# IAS PARLIAMENT

*Information is a **Blessing***

**A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative**

# CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

# DECEMBER 2019

# INDEX

# DECEMBER 2019
# G.S PAPER II

## 1. POLITY

### 1.1    Question over Oath-Taking Ceremony

**Why in news?**

Former CM of Maharashtra, Devendra Fadnavis, alleged that the oath-taking ceremony of the new government under Uddhav Thackeray had violated the Constitution.

**What is the charge made?**

- On the first day of the Assembly session, Devendra Fadnavis alleged that Constitutional norms were flouted in the oath-taking ceremony.

- He was referring to the invocation by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and each Minister.

- They made invocations at the start of the oath, before reading out the text, which Fadnavis alleged had altered the oath itself.

- [Thackeray invoked Chattrapati Shivaji and "my parents."

- Eknath Shinde named Bal Thackeray, Ananda Dhige (a Thane Shiv Sena leader who died in 2000), Uddhav Thackeray, and Shivaji.

- Others mixedly invoked Bal Thackeray, Shivaji, Sharad Pawar, Mahatma Phule, Chattrapati Shahu, Babasaheb Ambedkar, Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, and the Buddha.]

**What does the Constitution specify?**

- The mandates are specified in Article 164(3).

- Accordingly, before a Minister enters upon his/her office, the Governor shall administer to him/her the oaths of office and of secrecy.

- This must be according to the forms set out for the purpose in the Third Schedule.

- The Schedule requires the oath-taker either to "swear in the name of God" or "solemnly affirm" to "bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution…".

- It is widely accepted that Art 164 makes it clear that the text of the oath is sacrosanct.

- So, the person taking the oath has to read it out exactly as it is, in the given format.

- If a person wanders from the text, it is the responsibility of the person administering the oath to interrupt and ask the person being sworn in to read it out correctly.

- In this case, it was the Governor's responsibility.

**Are the objections valid?**

- Addition of something before or after the oath is not unlawful as long as the substance of the oath is unaltered.

- The Governor's approval is key in this regard.

- According to experts, if the person administering the oath approves the oath, the matter is closed.

- Immediately on taking the oath, the person who has been sworn in, must sign a register.

- The register is attested by the Secretary to the Governor, which means it has been approved by the Governor.

- In Maharashtra, that approval was also formalised by a gazette notification on the appointment of the CM and 6 ministers.

- So, once Governor takes it as read, it has been attested and the gazette notification has come out, then it can no longer be legally challenged.

**What were the earlier instances of deviation?**

- The most famous case of a political leader changing the oath was in 1989.
- Devi Lal inserted the words "Deputy Prime Minister" as he was being sworn in to Prime Minister V P Singh's cabinet.
- He was corrected by President R Venkataraman.
- In 2012, Azam Khan of the Samajwadi Party had to retake his oath in Uttar Pradesh.
- This was because he skipped the oath of office, and only took the oath of secrecy.

## 1.2 Creamy Layer for SCs and STs

**Why in news?**

The Union government has called upon the Supreme Court to form a seven-judge Bench to reconsider its earlier decision to apply 'creamy layer' concept to SCs and STs.

**What is the case on?**

- In 2006, the Supreme Court ordered that the creamy layer of SCs and STs be kept out from enjoying the benefits of quotas on jobs and admissions.
- However, the successive governments have not implemented it.
- Instead, they have repeatedly urged the court to refer the matter to a bench of seven judges for reconsideration.
- The top court has since 2006 reaffirmed its decision at least nine times in various cases.
- Attorney general KK Venugopal demanded before current Chief Justice SA Bobde, dubbing the issue as "sensitive".
- The Chief Justice said he would take a call on the matter in two weeks.

**How has the concept evolved?**

- The creamy layer concept was first applied in the Indra Sawhney case, or the Mandal case in 1993, as a facet of the larger equality principle.
- Eight members of a nine-judge bench had then agreed that the creamy lawyer must be identified and excluded from the backward classes.
- The court had said that this would more appropriately serve the purpose and object of reservation.
- In 2006, in the Nagraj case, the court said the creamy layer concept would be applied to SCs and STs as well.
- The concept involves application of a means test or imposition of an income limit.
- This is for the purpose of excluding people whose income is above the limit from the backward class.
- The creamy layer has to be excluded and economic criterion is to be adopted as an indicium or measure of social advancement.
- The court also added that socially advanced people must be excluded from reservations.

**What are the contentions?**

- The Attorney general had earlier claimed that the creamy lawyer concept was wrongly extended to SCs and STs in 2006 by a five-judge bench.
- It was not envisaged by a larger nine-judge bench that first applied the concept in 2000.
- A Constitution bench headed by the then Chief Justice Dipak Misra rejected the attorney general's plea.
- It was also reiterated that the concept would apply to SCs and STs, too.

**What are the conditions to be met?**

- While upholding Constitution amendments meant to preserve reservation, the Court contained an exposition of the equality principle.

- It hedged reservation against a set of constitutional requirements, without which the structure of equal opportunity would collapse.
- These were 'quantifiable data' to show -
    i.   the backwardness of a community
    ii.  the inadequacy of its representation in service
    iii. the lack of adverse impact on "the overall efficiency of administration"
- This placed a question mark on the continuance of quota policies of various State governments due to non-compliance with these parameters.
- In Jarnail Singh (2018), another Constitution Bench reaffirmed the applicability of creamy layer norms to SC/STs.
- On this ground, it felt that Nagaraj case did not merit reconsideration.
- However, it ruled that Nagaraj verdict was wrong to require a demonstration of backwardness for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes.
- This was because it was directly contrary to the nine-judge Bench judgment in Indra Sawhney (1992).
- It was laid down in this that there was no need for a test of backwardness for SC/STs.
- It's because, they unquestionably fall within the expression 'backward class of citizens'.

**What is the other challenge?**

- The Centre has accepted that the 'creamy layer' norm is needed to ensure that only those genuinely backward get reservation benefits.
- Dalits have been acknowledged to be the most backward among the backward sections.
- The Centre is thus justifiably upset that this principle has been extended to Dalits.
- However, a problem is the question whether the exclusion of the advanced sections among SC/ST candidates can be disallowed only for promotions.
- Most of them may not fall under the 'creamy layer' category at the entry level.
- However, after some years of service and promotions, they may reach an income level at which they fall under the 'creamy layer'.
- This may result in the defeat of the object of the Constitution amendments to protect reservation in promotions as well as consequential seniority.
- Another landmark verdict in the history of affirmative action jurisprudence may be needed to settle these questions.

## 1.3    SC on Delay in Judges Appointments

**Why in news?**

The Supreme Court recently said that 213 names recommended for appointment to various High Courts are pending with the government.

**What are the court's observations and directions?**

- Data show that 38% of all sanctioned posts for High Court judges are lying vacant as of December 1, 2019.
- The High Courts of some States including Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan are functioning at below half their actual capacity.
- The court has fixed a time period of 6 months to appoint as judges at least those whose names the SC collegium, the HCs and the Government have agreed upon.

**What is the procedure?**

- Prior to the names reaching the PM and President for final approval, there are time periods specified.
- This is the case at each level of the appointment process of judges to the higher judiciary.

- The Memorandum of Procedure states that appointments should be initiated at least 6 months before a vacancy arises.

- Also, 6 weeks of time is then specified for the State to send the recommendation to the Union Law Minister.

- After this, the brief is to be sent to the SC collegium in 4 weeks.

- Once the collegium clears the names, the Law Ministry has to put up the recommendation to the Prime Minister in 3 weeks.

- The PM will in turn advise the President.

- Thereafter no time limit is prescribed and the process, seemingly, comes to a standstill.

## What is the significance?

- The Supreme Court decided to strike down the government's move to set up a National Judicial Appointments Commission as unconstitutional in 2015.

- [The NJAC would have been responsible for appointments and transfers to the higher judiciary in place of the Supreme Court collegium.]

- Since then, reports of delays in appointments have become increasingly commonplace.

- The Supreme Court recently condemned the government for not acting on another set of nominations on which the government had sent back objections.

- The court said that if the collegium reiterates the names, the government has no option but to appoint the judges.

- In this backdrop, the equation between the court and the Union Government has been strained.

- Vacancies in the higher judiciary threaten every aspect of the justice delivery system.

- However, it is mostly the courts that take the blame for any shortfall in justice.

- Given all these, the Supreme Court's recommendation now of a time limit to the appointments is welcome.

## 1.4    Citizenship Provisions in Bangladesh

## What is the issue?

- The newly passed Citizenship Amendment Act in India provides for religious minorities of 3 neighboring countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan) to get Indian citizenship.

- In this context, here is an overview on the constitutional and legal provisions for citizenship and the idea of freedom of religion in Bangladesh.

## How does the Bangladesh Constitution define the country?

- The Bangladesh Constitution was adopted by the Constituent Assembly on December 4, 1972.

- It establishes the independent sovereign People's Republic of Bangladesh.

- The original preamble mentioned 'Nationalism, Democracy, Socialism and Secularism' as fundamental principles.

- Unlike India's Constitution, the Bangladesh Constitution's commitment to socialism is explicitly mentioned.

- The preamble says the fundamental aim of the state is to realise through democratic process socialist society free from exploitation.

- It would be a society in which rule of law, fundamental human rights and freedoms, equality and justice, political, economic and social will be secured to all citizens.

- The expression "rule of law" is not used in the Indian Constitution.

## Is there a state religion?

- In 1977, the military dictator Ziaur Rahman removed the term "secular" from the Constitution.

- In 1988, President Hussain Muhammad Ershad got Article 2A inserted.

- It says the state religion of the republic is Islam but other religions may be practised in peace and harmony.

- The amendment was struck down by the Bangladesh High Court in 2005 and the Supreme Court in 2010.

- The SC said that in spite of Islam being the state religion, the Constitution remains secular.

- It observed that the preamble and the relevant provision of the Constitution as existed on August 15, 1975 would be revived.

- These were particularly in respect of the principles of secularism, nationalism and socialism.

- On June 30, 2011, the Constitution was amended and the term "secular" reinserted.

- The amendment also removed the expression "absolute faith and trust in Allah" from the preamble.

- However, it retained, above the preamble, the expression "in the name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful" that had been added in 1997.

- To accommodate other religions, it also mentions "in the name of our Creator, the merciful".

## How does the idea of a state religion coexist with that of secularism?

- While Islam is the state religion, other religions have been given "equal status" and "equal rights" by the Constitution.

- Their followers have also been given an equal right to freely practise their religions.

- Article 8(1) of the Bangladesh Constitution mentions secularism along with nationalism, democracy and socialism as fundamental principles of state policy.

- Article 12 was revived by the 15th Amendment.

- In a way, this, unlike the Indian Constitution, explains the essential ingredients of secularism and how it will be achieved.

- It says the principles of secularism shall be realised by elimination of -

    i.   communalism in all forms

    ii.  granting of political status in favour of any religion

    iii. abuse of religion for political purposes

    iv.  any discrimination against, or persecution of, persons practising a particular religion

- Unlike Pakistan's Constitution, there is no Muslim qualification required for the office of President or other constitutional offices.

- With these progressive provisions, the charge of religious persecution made by India has no base.

## How is freedom of religion defined?

- Article 41 of the Bangladesh Constitution says every citizen has the right to profess, practice or propagate any religion.

- The provision is "subject to public order and morality".

- In India, Article 25 guarantees religious freedom in a narrower sense.

- Here, in addition to "public order and morality", it is also subject to "health" and "other fundamental rights".

- Also, the state can restrict freedom of religion in respect of any economic, financial, political or other secular activity associated with religious practices.

- It can also do so in the name of social reforms.

- But in another sense, India's religious freedom is broader as it is not confined to just citizens.

- Like India's Article 26, Bangladesh's Article 41(b) gives every religious community or denomination the right to establish, maintain and manage its religious institutions.

- Like India's Article 28, Article 41(c) in Bangladesh lays down that no person attending any educational institution shall be required to receive religious instruction of a religion other than one's own.

- No person shall be required to take part in or to attend any religious ceremony or worship, if that relates to a religion other than one's own.

- India does not permit any religious instruction in any institution that is maintained out of state funds or is recognised by the government.

- In contrast, Bangladesh permits religious instruction but only of one's own religion.

- Article 28(1) is a replica of India's Article 15.

- It prohibits the state from discriminating against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.

- This includes admission to any educational institution.

- India's Article 15 does not mention educational institutions and gives right of access only in respect of places maintained wholly or partly out of state funds.

- It also covers places dedicated to the use of the general public.

- The Bangladesh Constitution prohibits all discrimination based on religion.

- Clearly, this weakens the argument of religious persecution there, which is a basis for India's Citizenship Amendment Act.

**What are the laws on citizenship?**

- Article 6 of the Constitution says citizenship in Bangladesh shall be regulated by law and people shall be known as "Bengalees as a nation".

- In December 1972, a Presidential Order, Bangladesh Citizenship (Temporary Provisions), conferred citizenship.

- It covers from March 26, 1971 on anyone who, or whose father or grandfather, was born in the territories then comprising Bangladesh.

- It also applies to a permanent resident on March 25, 1971 and continued to be a resident of Bangladesh.

- Any person who, for studies or employment, was in territories within a country at war or engaged in military operation (Pakistan), and was being prevented from returning to Bangladesh, would also be a citizen.

- The Bangladesh government, like Pakistan, may grant citizenship to a person who is citizen of Europe, North America or Australia or any other state.

- But, knowledge of Bangla would be necessary.

- Foreign women married to Bangla men can also get citizenship after 2 years' residence.

- Irrespective of place of birth, if one's parents are Bangladeshi, citizenship would be given.

- In 2017, it was provided that anyone who invests $150,000 can get citizenship.

**Does Bangladesh grant citizens to non-Bangla-speaking residents?**

- Many Urdu-speaking people who had supported Pakistan in the war became stateless with the creation of Bangladesh.

- This is because the law did not give citizenship to those who sided with the enemy country.

- There were some 10 lakh such people in 1972.

- Under an agreement among India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, close to 1,780,000 were repatriated to Pakistan, followed by about 1 lakh more subsequently.

- But, 2.5 lakh remained within the country.

- In 2008, the Supreme Court reaffirmed the citizenship of all Urdu-speaking citizens too.

## 1.5    Section 144 of Code of Criminal Procedure

**What is the issue?**

- State governments are suppressing the widespread protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act by issuing prohibitory orders under Section 144 of CrPC.

- In this backdrop, here is an overview of Section 144 of the Code Of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).

## What is Section 144?

- Section 144 CrPC is a law retained from the colonial era.

- It empowers certain functionaries to issue orders to prevent and address urgent cases of apprehended danger or nuisance.

- These include district magistrate, sub-divisional magistrate or any other executive magistrate specially empowered by the state government in this regard.

- The magistrate has to pass a written order which may be directed -

    i.    against a particular individual, (or)

    ii.   to persons residing in a particular place or area, (or)

    iii.  to the public generally, when they frequent or visit a particular place or area

- In emergency cases, the magistrate can pass these orders without prior notice to the individual against whom the order is directed.

## What powers does the administration have?

- The magistrate can direct any person to abstain from a certain act or to take a certain order with respect to certain property in his/her possession or management.

- This usually includes restrictions on movement, carrying arms and from assembling unlawfully.

- It is generally believed that assembly of three or more people is prohibited under Section 144.

- However, it can be used to restrict even a single individual.

- This is done when the magistrate considers that it is likely to prevent, or tends to prevent, obstruction, annoyance or injury to any person.

- It is also employed to prevent danger to human life, health or safety, or a disturbance of the public tranquility, or a riot.

- But, no order passed under Section 144 can remain in force for more than 2 months, unless the state government considers it necessary.

- Even then, the total period cannot extend to more than 6 months.

## Why is Section 144 so contentious?

- The criticism is that the provisions are too broad.

- The words of the section are wide enough to give absolute power to a magistrate that may be exercised unjustifiably.

- The immediate remedy against such an order is a revision application to the magistrate himself.

- An aggrieved individual can approach the High Court by filing a writ petition if his/her fundamental rights are at stake.

- However, fears exist that before the High Court intervenes, the rights could already have been infringed.

- Imposition of Section 144 to an entire state, as now in UP, has also drawn criticism since the security situation differs from area to area.

## What has been the judiciary's stance?

- The Courts have earlier held that Section 144 was not an ordinary power flowing from administration.

- It is rather a power used in a judicial manner and which can stand further judicial scrutiny.

- However, the constitutionality of the law was upheld.

- The restrictions imposed through Section 144 cannot be held to be violative of the right to freedom of speech and expression.

- This is because the provision would fall under the "reasonable restrictions" under Article 19(2) of the Constitution.

- The fact that the "law may be abused" is no reason to strike it down altogether.

- The judiciary has also justified blanket prohibitory orders passed under Section 144.

- This is because occasions may arise when it is hard to distinguish between those whose conduct must be controlled and those whose conduct is clear.

**Does Section 144 provide for communications blockades too?**

- The Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Safety) Rules, 2017 are for suspending telecommunication services.

- They include services covering voice, mobile internet, SMS, landline, fixed broadband, etc.

- These Rules derive their powers from the Indian Telegraph Act of 1885, Section 5(2).

- It talks about interception of messages in the "interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India".

- However, shutdowns in India are not always under the rules laid down, which come with safeguards and procedures.

- Section 144 of CrPC has often been used to clamp down on telecommunication services and order Internet shutdowns.

# 2. GOVERNMENT POLICIES

## 2.1 Drawbacks in Seeds Bill 2019

**What is the issue?**

- The Seeds Bill 2019 is under Parliament's consideration. [Click here to know more on the Bill]

- In this context, here is an analysis if the provisions are truly farmer-friendly.

**What is the Bill on?**

- The draft Seeds Bill aims to replace the Seeds Act, 1966.

- The Bill, essentially, regulate the quality of seeds sold.

- The earlier versions of the Bill, in 2004 and 2010, had generated heated debates.

- According to the government, a new Seeds Bill is necessary to -

    i. enhance seed replacement rates in Indian agriculture

    ii. specify standards for registration of seed varieties

    iii. enforce registration from seed producers to seed retailers

**What necessitates seed protection?**

- In 1994, India signed the agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).

- In 2002, India also joined the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) Convention.

- Both TRIPS and UPOV led to the introduction of some form of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) over plant varieties.

- In this line, member countries had to introduce restrictions on the free use and exchange of seeds by farmers unless the "breeders" were remunerated.

**What are the conflicting commitments?**

- TRIPS and UPOV run counter to other international conventions in this reagrd.

- In 1992, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) provided for "prior informed consent" of farmers before the use of genetic resources.

- It also called for "fair and equitable sharing of benefits" arising out of their use.

- In 2001, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) recognised farmers' rights.

- It covered the rights to save, use, exchange and sell farm-saved seeds.

- National governments had the responsibility to protect such farmers' rights.

- So, while TRIPS and UPOV gave priority to breeders' rights, the CBD and ITPGRFA emphasised on farmers' rights.

- Notably, India is a signatory to TRIPS and UPOV as well as CBD and ITPGRFA.

- So, any Indian legislation had to be in line with both these sets of laws.

## How did the PPVFR Act address this?

- The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPVFR) Act of 2001 sought to achieve the delicate balance between farmers' and breeders' rights.

- It retained the main spirit of TRIPS i.e. IPRs as an incentive for technological innovation.

- Nevrtheless, the Act also had strong provisions to protect farmers' rights.

- In this regard, it recognised three roles for the farmer: cultivator, breeder and conserver -

    i.    as cultivators, farmers were entitled to plant-back rights

    ii.   as breeders, farmers were held equivalent to plant breeders

    iii.  as conservers, farmers were entitled to rewards from a National Gene Fund

## How important are public institutions in having certified seeds?

- While the above goals are indeed worthy, any such legislation is expected to be in alignment with the spirit of the PPVFR Act.

- E.g. a shift from farm-saved seeds to certified seeds, which would raise seed replacement rates, is desirable

- As, certified seeds have higher and more stable yields than farm-saved seeds.

- However, such a shift should be achieved not through policing, but through an enabling atmosphere.

- Private seed companies prefer policing.

- This is because their low-volume, high-value business model is crucially dependent on forcing farmers to buy their seeds every season.

- On the other hand, an enabling atmosphere is generated by the strong presence of public institutions in seed research and production.

- Public institutions, not motivated by profits, supply quality seeds at affordable prices, which make policing redundant.

- But, from the late-1980s, Indian policy has consciously encouraged the growth of private seed companies, including companies with majority foreign equity.

- Resultantly, today, more than 50% of India's seed production is undertaken in the private sector.

## What are the problematic provisions in the Bill?

- **Seed registration** - The Seeds Bill insists on compulsory registration of seeds.

- However, the PPVFR Act was based on voluntary registration.

- As a result, many seeds may be registered under the Seeds Bill but may not be under the PPVFR Act.

- For instance, a seed variety could have been developed by a breeder, but derived from a traditional variety.

- In this case, the breeder will get exclusive marketing rights.

- But no gain will accrue to farmers as benefit-sharing is dealt with in the PPVFR Act, under which the seed is not registered.

- **Data** - As per the PPVFR Act, all applications for registrations should contain the complete data of the parental lines from which the seed variety was derived.

- These include contributions made by farmers.

