, by an individual or a group like caste panchayat.

#### What is Social Boycott?

If any individual or group tries to prevent or obstruct another member or group from observing any social or religions custom or from taking part in a social or community function, the act amounts to social boycott.

### 5.4. INDIA YOUTH DEVELOPMENT INDEX AND REPORT 2017

Recently, government released the India Youth Development Index and Report 2017.

#### India Youth Development Index, 2017

- The Index has been constructed by The Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD) with an objective of tracking the **trends in Youth Development** across the States.
- According to the Report 'Youth' refers to a stage of life in transition between adolescence and adulthood in the age bracket of 15 to 29 years. (As accepted by Commonwealth and National Youth Policy 2014).

#### Global Youth Index

- It is developed by the **Commonwealth Secretariat** using a comprehensive measure across five domains - education, health, employment, and civic and political participation.
- It helps policy makers to make informed decisions regarding **young people's needs and opportunities** and help to achieve the **Sustainable Development Goals**.



### 5.5. TECHNICAL EDUCATION QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME (TEQIP)

- The government has decided to **employ graduates from premier colleges** like IITs, NITs etc to teach in engineering colleges in backward districts for a period of 3 years as a part of TEQIP Phase 3.
- The **World Bank** assisted scheme, launched by HRD Ministry in 2002, **aimed to overhaul the quality** of technical education in the Low Income States and Special Category States (SCS).
- It includes **institution based and student based** measures.

### 5.6. MADHYAMIK AND UCHCHTAR SHIKSHA KOSH

- The Union Cabinet has accorded its approval for creation of a non-lapsable pool in the Public Account for secondary and higher education known as "**Madhyamik and Uchhtar Shiksha Kosh**" (MUSK).
- The fund would be operationalised as per the present arrangements under **Prarambhik Shiksha Kosh (PSK)**.
- The MUSK would be maintained as a Reserve Fund in the **non-interest bearing** section of the Public Accounts of India.

### 5.7. NATIONAL ACADEMIC DEPOSITORY (NAD)

- The recently launched NAD has been integrated with the e-SANAD portal.
- NAD will be a 24x7 online store house of academic awards digitally lodged by various academic institutions/school boards/eligibility assessment bodies. Employers and other person with prior approval of the concerned student can verify the authenticity of any academic award.
- All the Central and State Universities, deemed to be Universities, CBSE, State School Education Boards will participate in the depository.
- The UGC will be authorised body to operationalise the NAD
- **e-Sanad** is a project aimed at online submission/ verification of documents with an ultimate object to extend contactless, cashless, faceless and paperless document attestation service for apostille and normal attestation to applicants in India (to be

extended to Indians residing abroad as well in a phased manner). It is designed and developed by NIC.

- **Parinam Manjusha** is CBSE's **digital repository** of academic records. Employers and Educational Institutions can use this repository to **verify academic records of CBSE students online**.

### 5.8. HEALTHY STATES, PROGRESSIVE INDIA REPORT

- It recently released by the **NITI Aayog**, which has been developed in consultation with **Technical Assistance Agency of World Bank, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)**, States and Union Territories, domestic and international sector experts and other development partners.
- It is an **annual report** which will rank States and UTs on incremental changes in health outcomes and overall performance with respect to others.
- The Health Index is based on three main domains which focus on outcomes, governance and information, and critical inputs.

### 5.9. PRIVATE HEALTH CARE

- Health being a state subject, the government has been persuading states for implementation of '**The Clinical Establishments (Registration & Regulation) Act, 2010**'.
- **Objective:** To provide for the registration and regulation of clinical establishments with a view to prescribe minimum standards of facilities and services.
- **Applicability:** All types of clinical establishments, except those run by the armed forces, fall within the ambit of this Act.
- **Implementation:** Through a three-tier structure — the Central Council, the State Council and the District Registering Authority.
- **Penalty:** Running a clinical establishment without registration would be punishable with a fine of Rs 50,000 for the first offence, Rs 2 lakh for the second offence and Rs 5 lakh for the subsequent offence.
- **Monitoring:** The Act permits health authorities to conduct inspections and penalize or cancel licenses of hospitals that are found to be fleecing patients, either by

prescribing needless tests and procedures, or overcharging.