- This allows for an easier identification of beneficiaries and simpler benefit-sharing processes.

- But, Seeds Bill, demands no such information while registering a new variety, thus overlooking the recording of the contributions of farmers.

- Private companies are thus left free to claim a derived variety as their own.

- **Re-registration** - The PPVFR Act, which is based on an IPR like breeders' rights, does not allow re-registration of seeds after the validity period.

- However, as the Seeds Bill is not based on such principle, private seed companies can re-register their seeds.

- They can do this for an infinite number of times after the validity period.

- Given this "ever-greening" provision, many seed varieties may never enter the open domain for free-use.

- **Seed prices** - A vague provision for regulation of seed prices appears in the Seeds Bill.

- However, it appears neither sufficient nor credible.

- In fact, strict control on seed prices has been an important demand raised by farmers' organisations.

- They have also demanded an official body to regulate seed prices and royalties.

- In its absence, they feel, seed companies may be able to fix seed prices as they deem fit, leading to sharp rises in costs of cultivation.

- **Compensation** - Under the PPVFR Act, if a registered variety fails in its promise of performance, farmers can claim compensation before a PPVFR Authority.

- This provision is diluted in the Seeds Bill, where disputes on compensation have to be decided as per the Consumer Protection Act 1986.

- Consumer courts are hardly ideal and friendly institutions that farmers can approach.

- Also, according to the Seeds Bill, farmers become eligible for compensation if a plant variety fails to give expected results under "given conditions".

- Sadly, "given conditions" is almost impossible to define in agriculture.

- Seed companies would always claim that "given conditions" were not ensured.

- Again, this will be difficult to be disputed with evidence in a consumer court.

## 2.2 Personal Data Protection (PDP) Bill, 2019

**Why in news?**

The Personal Data Protection (PDP) Bill, 2019, has been approved by the Cabinet and is to be placed in Parliament.

**How important has 'data principal' become?**

- The individual whose data is being stored and processed is called the 'data principal' in the PDP Bill.

- It usually refers to information about one's messages, social media posts, online transactions, and browser searches.

- This large collection of information about one's online habits has become an important source of profits.

- On the other hand, it is also a potential avenue for invasion of privacy because it can reveal extremely personal aspects.

- Thus, companies, governments, and political parties find it valuable as it offers the scope for having the most convincing ways to advertise online.

- Certainly, much of the future's economy and law enforcement will be based on data regulation, introducing issues of national sovereignty.

**How is data handled and processed?**

- Data is collected and handled by entities called data fiduciaries.

- While the fiduciary controls how and why data is processed, the processing itself may be done by a third party, the data processor.

- This distinction is important to delineate responsibility as data moves from entity to entity.

- E.g. in the US, Facebook (the data controller) fell into controversy for the actions of the data processor, Cambridge Analytica

- The physical attributes of data - where data is stored, where it is sent, where it is turned into something useful - are called data flows.

- Data localisation arguments are premised on the idea that data flows determine who has access to the data, who profits off it, who taxes and who "owns" it.

- However, many contend that the physical location of the data is not relevant in the cyber world.

**How does the PDP Bill propose to regulate data transfer?**

- To legislate on the topic, the Bill trifurcates personal data.

- The umbrella group is all personal data, which is data from which an individual can be identified.

- Some types of personal data are considered sensitive personal data (SPD).

- The Bill defines as SPD, the data on finance, health, sexual orientation, biometric, genetic, transgender status, caste, religious belief, and more.

- Another subset is critical personal data.

- The government at any time can deem something critical, and has given examples as military or national security data.

- In the Bill approved by the Cabinet, there are 3 significant changes from the version drafted by the Justice B N Srikrishna Committee.

**How does the Bill differ from the earlier draft?**

- **Localisation** - The draft had said all fiduciaries must store a copy of all personal data in India.

- This was criticised by foreign technology companies that store most of Indians' data abroad.

- The approved Bill removes this stipulation, only requiring individual consent for data transfer abroad.

- Similar to the draft, however, the Bill still requires sensitive personal data to be stored only in India.

- It can be processed abroad only under certain conditions including approval of a Data Protection Agency (DPA).

- The final category of critical personal data must be stored and processed in India.

- **Information** - The Bill mandates fiduciaries to give the government any non-personal data when demanded.

- Non-personal data refers to anonymised data, such as traffic patterns or demographic data.

- The previous draft did not apply to this type of data, which many companies use to fund their business model.

- **Social media companies** - Some social media companies are deemed to be significant data fiduciaries based on factors such as volume and sensitivity of data and their turnover.

- The Bill requires these companies to develop their own user verification mechanism.

- The process can be voluntary for users and can be completely designed by the company.

- However, it will decrease the anonymity of users and "prevent trolling."

**What are the other key features?**

- The Bill includes exemptions for processing data without an individual's consent for "reasonable purposes".

- This includes security of the state, detection of any unlawful activity or fraud, whistle-blowing, medical emergencies, credit scoring, operation of search engines and processing of publicly available data.

- The Bill calls for the creation of an independent regulator DPA, which will oversee assessments and audits and definition making.

- Each company will have a Data Protection Officer (DPO) who will cooperate with the DPA for auditing, grievance redressal, recording maintenance and more.

## 2.3 Shortfalls in Jal Shakti Abhiyan

**What is the issue?**

- Following the massive water crisis across India in the summer of 2019, the Central government hurriedly launched the Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA).

- However, in the absence of scientific planning and implementation, measures like Jal Shakti Abhiyan may fall short of being successful.

**What is Jal Shakti Abhiyan?**

- The Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA) is a time-bound, mission-mode water conservation campaign.

- It will run in two Phases:

    1. Phase 1 from 1st July to 15th September 2019 for all States and Union Territories

    2. Phase 2 from 1st October to 30th November 2019 for States and UTs receiving the retreating monsoon

- The latter includes Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Puducherry and Tamil Nadu.

- Officers, groundwater experts and scientists from the Government will work together with state and district officials in India's most water-stressed districts.

- These are the 255 districts having critical and over-exploited groundwater levels.

- The focus is on water conservation and water resource management by focusing on accelerated implementation of five target intervention.

**What are the key shortfalls?**

- **Approach** - The campaign was not intended to be a funding programme and did not create any new intervention on its own.

- It only aimed to make water conservation a 'people's movement' through ongoing schemes like the MGNREGA and other government programmes.

- The JSA is partly modeled and driven by some success stories.

- These include that of NGO Tarun Bharat Sangh's experiment in Alwar, Rajasthan and Anna Hazare-led efforts in Ralegan Siddhi, Maharashtra.

- These projects primarily involved building tanks and ponds to capture rainwater and building recharge wells to recharge groundwater.

- However, it is unclear whether they were based on reference to watershed management or groundwater prospect maps.

- **Assumptions** - The programme assumes that common people in rural areas are ignorant and prone to wasting water.

- However, on the contrary, the rural masses are the first to bear the brunt of any water crisis.

- The per capita water allocation to those living in rural areas is 55 litres.

- The same for urban areas like Delhi and Bengaluru is 135-150 litres.

- So, the JSA's move to reach out to poor people and farmers, asking them to 'save water', appears hypocritical.

- Particularly, district administrations blatantly allow the sewage generated from towns and cities to pollute village water sources.

**What does the data reveal?**

- The JSA's portal claims that there are around 10 million ongoing and completed water conservation structures; 7.6 million recharge structures.

- It says that one billion saplings have been planted and six million people participated in awareness campaigns.

- However, the data do not speak anything about the pre-JSA water levels, the monthly water levels and impact of monsoon on the water levels.

- They also do not convey anything about the quality of the structures, their maintenance and sustainability.

- Even if the water levels had been measured, it is unknown whether the measurement was accurate.

- The results for a 2016 study conducted by the Central Groundwater Board showed that water levels always increase post-monsoon.

- Therefore, it will require long-term monitoring of water level data to determine the actual impact of a measure like JSA.

- At present, there is no such parameter to measure the outcome of such a mission-mode campaign.

- The race among districts for ranking has thus turned out to be meaningless.

## What are the implications of lack of scientific planning?

- **Water planning** should be based on hydrological units, namely river basins.

- Political and administrative boundaries of districts rarely coincide with the hydrological boundaries or aquifer boundaries.

- However, contrary to this principle of water management, JSA was planned based on the boundary of the districts.

- This resulted in the division of basins/aquifers into multiple units that followed multiple policies.

- There was no data on basin-wise rainfall, no analysis of run-off, and groundwater maps were rarely used.

- So, there was no idea if water harvested in a pond in a district was at the cost of water in adjoining districts.

- Most of India's water-stressed basins, particularly those in the peninsular regions, are facing closure, with the demand exceeding supply.

- The JSA has also fundamentally ignored this fact.

- Hence, groundwater recharge happened at the cost of surface water and vice versa.

- An autonomous and knowledge-intensive river-basin organisation becomes crucial here.

- **Measures** - It is difficult to say whether measures like JSA can provide long-term solutions.

- The farm bunds built with soil can collapse within one monsoon season due to rains and/or trespassing by farm vehicles, animals and humans.

- Further, there are issues like

    i. lack of proper engineering supervision of these structures

    ii. involvement of multiple departments with less or no coordination

    iii. limited funding under MGNERGA and other schemes

- Importantly, there have hardly been any efforts undertaken to dissuade farmers from growing water-intensive crops such as paddy, sugarcane, and banana.

- [As, agriculture consumes 80% of freshwater.]

- In all, the recurring summer water crisis demands a much more systematic and integrated approach to water management.

## 2.4    Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019

### Why in news?

- The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 was recently passed in the Parliament and has received President's assent.

- Granting citizenship to illegal migrants and amendments to OCI provisions are the two major aspects in the Bill.

### What are the earlier provisions on illegal migrants?

- The Citizenship Act, 1955 regulates who may acquire Indian citizenship and on what grounds.

- A person may become an Indian citizen if they are born in India or have Indian parentage or have resided in the country for a period of time, etc.

- However, illegal migrants are prohibited from acquiring Indian citizenship.

- An illegal migrant is a foreigner who:

    i. enters the country without valid travel documents, like a passport and visa, (or)

    ii. enters with valid documents, but stays beyond the permitted time period

- Illegal migrants may be imprisoned or deported under the Foreigners Act, 1946 and the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920.

## What are the key provisions?

- The 2019 Bill amends the Citizenship Act, 1955.

- **Illegal migrants** - The Bill provides that illegal migrants who fulfill 4 conditions will not be treated as illegal migrants under the Act.

- The conditions are:

    1. they are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis or Christians

    2. they are from Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan

    3. they entered India on or before December 31, 2014

    4. they are not in certain tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, or Tripura included in the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution, or areas under the "Inner Line" permit, i.e., Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, and Nagaland

- In essence, it seeks to make illegal migrants who are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, eligible for citizenship.

- It exempts certain areas in the North-East from this provision.

- **OCI** - A foreigner may register as an OCI under the 1955 Act if they are of Indian origin (e.g., former citizen of India or their descendants) or the spouse of a person of Indian origin.

- This will entitle them to benefits such as the right to travel to India, and to work and study in the country.

- The Bill makes amendments to provisions related to OCI (Overseas Citizen of India) cardholders.

- It amends the Act to allow cancellation of OCI registration if the person has violated any law notified by the central government.

## What are the contentious issues in the Bill?

- The Bill provides differential treatment to illegal migrants on the basis of -

    1. their country of origin

    2. religion

    3. date of entry into India

    4. place of residence in India

- The question is whether this provision violates the right to equality under Article 14 of the Constitution.

- Article 14 guarantees equality to all persons, including citizens and foreigners.

- It only permits laws to differentiate between groups of people if the rationale for doing so serves a reasonable purpose.

- It is contentious if the differentiating factors in the Bill serve a reasonable purpose.

- **Religion** - The Bill classifies migrants based on religious persecution of certain minorities in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

- There are other religious minorities too in these countries, who face religious persecution.

- They may have well illegally migrated to India.

- E.g., over the years, there have been reports of persecution of Ahmadiyya Muslims in Pakistan (who are considered non-Muslims in that country)

- The other such fact is the murder of atheists in Bangladesh.

- So, it is unclear why illegal migrants from only six specified religious minorities have been included in the Bill.

- **Date of entry** - It is also unclear why there is a differential treatment of migrants based on their date of entry (December 31, 2014) into India.

- **North-East** - The Bill excludes illegal migrants residing in areas covered by the Sixth Schedule.

- The purpose behind the enactment of the Sixth Schedule was to aid in the development of tribal areas through autonomous councils.

- The objective is to protect the indigenous population in these areas from exploitation and preserving their distinct social customs.

- The Bill also excludes the Inner Line Permit areas.

- Inner Line regulates the entry of persons, including Indian citizens, into Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland.

- If an illegal migrant residing in these areas acquires citizenship, s/he would be subject to the same restrictions in these areas, as are applicable to other Indian citizens.

- So, it is unclear why the Bill excludes illegal migrants residing in these areas.

- **Cancelling OCI registration** - The 1955 Act provides that the central government may cancel the registration of OCIs on various grounds.

- The Bill adds one more ground for cancelling, i.e., if the OCI has violated any law notified by the central government.

- Here, giving the central government the power to prescribe the list of laws may amount to an excessive delegation of powers by the legislature.

- The Supreme Court has held that while delegating powers to an executive authority, the legislature must prescribe a policy, standard, or rule for their guidance.

- This is to set limits on the authority's powers and not give them arbitrary discretion to decide how to frame the rules.

- But, the Bill does not provide any guidance on the nature of laws which the central government may notify.

- So, the powers given to the executive may go beyond the permissible limits of valid delegation.

## Is the Statement of Objects and Reasons in the Bill (SoR) justifiable?

- The SoR says that India has had historic migration of people with Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

- These countries have a state religion, and so it has resulted in religious persecution of minority groups.

- The SoR thus reasons that millions of citizens of undivided India were living in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

- However, no reason has been provided to explain the inclusion of Afghanistan.

- Further, it is not clear why migrants from these countries are differentiated from migrants from other neighbouring countries.

- These include Sri Lanka (Buddhist state religion) and Myanmar (primacy to Buddhism).

- Sri Lanka has, notably, had a history of persecution of a linguistic minority in the country, the Tamil Eelams.

- Similarly, India shares a border with Myanmar, which has had a history of persecution of a religious minority, the Rohingya Muslims.

- Over the years, there have been reports of both Tamil Eelams and Rohingya Muslims fleeing persecution from their respective countries and seeking refuge in India.

- The Bill's stated objective is to provide citizenship to migrants escaping from religious persecution.

- So, it is not clear why illegal migrants belonging to religious minorities from these countries have been excluded from the Bill.

---

## 2.5 Payment for Destruction of Property

**Why in News?**

The Uttar Pradesh government has directed district administrations to serve notices on persons allegedly involved in arson and damage of public property, and direct them to pay a penalty.

**What is the story behind?**

- **Govt notice** - The Government announced this as a crackdown on protesters against the Citizenship Amendment Act.

- The quantum of the penalty is being determined according to the total cost of the damaged property, according to the FIR lodged by the police.

- **High Court order** - While issuing these notices, the administration has said it derives such powers on the basis of an Allahabad High Court (HC) order of Mohammad Shujauddin vs State of Uttar Pradesh case 2010.

- It has said the police are empowered to take penal action under The Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, 1984.

- The HC order, due to lacunae in the 1984 Act, has also empowered the civil administration to take action against the accused.

**What was the HC case about?**

- The order relates to a scuffle between two persons from different political parties that had resulted in injuries and loss of public property.

- The judge who passed the order asked the state government to file an affidavit on the number of cases filed by the police under the 1984 Act.

- The police replied that in 26 years, only 585 cases had been filed, and only 11 cases had been disposed of.

- The HC then referred to a Supreme Court (SC) judgment of 2009 relating to the destruction of public and private properties.

- The SC had issued guidelines on the basis of recommendations made by two committees, headed by former SC Justice K T Thomas and senior advocate Fali Nariman.

- In particular, the Nariman Committee's recommendations had dealt with extracting damages for destruction.

- Accepting the recommendations, the SC had said that the rioters would be made strictly liable for the damage, and compensation would be collected to make good the damage.

**What directions did the HC issue based on the SC observations?**

- If an agitation has been taken place at the invitation of a **political party** or a sitting or former **people's representative** and there is damage to the public property, a report shall be registered by the police against the political party/person by name.

- A concerned department, local body, public corporation would assess the damage and shall file a claim for realization of such amount before a competent authority.

- The competent authority will be nominated by the government, and claims have to be filed within 7 days after the nomination.

- Any person belonging to the area where the public property is damaged can also approach the competent authority.

- However, when the money is awarded, it has to be furnished only to the concerned department to whom the property belongs.

- There will be an opportunity of hearing against whom the claims is filed; and the competent authority is mandated to pass the appropriate order with a month after the hearing is complete.

- If the **person found guilty** is unable to pay the entire amount in a single instalment, the district magistrate has to issue a certificate.

- By this certificate, a person is made to pay in arrears under the relevant provisions of the Revenue Recovery Act.

- This competent authority who can say that a person is guilty should be of an official of the rank of Additional District Magistrate and he will be responsible for collecting the amount.

## 2.6    Three Capitals in Andhra Pradesh

**Why in news?**

Andhra Pradesh CM Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy recently hinted that his government would work towards the South African model of three capitals in his State.

**What is the proposal?**

- In South Africa, the administrative capital is in Pretoria.
- Its national legislature is in Cape Town, and the judicial capital is in Bloemfontein.
- Likewise, Mr. Reddy proposes distribution of executive, legislative and judicial governance across Visakhapatnam, Amaravati (the current capital) and Kurnool respectively.

**What is the rationale?**

- The idea seems to stem from the reasoning that the distribution would allow for "a decentralised development of the State".
- The location choices are in the upper, central and lower geographical regions of the State.
- Such an arrangement follows the recommendations of the expert committee appointed by the Home Affairs Ministry in 2014.
- It studied the alternatives for a new capital.
- The panel had argued against the need for a greenfield capital city.
- It instead suggested focusing on distributing locations of governance beyond the Vijayawada-Guntur-Tenali-Mangalagiri urban area.
- Meanwhile, it suggested utilising the time period of 10 years to continue functions from Hyderabad after bifurcation.
- The Chief Minister's current idea of three capitals has also got support from the government-appointed G.N. Rao committee.
- It has recommended that the Assembly's location be retained at Amaravati.
- The Secretariat and High Court were recommended to be moved to Visakhapatnam and Kurnool, respectively.

**What are the challenges?**

- Despite the expert committee's recommendations, the earlier A.P. government led by the Telugu Desam Party had decided to build a grand capital in Amaravati.
- The government had acquired large parcels of land from farmers.
- Many farmers had agreed to give up fertile land for the expansion of the capital as part of a land pooling scheme.
- They were to have received residential and commercial plots among other forms of compensation.
- Unsurprisingly, these farmers have protested the present decision to decentralise capital functions.
- On the other hand, the Secretariat and Legislative Assembly were shifted to Amaravati in 2016.
- The High Court began functioning in the beginning of 2019.
- Amaravati, which still requires significant development, has however become a functioning State capital for all purposes now.
- If the present government now limits Amaravati to hosting only the Assembly, it must take into account the concerns of the affected farmers.
- The government must consider the fact that considerable work has been completed in Amaravati to utilise it as a functioning capital.

- It must be taken into account before embarking upon the "decentralisation" idea (which was best served before the works in Amaravati began).

# 3. SOCIAL JUSTICE

### 3.1 Encounter in Hyderabad Rape-Murder Case

**Why in news?**

- The four accused in the Hyderabad veterinarian rape case were killed by the Cyberabad police.
- Here is what the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and the Supreme Court have said on the procedures to be followed in extra-judicial or "encounter" killings.

**When are extra-judicial killings permissible?**

- The following are the observations made by Justice Venkatachaliah, who was Chief Justice of India in 1993-94.
- Under Indian laws, the police have not been conferred any right to take away the life of another person.
- If, by his act, the policeman kills a person, he commits the offence of culpable homicide unless it is proved that such killing was not an offence under the law.
- This remains the case whether it amounts to the offence of murder or not.
- The only two circumstances in which such killing would not constitute an offence are -
    1. if death is caused in the exercise of the right of private defence
    2. under Section 46 of the CrPC
- Section 46 "authorises the police to use force, extending up to the causing of death, as may be necessary to arrest the person accused of an offence punishable with death or imprisonment for life".
- In this regard, the NHRC asked all states and UTs to ensure that police follow a set of guidelines in cases where death is caused in police encounters.

**What are the NHRC's guidelines on this?**

- When the in-charge of a Police Station receives information about the deaths in an encounter between the Police party and others, s/he shall enter that information in the appropriate register.
- Information as received shall be regarded as sufficient to suspect the commission of a cognizable offence.
- Immediate steps should be taken to investigate the facts and circumstances leading to the death.
- This should ascertain what, if any, offence was committed and by whom.
- The police officers belonging to the same Police Station are the members of the encounter party.
- So, appropriately, the cases are made over for investigation to some other independent investigation agency, such as State CID.
- Question of granting of compensation to the dependents of the deceased may be considered in cases ending in conviction.
- However, the NHRC finds that most of the States are not following the recommendations issued by it in the true spirit.
- Thereafter, the NHRC expanded the guidelines, adding several new procedures as the following:
- An FIR must be registered under IPC if a complaint is received against the police, alleging commission of a criminal act amounting to a cognisable case of culpable homicide.
- A magisterial enquiry must be held in all cases of death which occurs in the course of police action, as expeditiously as possible, preferably within 3 months.
- All cases of deaths in police action in the states shall be reported to the Commission.
- The Senior Superintendent of Police/Superintendent of Police of the District should report in a given format within 48 hours of such death.