### 5.10. NATIONAL NUTRITION STRATEGY

- A high-level panel under Niti Aayog has drawn up a 10-point nutrition action plan that includes governance reforms in line with the vision for “Kuposhan Mukta Bharat- Vision 2020”. Its provisions include-
  - **Reducing all forms of malnutrition by the end of 2030.**
  - The nutrition strategy envisages a **framework wherein the four proximate determinants** of nutrition – uptake of health services, food, drinking water & sanitation and income & livelihoods – work together to accelerate decline of under nutrition in India.
  - **Decentralised Approach-** to strengthen the ownership of PRIs and urban local bodies over nutrition initiatives.
  - **Governance reforms** envisaged in the Strategy include: (i) convergence of state and district implementation plans for ICDS, NHM and Swachh Bharat, (ii) focus on the most vulnerable communities in districts with the highest levels of child malnutrition, and (iii) service delivery models based on evidence of impact.
  - **Nutrition Social Audits** are to be undertaken to track the children and their health progress.
  - **National Nutrition Surveillance System-** Undernourished endemic zones of the country will be mapped for identifying ‘high risk and vulnerable districts’ & the cases of severe under nutrition in children should be included in the routine disease reporting system.
  - **Institutional Arrangements-** Institutional arrangements like the National Nutrition Mission Steering Group (NNMSG) and the Empowered Programme Committee (EPC) respectively under the chairpersonship of Minister and Secretary of Women and Children and the Secretary will be constituted.
  - Launch of **National Nutrition Mission.**

### 5.11. ‘ZERO HUNGER’ PROGRAMME

- Three districts –**Gorakhpur** (Uttar Pradesh), **Koraput** (Odisha) and **Thane** (Maharashtra)- have been chosen for the launch of India’s

ambitious ‘Zero Hunger’ programme through interventions in farm sector on **October 16 (World Food Day).**

- It will be initiated by the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)** in association with the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)**, the **M S Swaminathan Research Foundation** and the **Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC)**. The concerned **state governments** will also be involved in the programme.
- It will focus on agriculture, health and nutrition in a **sympiotic manner** to develop an integrated approach to deal with hunger & malnutrition.
- It will consist of organising farming systems for nutrition, setting up **genetic gardens** for biofortified plants crops and initiation of a ‘Zero Hunger’ training.

### 5.12. INDIA STATE LEVEL DISEASE BURDEN REPORT

- India State Level Disease Burden Report was published as a part of **Global Burden of Disease Study 2016** to provide state level-disease burden and risk factors trends from 1990 onwards.
- It has been prepared by **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** along with **Public Health Foundation of India and Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME)**.
- The findings of the study can be used to track subnational disease burden in India using DALY.

#### Disability-adjusted life years (DALYs)

- Years of healthy life lost to premature death and suffering.
- It is composed two components: Years of Life Lost (YLL) and Years of life lived with disability (YLD).
- DALYs instead of causes of death alone provides a more accurate picture of the main drivers of poor health.

### 5.13. JOINT MONITORING PROGRAMME 2017

- In **July 2017**, **WHO and UNICEF** under Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) released the **report** titled ‘Progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene 2017 update and Sustainable Development Goal baselines’.

#### Joint Monitoring Programme

- The **WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation (JMP)**
- Maintains global database and estimates the progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) since 1990.

- Focuses on further enhancing global monitoring of drinking water, sanitation and hygiene in the context of the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- Each sector is dependent on the presence of the other. For example, without toilets, water sources become contaminated; without clean water, basic hygiene practices are not possible.

**UN-Water**

- United Nations (UN) inter-agency coordination mechanism for freshwater related issues, including sanitation (no single organisation for water related aspect)
- UN-Water launched its 2014-2020 Strategy in support of the 2030 Agenda.