- A second report must be sent in all cases to the Commission within 3 months.
- This should provide information including post mortem report, inquest report, findings of the magisterial enquiry/enquiry by senior officers.

## What are the directions by the Supreme Court?

- The Court had, in 2014, issued a detailed 16-point procedure to be followed in the matters of investigating police encounters in the cases of death.
- This was to be followed as the standard procedure for thorough, effective and independent investigation.
- Some of these directives are as follows:
- If the police is in receipt of any intelligence regarding criminal movements or activities relating to grave criminal offence, it shall be written in some form (preferably into case diary) or in some electronic form.
- In regards with this, if encounter takes place and firearm used and death occurs, an FIR shall be registered.
- The FIR shall be forwarded to the court under Section 157 of the Code of Criminal Procedure without any delay.
- An independent investigation into the incident/encounter shall be conducted by the CID or police team of another police station.
- This should take place under the supervision of a senior officer (at least a level above the head of the police party engaged in the encounter).
- A Magisterial inquiry under Section 176 of the Code must invariably be held in all cases of death which occur in the course of police firing.
- A report thereof must be sent to Judicial Magistrate having jurisdiction under Section 190 of the Code.
- The involvement of NHRC is not necessary unless there is serious doubt about independent and impartial investigation.
- However, the information of the incident without any delay must be sent to NHRC or the State Human Rights Commission, as the case may be.
- These requirements should be treated as law declared under Article 141 of the Constitution of India.
- These must thus be strictly observed in all cases of death and grievous injury in police encounters.

## What are the concerns in the present case?

- There is wide acceptance to the "encounter killings" to deliver swift retribution.
- Existing laws on sexual crimes and punishment need better application.
- But, a recourse to brutal retribution is no solution.
- The political sanction of "encounter killings" would only be a disincentive for the police to follow the due process of law.
- It may even deter them from pursuing the proper course of justice.
- Far from ensuring justice to the victims, bending the law in such cases would only undermine people's faith in the criminal justice system.
- Justice in any civilised society is not just about retribution, but also about deterrence, and in less serious crimes, rehabilitation of the offenders.

## 3.2    SDG India Index 2019

### Why in news?

NITI Aayog has recently released the 'SDG India Index 2019'.

### What is SDG India Index?

- The index aims to measure India and its States' progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030.

- The SDGs of the UN have 17 goals and 169 related targets to be achieved by 2030.

- The SDG India Index 2019 has been constructed spanning across 16 out of 17 SDGs with a qualitative assessment on SDG 17.

- The 2019 Index ranked states and UTs based on 54 targets spread over 100 indicators out of 306 outlined by the UN.

- It measures their progress on the outcomes of the interventions and schemes of the Government of India.

- The Index is intended to provide a holistic view on the social, economic and environmental status of the country and its States and UTs.

- The first report, which was launched in 2018, had 13 goals and 39 indicators.

## What are the highlights of the 2019 index?

- **Ranking** - Kerala retained its rank as the top state with a score of 70.

- Chandigarh too maintained its top spot among the UTs with a score of 70.

- Himachal Pradesh took the second spot while Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Telangana shared the third spot.

- Bihar, Jharkhand and Arunachal Pradesh are the worst performing states.

- Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and Sikkim have shown maximum improvement.

- West Bengal (rank 14) has also done well, but given the education level in the state, it should be in top 3 performing states.

- On the other hand, states like Gujarat have not shown any progress vis-a-vis 2018 rankings.

- **Progress** - Only 3 states were placed in the category of Front Runners (with a score in the range 65-99) in 2018.

- These were Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu.

- In 2019, 5 more states joined this league- Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Sikkim and Goa.

- **Parameters** - With regard to poverty reduction, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Andhra Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Sikkim have done well.

- On 'zero hunger' parameters, Goa, Mizoram, Kerala, Nagaland and Manipur were the front-runners.

- **India** - India's composite score improved from 57 in 2018 to 60 in 2019.

| TOP 12, THE STATES | |
|---|---|
| Kerala | 70 |
| Himachal | 69 |
| Andhra | 67 |
| Tamil Nadu | 67 |
| Telangana | 67 |
| Karnataka | 66 |
| Goa | 65 |
| Sikkim | 65 |
| Gujarat | 64 |
| Maharashtra | 64 |
| Uttarakhand | 64 |
| Punjab | 62 |

| BOTTOM 5, THE STATES | |
|---|---|
| Bihar | 50 |
| Jharkhand | 53 |
| Arunachal | 53 |
| Meghalaya | 54 |
| UP, Assam | 55 |

| TOP 5, THE UTs | |
|---|---|
| Chandigarh | 70 |
| Puducherry | 66 |
| Dadra & NH | 63 |
| Lakshadweep | 63 |
| Delhi, A & N Islands, Daman & Diu | 61 |

- The major contribution was success in water and sanitation, industry and innovation.

- However, nutrition and gender continue to be problem areas for India, requiring more focused approach from the government.

## 3.3 Divorce on "irretrievable breakdown of marriage"

### Why in news?

The Supreme Court used its extraordinary powers under Article 142 of the Constitution to grant divorce in a case of "irretrievable breakdown of marriage".

### What does the Hindu marriage law specify?

- The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 lays down the law for divorce.

- It applies to Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs.

- Under Section 13 of the Act, the grounds for divorce include:
    i. voluntary sexual intercourse with any person other than his or her spouse
    ii. cruelty
    iii. desertion for a continuous period of not less than 2 years immediately preceding the presentation of the petition
    iv. ceasing to be a Hindu by conversion to another religion
    v. being "incurably of unsound mind"
- In addition to this, Section 13B provides for "divorce by mutual consent".
- Section 27 of The Special Marriage Act, 1954 provides the grounds for grant of divorce in the case of marriages solemnised under that Act.
- However, neither of the two Acts provides for "irretrievable breakdown of marriage" as a ground for divorce.

## What is the court's observation?

- "Irretrievable breakdown of marriage" refers to a marriage that is totally unworkable, emotionally dead, beyond salvage and has broken down irretrievably.
- In a recent case, divorce was granted on this ground, after examining various judicial pronouncements.
- Such powers are exercised in rare cases, in view of the absence of legislation in this behalf.
- In the present case, the court said that it believed that the continuity of the marriage was fruitless.
- It also observed that continuance of it would cause further emotional trauma and disturbance to both the parties.
- Thus, the sooner this comes to an end, the better it would be, for both the parties.

## What does Article 142 provide for?

- Article 142 provides a unique power to the Supreme Court, to do "complete justice" between the parties involved.
- This means that at times when law or statute may not provide a remedy, the Court can extend itself to settle a dispute in a manner that would befit the facts of the case.
- It is with this objective that the court finds it appropriate to grant divorce in a case of "irretrievable breakdown of marriage".
- The Law Commission of India has also twice recommended that this be included as a new ground for granting divorce to Hindus under Hindu Marriage and the Special Marriage Acts.
- There is, thus, recognition of the futility of a completely failed marriage being continued only on paper.

# 4. HEALTH

## 4.1 NITI Aayog's Healthcare Plan

## What is the issue?

- The NITI Aayog has proposed a 15-year plan for Indian healthcare.
- There is a concern that the arrangements in this proposal would deprive the personal touch in the health care of a patient.

## Why is there such a concern?

- A health care company had set-up a prolific prototypical multispecialty group practice in the U.S.,
- There was a concern that such arrangements would be bereft of the personal touch in patient care were vociferously raised.

---

- This continued through the evolution of more organised structures like Health Maintenance Organisations (HMOs) in the forthcoming years.
- This were criticised for turning healthcare into a marketable commodity sold by unfeeling healthcare providers in supermarket-like institutions.

## Why is this problematic proposition?

- The NITI Aayog's report entitled as "Health Systems for a New India: Building Blocks - Potential Pathways to Reform" outlines prospects of such an infelicitous turn in Indian healthcare.
- While the report makes otherwise worthy proposals for health system strengthening the proposal to consolidate small practices into larger business-like organisations appears problematic on multiple fronts.
- That nearly 98% of healthcare providers have less than 10 employees is identified as a negative trait, to be dealt with through a set of incentives and disincentives favouring consolidation.
- Apart from cost and competition-related concerns, an enthusiastic pursuit of it could portend commodification of healthcare from the bottom-up.
- The report's bent towards the U.S. HMO model further adds to such a foreboding.

## Why a patient-physician relationship is needed?

- Loyalty and longitudinality form vital pillars of this relationship.
- The structure of these is built upon a substratum of **mutual trust, warmth, and understanding** that accrues over time between a patient and their personal physician.
- Momentary and haphazardly physician-patient interactions in a system that limits access to one's 'physician of choice' are incapable of fostering such enduring relationships.
- It is in this context that the role of a family physician becomes instrumental.
- A family physician's longitudinal relationship with their patient helps in a better understanding of the patient's needs and expectations and in avoiding unnecessary clinical hassles and encounters.
- This in turn reflects in better outcomes and increased patient satisfaction.
- Widespread commercialisation of care over the past few decades has entailed that the family physician is a dying breed in India today.

## What are the advantages of small clinics?

- Studies show that healthcare received in small clinics scores higher in terms of patient satisfaction than that received in larger institutions.
- This increased satisfaction manifests as better compliance with the treatment regimen and regular follow-ups, culminating in improved clinical outcomes.
- Disregard for this aspect in health services design is bound to entail a sizeable cost to the health system.
- However, the non-urgent nature of this problem keeps it from assuming significance to policy-makers.
- As a result of which doctor-patient relationship considerations are largely invisibilized in the policy discourse in favour of more pressing concerns like lack of funds and manpower.
- As India looks forward to a long-term healthcare plan, neglecting this consideration could be of sizeable consequence.

# 5. GOVERNANCE

## 5.1 Good Governance Index

**Why in News?**

The Good Governance Index (GGI) was launched on the occasion of Good Governance Day (25th December).

**What is GGI?**

- GGI is a nation-wide comparative study of States on governance which is carried out by the Government of India.

- It is a welcome exercise to incentivise States to competitively deliver on public services to the citizens.

**What are the findings of the index?**

- Tamil Nadu has ranked first in this index.

- Its strength has been the ability to ensure stable and smooth delivery of services without much ado.

- Three of its neighbours are among the top 10 of the big 18 States.

- These three are one of the 3 groups formed for the study with the north-east and hill States and Union Territories being the other two.

- Traditionally, the south has been ahead of others in several parameters of development.

**What does the index say about BIMARU states?**

- BIMARU States - Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

- The dubiously-labelled BIMARU States are seeking to catch up with others in development is more significant about the GGI.

- Of the nine sectors, Rajasthan has finished within the top 10 in 5 sectors, Madhya Pradesh in 4 and Uttar Pradesh in 3.

- In agriculture and allied sectors, almost all these States are within the top 10 and in human resources development, U.P. and Bihar figure.

- In the composite ranking, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh are ranked 4th and 9th, respectively.

- The key message is that these northern States can catch up with others in due course of time, if the political leadership shows the will to overcome historical obstacles and stays focused on development.

**What are the shortcomings with this index?**

- Some indicators — farmers' income, prevalence of micro irrigation or water conservation systems and inflow of industrial investment — have been left out.

- The "ease of doing business" indicator has been given disproportionate weight in the sector of commerce and industries, to the virtual exclusion of growth rate of major and micro, small and medium enterprises.

- There will always be an unending debate over which indicators (process-based or outcome-based) should get more importance in the design of such a study.

**What could be done?**

- In spite of these shortcomings, the Centre has made an attempt to address the problem of the absence of a credible and uniform index for an objective evaluation of the States and Union Territories.

- The GGI requires **fine-tuning and improvement**.

- But that does not take away the strength of the work that has been accomplished, keeping in mind India's size and complexity.

# 6. INDIA & ITS NEIGHBORHOOD

## 6.1 China at Indian Sea - Shiyan Incident

**What is the issue?**

- Indian Navy, reportedly, "chased out" a Chinese vessel named 'Shiyan 1' from the Andaman Sea.

- This has drawn India's attention to China's growing maritime scientific capabilities and its ambitious research agenda for distant waters.

**What happened?**

- Shiyan 1 was operating near Port Blair.

- It had neither taken prior permission from India nor did it inform the relevant Indian authorities of its plans.

- Shiyan 1 is operated by the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

- It is part of Beijing's growing marine research fleet that now stands at about 50 vessels.

**What is China's stance?**

- China accepted that Shiyan 1 was indeed "conducting acoustic propagation experiments and hydrologic environment measurements on the high seas of the Indian Ocean".

- However, it insisted that Shiyan 1 did not conduct any operations in the Indian EEZ (exclusive economic zone) during the whole process.

- It only sailed through the Indian EEZ on the way to and from the experimental area.

- Also, throughout the ship's voyage, the Indian navy aircraft followed it with warnings and its crew also replied in accordance with international practice.

- Notably, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) favours freedom of marine scientific research.

- It also lets coastal states decide on granting permission for marine scientific research by other entities in their exclusive economic zones.

- In this context, China maintains that it was merely asserting its rights.

- It also expressed hope that Delhi would take a correct view of China's marine scientific research activities.

**What is India's real concern then?**

- The issue is not a technical one about the provisions of the law of the sea.

- It is instead about China's growing maritime scientific ambition.

- Beijing's expansive investment in marine scientific research is very much part of its rise as a great maritime power.

- China has leveraged marine science diplomacy to good effect in the South China Sea over the last many years.

- It has now begun to extend it to the Indian Ocean.

- In 2018, Shiyan-3 invited Pakistan scientists to join a research expedition in the Arabian Sea.

- Delhi must expect to see more of this in the Indian Ocean littoral.

**What are the legal challenges in this regard?**

- There are many grey areas in the law of the sea.

- These include the conduct of maritime scientific research in the waters that other states have sovereign control over.

- Great powers, rising or incumbent, tend to interpret international law to suit their interests and convenience.

- Weaker ones have no way of enforcing their rights under UNCLOS.

- More broadly, it is difficult to separate marine scientific research for peaceful and military purposes.

## How does this apply in the Shiyan 1 case?

- Shiyan 1 now operates as part of the so-called "national fleet" for marine scientific research.

- Earlier this decade, China consolidated its marine research activities.

- In this regard, it brought together multiple governmental agencies, ministries and commercial entities like oil companies under one administrative framework.

- It will also closely align research with larger maritime goals, civilian and military, set by the party-state.

- In the past, China's marine science research was confined to near seas in the Western Pacific.

- It now extends to seas all around the world.

- About half of the marine scientific fleet is reportedly devoted to distant seas.

## What are Chinese objectives for the national science fleet?

- Experts on the Chinese navy identify at least four broad objectives for the national science fleet:

- 1) To map the sea-bed resources of the world's oceans.

- China has internationally sanctioned licences to explore sea-bed mining in a few areas including in the South-western Indian Ocean.

- 2) To develop large ocean databases that facilitate Chinese naval operations by providing accurate maritime domain awareness.

- 3) To use its national fleet for science diplomacy that adds to building productive maritime and naval cooperation with coastal states across the world.

- 4) It also lets China set the rules for global marine scientific research.

- All major naval powers through history have sought to leverage marine scientific research to broader national objectives, both civilian and military.

## What is the need now for India?

- The Shiyan incident is a useful reminder to India on the need to invest more in maritime scientific research.

- India needs to strengthen its own national capabilities in this regard.

- Besides this, it should also deepen its scientific cooperation with its partners in the maritime domain.

- Along with the US, Japan, Australia and France, India should develop mechanisms for collaborative research in maritime scientific domain.

- This would provide a sound basis for eventual engagement with China on marine scientific research.

## 6.2    Rohingya Question at ICJ

### Why in news?

Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi is to lead Myanmar's defence against charges of carrying out genocide against its Muslim Rohingya minority, at the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

### What is the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar?

- In 2017, the Myanmar military launched a brutal crackdown on Rohingya villages in the country's Rakhine state.

- An estimated 7.3 lakh Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh since then.

- The UN too recently said the army action was carried out with "genocidal intent".

- However, Myanmar has firmly denied all allegations of genocide.

- It has also denied nearly all allegations made by the Rohingya of mass rape, killings and arson against its army.

- Myanmar asserts that the soldiers carried out only legitimate counterterrorism operations.

## Who has taken Myanmar to the ICJ?

- It is the Republic of the Gambia that took Myanmar's case to the ICJ.

- [Gambia is a tiny country on the west coast of Africa.

- It stretches out as a thin strip of territory on either side of the river Gambia before it empties itself into the North Atlantic Ocean.]

- The Gambia, which is predominantly Muslim, went to the ICJ in November 2019.

- It accused Myanmar of genocide, which is the most serious of all international crimes.

- The Gambia is backed by the 57-member Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

## What is the procedure at ICJ?

- The case will be heard by 16 United Nations judges at the ICJ.

- Both the Republic of The Gambia and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar will have the opportunity to present themselves before the court.

- The hearings will be streamed live on the ICJ website.

## What could Myanmar's response be?

- Suu Kyi is the leader of the National League for Democracy, in Myanmar.

- She is also the first and incumbent State Counsellor, a position akin to a prime minister.

- In Myanmar's defence, Suu Kyi will present personally the country in ICJ.

- Myanmar would say that no mass killings of Rohingya have taken place.

- It would also argue that the ICJ has no jurisdiction and that the case by The Gambia fails to meet full legal requirements.

---

**International Court of Justice**

- It was established in 1945 after half a century of international conflict in the form of two World Wars.

- The ICJ functions with its seat at The Hague, Netherlands.

- It has the jurisdiction to settle disputes between countries and examine cases pertaining to violation of human rights.

- It adjudicates cases according to the tenets of international law and is the judicial arm of the United Nations.

- ICJ is different from the ICC (International Criminal Court) which is a permanent tribunal created to prosecute individuals for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression.

- While ICJ is the primary judicial organ of the UN, the ICC is legally and functionally independent from the UN.

---

## What will happen after the hearings are over?

- The ICJ will decide the plea on provisional measures fairly soon, possibly within weeks.

- The hearings dealing with the main and more serious allegations of genocide will follow and could begin a little later.

- However, cases at the ICJ often drag on for years on end, and no quick closure can be reasonably expected.

- Also, the legal bar for handing out a conviction for genocide is rather high.

- So far, only 3 cases of genocide worldwide have been recognised since World War II:
    1. Cambodia (the late 1970s)
    2. Rwanda (1994)
    3. Srebrenica, Bosnia (1995)

- Proving genocide has been difficult because of the high bar set by its 'intent requirement.'

- These include showing that the genocidal acts, say killings, were carried out with the specific intent to eliminate a people on the basis of their ethnicity.

---

## 6.3 Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees in India

**What is the issue?**

- The Citizenship Amendment Act was recently passed in India, in regards with offering citizenship to illegal migrants.

- In this connection, here is a look at the issue of the Sri Lankan Tamils, as they are excluded from the provisions of the Act.

**When did the refugees from Sri Lanka arrive in India?**

- Tamils who came from Sri Lanka can be separated into those who came before 1983 and those who came after.

- The latter was when the separatist movement in Sri Lanka took a violent turn followed by a series of anti-Tamil riots.

- Most of the 1 lakh documented Sri Lankan illegal immigrants in India today are those who fled this ethnic conflict.

- Those who reached India before 1983 were mostly Indian-origin Tamils whose forefathers migrated to Sri Lanka a century previously.

- This was mainly on account of working in the tea plantations there.

- In 1964, Prime Ministers Lal Bahadur Shastri (India) and Sirimavo Bandaranaike (SL) signed an agreement.

- This was to allow some 9,75,000 people of Indian origin in Sri Lanka, who had citizenship of neither country, to become citizens of the country of their choice.

- Many of those who arrived in India until 1982 got legal accommodation.

- However, the process was not comprehensive, and was ultimately not completed.

- Some 4.6 lakh repatriations from Sri Lanka have been officially recorded so far.

- This is besides the thousands of Tamils of Sri Lankan origin who sought asylum in India.

**What is the present scenario?**

- Some of those who arrived from Sri Lanka managed to travel onward to countries of Europe.

- Some others married Indians and resolved their identity issues.

- At present, about 1 lakh Tamils from Sri Lanka live in India.

- These include some 60,000 in camps across Tamil Nadu.

- These refugees are mostly Hindu, and are of both Sri Lankan and Indian origin.

- Technically, those who arrived by boat and other informal, illegal channels during the war in Sri Lanka are considered illegal immigrants.

- They are not considered as refugees.

- Most of these "illegal immigrants" reached Tamil Nadu in the 1980s and 1990s.

- Thereafter, a few hundreds came over the years.

- The arrivals increased rapidly during the last years of the war.

- [The war ended with the final defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 2009.]

- At least 20% of these refugees claim an Indian origin on the basis of Sri Lankan birth certificates that identify them as "Indian Tamil".

- Documents issued by Indian authorities that trace their links to Indian grandparents or other ancestors also provide evidence.