**World water Development report (WWDR)**

- Published by UN-Water Members and Partners it represents.
- The report production is coordinated by the World Water Assessment Programme and the theme is harmonized with the theme of World Water Day (22 March).

**UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS)**

- By the World Health Organization (WHO) on behalf of UN-Water.
- It is a substantive input into the activities of Sanitation and Water for All (SWA).

**5.14. ECHO CLINIC**

- ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) is a concept of weekly or fortnightly virtual clinics using teleconferencing by best specialists to reach out to underserved areas.
- ECHO clinics do not provide care directly to patients like in telemedicine. Instead, they **equip primary healthcare clinicians** in remote areas with the knowledge and support to manage complex cases.
- India's first ECHO clinic **began in 2008** as a collaboration between the National Aids Control Organization (NACO) and Maulana Azad Medical College (MAMC) on managing HIV AIDS patients. Since then, ECHO clinics and handling various diseases in the country.

Project ECHO **began in 2003** in **New Mexico** when a liver disease specialist in US realized that there were thousands of cases of Hepatitis C in New Mexico without access to any treatment.

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## 6. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

### 6.1. STEPHEN HAWKING

Stephen Hawking passed away at the age of 76. He suffered from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS (also known as Lou Gehrig's disease).

#### Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)

- ALS is a neurodegenerative condition, that attacks the motor nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord, hampering their ability to communicate with muscles and control voluntary movements, leading to eventual paralysis.
- ALS is very rare, occurring on average among two new cases per 100,000 people every year, most typically among individuals aged between 55 and 65.
- There is currently no cure or treatment that halts or reverses ALS

#### Contribution of Stephen Hawking

##### Hawking-Penrose theorem / Big Bang Theory

- **Sir Roger Penrose and Stephen Hawking in 1970** proved in a theorem that Einstein's General Relativity must break down at a certain point in Space-time under certain generic physical conditions. This point is called 'Singularity' which inside a Black Hole indicate towards the beginning of the Universe. Big Bang is now the most widely accepted theory of the origin of the universe.

##### Information Paradox, or Hawking Paradox,

- By using Quantum Mechanics in the General Relativistic realm, he showed that Black Holes can radiate and has temperature. Emission is similar to something escaping from Black Holes. He also showed that because of the emission of this thermal radiation or **Hawking Radiation**, the black hole would lose energy and eventually disappear or "evaporate".
  - If the paradox is true, it would require some radical revision of physics as it left two pillars of modern physics quantum mechanics and Einstein's general theory of relativity irreconcilable.
  - This could also open a path towards the final unified theory of Physics called 'Quantum Gravity' or more popularly '**The Theory of Everything**'.

##### Hawking-Hurtle state

- Hawking with colleague James Hurtle developed a Quantum Mechanical model of the Universe that says the Universe is self-contained (like Earth surface which has no

starting point) but has No Boundary (We can't fall from the edge of Earth). So Universe is finite but boundary-less (Like Earth surface having finite area but no edge).

#### Breakthrough Initiative

- It was launched by Russian tech investor **Yuri Milner and cosmologist Stephen Hawking**, to explore the Universe, seek scientific evidence of life beyond Earth. Various component of initiative are:

- **Singularities:** Points where space time appeared to be infinitely curved.
- **Albert Einstein's** in his **Theory Of General Relativity 1915**, suggested the existence of **black holes** — an object whose gravitational pull is so intense that once something passes a region known as the event horizon, there's no escape.
- **Quantum theory:** It describes the behaviour of very small particles, those smaller than an atom, like protons or electrons, or the even smaller ones like quarks.
- **General relativity:** It describes how gravity works around massive objects like planets, stars and Black Holes.

### 6.2. EINSTEIN RING

Recently, the Hubble Telescope discovered a light bending Einstein Ring in space.