**What are the conditions in the Tamil Nadu camps?**

- About 19,000 Sri Lankan families, comprising 60,000 individuals, live in 107 camps in Tamil Nadu.

- Some 10,000 of these inmates are children below the age of 8 years.

- Dwellings here are in most cases a single room that was allotted to a family when it reached India in 1983 or later.

- They continue to live there ever since. Most of these camps are in a shambles.

- No rent is charged from the residents, and they get rice for 57 paise a kilo.

- Each member of a family aged eight and older is eligible for 12 kg of rice every month.

- The head of the family gets an allowance of Rs 1,000 every month.

- The spouse gets Rs 750, and children below the age of 12, Rs 400 each.

- Besides the 60,000 in the camps, about 30,000 Sri Lankan Tamils live on their own.

- They are required to periodically report to the nearest police station.

- However, they have greater freedom of movement than those who live in the camps.

- The camps have a system of attendance.

- The inmates of camps cannot go outside Tamil Nadu, and require permission to even travel out of the district.

- A VIP visit in the vicinity of the camps almost always brings interrogation and inquiries from the Q-Branch of the police and central intelligence agencies.

- The relatively free atmosphere in the refugee camps changed permanently after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991.

## What do the refugees expect from the government?

- The refugees expect citizenship of India.

- Most of those in the camps have nothing left in Sri Lanka, no property or community to go back to.

- They fear persecution and violence at the hands of the Colombo government and Sinhala Buddhist majority if they return to Sri Lanka.

- They are also unable to go anywhere else (such as to a European country).

- Also, most of the Indian-origin Tamils have ancestral roots, relatives, and property in India.

- Many could have got Indian citizenship under the Shastri-Bandaranaike Pact if they had chosen to come to India before the ethnic riots broke out in Sri Lanka.

## Is there a scope for them to get Indian citizenship?

- There is no process in India to give citizenship to the Tamil refugees.

- The refugee camps were built only as a temporary arrangement for people in distress.

- They were meant to make them feel safe until such time as they could return to Sri Lanka after normalcy was restored.

- The European model of giving asylum and citizenship to refugees works on individual cases.

- That is impossible in India, as there are thousands of Tamil refugees.


## 6.4    Citizenship Provisions in Pakistan

### What is the issue?

- The newly passed Citizenship Amendment Act in India provides for religious minorities of 3 neighbouring countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan) to get Indian citizenship.

- In this context, here are the constitutional and legal provisions for citizenship and rights of religious minorities in Pakistan.

### How is preamble to Pakistan's Constitution different from India's?

- The preamble to the Indian Constitution declares the country as a "sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic".

- [The terms "socialist" and "secular" were added by the 42nd Amendment, 1976.]

- On the other hand, as many as 60 Constitutions in the world refer to God including those in Germany, Brazil, Greece and Ireland.

- Pakistan's Constitution starts with "In the name of Allah, the most beneficent, the merciful".

- It acknowledges the sovereignty of God in respect of the universe, and contains references to Muslims and Islam.

- When this provision in the Objective Resolution was moved by Liaquat Ali Khan in 1949, it was opposed by non-Muslim members of Constituent Assembly.

## Whom does Pakistan recognize as citizens?

- Although an Islamic state, Pakistan does not have any religious test for citizenship.

- Its Citizenship Act, 1951 is similar to India's Citizenship Act; in certain respects may be seen as more liberal.

- Section 6 lays down that any person who migrated to Pakistan before January 1, 1952 is a citizen.

- Section 3 gives citizenship on the commencement of the Act (April 13, 1951) to anyone who, or any of whose parents or grandparents, was born in the territories included in Pakistan on March 31, 1973.

- Pakistan grants citizenship to any person who migrated there before April 13, 1951 from any territory in the subcontinent with the intention of permanently residing there.

- [India's cutoff is July 19, 1948, except in Assam, where it is March 25, 1971.]

- Like India's law, Section 7 in Pakistan says that a person who migrated to India after March 1, 1947 shall not be a citizen of Pakistan except if s/he returned under resettlement or permanent return.

- Section 4 in the Pakistan law lays down that every person born in Pakistan after the commencement of the Act shall be a Pakistan citizen by birth.

- In contrast, India has added restrictive qualifications by amendments -
    1. in 1986 (one parent should be an Indian citizen)
    2. in 2003 (both parents should be Indian citizens, or one a citizen and the other not an illegal migrant)

- Section 5 of the Pakistan Act talks of citizenship by descent if one of the parents was a Pakistani citizen at the time of the person's birth.

- J&K migrants to Pakistan are deemed to be Pakistan citizens until Kashmir's relationship with Pakistan is finally determined.

- British residents were similarly deemed to be citizens.

- Citizenship can also be given to Commonwealth citizens by the government.

## How does the 'freedom of religion' differ?

- Pakistan's Constitution explicitly provides for minorities rights in the Preamble itself.

- It mentions that adequate provision shall be made for the minorities to freely profess, practice freedom of religion and develop their culture.

- It also notes that adequate provision shall be made to protect legitimate interests of minorities and backward classes.

- Of course, the expression "legitimate interests" in respect of minorities is restrictive.

- Unlike India, Pakistan gives the right to freedom of religion only to citizens.

- In India, everyone, including foreigners, has freedom of religion.

- Unlike in India, freedom of speech in Pakistan specifically includes freedom of press but this is subject to "glory of Islam".

- Due to this restriction, Pakistan has a regressive blasphemy law with a mandatory death penalty.

- This runs contrary even to the fundamental principles of Islamic criminal law.

- Its widespread abuse raises questions about Pakistan's commitment to free speech.

**What are the steps taken to protect the minorities in Pakistan?**

- Article 36 says the state shall safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of minorities.

- These include their due representation in the federal and provincial services.

- While religious minorities do face discrimination, the Constitution makes a provision of reservation for them.

- In the National Assembly, 10 seats are reserved for them.

- There are also personal laws for religious minorities in Pakistan.

- There is a provision that laws that are inconsistent with the state religion are to be struck down as unconstitutional.

- However, Article 227(3) of Pakistan's Constitution does exempt personal law of minorities from this provision.

- [In India, any provision of personal law that is inconsistent with the Constitution is null and void.

- Triple talaq was thus declared invalid in 2017.]

- In 2016, Sindh province, which has the highest number of Hindus in Pakistan, passed legislation outlawing forced conversions.

- The Punjab Assembly enacted the Sikh Anand Marriage Act in 2018.

# 7. INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

## 7.1 US's Recognition of Israel's West Bank Settlements

Click here for Part I

**What is the issue?**

- The U.S. administration recently declared that the Israeli settlements on the West Bank are not illegal. Click here to know more on West Bank settlements.

- It is essential now that any future solution must be one that rectifies past evils and offers democracy to all Palestinians.

**What is the new challenge?**

- The "Green Line" was the 1949 armistice line that separates Israel from the West Bank.

- It is an illusion of the imagination of those who support the two-state solution.

- [The two-state solution envisages Israel for the Jewish people and Palestine for the Palestinian people.]

- That was replaced by a greater Israel, ruled by the Israeli nationality law passed in 2018.

- It states that only the Jews have the right of self-determination all over historical Palestine.

- It thus sanctions the continued colonisation of the country and upholds its apartheid system.



- This new reality requires a different approach by anyone caring for the future of the Palestinians and respecting their basic rights.

- This is now a struggle for a regime change.

- It allows half of the population living between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean to have all the privileges.

- They would thus continue to rob the other half of its living space, lands, rights, dignity and life.

- In this regard, popular or armed resistance on the way to liberation would have not been needed if the international community had responded rightly.

## What is the international community's approach?

- The international diplomacy should have bravely examined the origins of the conflict in Palestine and on its basis, support a just and lasting solution.

- But, the international community, and mainly western political elites, fully support Israel.

- It also remains silent in the face of continued dispossession of Palestinians.

- It adopted the two-state solution as its mantra for what should be done.

- This was supported by the Palestinian leadership which hoped to salvage at least part of Palestine (22%).

- This approach too has failed miserably.

- The recognition of the U.S. of the illegal Jewish settlements in the West Bank is yet another indication that the two-state solution is dead.

## What is Israel's stance?

- Israel has established that any sovereign Palestinian state is impossible.

- Moreover, now is the American administration's endorsement of Israel's wish to de-politicise the Palestinian question.

- It thus allows Israel to fully extend its sovereignty all over historical Palestine.

- It thereby rejects categorically the right of any Palestinian refugee to return.

- Notably, this was a right recognised by the UN in its Resolution 194 from December 11, 1948.

- Israel feels that it wasted 50 years in trying to push towards the two state solution.

- The end result of this effort was more Jewish settlements in the West Bank and a total separation between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

## What does the Palestine's civil society feel?

- The civil society in Palestine and around the globe believes in a different way forward.

- Unlike its political elites, it frames the situation in Palestine not as a conflict but a struggle against settler colonialism.

- So, the first step forward suggested by Palestinian civil society was to call upon the international community to boycott and sanction Israel.

- This BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) campaign will continue until -

    i. the people of the West Bank would be liberated from a military rule

    ii. the people of Gaza would be liberated from the siege

    iii. the refugees return from their exile

    iv. the Palestinians in Israel would be recognised as equal citizens

## What is the next Palestinian step?

- A clear alternative Palestinian call for the establishment of a one democratic state all over historical Palestine.

- It is now a vision that will soon become a clear Palestinian political programme.

- This could play a significant role in -

    i. rectifying past evils by compensating and restituting lost land and property

    ii. enabling the repatriation of the refugees

    iii. offering democracy for all who live in historical Palestine, without any discrimination

- This vision has now a growing support in the international community, among young Palestinians and progressive Jews inside and outside Israel.

- However, privileged people like the Jews of Israel would not willingly give up their position.

- Nevertheless, pressure from the outside, a continued popular struggle from the inside and a clear Palestinian vision for the future can turn this vision into reality.

## 7.2    NATO's 70th Anniversary Meet

**Why in news?**

Leaders of the member states of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) are gathered in London to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the defence alliance.

**When and why was NATO formed?**

- NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) was founded in 1949 as a defence alliance.

- It was meant to ensure collective protection for its members against the threat of possible post-War communist expansion and aggression by the Soviet Union.

- The key member States included the United States, Canada, and American allies in Europe.

- The Soviet Union too, formed its own defence and political alliance with Eastern European nations as a counterbalance to NATO.

- In this context was signed the Warsaw Pact in 1955.

- This alliance was disbanded after the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1991.

**What is the current relevance of NATO?**

- NATO has traditionally focused on Russia and the European neighbourhood.

- It had the need to deter "revisionist" and "militarily advanced" Russia, and the threat posed by rogue nations such as North Korea.

- However, with the collapse of the USSR, NATO lost its fundamental purpose of existence.

- For most NATO members, the primary concern now is the expansionist ambition of China.

**What are the present contentions within NATO states?**

- France's President Emmanuel Macron has clashed publicly with both U.S. President Donald Trump and Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

- President Macron described NATO as "brain dead".

- He also accused Turkey of working with Islamic state proxies.

- He observed that the common enemy today was the terrorist groups.

- However, the NATO states do not have the same definition of terrorism among them.

- In this context, he referred to Turkey wanting to recognise the Kurdish YPG militia as a terrorist organisation.

- The militia fought alongside US special forces in Syria against the IS.

- On the other hand, President Erdogan of Turkey calls for NATO's support to defeat Syrian Kurds at its borders.

- This is something that France and the US do not agree with.

- But Erdogan rejects NATO's military plan for the Baltic nations against Russia, unless Turkey receives support for its plans in regards with the Kurds.

- The withdrawal of US Forces from Syria is another irritant in the NATO relations.

- **Expenditure** - During NATO's Brussels Summit in 2018, Trump criticised European nations, especially Germany for not spending enough on defence.

- As per an agreement that was reached in 2014, member nations are supposed to spend up to 2% of their GDP on defence on a voluntary basis.

- According to NATO data until 2018, the US spends the highest percentage of its GDP (at least 3.5%) on defence.

- The Europeans, including the French, the Germans, the Italians, and the Spaniards, spend less than 2%.

## What are the challenges before NATO?

- There is much for the NATO leaders to pay attention to including issues related to China and Russia, and the future of arms control.

- However, a key priority now relates to the difference and disunity in the alliance.

- There is very limited scope for the convergence of the distinct national priorities of the member countries.

- France's priority at the moment is the eradication of terrorism from northeast Syria.

- The US under Trump clearly wants to get out of the Middle East and focus more on the military rise of China.

- The challenge is made stronger by the personalities of the leaders.

- The Europeans are clearly impatient with Erdogan.

- On the other hand, Trump's unpredictability and repeated attacks on European countries and leaders has not endeared him to them.

### 7.3    Impeachment of the U.S. President

**Why in news?**

Donald Trump has become the third US President in history to be impeached by the House of Representatives.

Click here to read more on impeachment process in the U.S.

**What is the procedure?**

- The United States Congress of the federal government of the U.S. is a bicameral legislature.

- It comprises of the two chambers - the House of Representatives and the Senate.

- Impeachment refers to the 435-member House of Representatives approving formal charges against a President.

- The House acts as the accuser, voting on whether to bring specific charges against the President.

- A simple majority vote is needed in the House to impeach, after which the Senate conducts a trial.

- In effect, the House members act as the prosecutors and senators as the jurors.

- A two-thirds majority vote is required in the 100-member Senate to convict and remove a President from office.

- The chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court presides over the trial.

**What are the charges made?**

- The House voted on two charges:
    1. the President abused his power
    2. the President had obstructed Congress

- The 'abuse of power' stemmed from Trump's alleged attempt to pressure Ukraine to announce investigations into his Democratic political rival, Joe Biden.

- The 'obstruction of Congress' was due to President's alleged refusal to co-operate with the impeachment inquiry.

- He also withheld documentary evidence and barred his key aides from giving evidence.

- The vote for the first article of impeachment, abuse of power, was passed 230-197 and the second, for obstruction of Congress, 229-198.

- Both votes fell along party lines with nearly all Democrats voting for the charges and all Republicans against.

**What was the allegation on abuse of power?**

- Mr Trump had personally blocked nearly $400m in military aid to Ukraine.

- At about the same time, he spoke by phone with Ukraine's new President.

- The aid was allegedly withheld to pressurize Ukraine's President to investigate a leading domestic political rival of Trump, Joe Biden.

- [Joe Biden is the front-runner for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination in the U.S.]

- A U.S. intelligence official filed a whistleblower complaint to the intelligence community's inspector general in this regard.

- The allegation now is that Mr Trump used the power of his office to solicit interference from a foreign country in the US 2020 election.

- Mr Trump has denied the charges, saying the aid was not withheld in order to put pressure on Ukraine.

### What is the effect of impeachment?

- With impeachment by the House of Representatives, the next step is the trial in the Senate.

- This will ultimately decide whether the President remains in office or not.

- Being impeached places Donald Trump alongside only two other presidents in the nation's history - Andrew Johnson and Bill Clinton.

## 7.4 Russia's Ban from Global Sporting Events

### Why in news?

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) has decided to ban Russia from global sporting events for a four-year period.

### What is the case?

- The issue has its roots in the scandal that erupted on the eve of the 2016 Rio Olympics.

- Whistle-blower reports alleged Russia for running one of the most sophisticated doping programmes.

- The allegations were of replacing dope-tainted urine samples with clean ones during the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia.

- There was active collusion of Russian anti-doping experts, the sports ministry and members of the country's intelligence service in this.

- In September 2018, as part of the resolution of that case, Russia reluctantly agreed to open up its database to corroborate the findings of the reports.

- WADA has now ruled that the country manipulated this very database in order to cover up large-scale violations.

### What are the implications?

- The anti-doping watchdog's move will hurt Russia the most at the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games and the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics.

- The nation's flag, name and anthem will not be allowed in these occasions.

- Russia can approach the Court of Arbitration for Sport with an appeal within three weeks.

- But, if the sentence is upheld, it could bar Russia from participation in several high-profile global sporting events including the 2022 football World Cup in Qatar.

### What is the significance?

- Some athletes do cheat, but when they do so with official sanction, it is a serious crisis.

- WADA's decision makes it arguably the biggest sporting crisis Russia has faced till date.

---

**World Anti-Doping Agency**

- The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) was established in 1999.

- It is an international independent agency composed and funded equally by the sport movement and governments of the world.

- Its key activities include scientific research, education, development of anti-doping capacities, and monitoring of the World Anti-Doping Code (Code).

- The Code is the document harmonizing anti-doping policies in all sports and all countries.

---

## How effective have earlier bans been?

- There is considerable doubt among anti-doping experts if the current measures would be effective.

- Even ahead of the Rio games, WADA had recommended that Russia be expelled.

- But, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), under President Thomas Bach, had left the decision to individual sports' governing bodies.

- Subsequently, athletes who were cleared of doping were allowed to compete as neutrals.

- A similar episode had played out during the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Games.

- Russia was again banned from this but individual athletes competed.

## How does the future look?

- The IOC may be forced this time around by the sheer magnitude of the findings.

- However, there remains a similar possibility of Russian competitors still participating.

- It may be worth noting that despite Sochi, Russia still played host to events such as the 2015 World Aquatics Championships and the 2018 FIFA World Cup.

- It is again slated to host the swimming event in 2025.

- In a sense, both the IOC and WADA have had to balance between two powerful but opposing arguments.

- One is of punishing the country for its misdemeanors while the other is preserving natural justice for athletes who are clean.

## 7.5   Afghanistan Presidential Election - Ashraf Ghani

### Why in news?

Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani appeared to have won a second term as per the preliminary election result.

### What is the procedure?

- President Ashraf Ghani has won 50.64% of the votes counted.

- If ratified, this will obviate the need for a second round of polling.

- A second round, after a gap, would prolong the uncertainty around the polls.

- Notably, even these results took more than three months to announce.

- A prolonged election process will do little to end political instability in Afghanistan.

### What is the significance?

- The current elections are the fourth Presidential poll since the Taliban's fall in 2001.

- It consolidates the country's democratic process in the face of odds, including continuing violence and terrorism there.

- It is a great success that these polls were held, having been delayed for months.

- It was almost cancelled after progress in reconciliation talks with Taliban leaders, who do not recognise the electoral process.

- The U.S.'s decision to cancel the talks, which is now resumed, gave the necessary breather for the polls and counting to be carried out.

### What are the concerns?

- Voter turnout was a record low, with only about a quarter of 9.6 million registered voters voting.

- Thousands of votes were also disqualified after biometric match failures and other irregularities, setting off allegations of voter fraud.

- As a result, Afghanistan's former Chief Executive Officer and Mr. Ghani's chief rival, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, has rejected the preliminary results.

- Mr. Ghani's vote margin over Mr. Abdullah is only around 2,14,000.

- If more votes are disqualified during the review process, then they may have to fight the second round.

- This will possibly be more divisive for Afghanistan.

- [Mr. Ghani, a Pashtun leader, has drawn much of his support from the Pashtun-majority south.

- On the other hand, Mr. Abdullah has won mainly in the Northern areas with Tajik presence.]

- The U.S.-Taliban talks also cast a shadow over whether the results will be respected if the Taliban negotiates its way into a power-sharing arrangement in Kabul.

## How have nations reacted to this?

- Indian PM Modi congratulated Mr Ghani for winning the elections.

- He reaffirmed India's close and strategic partnership with Afghanistan since 2010.

- The move came in sharp contrast to the rest of world that has chosen to be more cautious at present.

- The U.S. Ambassador has reminded all that "many steps remain" before the final results are certified and declared.

- The UN has also called for all candidates to "safeguard and complete the election".

- It will be in everyone's interests if the remaining steps of the electoral process are completed at the earliest, and democracy is reaffirmed in Afghanistan.

# G.S PAPER III

# 8. ECONOMY

## 8.1    Monetary Policy Review - December 2019

### Why in news?

The RBI, in its latest monetary policy review (December 2019), has kept the repo and reverse repo rates unchanged.

### Why is the decision significant?

- The RBI has cut the policy rate (repo rate) consecutively in the preceding five monetary policy reviews.

- There has been a cumulative 135 basis points cut since February 2019.

- But the RBI now seems to have decided to pause this trend, by holding the interest rate.

### What is the RBI's rationale?

- Economic growth concerns are still paramount which might call for a rate cut.

- However, a lot has changed between the earlier policies and now.

- Inflation is on an upward trend, and so a rate cut may turn out disadvantageous.

- Macro numbers indicate a considerable slippage in the fiscal deficit target of 3.3% for this fiscal.

- But, the government's approach to the fiscal deficit glide path is still unclear.

- Moreover, the effects of rate cuts since February still need to percolate down through the system, which is lagging.

- If RBI continues to cut rates without the cuts being transmitted down the line, the instrumental role of rate cuts in boosting growth may not happen.

- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has thus taken care to point out that "there is monetary policy space for future action."

- Hence, the accommodative stance will continue.

- The MPC also wants to watch the government's moves in the budget before easing rates again.

- The RBI has, however, clearly indicated that facilitating growth is still at the top of its agenda.