#### What is an Einstein Ring?

- According to the **General Relativity theory** of Albert Einstein, light can get deflected when passing through gravitational field of a massive body. Therefore, a massive object would warp space and time.
- When light from a distant object/**source** (e.g. a galaxy), pass by an extremely large mass/**lens** (e.g. another galaxy or galaxy cluster), it gets diverted and distorted around the massive intervening cluster and is forced to travel along many different light paths toward Earth, making it seem **as though the galaxy is in several places at once**. This is called **Gravitational Lens effect**.
- Einstein Ring is a kind of gravitational lens which is formed **when the galaxy cluster is so closely aligned that the otherwise divergent light is focussed as a visible ring by them**.
- The rings and lenses **magnify objects** that otherwise would be too distant and dim to see in today's telescopes.
- When the amount of bending of light is analyzed and the required bending mass is

greater than the visible mass of the cluster, it shows the presence of Dark matter.

### 6.3. MARS ORBITER MISSION

- It was India's **first interplanetary mission**, launched by using a Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) rocket.
- Proved the capability and efficiency of ISRO:** ISRO has become the fourth space agency to reach Mars, after the Soviet space program, NASA, and the European Space Agency
- MOM was aimed to explore and observe Mars surface features, morphology, mineralogy and the Martian atmosphere
- It carried **5 instruments** for Atmospheric studies (**Lyman-Alpha Photometer (LAP)**, Methane Sensor for Mars (**MSM**)), Particle environment studies (Mars Exospheric Neutral Composition Analyser (**MENCA**)), Surface imaging studies (Thermal Infrared Imaging Spectrometer (**TIS**), Mars Colour Camera (**MCC**)).
- ISRO was presented with the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development for the year 2014 for the successful **Mars Orbiter Mission** and for strengthening international co-operation.

### 6.4. NAVIC OR IRNSS (INDIAN REGIONAL NAVIGATION SATELLITE SYSTEM)

Recently, IRNSS received setback due to failure of the atomic clocks on board **IRNSS-1A** and unsuccessful launch of navigational satellite **IRNSS 1H**.

An **atomic clock** is a clock device that uses an electronic transition frequency of the electromagnetic spectrum of atoms as a frequency standard for its timekeeping element.

Atomic clocks are the most accurate time and frequency standards known and are used as primary standards for international time distribution services, to control the wave frequency of television broadcasts, and in global navigation satellite systems such as GPS.

A **rubidium atomic clock** is a frequency standard in which a specified hyperfine transition of electrons in rubidium-87 atoms is used to control the output frequency. It is the most inexpensive, compact, and widely used type of atomic clock.

#### NAVIC

- It is an independent **indigenous regional system** developed by India on par with the US-based Global Positioning System (GPS), Glonass of Russia, Galileo by Europe, BeiDou

by China and Quasi-Zenith Satellite System (QZSS) by Japan.

- IRNSS will provide basically two types of services:
  - Standard Positioning Service (SPS) for civilian users
  - Restricted Service (RS), is an encrypted service provided only to specific users

**IRNSS: INDIAN REGIONAL NAVIGATION SATELLITE SYSTEM**

7 SATELLITES      ORBIT ALTITUDE 36,000 KM      COST ₹ 1,420 CRORES

Covers India and up to 1,500 km beyond its borders      3 extremely accurate rubidium atomic clock in each satellite

GPS receivers will not work, need special receivers (yet to be developed)

IRNSS provides Standard Positioning Service      Open to all users      Accuracy better than 20 metres

4 satellites in geosynchronous orbit - in pairs, move in two inclined orbits - appear from ground to travel in figure '8' - assist in accurate position determination

3 satellites in geostationary orbit - appear from ground to be at fixed positions in the sky

### 6.5. COPERNICUS PROGRAMME

India and the European Union signed an agreement that will enable them to share earth observation data from each other's satellite.

#### About the Arrangement

- Copernicus Programme** is Earth observation programme headed by the European Commission (EC) in partnership with the European Space Agency (ESA).
- India will get **free, full and open access to the data from the Copernicus Sentinel family of six satellites**.
- Reciprocally** India will provide free, full and open access to the **data from ISRO's land, ocean and atmospheric series** of civilian satellites (Oceansat-2, Megha-Tropiques, Scatsat-1, SARAL, INSAT-3D, INSAT-3DR) with

the **exception of commercial high-resolution satellites data.**

- The services address **six thematic areas:** land, marine, atmosphere, climate change, emergency management, and security.

## 6.6. FREE SPACE OPTICAL COMMUNICATION

X Development LLC, a subsidiary of Google’s parent company Alphabet will supply and deploy two thousand cutting-edge **Free Space Optical Communication (FSOC) links** for Andhra Pradesh (AP) fiber-grid.

X is a research and development facility founded by Google in January 2010.

It has been working on several projects including driverless car, product delivery through flying vehicles, Project Loon, Google glass **among** other technologies.

### What is Free Space Optical Communication?

- It is an optical communication technology in which data is transmitted by propagation of light in free space allowing optical connectivity.
- Working of FSO is similar to OFC (optical fiber cable) networks but the only difference is that the optical beams are sent through free air or vacuum instead of glass fiber.
- It is a **Line of Sight (LOS) technology.** It consists of an optical transceiver at both ends to provide full duplex (bidirectional) capability.
- **Advantages:** low initial investment, flexible network that delivers **better speed** than broadband, security due to line of sight operation etc.
- **Challenges:** misalignment errors, geometric losses, background noise, weather attenuation losses and atmospheric turbulence.

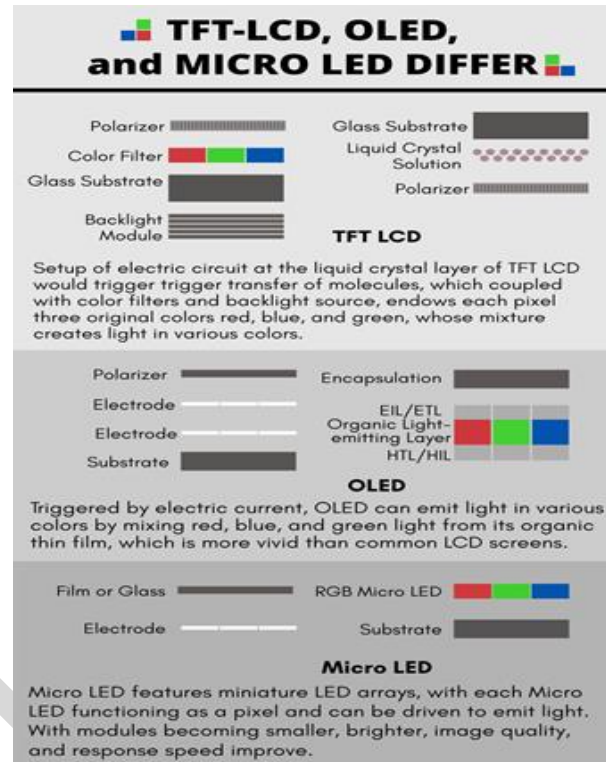
## 6.7. MICRO-LED: THE NEXT-GEN DISPLAY TECHNOLOGY

Samsung recently demonstrated a prototype MicroLED based TV of 146 inches display.

### About MicroLED

- It is an emerging flat panel display technology in which displays consist of arrays of microscopic LEDs forming the individual pixel elements.
- These are simply traditional LEDs shrunk down and placed into an array. The LED technology is not new but manufacturing a

panel array using such tiny components is very difficult and currently not commercially viable over OLED.



### OLEDs and MicroLEDs

- OLEDs are self-emissive, which means they require no backlight; instead, they light each individual pixel as needed. Like OLED, Micro LED too don't need backlight.
- OLEDs are made of organic materials that age, resulting in a decrease in luminance over time, with the potential for uneven ageing. MicroLEDs being inorganic (gallium nitride) are not as susceptible to ageing.
- This switch from organic to inorganic also reduces the need for a polarizing and encapsulation layer, making panels thinner.
- The OLED manufacturing process also limits the possible screen shapes and sizes. The MicroLED technology are “modular” in nature which are flexible to configure any size.
- MicroLEDs are more power-efficient than OLEDs.