# What are the latest growth projections?

- Acknowledging the dismal growth in the second quarter, the MPC has revised the growth projections for fiscal 2019-20.
- It has revised it sharply downwards to 5% from the 6.1% it had projected in the October 2019 policy.
- On inflation, the RBI has projected a significant rise in the second half of the 2019-20 fiscal.
- However, there is optimism that the spike is temporary.
- It is driven largely by rising prices of food items due to unseasonal rains that destroyed standing kharif crops.
- Given these, it seems to be a strategic pause by the MPC to watch how inflation moves and what the government does in the budget.

## 8.2    Reworking on Personal Income Tax Rates

### Why in news?

Finance Minister recently said that the government was considering lowering and rationalising personal income tax (I-T) rates.

### What is the announcement?

- Budget 2020-21 will make changes to the personal income tax rates for the salaried in lower and middle income groups.
- This may be done through changes in the tax slabs.
- Accordingly, those having annual income between Rs. 2.5-10 lakh may be taxed at the rate of 10%.
- On the other hand, individuals earning between Rs. 10-20 lakh may get to pay tax at a rate of 20%.
- The tax exemption limit may, however, remain unchanged at Rs. 2.5 lakh.
- The announcement was among other measures to boost economic growth.
- Notably, the economic growth slowed to 4.5% in the second quarter of the current fiscal year.

### What is the rationale?

- There are various reasons why the government should revisit and rationalise income tax in the forthcoming Union Budget.
- Primarily, it would be a logical step after the reduction in corporate tax rates earlier in 2019.
- It would also help take the process of direct tax reforms forward.
- The simplification of the tax structure has a better chance of improving collections in the medium- to long-run.
- The move will also provide an opportunity to rationalise taxes for different category of taxpayers and remove distortions.
- [E.g. It was highlighted in the 2018 Budget speech that in 2016-17, salaried individuals on an average paid Rs 76,306 as income tax.
- On the other hand, the average for individual business taxpayers, including professionals, was Rs 25,753.]
- Also, lowering tax rates for individual taxpayers is expected to increase their disposable income and help boost consumption.
- This is despite the fact that the impact on the overall economic activity could be limited because of the small taxpayer base.

### What is the need for caution?

- The idea of rationalising individual income tax rates needs to be welcomed.
- However, it is important to note that the government is in a difficult position in terms of revenue collection.
- Given this, it will need to strike a fine balance.

- A sharp reduction in rates can adversely affect revenues and further weaken the government's fiscal position.
- It is almost impossible for the government to contain the fiscal deficit under the target of 3.3% of GDP in the current year.
- The economy is also unlikely to witness a sharp recovery in the near term.
- Given these, revenue collection in the next financial year could also remain under pressure.

## 8.3    IBC Amendments

**Why in news?**

The cabinet has approved amendments to the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) on resolution of defaulting entities.

**What are the key changes made?**

- The changes protect successful resolution applicants from criminal proceedings against offences committed by previous managements or promoters.
- This is likely to speed up the resolution process by giving comfort to buyers of stressed assets.
- It also lowered the rating threshold for public sector banks to purchase high-rated pooled assets.
- The rating is lowered from AA ("financially sound") to BBB+ ("most stressed").
- Earlier, only AA-rated companies were able to raise money from the market considering their healthy credit rating.
- [The ratings are as under the partial credit guarantee (PCG) scheme.]
- The relaxation will now make more NBFCs (nonbanking finance companies) and HFCs (housing finance companies) eligible for funds from banks.
- Other amendments include measures to ensure that corporate debtors undergoing resolution continue as going concerns.
- Licences, permits, concessions, clearances etc. cannot be terminated, suspended or not renewed during the moratorium period.
- The changes also propose a threshold for financial creditors to prevent frivolous triggering of corporate insolvency.
- This is to ensure that bankruptcy is not invoked for small amounts.

**What are the benefits?**

- Changes are being made to streamline the corporate insolvency resolution process (CIRP) and protection of lastmile funding.
- The changes will remove hurdles in the way of speedy resolution and also attract bidders.
- However, the IBC's effectiveness depends crucially on the mechanism working at speed.
- Thus, it is essential that these amendments swiftly be enacted into law.

## 8.4    Addressing the Economic Slowdown

**What is the issue?**

- India is at a critical stage in terms of its economy with increasing fiscal deficit and growth not happening at required levels.
- In this backdrop, here is a look at the various recourses that the government could take.

**What should the government do on the investment side?**

- The private sector, in its reaction to the economic slowdown, has lost confidence and is investing less.
- This is only aggravating the economic crisis.
- An RBI report suggests that business confidence, consumer confidence and capacity utilisation are down.

- The government thus has to garner resources and give a boost to the economy by increasing its investments.
- But, the slowdown has adversely impacted growth of tax revenues.

## What is required on the tax revenues side?

- The government calculated tax revenues on the assumption of a 12% nominal growth.
- But, it has been around only 9%, both in 2018 and 2019.
- So, in 2018-19, tax revenue was short by about Rs. 1.5 lakh crore.
- However, this was not reflected in the planning for the 2019-20 Budget.
- So, certainly, the revenue shortfall for the Centre will be even larger than last year when it was around Rs. 2 lakh crore.

## How does this affect the states?

- The States get 42% of the tax revenue, and so they will get Rs. 84,000 crore less this year.
- Further, the concessions in corporate taxation of Rs. 1.45 lakh crore will also mean Rs. 58,000 crore less revenue for the States.
- While the Centre has obtained Rs. 1.76 lakh crore from the RBI's reserves, no such assistance is available to the States.
- The Centre will also get the proceeds of disinvestment but that is not shared with the States.
- In essence, the States will have a larger shortfall in resources than the Centre.

## How can the states manage this?

- With the current GST structure, revenue from indirect taxes cannot fill the resource gap of the states.
- The States have also been complaining that they are not getting the funds that are due to them from the Centre.
- The Centre has partly responded to this by transferring more, but that raises its deficit.
- The Centre is required to give the States their share of Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST).
- It should also compensate the states if the revenue growth of State Goods and Services Tax is less than 14%.
- This could come from the cess collected on sin goods and luxury goods.
- One of the big contributors to GST has been the auto sector.
- But, with sales falling in the recent period, collections have declined.
- The Centre is apparently holding back the States' share of IGST and arguing that the cess collection is inadequate to compensate the States for their shortfall.

## What are the challenges in addressing this?

- The dilemma is that if the GST rates are increased, prices would rise and demand would further slump.
- This would further aggravate the economic slowdown and shortfall in revenues.
- One of the suggestions has been to raise the 5% slab to 6% or 10%.
- It has also been suggested that taxes on petro goods and liquor for human consumption are under the purview of the States.
- They can raise tax rates on these items as per the demands of the situation.
- But, these will be inflationary moves and demand would fall.
- The problem is compounded by the shortfall in direct tax collections.
- This is both the result of corporate tax concessions and the slowing economy.
- Income-tax rates cannot be raised now since that would be seen as inequitable.
- There are demands to reduce income-tax (I-T) rates to boost demand in the economy.

- However, a cut in I-T rates will largely benefit less than 2% of the citizens who pay a significant amount of income-tax.

- They are well-to-do and unlikely to increase consumption.

- Similarly, the cut in corporate tax rates will not boost demand since neither investment nor consumption will rise.

- The concessions to the corporate sector have narrowed the fiscal space available without raising demand.

## 8.5 Reflecting on India's Black Money Problem

**What is the issue?**

- India's black money problem was largely misdiagnosed.

- The ensuing legislative measures in addressing the black money problem have fallen short of constitutional and economic rationale.

**What are the shortfalls in black money laws?**

- Being high on populism and low on constitutional wisdom, the Black Money Act was a draconian law that was bound to fail.

- The Act aimed at bringing back a few lakh crore of unaccounted money parked as overseas assets.

- Sadly, it was able to accomplish only 5 to 10% of what was expected of it.

- At minimum tax rate of 60%, it gave only marginal incentive for the hoarders to come clean.

- Lawmakers overestimated the writ of international laws and made no economically persuasive case.

- Resultantly, as of May 2019, the total untaxed foreign assets mined was Rs. 12,500 crore.

- Wholly recovered, this would not even pay Prasar Bharati's bills for 4 years.

- Even this recovery was aided greatly by international exposes such as the Panama Papers in which the government's legislation had no role to play.

- In comparison, Indonesia recovered about Rs. 25 lakh crore under similar schemes.

- Instead of doing course correction, the government passed an even more confiscatory law, the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act.

- Demonetisation was among the government's purported measures to fight the black money menace.

- However, the international media called demonetisation as a 'massive theft of people's property'.

- Similarly, the announcement that Rs. 15 lakh will be deposited in each citizen's account was found to be nothing more than a political bait.

**What is the limitation?**

- No clear estimate of black money owned by Indians and stashed abroad is available.

- Between 2008 and 2012, various reports quoted anywhere between $500 billion and $1.5 trillion.

- However, these turned out to be false.

- In March 2019, National Institute of Financial Management reported that the estimate is about $216 billion-$490 billion.

- This is just one-seventh the estimate quoted ahead of the 2014 elections.

- In essence, India's foreign black money problem was misdiagnosed and unverified.

- Consequently, the exaggerated numbers went into satisfying Parliament that draconian financial laws are justified.

**What is the key concern?**

- Any fiscal system must have not just legality but also legitimacy.

- A system loses legitimacy when there is a breach of faith on the part of the government in its dealings with the taxpayer.
- A democratic state cannot unjustly enrich itself by making citizens pay for what is not rightly owed.

**What does this call for?**

- The true intent of both the Black Money Act and Fugitive Economic Offenders Act could have been achieved by a few tweaks in the existing laws as the Income Tax Act.
- The government should give up the belief that being an intrusive, pressurizing confiscator enriches Indians. This, clearly, does not work.
- This approach is only impoverishing the country into an economic depression.
- The draconian fiscal laws must at once be repealed.
- Increased international cooperation, technological advances and banking penetration would address the black money concern better.
- India's war on black money can only be won through democratic, persuasive and economically-sound means.

# 9. INFRASTRUCTURE

## 9.1 Anaj Mandi Fire Tragedy - Delhi

**Why in news?**

At least 43 were dead and 16 were injured in a fire at an illegal factory in Anaj Mandi area, north Delhi.

**What are the shortcomings identified?**

- Multiple rules were broken, including -
  i. running factories in residential areas
  ii. lack of a no-objection certificate from the fire department
  iii. workers living on the factory premises
- Most of the workers came from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, and virtually slept at night next to the machines they worked on.
- Probe should reveal if the victims were locked in and obstructed by materials stacked on staircases.
- In that case, the culpability of those responsible would be enormously higher.

**What are the larger concerns?**

- The Anaj Mandi tragedy is the latest in a long list of fatality-causing fires in the national capital.
- All of such incidents were invariably the result of lax vigilance and rule-breaking by local authorities.
- The tragedy is yet another reminder for the dangerous conditions of the country's industrial units.
- Poorly paid labourers live and work in several residential buildings turned into unregistered factories.
- The factory and other such units are allowed to function illegally, without safety audits.
- Slums and crowded residential areas take up the bulk of the city's space.
- These spaces are all much prone to fire hazards.
- State and central governments, which divide the city's administration between them, blame each other.

## 9.2 Evaluation of Strategic Disinvestment of PSUs

**What is the issue?**

- The cabinet committee on economic affairs (CCEA) recently approved strategic disinvestment in BPCL and four other PSUs. Click here to know more.

- In this context, here is an analysis if the decision is financially and strategically sound or not.

## What are the key considerations to disinvestment?

- A few strategic issues of national importance need to be considered for stake sale of profit-making public sector undertakings (PSUs):

    i. if the Government must get out of business

    ii. the need to bring the fiscal deficit down

    iii. whether public- or privately-owned was better for the Government treasury

    iv. national security and self reliance i.e. if India could be under pressure if there is no full control over petroleum

- The last one arises from the fact that U.S., China and other superpowers have control over their petroleum reserves.

## Is selling profitable PSUs financially wise?

- Financially, India as a nation is worse off by selling a profitable venture as the BPCL.

- The numbers on current value of the PSUs, the government's profit in holding or selling the entity, make the above fact evident.

- As the case of the BPCL and several other PSU 'Navratnas' show, they have given super normal returns to the public exchequer.

- So, instead of selling such high performing PSUs, the government should consider selling the loss-making ones.

## How is fiscal deficit target a factor in this?

- Another issue underlying the disinvestment is the fiscal deficit target of 3.4%, now reduced to 3.3%.

- [Fiscal deficit is the difference between total revenue and total expenditure of the government.]

- Given that revenue collections are not enough, the Government is perhaps planning the sale of well-running PSUs to meet the fiscal deficit target.

- The Government may meet its fiscal deficit target by the stake sale of various PSUs including the BPCL this year.

- However, how would the target be met in the next year is a big question.

- Notably, despite the huge one-time dividend from the RBI, the government is far from meeting the deficit target.

- Also, nothing much will change in terms of the expenditure or revenues in the coming years.

- The strategic sales and dividends cannot be repeated every year.

- So, in effect, the country will be back to the same levels of fiscal deficit.

- The real way of meeting this target is to cut out wasteful Government expenditure.

- Unfortunately, the cuts will be in the social sector.

## What is the national security concern involved?

- National security also depends on the economic power that a Government has.

- The ideological issue of Government versus private ownership is related to the strategic issue about national security.

- Natural resources, especially oil, are a strategic national resource.

- The United States maintains such an underground crude oil reserve to mitigate any supply disruptions.

- Such reserves stands at over 600 billion barrels for the U.S., 400 for China, 146 for South Korea, 120 for Spain and 39.1 for India.

- India does have a target to substantially increase its reserves.

- At today's prices to reach Chinese levels of reserves, India will need nearly Rs. 2 lakh crore, which is 10% of the Central Budget.

- Even if it is spread out over several years, it is still a lot of money.

- While China sticks to state-owned national resources, India is moving in the opposite direction.

- India does have plans to build perhaps the world's largest refinery in India, with the help of Saudi Arabia.

- However, ownership and control will be in foreign hands.

- Meanwhile with the strategic disinvestments, India will lose Government control over both crude and refining.

**What is the way forward?**

- Financially, the country is worse off, and strategically the nation finds itself in a vulnerable situation.

- India thus needs to see through the ideological narrative coming from the developed nations.

- They embraced free trade when it suited them and are now trying to embrace protectionism.

- China adopted a market system but this does not cloud its thinking in strategic national issues; the control remains with the Government.

- India too needs to re-think its strategy.

# 10.  AGRICULTURE

### 10.1  Definition of a Farmer - Question in Rajya Sabha

**Why in news?**

The Agriculture Minister evaded answering a question over the government's definition of a farmer and the number of farmers in India by that definition.

**What happened in Parliament?**

- The question was posed in the Rajya Sabha by BJP MP Ajay Pratap Singh.

- He also asked whether any survey had been conducted to find out the number of farmer families.

- In a written response, the Agriculture Minister evaded giving any definition of a farmer.

- He instead said that agriculture was a State subject.

- He provided data on the number of agricultural landholdings.

- He noted that the Centre provides income support to all farmer families who own cultivable land via the PM-KISAN scheme.

- In the following discussion, MPs pointed out that the number of land holdings do not necessarily equate with the number of farming households.

**What is the definition in the National Policy?**

- There is a clear and comprehensive definition available in the National Policy for Farmers.

- [The policy emphasises the need to substantially increase the net income of farmers.

- It also aims at developing support services for them, using that comprehensive definition.

- It was drafted by the National Commission of Farmers headed by M.S. Swaminathan.]

- The definition was officially approved by the Centre in 2007 following consultations with the States, for the purpose of the Policy.

- Accordingly, the term 'FARMER' will refer to a person actively engaged in the economic and/or livelihood activity of growing crops.

- It will also apply to those producing other primary agricultural commodities.

- It will include all agricultural operational holders, cultivators, agricultural labourers, sharecroppers, tenants, poultry and livestock rearers, fishers.

- Others include beekeepers, gardeners, pastoralists, non-corporate planters and planting labourers.

- Besides these, those engaged in various farming related occupations such as sericulture, vermiculture and agro-forestry are also covered.

- The term will also include tribal families/persons engaged in shifting cultivation and in the collection, use and sale of minor and non-timber forest produce.

## What is in practice?

- There is a deliberate attempt at avoiding this pre-existing official definition.

- In practice, those who cultivate or work on the land but do not own it are excluded from the definition of farmers.

- Thus, dairy farmers, fisherfolk, fruit and flower growers would not fit into it.

- Also, landless agricultural workers who cultivate the land belonging to others would not come under it.

## What are the implications of this?

- The government's ambiguity has serious implications for the design and beneficiaries of the schemes meant to help them.

- According to Census 2011, there are 11.8 crore cultivators and 14.4 crore agricultural workers.

- The excluded ones do not get access to agricultural credit and interest subvention for farm loans.

- Crop insurance and loan waivers go to loanees so they are left out of that as well.

- Most schemes meant for farmers' welfare, including the procurement of wheat and paddy at MSP, are effectively available only for land owners.

- Access to subsidised crop inputs is difficult without identification as farmers.

- In the event of crop failure too, compensation is only given to owners.

- Tax exemption is usually claimed by owners who give an unverified affidavit that they cultivate the land.

- Direct income support schemes such as PM-KISAN (Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi) are also limited to owners.

- Those who work on the land may not be identified as farmers for the purposes of counting farmer suicides.

- **Women** - Linking the identity of a farmer to land ownership has devastating consequences for another category - women farmers.

- Some studies estimate that 60%-70% of farmers are actually women, but their names are rarely on ownership documents.

## 10.2   Evaluation of Fertiliser Subsidy Policy

## What is the issue?

- India's experience with fertilisers, in the later part of the Green Revolution, prompted it to adopt a policy of subsidising fertilisers.

- However, the challenges rooted in the subsidy policy for the farmers, industry, the government and the environment are so serious.

## How has fertiliser use evolved?

- In 1977, India had a total NPK (nitrogenous, phosphatic and potassic) fertiliser consumption of 4.3 million metric tonnes (mmt).

- The per hectare usage was 24.9 kg.

- In contrast, by FY19, total consumption had risen to 27.3 mmt and per hectare usage stands at 137.6 kg.

## What were the gains?

- Increased fertiliser usage also meant a concomitant spurt in agricultural production.

- Resultantly, the total foodgrain production reached 284.95 mmt in FY19.

- This is an over-three-fold increase from the production in 1977-78.

- Undeniably, increased foodgrain production has been a boon for food security.

- The per capita foodgrain availability has increased from 155.3 kg in 1976 to 180.3 kg in 2018.

- Also, foodgrain requirement is set to increase more and the climate crisis impact is predicted to be quite severe for India.

- So, given this and looking at the gains, continuing with the fertiliser policy would only seem sensible.

- However, there is a flip side to this, with negative implications to farming, fertiliser industry, environment and the government.

## How does this affect the farmers?

- Due to subsidising of primarily urea (N of NPK), there is rampant overuse of urea.

- Urea accounts for 64% of the government's subsidy for fertiliser, with 77% of its price being subsidised.

- Consequently, there is worse overuse, drastically skewing the ideal usage ratio of fertilisers, and altering the soil chemistry further.

- The indicated N:P:K usage for Indian soil is 4:2:1.

- While it stood at 7:2.7:1 in 2000-01, it was 6.1:2.5:1 in 2017-18.

- In Punjab and Haryana, two of India's top agrarian states, the ratio was 25.8:5.8:1 and 22.7:6.1:1, respectively.

- The overuse has led to worsening of soil quality that has resulted in falling crop response to fertilisers.

- In 2005, the crop response ratio to fertilisers had fallen to 3.7 kg grains/kg fertiliser, from 13 kg grains/kg fertiliser in 1970.

- This, in turn, has adversely affected farm productivity and farmers' profitability.

- This is, thus, somewhat of a vicious cycle.

## What is the scenario in the fertiliser industry?

- Subsidy and controls meant fertiliser production boomed in the country.

- However, with no proper incentives, domestic urea production rose just 4.4 mmt between 2000-01 and 2018-19.

- In 2018-19, urea production stood at 23.9 mmt while consumption was at 32 mmt.

- India, thus, is a major urea importer.

- Domestic urea production is simply uncompetitive, seen in comparison with global urea price.

- Only 7 of the 30 Indian plants were operating below the global price.

- The problem lies in the cost of the feedstock.

- Of the 30 urea production plants in the country, 27 use natural gas and three use naptha as the feedstock.

- The average cost of production for natural gas-based plants is much lower than that of naptha-based plants.

- In 2015, the government introduced pooling of natural gas so that all fertiliser plants got gas at the same price.

- While the price of domestic gas is still low, the price of the pooled natural gas for the fertiliser industry has shot up.

## What does it cost to the government?

- Between FY01 and FY19, urea subsidy has increased from Rs 9,500 crore to Rs 45,000 crore.

- As per FY20 Budget estimates, it will be Rs 50,000 crore.

**How does it affect the environment?**

- Indian soils have relatively low nitrogen use efficiency (average of 22% estimated in 2008).

- So, the bulk of the urea applied contaminates ground- and surface water and the atmosphere.

- In effect, the current fertiliser policy is only subsidising pollution.

- The bulk of the applied urea is lost as ammonia ($NH_3$), dinitrogen ($N_2$) and NOx (nitrogen oxides).

- While the ammonia gets converted to nitrates, increasing soil acidity, NOx gases are major air pollutants.