## 6.8. SUPERCRITICAL CO<sub>2</sub>-BRAYTON CYCLE

Indian scientists have developed a **super critical carbon dioxide** Brayton test loop facility that would help generate clean energy from future power plants.

**Brayton cycle** - A thermodynamic cycle using constant pressure, heat addition and rejection to spin the blades of a turbine, which can be used to generate electricity.



### Key facts

- This is India's first test-bed for next generation, efficient, compact, waterless super critical carbon dioxide **Brayton cycle** test loop for power generation.
- The term "supercritical" describes the state of carbon dioxide above its critical temperature of 31°C and critical pressure of 73 atmospheres making it twice as dense as steam.
- Today's thermal power plants use steam to carry heat away from the source and turn a turbine to generate power. However, it could generate more power if, instead of steam, **supercritical CO<sub>2</sub> (SCO<sub>2</sub>)** is used

## 6.9. STEM CELLS THERAPY

Recently, miniature eye-like organs have been successfully grown using **induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cells**.

**Stem Cells:** Stem cells are a class of undifferentiated cells that are able to differentiate into specialized cell types. Commonly, stem cells are of the following types:

- **Embryonic stem cells** - derived from the inner cell mass of an embryo and these are capable of forming any cell types of the body.
- **Adult stem cells** – also known as somatic stem cell and it refers to non-reproductive cells in the body (eggs or sperm). They generate cells to replace those that are lost through normal repair, disease, or injury. ASCs are found throughout ones lifetime in tissues such as the umbilical cord, placenta, bone marrow, muscle, brain, fat tissue, skin, gut, etc.
- **Induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cells:** These cells are produced by genetically manipulating somatic cells to produce embryonic-like stem cells

### Importance

- Stem cells offer new potentials for treating diseases such as diabetes, and heart disease.
- To screen new drugs and to develop model systems to study normal growth and identify causes of birth defects.
- Study how an organism develops from a single cell and how healthy cells replace damaged cells in adult organisms.

## 6.10. ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY (REGULATION) BILL

Recently, Draft Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) (Regulation) Bill, 2017 was released by Department of Health Research under **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare**.

Assisted reproductive treatment (ART), also known as assisted reproductive technology, refers

to treatments used to assist people in achieving a pregnancy. Common methods of ART include-

- **In vitro fertilization (IVF)** means fertilization outside of the body. In IVF, the woman's eggs are collected, along with sperm from the male partner or donor. The egg and sperm are left in a culture dish in the laboratory to allow the egg to be fertilised. If fertilisation occurs and an embryo develops, the embryo is then placed into the woman's uterus in a procedure called an embryo transfer.
- **Gamete intrafallopian transfer (GIFT)** involves transferring eggs and sperm into the woman's fallopian tube. So fertilization occurs in the woman's body.
- **Surrogacy** is a form of ART in which a woman (**the surrogate**) carries a child for **another person or couple** with the intention of giving the child to that person or couple after birth.
- **Artificial insemination** involves insertion of a male partner's semen through the female's cervix and into the uterus at or just before the time of ovulation.

## 6.11. BIOSIMILAR FOR CANCER

Recently, Biocon became the first Indian company to get a US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) nod for a biosimilar drug Ogivri.

### What are biosimilars?

- A biosimilar medicine is a biological medicine that is developed to be **highly similar and clinically equivalent** to an existing biological medicine.
- A biosimilar contains a **version of an active substance of an already approved biological medicine**, which is referred to as the 'reference medicine' or 'originator medicine'.
- They are different from generic medicines, because they contain simpler chemical structures and are identical, in terms of molecular structure, to their reference drugs.

## 6.12. PROJECT DHOOP

Recently the Project Dhoop has been launched by Food Safety and Standards Authority (FSSAI).

### About the Project Dhoop

It is a **nationwide campaign** launched by FSSAI along with NCERT, New Delhi Municipal Council and North MCD Schools to spread awareness about consumption of Vitamin D through natural sun light and consuming fortified food among school going children.

### Vitamin D and its importance for the body

- Vitamin D is essential for the development of human bones. It facilitates absorption of calcium and phosphorus by intestines and their retention in the body and deposition in bones and teeth.
- When skin is exposed to sun, the cholesterol in the skin converts the cholesterol to Vitamin D via additional conversions in the liver and kidneys.
- The deficiency of Vitamin D can cause Rickets in children and Osteomalacia in adults, whereas acute deficiency could lead to brain, cardiovascular and kidney damage.
- Source of Vitamin D – Fish liver oil, egg yolk, milk, liver etc.

### 6.13. FOSCORIS SYSTEM

- Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has directed states to implement a **web-based real-time inspection platform for food safety officers (FSOs)**.
- **Food Safety Compliance through Regular Inspections and Sampling' (FoSCoRIS) system will bring together all key stakeholders-** food businesses, food safety officers (FSOs), designated officers, state food safety commissioners, on a nation-wide IT platform.
- FoSCoRIS system uses **time stamping, geo-tagging**, real-time data collection and multiple levels of verifications.
- FoSCoRIS will replace the current system of **ad hoc and subjective inspection** and sampling.
- FoSCoRIS result can be used as **an evidence under IPC**, thus it has legal implications.

#### 'One Nation One Food Law' initiative

Despite a single nationwide Act, (Food Safety and Standards Act) implementation across individual states and UTs remains fragmented and inconsistent, which has been an area of deep concern. To address the concern, FSSAI has launched **One Nation One Food Law' initiative**.

### 6.14. INTERSTITIUM

A new human organ called Interstitium has been identified by the scientists. Excluding Interstitium, **79 organs** have been identified within human body by now.

#### Details about Interstitium

- They are **fluid filled compartments** found beneath the skin, as well as lining the gut, lungs, blood vessels and muscles, and join

together to form a network supported by a mesh of strong, flexible proteins.

- They may act as “shock absorbers” that protect body tissues from damage.
- This newly discovered organ may help in understanding of the spread of cancer in human body.
- Interstitium is among one of the largest organs of human body.

### 6.15. BAN ON OXYTOCIN

- The Union government **restricted the manufacture** of Oxytocin formulations for domestic use to public sector only. The government has also **banned imports** of the oxytocin.

#### About Oxytocin

- Oxytocin is a hormone produced in humans by the hypothalamus (a part of brain) and secreted by the pituitary gland. It is also produced in animals naturally.
- **Usage of Oxytocin-**
  - **During Childbirth-** The hormone stimulates the uterine muscles to contract, so labor begins. It is also used to control post-delivery bleeding
  - **Breastfeeding-** It promotes lactation by moving the milk into the breast during feeding.
  - **Human bonding activities-** released naturally during sex, it is also known as 'love hormone'.
- It has been misused for increasing milk production in animals, increasing size of vegetables, accelerate puberty among trafficked girls etc.

### 6.16. E-CIGARETTES

The government recently quoted a WHO report to state that there is **sufficient evidence** to warn children, adolescents, pregnant women, and women of reproductive age against use of e-cigarettes.

#### About E-Cigarettes

- E-cigarettes are a type of **Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS)** which **claims to emit nicotine without other harmful chemicals that are present** in normal cigarettes.
- They aim to provide a **similar sensation to inhaling tobacco smoke**, without the smoke and are **sold as aids to reduce or quit smoking**.

- They produce an **aerosol** by heating a fluid that usually **contains nicotine, flavorings, and other chemicals** which is then **inhaled by users of e-cigarettes**.

Smoking e-cigarettes is also called **vaping**.

## 6.17. NTRO UNDER INTELLIGENCE ACT

Recently, the Home Ministry issued a notification listing **National Technical Research Organization (NTRO)** under the **Intelligence Organizations (Restriction of Rights) Act, 1985**.

### About NTRO

- The NTRO was created after the 1999 Kargil conflict as a dedicated **technical intelligence agency**. It was finally constituted in 2004.
- NTRO reports to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and the National Security Advisor (NSA).
- It functions under the National Security Adviser.
- It also includes National Institute of Cryptology Research and Development.