- Nitrate contamination of groundwater leads to conditions such as methaemoglobinaemia (commonly known as blue baby syndrome).

- This has reached far beyond WHO safe limit in Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan.

# 11.  ENVIRONMENT

## 11.1  IPCC Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere - UNFCCC Meet

**What is the issue?**

- The annual conference of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) took place in Madrid, Spain. Click here to know more.

- In this backdrop, one of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC's) recent reports gains significance.

**What is the report on?**

- The report is entitled the 'Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate'.

- It highlights the changes taking place in oceans, glaciers and ice-deposits on land and sea.

- It was prepared following an IPCC Panel decision in 2016 to prepare three Special Reports.

- The above report follows the Special Reports on Global Warming of 1.5°C (SR1.5), and on Climate Change and Land (SRCCL).

- The 1.5°C report was a key input used in negotiations at Katowice, Poland in 2018.

- Countries relied on it to commit themselves to capping global temperature rise to 1.5°C by the end of the century.

- The recent report updates scientific literature available since 2015.

- 2015 was when the IPCC released its comprehensive 5th Assessment Report.

- The report summarises the disastrous impacts of global warming based on current projections of global greenhouse gas emissions.

**Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change**

- IPCC was established by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in 1988.

- It is the leading international body for the assessment of climate change.

- It is the apex referee for scientific evidence on the impact of global warming.

- It provides a clear scientific view on the current state of knowledge in climate change and its potential environmental and socio-economic impacts.

**What are the key highlights?**

- Over the 21st century, the ocean is projected to make transition to unprecedented conditions.

- Increased temperatures, further ocean acidification, marine heatwaves and more frequent extreme El Nino and La Nina events are the key threats.

- It is virtually certain that the global ocean has warmed unabated since 1970.

- It has taken up more than 90% of the excess heat in the climate system.

- Since 1993, the rate of ocean warming has more than doubled.

- Marine heatwaves have very likely doubled in frequency since 1982 and are further increasing in intensity.

- The Southern Ocean accounted for 35%–43% of the total heat gain in the upper 2,000 m global ocean between 1970 and 2017.

- Its share increased to 45%–62% between 2005 and 2017.

- **Threats** - Even under the most optimistic scenarios, human health, livelihoods, biodiversity and food systems face a serious threat from climate change.

- Accelerated rates of loss of ice, particularly in Greenland, the Arctic and the Antarctic, will produce a destructive rise in sea levels.

- Increases in tropical cyclone winds, rainfall and extreme waves, combined with relative sea level rise, will exacerbate catastrophic sea level events.

- All this will deal a blow also to the health of fish stocks.

- What is particularly significant for countries with a long coastline, including India, is the local sea level anomalies.

- Such events that occurred once in a century may become annual events, due to the projected global mean sea level rise over the 21st century.

- This is an alarming scenario for the 680 million residents of low-lying coastal areas and for those living in small islands.

- Notably, population of low-lying coastal areas may go up to one billion by 2050.

- A major impact is in the Hindu Kush Himalayan Regions.

- Floods will become more frequent and severe in the mountainous and downstream areas of the Indus, Ganges and Brahmaputra river basins.

- This would be because of an increase in extreme precipitation events.

- The severity of flood events is expected to more than double towards the end of the century.

## What does the report call for?

- There is a yawning gap between planned emissions cuts, and what needs to be done by 2030 to contain global temperature rise at 1.5°C.

- The IPCC report thus lends further urgency to the task before countries at the UN conference.

- The member-nations of the UNFCCC are tasked to finalise measures under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement.

- The objective is to commodify carbon emissions cuts, and to make it financially attractive to reduce emissions.

- The IPCC assessment underscores the need for unprecedented and urgent action in all countries that have significant greenhouse gas emissions.

- It strengthens the case for industrialised nations to provide liberal, transparent funding to developing countries under the Paris Agreement.

- This would reinforce the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities.

- It would also recognise that rich countries reduced the carbon space available to the poor.

# 12.    INTERNAL SECURITY

## 12.1    SIT Report on 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots

## Why in news?

The special investigation team (SIT) set up to probe on 1984 anti-Sikh riots handed over its report to the Court.

### What was the case on?

- The 1984 anti-Sikh riots broke out after the assassination of Indira Gandhi who was then the Prime Minister of the country.

- As many as 3,325 people from the Sikh community, including 2,733 in Delhi alone, were killed in the pogrom.

- Some senior politicians, many of them from the Congress party, were accused of inciting violence and stirring up tensions.

### How did the present SIT come up?

- Another SIT had earlier scrutinised 293 cases, and closed 199 of them.

- A two-member team of retired apex court judges scrutinised these 199 cases, along with 42 other matters that had been closed earlier.

- The supervisory committee gave its views on these 241 cases.

- The Bench headed by the then Chief Justice of India, Dipak Misra, was informed that 186 cases merited further investigation.

- Thus, a fresh 3-member team, headed by retired Delhi HC judge, S.N. Dhingra, was constituted on the direction of a three-judge bench in January 2018.

- It was asked to examine these 186 cases.

- This came up on a petition filed by a riot victim Gurlad Singh Kahlon.

### What is the present report on?

- The SIT had taken up the probe into cases on 1984 riots that had been closed by the police.

- On the completion of the investigation, the report was handed over in a sealed cover to the top court.

- It was also requested that the team be discharged.

- The court has taken the report on record and adjourned the case for two weeks.

### What are the earlier developments in the case?

- In November 2018, two men were convicted of murder.

- One of them was sentenced to death, and the other to life.

- In December 2018, the Delhi High Court had convicted former Congress MP Sajjan Kumar for his role in the riots.

- He was sentenced to life imprisonment (after being acquitted by the trial court 5 years earlier). [His appeal is pending in Supreme Court.]

- Otherwise, the 35-year-long quest for justice is largely a story of failure due to political influence, hurried investigation and shoddy prosecution.

- The country has seen other large-scale riots and pogroms after 1984, but has not been able to ensure substantive justice.

### What is the significance?

- It is not easy to secure convictions in instances of communal riots and sectarian violence.

- This is especially challenging when thousands of offenders are gripped by mob frenzy.

- Moreover, in 1984, there was little effort in the early days to bring to justice the high political functionaries who were suspected to have instigated the riots.

- Given this, fresh SIT report on 1984 riots may pave the way for reopening the probes.

- It may be a precedent to correcting the country's poor record in securing justice for the victims of the 1984 anti-Sikh pogrom.

- Regardless of how many cases out of these result in prosecution, the development does offer a glimmer of hope to the victims of 1984.

- It is time to consider the Delhi High Court's suggestion in its verdict on Sajjan Kumar.

- It suggested that there could be separate legislation to deal with mass murders that amount to genocide or crimes against humanity.

## 12.2    2012 Anti-Naxal Encounter Findings

**Why in news?**

The Justice V.K. Agarwal judicial enquiry commission gave its observations over the June 28-29, 2012 "anti-naxal encounter" in 3 villages in Bijapur and Sukma districts of Chhattisgarh.

**What were the security forces' claims?**

- It was claimed by the security forces in Chhattisgarh that the 17 people who died in the "encounter" were "Naxalites".

- In the official narration, two teams led by a DIG marched into the forests to outflank the extremist groups in a meeting only to be surprised by gunfire.

- On the next day, 17 Naxalites lay dead, and six uniformed personnel hurt.

**What are the commission's findings now?**

- The commission found no evidence of a gunfight, and held that firing had been one-sided from the beginning to end.

- The postmortem reports showed that injuries on 10 of those killed were on their backs.

- This was not consistent with the security forces' claims that the firing had been in self-defence.

- Instead, the nature and location of the injuries suggested that they were fired upon while fleeing, and in no position to pose a threat.

- There were bullet shots on some of the heads, evidently from close quarters.

- There were injuries on the upper torsos caused by the butt of guns or rifles, which were signs of physical assault.

- There were also signs of manipulation in the timing of injury and post-mortem reports in at least one case.

- More worse, the commission concluded that injuries sustained by the uniformed personnel were more likely caused through friendly fire.

- The cataloguing and managing of the evidence relating to the armaments such as guns and detonators allegedly carried by the "Naxalites" suffered from imprecise documentation.

**What does this indicate?**

- The findings reveal how truth can be subverted and buried by the very officers who are supposed to enforce the law.

- The findings make it clear that the entire operation was substandard from the start.

- There was poor intelligence, inadequate training, lack of communication, and hasty reaction.

**What are the recommendations made?**

- Training should be imparted to improve the mental fabric of the security forces.

- This is to make them more balanced so that they act with equanimity.

- Security forces must be trained to desist from panic responses while dealing with extremists.

- There is a crucial need now to find ways to initiate action against the officers involved in the unfortunate operation and its heinous subversion and cover up.

## 12.3    Nanavati Commission - 2002 Godhra Riots

**Why in news?**

- The Gujarat government tabled in the Assembly the report of the Nanavati Commission.

- The commission had been appointed to probe the burning of the Sabarmati Express in 2002 and the subsequent riots in the state.

## What is the Nanavati Commission?

- It was set up in 2002 following the burning of the Sabarmati Express near Godhra station on February 27, 2002, in which 59 died.

- The Commission inquired into events leading to the Sabarmati Express incident.

- It also looked into -

    i.   the subsequent incidents of violence in Gujarat in which nearly 1,200 persons had been killed (including the 59 in the train carnage)

    ii.  the inadequacy of administrative measures taken to prevent and deal with disturbances

    iii. whether the incident in Godhra was pre-planned

    iv.  whether information was available with agencies to prevent it

- The commission was also tasked to recommend measures to prevent such incidents in the future.

- In 2004, its scope was expanded to include inquiry into the role and conduct of the then CM Narendra Modi and/or any other minister(s), police officers, other individuals and organisations.

- The Commission got 24 extensions until it submitted the final report in 2014.

## Why was the delay in tabling it?

- The first report, containing a single volume dealing with the inquiry into the burning of the coaches, was tabled in the Assembly in 2008.

- It gave a clean chit to Modi, his council of ministers and police officers.

- It concluded that the train burning was "pre-planned act" and done to "cause harm to the kar sevaks travelling in that coach".

- The final report was submitted in 2014 to then Chief Minister Anandiben Patel, months after Modi became Prime Minister.

- The final report was of 9 volumes across 2,500 pages.

- Minister of State for Home said that it was voluminous and they needed to study every aspect before putting it out in public, and so was the delay

## What are the key findings?

- The Commission found that there was no conspiracy involved in the riots.

- The riots were largely the outcome of the anger over the Godhra train burning incident.

- It gave a clean chit to Modi, as well as to police, the BJP, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal.

- **Findings about Modi** – The commission quoted Modi as having told it that he was being kept informed about the incident.

- The senior officers of respective departments were keeping him posted with the steps taken to control the sudden violent situation.

- The measures were on with the assistance of all forces including para military forces and military, which the state agencies had deployed immediately.

- **Ministers, police and other organisations** - There was no incident to show that either BJP, VHP or any other political party or any religious organisations had instigated attacks on Muslims.

- Only in two cases it was alleged that VHP persons had taken part in those incidents.

- The incidents against Muslims appear to have happened because of the anger of the people on account of the Godhra incident.

- Anti-social elements appear to have taken part in some incidents.

- The police had taken prompt and effective steps to curb violence and had saved lives and properties.

- There was no evidence to show there was any inaction or negligence on the part of police in maintaining law and order in the district.

- There was also no evidence to show involvement of any Minister of the State in the incidents or any interference in the functioning of the police.

**What are the key recommendations?**

- Reasonable restriction be placed upon the media in matter of publication of reports about the incidents (during communal riots).

- The Commission cited testimonies accusing media.

- The media gave wide publicity to the Godhra incident and the incidents that happened thereafter people got excited and indulged in communal violence.

- It also found "deep rooted hatred between some sections of Hindu and Muslim communities" as one of the causes of communal riots.

- It recommends the government to take steps for removing this "weakness" from society.

- In this regard, it cited instances to show that Hindus, in fact, were either assaulted for helping Muslims or alerted Muslims about possible attacks.

## 12.4    Internet Shutdowns in India

**What is the issue?**

- It has become common for law enforcement and government officials to cut off the Internet during moments of tension.

- With rise in such instances in the recent period, here is a look at the trend, the legal provisions, and the implications in regards to internet shutdowns.

**What are the recent instances?**

- The Delhi-based non-profit Software Freedom Law Centre (SFLC) tracks these shutdowns nationally.

- It says there have been 55 internet blockades in J&K in 2019.

- There were 11 in Rajasthan in the same period.

- Network disruptions have also become increasingly common around the world.

- The Iranian government recently ordered near-complete suspension of internet services as a response to protests over a hike in petrol prices.

- Between mid-2015 to mid-2016, over 19 countries suspended internet access.

- The number increased to more than 30 in 2017.

- However, it is India that has the distinction of witnessing the most number of shutdowns in the world.

- According to an estimate, in 2018, of the 196 internet shutdowns collated from 25 countries, India was responsible for the majority.

- With 134 incidents, 67% of the world's documented shutdowns took place in India, in 2018.

**How has the trend been?**

- Most often, the internet shutdown orders restrict only mobile data services.

- This is because, 95.13% of Indian internet users access the internet over mobile networks (phones and dongles).

- In terms of duration, the longest-running shutdown was in the erstwhile state of J&K in 2016.



INTERNET BAN ACROSS INDIA

JAMMU AND KASHMIR
Kashmir

UTTAR PRADESH
Aligarh, Meerut and Saharanpur

MEGHALAYA

ASSAM
Lakhimpur, Tinsukia, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Charaideo, Sivasagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Kamrup

WEST BENGAL
Malda, Uttar Dinajpur, Murshidabad, Howrah, North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas

The Indian EXPRESS
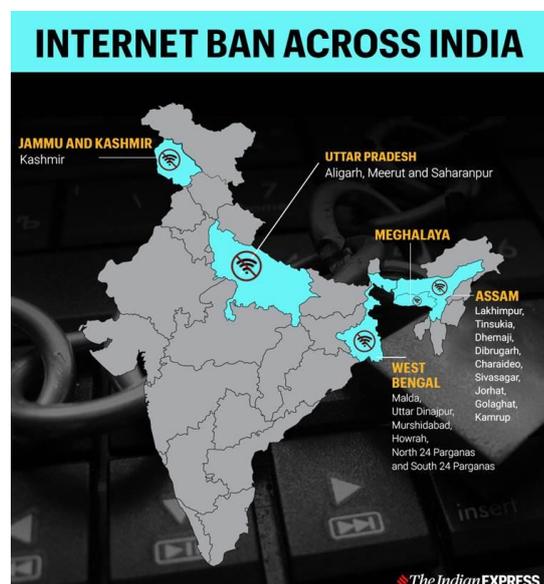
- Services remained suspended for nearly 5 months after the death of Hizb-ul-Mujahideen commander Burhan Wani.

- This is followed by the ongoing shutdown in the valley since 5 August, 2019 (when special status was revoked).

- The third longest was a 100-day shutdown in West Bengal's Darjeeling in June 2017 linked to the agitation for Gorkhaland.

- **Limitations** - SFLC's primary sources to track shutdowns are RTI (right to information) applications, news reports and citizen reporting on its website.

- But, several shutdowns are not reported in the news.

- Moreover, even RTI is not a reliable method as many states deny giving information under Section 8 of the RTI Act.

- Estimates then are, in fact, limited, especially given that there is no centralized count of internet shutdowns in India.

## What are the legal provisions?

- Until 2 years ago, shutdowns were imposed largely under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).

- This gave the police and district magistrate powers to prevent unlawful gatherings of people and "direct any person to abstain from a certain act".

- However, in August 2017, the Centre promulgated the Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Safety) Rules, 2017.

- It did this under the authority granted to it by the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885.

- These rules trace the legal source of the power to issue shutdown orders to the Union home secretary or the secretary in charge of the home department in a state.

- This order must then be forwarded to a review committee, which is required to decide on its reasonability within 5 working days.

## What are the concerns with 2017 rules?

- The 2017 Shutdown Rules result in arbitrary shutdown orders due to inadequate oversight and safeguards.

- In effect, a specific legal basis for internet shutdowns has enhanced the general power under Section 144 of the CrPC, rather than displacing it.

- The telecom service providers (TSPs) suffer heavy losses with every shutdown.

- TSPs have little option but to comply.

- In India, TSPs' licence can be cancelled or a penalty of up to Rs. 50 crore per service area imposed for every violation.

- The 2017 rules also list the circumstances under which the government may order shutdowns.

- These include situations of public emergency, or to ensure public safety.

- Over the years, these have been invoked in a variety of circumstances, including conflict, militancy, caste and communal uprisings, or protests.

## How significant has internet become, and what are the implications of a shutdown?

- **Education** is now inextricably linked to the internet.

- Enabling students to have access to internet will only enhance opportunities of students to acquire knowledge from all available sources.

- The Kerala high court too acknowledged this in the case involving Faheema Shirin, an 18-year-old BA student.

- She filed a petition seeking to set aside the rule that denied internet access to women students at night in her hostel.

- **Women safety** - The Kashmir Women's Collective (KWC) is an organization in the valley that helps women who are targets of violence, domestic or otherwise, and familial disputes.

---

- The team counsels complainants, who reach out primarily via Facebook.

- It helps them pursue legal recourse or provides support through other channels.

- With communication shutdown in J&K after Centre's decision to revoke special status, services as the above came to a standstill.

- The gendered impact of a communication blockade, especially in areas ridden with conflict, is often missed in the clamor of politics.

- **Human right** - For a lot of people, the internet has become a very vital way to connect them to their professional and personal lives.

- In 2016, the UN declared that access to the internet is a human right.

- **Democracy** - The internet today is a platform where dissent can be registered meaningfully.

- It creates a democratized space cutting across distinctions of caste, class and gender in an unprecedented way.

- Also, many of the schemes rolled out by the government are linked to the internet.

- **Financial** - The financial setback as a result of internet shutdowns can be crippling for businesses both in the formal and informal sectors.

- The internet shutdowns in India between 2012-17 cost the economy approximately $3.04 billion (around Rs. 21,584 crore).

## Should internet be a right then?

- Access to the Internet is thus a right that is very similar to what the Supreme Court held with respect to the right to privacy.

- It is a right that is located through all fundamental rights and freedoms.

- Internationally, the right to access to the Internet is spelt out in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

- It states that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

- This right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

- The Human Rights Council in a UN resolution made important declarations on promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet.

- The resolution affirmed that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online.

- These include, in particular, freedom of expression, which is applicable regardless of frontiers and through any media of one's choice.

- The Kerala high court too recently acknowledged this in the case involving Faheema Shirin, an 18-year-old BA student.

- She filed a petition seeking to set aside the rule that denied internet access to women students at night in her hostel.

- It is time that India recognises that the right to access to the Internet is indeed a fundamental right within constitutional guarantees.

## 12.5 Post of Chief of Defence Staff

**Why in news?**

The Cabinet has recently approved the creation of the post of chief of defence staff (CDS).

**What is the rationale?**

- The move was envisaged after the Kargil war in 1999.

- Various authorities recommended the need for creating a post for a single command centre in matters of warfare and nuclear weaponry.

- The government's approval comes essentially after two reports in this regard:

---

1. the Kargil Review Committee, Report of Task Force on National Security (Naresh Chandra Committee Report)
2. the Committee of Experts on Enhancing Capability and Rebalancing Defence Expenditure (General Shekatkar Committee Report)

- These reports chalked out a strategy for higher defence management.
- In 2017, intelligence and security officials had said that the absence of a CDS was hampering India's combat capabilities.
- A single chain of command was imperative to strengthen India's collective defence might.
- However, there is a fear in the minds of the three services (Army, Navy and Air Force) of how the move would impact their role and functioning.
- There must have been a parallel thought in the bureaucracy too as to how such a shift would affect them.

**What will CDS's role be?**

- The ministry of defence (MoD) is likely to make the appointment soon.
- The CDS will head the Department of Military Affairs (DMA).
- The officer to be appointed as chief of defence staff will be a four-star general, as Secretary, DMA.
- The CDS will act as the principal military adviser to the defence minister on all tri-services matters.

**What are the key functions?**

- The post of Chief of Defence Staff could bring about unison among the armed forces.
- The job calls for total transformation of traditional military mindset.
- The CDS has to restructure the military commands into appropriate theatre or joint commands.
- A critical prerequisite for this is 'jointness', a term that envisions the various arms of the armed forces working in unison towards a goal.
- This is a challenging task as since Independence, the armed forces have been working separately, with no concept of jointness.

**What is the significance?**

- The Americans are preparing to move out of Afghanistan, India's neighbourhood.
- Within India, the dilution of Article 370 has caused much unrest.
- Given this security environment, the key changes in defence management gain significance.

## PRELIM BITS

## 13. HISTORY AND ART & CULTURE

### *Tansen Samaroh*

- It is a popular classical music festival in Madhya Pradesh.
- It is a five-day festival celebrated every year in the memory of one of the most eminent singers of Indian history, 'Mian Tansen'.
- It begins with traditional style in Gwalior with the recitations of Harikatha and Milad.
- It is organised by Ustad Alauddin Khan Kala Evam Sangeet Academy, under the Madhya Pradesh culture department.
- Noted vocalist Pandit Vidyadhar Vyas will be presented the National Tansen Award for 2019 which is given to outstanding exponents of Hindustani classical music.

- Tansen was one of the nine gems in the court of one of the greatest Mughal rulers of India, Emperor Akbar.

## *Paika Rebellion Memorial*

- President has recently laid the foundation stone for a memorial to mark completion of 200 years of Paika Rebellion.
- The proposed project will come up at the foothills of Barunei hills in Khurda district.
- The rebellion is a valiant uprising of Paikas in 1817 against the British Rule which is often termed as the First War of Independence.
- The Paiks were the traditional landed militia of Khurda, Odisha.
- Rulers of Khurda were traditionally the custodians of Jagannath Temple and ruled as the deputy of Lord Jagannath on earth.
- The British, having established their sway over Bengal Province occupied the Khurda's land in 1803 and took over the hereditary rent-free lands granted to Paikas.
- The Paikas rose in armed rebellion in 1817 under the leadership of BaxiJagabandhu.
- The tribals of Ghumusar and other sections of the population actively took part in it.
- Many scholars, researchers and historians have opined that the Paika Rebellion was India's first organized armed rebellion against British Raj.

Click here to know more about the rebellion

## 14. GEOGRAPHY

## *White Island Volcano*



- The White Island Volcano, also called Whakaari, in New Zealand has recently erupted.
- It is the country's most active volcano situated in the east coast in the Bay of Plenty.
- It has been built up by continuous volcanic activity over the past 1,50,000 years.
- It is a privately owned island and tourist destination. The large eruption resulted in atleast 5 fatalities.

## 15. POLITY

## *New Cabinet Committees*

- Cabinet Committee on Investment & Growth is the newly formed cabinet committee with Prime Minister as the chairman.
- The panel has 4 members - Home Minister, Highways and MSME Minister , Finance Minister and Commerce & Railways Minister.
- Cabinet Committee on Employment & Skill Development with PM as the head and 10 panel members was also constituted.
- Ministers from the following ministries are members - Home, Finance, Commerce & Railways, Agriculture, Petroleum, Skill Development, Labour, Housing & Urban Development and HRD.
- These committees were formed in response to growth slowing down and a rise in unemployment.

## *Recycling of Ships Act*

- Recycling of Ships Act, recently comes into force, provide for the regulation of recycling ofships by setting certain international standards.

- It lays down the statutorymechanism for enforcement of such standards.

- It restricts and prohibits the use orinstallation of hazardous materials, which applies irrespective of whether a shipis meant for recycling or not.

- For new ships, such restriction or prohibition on useof hazardous materials will be immediate, that is, from the date the legislationcomes into force, while existing ships shall have a period of five years forcompliance.

- Restriction or prohibition on use of hazardous materials would notbe applied to warships and non-commercial ships operated by Government.

- Ships shall be surveyed and certified on the inventory of hazardous materialsused in ships.

- Under this Act, ship recycling facilities are required to be authorized andships shall be recycled only in such authorized ship recycling facilities.

- It also provides that ships shall be recycled in accordance with aship-specific recycling plan.

- Ships to be recycled in India shall be required toobtain a Ready for Recycling Certificate in accordance with the Hong Kong Convention for Ship Recycling.

- The Act imposes a statutory duty on ship recyclers to ensure safe andenvironmentally sound removal and management of hazardous wastes fromships.

- Appropriate penal provisions have been introduced in the Act to deter anyviolation of statutory provisions.

Click here to know about Hong Kong Convention for Ship Recycling

## *Reservations in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies*

- Article 334 of Indian Constitution provides for reservation of seats and special representation of SC/ST's and from Anglo-Indian community (by nomination) in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies.

- In the original constitution of 1949, it states that such special representation will cease to have effect after 10 years.

- Parliament through various constitution amendment has extended the time period of reservation for the communities.

- The period of reservation was extended to 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2010 by the 8th, 23rd 45th, 62nd and 79th Amendments respectively.

- The 95th constitution amendment extended the reservation upto January 26, 2020.

- Thus, the reservation for these categories in the lower House of Parliament and the State Assemblies was to expire on 25th January next year.

- So, Union Cabinet has approved a proposal to extend reservation for SC/ST's in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies for another 10 years.

- But a question mark prevailed over whether it has extended reservations for two seats in the Lok Sabha for the Anglo-Indian community.

- Article 334, clause b provides for nomination of 2 Anglo-Indian community in the Lok Sabha.

- Presently, there are 84 members from the Scheduled Caste and 47 from the Scheduled Tribe communities in Parliament.

### 12.6 Related Articles

- Article 341 of the constitution define as to who would be Scheduled Castes with respect to any State or UT.

- Article 342 of the constitution define as to who would be Scheduled Tribe (ST) with respect to any State or UT.

- The President, in consultation with the Governor of a particular State, may notify the castes, races or tribes be deemed to be Scheduled Castes (A-341) and to be Scheduled Tribes (A-342).

- Article 333states that the number of Anglo-Indians nominated by the governor to the State Legislative Assemblies should not be more than one.

# 16. GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

## *University for Transgender Community*

- The country's first university for transgender community will be opened in Uttar Pradesh's Kushinagar district.

- It is being built by All-India transgender education service trust.

- It facilitate its members to study right from class one to PG and even do research and get PhD degree.

## *Atal Bhujal Yojana*

- Atal Bhujal Yojana (ATAL JAL) is a Central Sector Scheme under the Ministry of Jal Shakt recently approved by the Cabinet.

- It will be implemented over a period of 5 years (2020-21 to 2024-25).

- It aims to improve ground water management through community participation in identified priority areas in seven States.

- The states are Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

- It will promote panchayat led ground water management and behavioural change with primary focus on demand side management.

- It has two major components such as,

  1. Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building Component

  2. Incentive Component forthe States

- The total outlay of Rs 6,000 crore, 50% shall be in the form of World Bank loan and will be repaid by the Central Government.

- The remaining 50% shall be through Central assistance from regular budgetary support.

## *Jal Jeevan Mission*

- The mission is set to be operationalised with new guidelines released recently.

- It aims to provide Functional Household Tap Connection (FHTC) to every rural household by 2024.

- Jal Shakti Ministry is the nodal ministry for this mission.

- The new guidelines will emphasise the critical role of the gram panchayat level to run and maintain the water supply system in their community and also bring in systems for water use charges.

- Water is the State subject. Thus, the implementation has to be done through the States.

- The fund sharing pattern to be 90:10 for Himalayan and North-Eastern States; 50:50 for other States and 100% for UTs.

- For the implementation of JJM, following institutional arrangement has been proposed:

  1. National Jal Jeevan Mission at the Central level;

  2. State Water and Sanitation Mission (SWSM) at State level;

  3. District Water and Sanitation Mission (DWSM) at district level; and

  4. Gram Panchayat and/ or its sub-committees i.e. Village Water Sanitation Committee (VWSC)/ Paani Samiti at village Level.

- The fund released by Central Government to the State Governments is to be deposited in one Single Nodal Account (SNA) that will be maintained by SWSM.

- Public Finance Management System (PFMS) should be used for tracking the funds.

**Fisheries and Aquaculture Development Fund**

- The first tripartite Memorandum of Agreement was signed for the implementation of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development Fund (FIDF).

- It is signed between the department of Fisheries Government of India, NABARD and the Government of Tamil Nadu.

- The nodal loaning entities for the fund are

  i. National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD),

  ii. National Cooperatives Development Corporation (NCDC) and

  iii. All scheduled Banks.

- The fund would provide concessional finance to take up investment activities of fisheries development.

- The beneficiaries are State Governments / UTs and State entities, cooperatives, individuals and entrepreneurs etc.,

- The Department of Fisheries provides interest subvention up to 3% per annum for providing the concessional finance by the nodal loaning entities at the interest rate not lower than 5% per annum.

- NABARDprovides concessional finance for development of fisheries infrastructure facilities through State Governments/State Entities under the FIDF.

### India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative

- India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative prepared the first comprehensive estimates of disease burden attributable to mental health from 1990.

- It states that Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Telangana, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh account for a higher prevalence of mental disorders.

- It manifests primarily during adulthood in depression and anxiety.

- It finds that roughly one in seven Indians, or 197 million persons, suffered from mental disorders of varying severity in 2017.

- These include depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, bipolar disorders, idiopathic developmental intellectual disability, conduct disorders, and autism.

- The contribution of mental disorders to the Disability Adjusted Life Year (DALY) has doubled between 1990 and 2017 increasing from 2.5% to 4.7%.

- In accordance with socio-demographic index (SDI), prevalence of depressive disorders was highest in,

  i. Tamil Nadu (loss of 836 years per 1 lakh population ), Kerala (loss of 641 years) in the high SDI state group and

  ii. Andhra Pradesh (loss of 793 years) in the middle SDI State group.

- **DALY** - the sum of total years of life lost and years lived with disability

- **SDI** - It is a composite measure of per-capita income, mean education, and fertility rate in women younger than 25 years and is calculated on a scale of one.

### Nagpur Resolution

- It a holistic approach for empowering citizens' adopted during regional conference organized by DARPG in Nagpur.

- The conference was organized by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), in collaboration with the Government of Maharashtra.

- The resolution aims to empower the citizens by policy interventions for better service delivery through timely updating of citizens charters, implementation of enactments and benchmarking standards for continuous improvement.

- It also aims to ensure timely publication of Good Governance Index to identify the quality of governance in 10 sectors especially those pertaining to welfare and infrastructure at the Union, State and District levels.

- Shillong Declaration and Jammu Resolution are other two resolutions, which was adopted for good governance.

## Spandana Initiative

- It is an initiative of Andhra Pradesh Government to make police stations more approachable for the public, especially women.

- Spandana (means response) centers have been established within the premises of all District Collector offices and police stations.

- These centers mostly have a female receptionist and other staff members who are trained, briefed and sensitized in handling women victims and complainants.

- Spandanacentres spread across the district, and each have video conferencing facility, it is easier and cheaper for people to lodge complaints.

- They no longer have to travel to the district headquarters to follow up.

## Silver Line Project

- The Silver Line project is a proposal of the Kerala government that aims to connect major districts and towns with semi high-speed trains that will run on their own tracks.

- Ministry of Railways have recently granted in-principle approval for the project.

- It involves laying the railway lines from Kasaragod in the north to Thiruvananthapuram in the south.

- It aims to cut the travel time between the two corners (532 km) from 12 hours to less than four hours with a maximum speed of 200 km/h.

- The project is scheduled to be commissioned by 2024.

- The Kerala Rail Development Corporation (K-Rail), a joint venture between the Ministry of Railways and the Kerala government will be the nodal agency.

## EChO Network

- EChO Network is a national program aimed at increasing research, knowledge, and awareness of Indian ecology and the environment.

- It will provide a template for cross-disciplinary leadership in India.

- It could develop a national network to catalyse a new generation of Indians who can synthesize interdisciplinary concepts and tackle real-world problems in medicine, agriculture, ecology and technology.

- There is no precedent for such a network anywhere in the world.

- It establishes a new platform to change how science is embedded in our modern society.

- The purpose of this Network is to bring all those together to share knowledge and synergize efforts under the umbrella of science.

## Operation Twist

- Operation Twist is the name given to a U.S Federal Reserve monetary policy operation in 2011-12 that involves the purchase and sale of bonds.

- Its objective was to make long-term borrowing cheaper and to stimulate the economy.

- It does not expand the Fed's balance sheet, making it a less aggressive form of easing.

- RBI have recently decided to launch India's version of Operation Twist.

- Accordingly, RBI will simultaneously buy and sale government securities worth Rs. 10,000 crore each under its open market operations.

- RBI will purchase the longer-term government bonds maturing in 2029 at 6.45% and simultaneously sell short term bonds maturing in 2020.

- It will purchase bonds that are trading at a spread of 150 bps (basis points) over the repo rate, so that the yield of these papers will soften.

- It is seen as a move aimed at managing the yields.

- Bond yields have been rising since the RBI unexpectedly left its key repo rate unchanged earlier this month

- Thus, it is an unconventional step by RBI as policy rate cuts are unable to bring down the bank lending rates proportionately.

## *Economic Census*

- The 7th Economic Census was launched by the Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation (MoSPI) in Delhi.

- The ministry has tied up with Common Service Centre (CSC), an SPV under Ministry of Electronics and IT to carry out the census.

- It is expected to be completed by March 2020.

- One of the main aims of the Economic Census is preparation of a National Business Register which can be linked with existing databases at the central and state government levels.

- The economic census was started in the year 1977 in collaboration with States/UTs.

- The subsequent Censuses were conducted in the years 1980, 1990, 1998, 2005, 2013.

- The 7th economic census is the first one being done using digital platform which has reduced time for survey to 6 months from 2 years earlier.

- It will cover all households/establishments engaged in non-agricultural economic activities including construction.

- But it will not cover public administration, defence and compulsory social security.

- Population Census 2011 will form the primary geographical unit for this.

- It will provide disaggregated information on various operational and structural aspects of all establishments in the country.

## *Virtual Police Station*

- The Virtual Police Station is an initiative by the Andhra Pradesh government.

- It is to demystifythe police station and acquaint the public with the functioning of a police station electronically without visiting it physically.

- It will set up in the educational institutions as a pilot project and it will educate public about the functioning of police stations and how to file a FIR.

## *Google and Defamation Cases*

- Supreme Court has ruled that Internet intermediaries cannot be protected from criminal defamation cases registered against them prior to October 27, 2009.

- It was only on October 27, 2009 that Parliament amended the Section 79 of Information Technology Act of 2000.

- By this amendment, it makes intermediary not liable for any third party information, data or communication link made available or hosted by them.

- It aims to protect online intermediaries from liability for criminally defamatory content published in them by third parties.

- It gave almost blanket protection to intermediaries from legal action under Section 499/500 (criminal defamation) of the Indian Penal Code.

- The recent judgement was issued on the basis of an appeal filed by Google India Pvt Ltd against a criminal defamation case filed by M/s Vishaka Industries, a manufacturer of asbestos cement sheets.

- Vishaka accused the co-ordinator of a Google group called 'Ban Asbestos India' and Google India for authoring/hosting defamatory articles against their products in 2008.

- The accused were asked to appear in court in September 2009, that is before the amendment in Section 79 came into existence.

- Google India argued that its role is passive and not a publisher of third-party content.

- The government too agreed with Google India. The government had said that its powers to block online information do not expand to blocking any case of defamation, contempt of court, etc.

## 12.7  126th Constitution Amendment Bill

- The 126thConstitution Amendment Bill was recently introduced in the Lok Sabha.

- The bill intends to extend the reservation of SC/STs in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies by 10 years.

- It **removes** the provision of nominating two members of the Anglo-Indian community to the Lok Sabha.

- The reservation given to SCs, STs and the Anglo-Indian community for the past 70 years is to end on January 25, 2020.

- According to the 2011 census, there are 296 members of the Anglo-Indian community in the entire country.

Click here to know more about the reservation.

### *Piped Drinking Water*

- Jal Jeevan Mission was launched to provide functional household tap connections to every households by 2024.

- Jal Shakti Ministry is the nodal ministry for this mission.

- Water is the State subject. Thus, the implementation has to be done through the States.

- The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) is preparing the ground for enforcement of piped water quality standards with a workshop for State officials.

- The BIS standard is available for bottled water which is mostly produced by private companies.

- But the BIS standard is not yet mandatory for piped water which is largely supplied by government agencies.

# 17.  NATIONAL INSTITUTES

### *Digital Communications Commission*

- The Digital Communications Commission (DCC) has recently approved plans to auction over 8,300 MHz of spectrum to be used for offering 5G services.

- The proposal will now be sent to the Cabinet for approval.

- DCC is erstwhile Telecom Commission, created under the government resolution in 2018.

- It consists of a

  1. Chairman - The Secretary to the Government of India in the Department of Telecommunications

  2. Four full time members - Ex-officio Secretaries to the Government of India in the Department of Telecommunications and

  3. Four part time members - CEO, NITI Aayog, Secretary (Department of Economic Affairs), Secretary ( Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology) and Secretary (Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion).

- It is responsible for,

  o Formulating the policy of Department of Telecommunications for approval of the Government;

- o Preparing the budget for the Department of Telecommunications for each financial year and getting it approved by the Government; &
- o Implementation of Government's policy in all matters concerning telecommunication.

## Indian Pharmacopoeia

- The Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP) is an officially recognized book of standards as per the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Rules 1945 there under.
- It specifies the standards of drugs manufactured and marketed in India in terms of their identity, purity and strength.
- The standards are provided by Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC) based on the 2nd schedule of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.
- IP is designated as the official book of standards for drugs imported and/or manufactured for sale, stock or exhibition for sale or distribution in India.
- Its mission is to promote public and animal health in India.
- In addition, IPC also develops IP Reference Substances (IPRS) that act as fingerprint for identification of an article under test and its purity as prescribed in the IP monographs.
- **Recent Development -** IP has been recognised formally by thePublic Health Ministry of Afghanistan.
- Afghanistan is the first country to recognise IP.
- IP will be used based on the requirement in the laboratory of medicines and health products quality.

## *Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers Rights Authority (PPV&FRA)*

- The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers Rights (PPV&FR) act has been enacted in India in 2001.
- PPV&FRA was created as a statutory body under the Ministry of Agriculture through this act.
- The primary objective is to provide an effective system for protection of plant varieties, the rights of farmers and plant breeders.
- It allows a farmer to save, use, sow, resow, exchange, share or sell his farm produce including seed of a variety protected under this Act.
- The act was enacted to give effect to the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of the Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), to which India is a member.
- **Recent Issue –** There is a case ongoing between PepsiCo and farmers over alleged cultivation of variety of potatoes.
- PepsiCo introduced a particular variety of Potato to India in 2009 and registered it under the PPV&FR Act in 2016.
- It sells seeds to 12,000 farmers under a collaborative farmers programme and has an exclusive contract to buy back their produce to make its chips.
- The company filed a lawsuit against 4 farmers for allegedly growing potato which is exclusively registered by the company.
- However, after major protests and boycotts, it withdrew all cases.
- In June 2019, activists applied for the revocation of PepsiCo's registration at the Authority on the grounds that it was not in public interest, especially given the company's lawsuits against farmers.
- In response to the revocation notice, PepsiCo claimed that it had rights under the PPV&FR act to pursue necessary action against individuals who infringe its rights.

Click here to know more about conventions regarding this

# 18. BILATERAL ISSUES

## Annual Parliamentary Exchange

- The US and India have announced the establishment of an annual Parliamentary Exchange as a part of India-US 2+2 Ministerial dialogue.
- It will discuss issues of strategic importance to the bilateral relationship.
- It will feature members in the US and Indian parliamentarians travelling to each other's countries every other year to discuss issues of strategic importance to the bilateral relationship.

# 19. INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

## Eurasian Economic Union

- The Eurasian Economic Union is an international organization for regional economic integration.
- It provides for free movement of goods, services, capital and labour, pursues coordinated, harmonized and single policy in the sectors determined by the Treaty.
- The Member-States are Republic of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz and Russian Federation.
- It is being created to promote stable development and living standards of the nations of the Member-States.
- Russia is looking forward to India concluding a new Free Trade Agreement with the EAEU.

## European Council

- The European Council (informally EUCO) is a collective body that defines the European Union's overall political direction and priorities.
- Established as an informal summit in 1975, the European Council was formalized as an institution in 2009 upon the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon.
- It comprises the heads of state or government of the EU member states, along with the President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission.
- The President of the European Council is elected by the European Council by a qualified majority for a once-renewable term of two and a half years.
- The European Council has no legislative power, but it is a strategic body that provides the union with general political directions and priorities, and acts as a collective presidency.
- The European Commission remains the sole initiator of legislation, but the European Council is able to provide an impetus to guide legislative policy.
- The meetings of the European Council, still commonly referred to as EU summits, are chaired by its president and take place at least twice every six months.

## SAANS Initiative

- Social Awareness and Actions to Neutralize Pneumonia Successfully (SAANS) is an initiative under National Health Mission.
- It is to accelerate action to reduce deaths due to Childhood Pneumonia.
- Under this, the government is targeting a reduction in pneumonia-caused deaths by 2025 to less than 3 deaths out of 1000 live births.
- Under SAANS, health and wellness centres can use pulse oximeter (device to monitor oxygen saturation) to identify low oxygen levels in the blood of a child, and if required, treat him by use of oxygen cylinders.
- A health campaign will be conducted to mobilise people to create awareness.

- As per Health Management Information System (HMIS) data, Madhya Pradesh has the highest number of pneumonia-caused child deaths, followed by Gujarat.

## International Geological Congress

- International Geological Congress (IGC) is the prestigious global platform for advancement of Earth Science.
- It was founded as a non-profit scientific and educational organization in 1878 but came under the aegis of International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) in 1961.
- Since 1961, the meetings of IGC are held in collaboration and under scientific sponsorship of IUGS.
- So far 35 congresses have been held throughout the world at 3 to 5-year intervals.
- The last session (35th) was held in Capetown, South Africa in 2016.
- This time (36th) congress is going to be held in Delhi, India with the theme "Geosciences: The Basic Science for a Sustainable Future".
- India had already hosted a congress in 1964 (24th congress). Thus, India becomes the first Asian country to host the event twice.
- The 36th IGC is funded by the Ministry of Mines and the Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India.
- It is supported by the Indian National Science Academy (INSA) and the science academies of Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
- Geological Survey of India is the nodal agency for organizing the event.