### Various Intelligence Agencies in India

1. **Research and Analysis Wing (RAW)** –
  - It is India's premier **external intelligence** agency. It was founded in 1968 to counter Chinese influence but over time its focus has shifted to Pakistan.
  - It reports directly to the Prime Minister and not to the Department of Defence.
2. **Intelligence Bureau**
  - It was founded by the Britishers as an intelligence agency for **both external and domestic** intelligence gathering. After the 1962 war with China, the external intelligence function was taken away from it.
3. **Directorate of Revenue Intelligence**
  - It is the apex anti-smuggling agency of India, working under the Central Board of Excise Customs, Ministry of Finance.
  - It is tasked with detecting and curbing smuggling of contraband, including drug trafficking and illicit international trade in wildlife and environmentally sensitive items.
  - It also combats commercial frauds related to international trade and Custom duty evasion.
4. **Narcotics Control Bureau** – It was formed in 1986 as per a provision of The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985. It is an intelligence agency and coordinates actions of concerned authorities over trade of illicit narcotics from the country.

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## 7. ERRATA (PT-365 2019)

### Polity

- **Article 1.2** - The Commission shall consist of a Chairperson, a Vice Chairperson and five Members to be nominated by the Central Government from amongst persons of eminence, ability and integrity; provided that five Members including the Chairperson shall be from amongst the minority communities (not all necessarily from minority community).
- **Article 6.1**- The Constitution (123rd Amendment) Bill granting constitutional status to National Commission for Backward classes did not require approval of half of the states.
- **Article 6.4** - It has financial power to prepare budget for themselves unlike council in 6th schedule areas (not 5th Schedule).

### Environment

- **Article 3.2.7.** - Irrawady Dolphin - IUCN Status - Endangered (not Critically Endangered)

### Culture

- **Updated Material Article 7.1** - Hunter Committee (and not Hunter Commission) was set up to enquire into the events in Punjab.

**मासिक समसामयिकी रिवीजन 2020**  
**सामान्य अध्ययन (प्रारंभिक + मुख्य परीक्षा)**

**English Medium 25 June 5 PM**

**प्रारम्भ 10 July 5 PM**

- इन कक्षाओं का उद्देश्य जटिल समसामयिकी मुद्दों, जिन्हें कवर करने की अपेक्षा उम्मीदवारों से की जाती है, की एक विस्तृत विषय-वार समझ विकसित करना है।
- तमाम समसामयिक मुद्दों की सर्वाधिक अद्यतित प्रासंगिक समझ, जिसमें भारतीय राजव्यवस्था और संविधान, शासन (गवर्नेंस), अर्थव्यवस्था, समाज, अंतर्राष्ट्रीय संबंध, संस्कृति, पारिस्थितिकी और पर्यावरण, सुरक्षा, विज्ञान एवं प्रौद्योगिकी तथा विविध विषयों के अतिरिक्त और भी बहुत कुछ सम्मिलित हैं।
- इस कोर्स (35-40 कक्षाएं) में विभिन्न मानक स्रोतों, जैसे- द हिंदू, इंडियन एक्सप्रेस, बिजनेस स्टैंडर्ड, PIB, PRS, AIR, राज्य सभा/लोक सभा टीवी, योजना आदि से महत्वपूर्ण सामयिक मुद्दों को शामिल किया जाएगा।
- प्रत्येक टॉपिक के बाद MCQ तथा मुख्य परीक्षा के लिए संभावित प्रश्नों के माध्यम से आपकी समझ का आकलन।
- "टॉक टू एक्सपर्ट" के माध्यम से और कक्षा में ऑफलाइन व्याख्यान के दौरान चर्चा और विचार-विमर्श हेतु अवसर।
- प्रत्येक पखवाड़े में दो से तीन कक्षाएं आयोजित की जाएंगी। समय-समय पर मेल के माध्यम से शेड्यूल साझा किया जाएगा।

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