## GCC Summit

- Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) 40th summit was recently held in Riyadh, for second year in a row.
- It is a regional political and economic alliance of six Gulf States i.e Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.
- HQ - Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
- Its aim is to achieve ever closer union between the energy rich Gulf countries.
- In the recent summit, Saudi Arabia's King Salman called for regional unity to confront Iran and secure energy supplies and maritime channels.
- **Qatar and GCC -** Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and non-GCC member Egypt imposed a political and economic boycott of Qatar in June 2017 over allegations that Doha backs terrorism.
- Kuwait and the United States have tried to mediate the rift.
- After 2 years of strained relationship, Qatar's Prime Minister has attended the recent meeting which is the sign of thaw in a regional dispute.
- PM is the most senior Qatari to attend the annual gathering since 2017, follows an intensification of efforts to resolve the Gulf dispute.

## Taj Trapezium Zone

- Taj Trapezium Zone was established in 1996 through an order of Supreme Court.
- It is so named since it is located around the Taj Mahal and is shaped like a trapezoid.
- It is a 10,400 sq km area to protect the Taj Mahal from pollution.
- It is spread across the districts of Agra, Firozabad, Mathura, Hathras and Etah in Uttar Pradesh and Bharatpur district of Rajasthan.
- It comprises over 40 protected monuments along with 3 world heritage sites such as  the Taj Mahal, Agra Fort and Fatehpur Sikri.
- SC in its order declared it as an eco-sensitive area and banned the use of coal/coke in industries located in the zone with a mandate of switching over to natural gas.

- Recently, SC lifted its earlier interim order imposing a complete ban on construction, industrial activities and cutting of trees in the TTZ.

# 20. INTERNATIONAL ISSUES AND EVENTS

## SEAD Initiative of CEM

- Clean Energy Ministerial is a high-level global forum to promote policies and programs that advance clean energy technology and to encourage the transition to a global clean energy economy.
- At the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change conference of parties in Copenhagen in December 2009, Clean Energy Ministerial meeting was proposed by U.S. Secretary of Energy.
- It is focused on three global climate and energy policy goals - Improve energy efficiency worldwide, Enhance clean energy supply, Expand clean energy access.
- The framework for the CEM was adopted at the 7th CEM meeting in 2016.
- The 10th CEM meeting was held in Vancouver, Canada in 2019.
- SEAD initiative - The Super-efficient Equipment and Appliance Deployment (SEAD) of CEM is a voluntary collaboration among governments to promote use of energy efficient appliances worldwide.
- It is a task of the International Partnership for Energy Efficiency Cooperation (IPEEC).
- Presently, there are 18 participating governments to this initiative.
- If all SEAD governments were to adopt current policy best practices for product energy efficiency standards, 2,000 TWh of annual electricity could be saved in 2030, equal to the energy generated by 650 mid-sized power plants.

# 21. ECONOMY

## Standing Committee on Economic Statistics

- The statistics ministry has constituted a 28 member Standing Committee on Statistics (SCES) chaired by former Chief Statistician Pronab Sen.
- It is to improve quality of data amid criticism of the government over political interference.
- The first meeting of the SCES is scheduled on January 6, 2020.
- The committee is set up in the backdrop of controversy over revision of GDP numbers and withholding employment data by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO).
- Earlier, Ministry of Statistics had decided not to release the Consumer Expenditure Survey results of 2017-18 citing data quality issues.

## eBkray

- It is a platform launched by the Ministry of Finance.
- It enables online auction of assets attached by various state-run banks.
- It provides navigational links to all PSB e-auction sites, property search feature and presents single-window access to information on properties up for e-auction.
- It also provides facility for comparison of similar properties.
- It seeks to bring in transparency in the sale of properties.

## Rohtang Tunnel

- The Rohtang tunnel connect Manali in Himachal Pradesh with Leh, Ladakh, and Jammu Kashmir, will be known as Atal Tunnel.

- It is the 8.8 km-long tunnel and it will be the world's longest highway tunnel at an altitude of above 10,000 feet (3,000 metres).

- This strategic tunnel below the Rohtang pass is now nearing completion.

- It cuts across the PirPanjal range and provide all-weather connectivity to remote border areas of Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh.

- It will reduce the distance between Manali and Leh by 46 kilometres.

- The Seri Nullah river threatened to derail the project by its massive flow of water that often went upto 140 litres per second.

## GEM Samvaad

- Government e-Marketplace (GeM) is the national public procurement portal launched by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in 2016.

- It offers end to end solutions for all procurement needs of Central and State Government Departments, PSUs, autonomous institutions and local bodies.

- It has more than 3 lakh registered sellers and service providers and more than 40,000 Government buyer organizations.

- Sellers from the State are benefitting through the access to national Public Procurement market using the portal.

- It makes procurement contactless, paperless and cashless.

- The government has recently launched **GeMSamvaad,** which is a national outreach programme.

- It will take place with stakeholders across the country and with local sellers in order to facilitate on-boarding of local sellers on the marketplace while catering to specific requirements and procurement needs of buyers.

- The outreach programme will cover all the States and UTs of the country.

- Through GeMSamvaad the marketplace is looking forward to receiving feedback from users which shall be used for making improvements and advancements in the system.

## National Broadband Mission

- Ministry of Communications have recently launched a new "National Broadband Mission".

- The mission aimed at providing broadband access in all villages in the country by 2022.

- Under the mission, the government plans to lay incremental 30 lakh route km of Optical Fiber Cable.

- The Centre will work with States and UTs for having consistent policies pertaining to expansion of digital infrastructure including for Right of Way (RoW) approvals required for laying of optical fibre cable.

- It aims to increase tower density from 0.42 to 1 tower per thousand of population by 2024.

- It entails investments of around ₹7 lakh crore from various stakeholders.

- Additionally, a Broadband Readiness Index will be developed to measure the availability of digital communications infrastructure within a State/UT.

- **Other Objectives -** Creation of a digital fiber map of the Digital Communications network and infrastructure, including Optical Fiber Cables and Towers, across the country.

- Investment from stakeholders of USD 100 billion (Rs 7 Lakh Crore) including Rs 70,000 crore from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF).

## Nirvik Scheme

- It is a new Export Credit Insurance Scheme (ECIS) introduced by Ministry of Commerce and Industry through Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC).

- Under the scheme, ECGC will provide 90% credit insurance cover and any additional outgo would be supported by the government.

- The scheme is valid for 5 years.

- It is to enhance loan availability and ease the lending process.

- It would give a fillip to export lending and insurance cover for export credit.

- The ECGC cover provides additional comfort to banks as the credit rating of the borrower is enhanced to AA rated account.

- Previously, the credit insurance cover percentage was 60% for both principal and interest.

## Compensation Cess

- The government has released Rs 35,298 crore to the States in Goods and Services Tax (GST) compensation.

- Compensation cess was introduced as relief for States for the loss of revenues arising from the implementation of GST.

- States were guaranteed a 14 per cent tax revenue growth in the first five years after GST implementation by the Central government.

- States' tax revenue as of Financial Year (2016-17) is considered as the base year for the calculation of this 14 per cent growth.

- Any shortfall against it is supposed to be compensated by the Centre using the funds specifically collected as compensation cess.

- Compensation cess is levied on products considered to be 'sin' or luxury goods.

- The collected compensation cess flows into the Consolidated Fund of India.

- It is then transferred to the Public Account of India, where a GST compensation cess account has been created.

- States are compensated bi-monthly from the accumulated funds in this account.

## CAA and RBI

- The RBI has released a notification in 2018under the Foreign Exchange Management (Acquisition and Transfer of Immovable Property in India) Regulations, 2018.

- It gives directions to persons defined under Citizenship Amendment Bill and is residing in India and has been granted a Long Term Visa (LTV) by the Central government.

- It states that those persons may purchase only one residential immovable property in India as dwelling unit for self-occupation and only one immovable property for carrying out self-employment.

- It also kept out Muslim long-term visa holders from property-buying rights.

- Since these guidelines were issued, under the foreign exchange management regulations, these were issued after consultation with the government.

- With the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) coming into force, the spotlight is now on this RBI's notification.

## Amendment in IBC Code

- Union Cabinet has recently approved the proposal for Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Second Amendment) Bill, 2019.

- It amends Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code 2016to remove certain difficulties being faced during insolvency resolution process.

- It includes a provision to ring-fence successful resolution applicants from criminal proceedings against offences committed by previous managements or promoters of a company.

- Thus, it gives the comfort to buyers of stressed assets.

- It would also ensure that the substratum of the business of a corporate debtor is not lost.

- It also held that licences, permits, concessions, clearances etc. cannot be terminated or suspended or not renewed during the moratorium period.

## India's Forex Reserves

- India's Forex reserves consists of Foreign Currency Assets, Gold, Special Drawing Rights (SDR), Reserve Tranche Position in the IMF.

- The country's foreign exchange reserves recently crossed the $450-billion mark for the first time ever.

- It provides country's import cover for 11 months.

- Since the beginning of the current financial year, the forex reserve has gained by $38.8 billion.

- It enables the central bank to buy dollars from the market to check any sharp appreciation of the rupee.

- **Trends -** India's foreign exchange reserves fell to $274.8 billion in September of 2013.

- It prompted the Centre and RBI to unleash measures to attract inflows.

- It has been a steady rise for the reserves since then, with $175 billion added in the last six years.

## Small Finance Banks

- RBI has recently released the final guidelines on on-tap licensing for small finance banks.

- The guidelines say that Payments banks willing to convert themselves into small finance banks (SFBs) can apply for such a licence only after five years of operations.

- Such payments banks which are eligible to set up an SFB have to come under the non-operating financial holding company (NOFHC) structure.

- SFB undertakes basic banking activities of accepting deposits and lending to unserved and underserved sections, including small business units, small and marginal farmers, micro and small industries and unorganised sector entities.

- The SFB will be given scheduled bank status once they commence their operations.

- The minimum capital for setting up an SFB has been mandated at Rs. 200 crore.

- For primary (urban) co-operative banks (UCBs) to become SFB's, the initial net worth requirement will be Rs.100 crore and to be increased to Rs.200 crore within 5 years.

- Any individual or professional having at least 10 years of experience in banking and finance at a senior level can also set up anSFB either singly or jointly.

- Promoters of SFB's shall always hold a minimum of 40% of the paid-up voting equity capital of the bank during the first five years from the date of commencement of business.

- RBI has also decided to bring UCBs with assets of ₹500 crore and above, under the reporting framework of the Central Repository of Information on Large Credits (CRILC).

## Payments Banks

- The objectives of setting up of payments banks will be to further financial inclusion by providing

    i.  Small savings accounts and

    ii. Payments/remittance services to migrant labour workforce, low income households, small businesses, other unorganised sector entities and other users.

- They can Accept of demand deposits and initially restricted to hold a maximum balance of Rs. 100,000 per individual customer.

- They cannot undertake lending activities.

- They should maintain Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) with RBI.

- It is required to invest minimum 75% of its "demand deposit balances" in Statutory Liquidity Ratio(SLR).

- It should maintain maximum 25 per cent in current and time/fixed deposits with other scheduled commercial banks for operational purposes and liquidity management.

- They can issue ATM/Debit cards however cannot issue credit cards.

- The minimum paid-up equity capital for payments banks shall be Rs. 100 crore.

## NIIF Master Fund

- The NIIF is a trust that raises debt to invest in the equity of infrastructure finance companies.

- It acts like a bankers' bank in infrastructure financing. Government owns 49% of NIIF.

- It provides equity support to NBFCs/ Financial Institutions (FIs) engaged in infrastructure financing.

- It also provides equity/ debt to commercially viable projects, both Greenfield and Brownfield, including stalled projects.

- It is being considered as an Alternative Investment Fund (AIF) under SEBI regulation.

- A typical sovereign wealth fund (SWF) will be a state-owned investment company owned by governments and invests their own money in foreign countries.

- Though the NIIF acts like an SWF, it does not invest in assets such as stocks, bonds, real estate, commodities etc like an SMF do and therefore cannot be called so.

- **Recent Developments -** NIIF of India and Canada Pension Plan Investment Board (CPPIB) have agreed for CPPIB to invest up to $600 million through the NIIF Master Fund.

- The NIIF Master Fund invests equity capital in core infrastructure sectors in India, with a focus on transportation, energy and urban infrastructure.

## Bharat Bond Exchange Traded Fund

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its approval for creation and launch of Bharat Bond Exchange Traded Fund (ETF).

- It is to create an additional source of funding for Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs) Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs), Central Public Financial Institutions (CPFIs) and other Government organizations.

- Bharat Bond ETF would be the first corporate Bond ETF in the country.

- ETF will be a basket of bonds issued by CPSE/CPSU/CPFI/any other Government organization Bonds (Initially, all AAA rated bonds)

- Each ETF will have a fixed maturity date. As of now, it will have 2 maturity series - 3 and 10 years.

- Each series will have a separate index of the same maturity series.

## Exchange Traded Fund

- An ETF is a type of fund that tracks the underlying assets and divides ownership of those assets into shares.

- The underlying assets can be shares of stock, bonds, oil futures, gold bars, foreign currency, etc.

- Shareholders do not directly own or have any direct claim to the underlying investments in the fund, rather they indirectly own these assets.

- The ETFs trading value is based on the net asset value of the underlying stocks that it represents.

- ETF shareholders are entitled to a proportion of the profits, such as earned interest or dividends paid, and they may get a residual value in case the fund is liquidated.

- ETF Vs Mutual Fund - The transaction of stocks and bonds under the Mutual Fund is with the company that manages the fund.

- Whereas in ETF, the ownership of the fund can easily be bought, sold or transferred in the same way as shares of stock, since ETF shares are traded on public stock exchanges.

## *Manufacturing PMI*

- Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) is an indicator of the economic health and investor sentiments about the manufacturing sector (Manufacturing PMI) and services sector (Services PMI).

- Recent PMI survey has showed that Manufacturing activity increased in November from a two-year low in the previous month.

- The value of the Index rose to 51.2 in November, up from 50.6 in October.

- It is driven by a modest increase in the growth of new orders and production.

- **PMI** - Its purpose is to provide information about current business conditions to company decision makers, analysts and purchasing managers.

- It is based on five major indicators: new orders, inventory levels, production, supplier deliveries, and the employment environment

- For India, the PMI Data is published by Japanese firm Nikkei but compiled and constructed by Markit Economics.

- In a PMI survey, a standard questionnaire is administered to business entities.

- The respondents can either give a "Positive, Neutral or Negative" response and each response is marked as "1, 0.5 or 0" on the score card respectively.

- In adding up the response, a reading above 50 indicates economic expansion, while a reading below 50 points shows contraction of economic activities.

- **IIP -** IIP measures actual production output across the industrial sector.

- It shows the change in production volume in major industrialsubsectors like manufacturing, mining and electricity. It covers broader industrial sector compared to PMI.

- As it is a comparison over the previous year, it is season neutral.

- PMI shows the growth oriented positive trends and not just the volume of past production that can be traced in an ordinary Index of Industrial Production.

- The PMI is released on the 1st of every month and the IIP is known on the 12th, the PMI score is assumed to be a precursor to the IIP.

- But the correlation between PMI and IIP isn't strong and the relationship between the two variables is quite low and insignificant.

# 22.    ENVIRONMENT

## CONVENTIONS/INITIATIVES

## *State of India's forest Report 2019*

- The biennial State of India's forest Report 2019 is published by Forest Survey of India (FSI), a premier institution under the Ministry of Environment and forest.

- According to the recent report, compared to the last assessment of 2017,

    1. The total tree and forest cover in the country increased by 5,188 Sqkm with sharpest declines in the northeastern states

    2. There is an increase of 42.6 million tonnes in the carbon stock of the country

- The total forest cover (TFC) in 2019 is 21.67% of the total geographical area (TGA) of the country as against 21.54% in 2017.

- Tree and forest cover together made up 24.39% of the geographical area.

- In terms of canopy density classes, area covered by Very Dense Forests (VDF) is 3.02%, Moderately Dense Forest is 9.39% and Open Forest is 9.26%.

- The category of VDF is defined as a canopy cover over 70 per cent has increased by a mere 1.14% between 2017 and 2019.

- The forest cover within the Recorded Forest Area or officially classified as 'forest' by States/Centre showed a decrease, but 'forest' outside such recorded area increased by 4,306 sqkm.

- Maharashtra had the largest extent of such tree outside forest.

- The top three States showing an increase in forest cover are Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala.

- Area-wise Madhya Pradesh has the largest forest cover in the country followed by Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Maharashtra.

- In terms of forest cover as percentage of total geographical area, the top five States are Mizoram (85.41%), Arunachal Pradesh (79.63%), Meghalaya (76.33%), Manipur (75.46%) and Nagaland (75.31%).

- The mangrove cover increased by 54 sqkm, or about 1%, from the last assessment, with Gujarat and Maharashtra registering the largest improvements.

## Forest Survey of India

- Forest Survey of India (FSI) is an organisation under the Ministry of Environment & Forests.

- Its principal mandate is to conduct survey and assessment of forest resources in the country.

- The Forest Survey of India organize the training programmes to state sponsored forest personnel.

- FSI releases State of Forest Report biennially based on satellite imageries.

- According to the State of Forest Report, the definition of forest cover includes all lands more than 1 hectare in area with a tree canopy of more than 10 per cent, irrespective of land use, ownership, and legal status

## Tree cover and Forest Cover

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change defines 'forest cover' in India as "all lands, more than one hectare in area with a tree canopy density of more than 10%"

- Similarly 'tree cover' is defined as "tree patches outside recorded forest areas exclusive of forest cover and less than the minimum mappable area of 1 hectare".

- There is a third measure known as Tree outside forest (TOF).

- The 'India State of Forest Report 2017' defines TOF as "trees existing outside the recorded forest area in the form of block, linear & scattered size of patches".

- Since tree cover measures only non-forest patches that are less than 1 hectare, it is only a part of TOF.

## Ecoclub Programme

- Environment Education Awareness and Training (EEAT) is an established central sector scheme of the Environment Ministry since 1983-84.

- It aims to promote environmental awareness and mobilize student's participation for environment conservation.

- Under the scheme, National Green Corps (NGC) 'Ecoclub' programme was initiated in 2001-2002 with the objective to impart knowledge to school children about their immediate environment, interactions within it and the problems therein.

- It aims to inculcate proper attitude towards environment and sensitize children on issues related to environment and development.

- In a first, Annual Meet of the State Nodal Agencies implementing the Ecocluborganized by the EnvironmentMinistry was held in Kevadia, Gujarat.

## Heavy Metal Contamination in Indian Rivers

- Central Water Commission released a report which pointed out that 2/3rd of the water quality stations spanning India's major rivers showed contamination by one or more heavy metals.

- The study spanned 67 rivers in 20 river basins.

- The concentration of heavy metals exceeds safe limits set by the Bureau of Indian Standards.

- The presence of metals in drinking water in trace amounts is required for good health and when present above safe limits, it will bring range of disorders.

- **Iron** emerged as the most common contaminant in most of the sampled sites registering levels of the metal above safe limits.

- The other major contaminants found in the samples were lead, nickel, chromium, cadmium and copper.

- Lead, cadmium, nickel, chromium and copper contamination were more common in non-monsoon periods.

| River | Chromium | Lead | Iron |
|-------|----------|------|------|
| Ganga | Exceeds | | Exceeds |
| Yamuna | | | Exceeds |
| Brahmaputra | | | Exceeds |
| Ramganga | | Exceeds | |
| Rapti | Exceeds | | Exceeds |
| Narmada | | | Exceeds |
| Godavari | | | Exceeds |

SOURCE: CENTRAL WATER COMMISSION STUDY

- While iron, lead, chromium and copper exceeded 'tolerance limits' in monsoon periods most of the time.

- None of the sites registered **arsenic and zinc** levels above the safe limit.

- Arsenic contamination is a major environmental issue that affects groundwater.

- The main sources of heavy metal pollution are mining, milling, plating and surface finishing industries that discharge a variety of toxic metals into the environment.

## Rare Earth Metals

- Rare Earth Elements or Rare Earth Metals are a set of 17 chemical elements in the periodic table that have similar chemical properties.

- It includes 15 lanthanides plus scandium and yttrium.

- One of the Rare Earths, promethium, is radioactive.

- Some of the applications of Rare Earth Metals are,

  i. Cerium is used in Space shuttle components, jet engine turbines and drones

  ii. Scandium is used in Televisions and fluorescent lamps

  iii. Yttrium is used in drugs to treat rheumatoid arthritis and cancer

  iv. Other applications - Technologies of consumer electronics, computers and networks, communications, clean energy, advanced transportation, healthcare, environmental mitigation, and national defence.

- China dominates the production of these elements.

- **Recent Development -** The United States Army has planned to fund the construction of a Rare Earths processing facility,

- This is to secure the domestic supply of minerals that are used to make military weapons and electronics.

- The decision comes after China threatened to stop exporting Rare Earth materials to the US amid the ongoing trade war between the countries.

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

*Tiger Corridors*

- The National Tiger Conservation Authority in collaboration with the Wildlife Institute of India hasmapped out 32 major tiger corridors across the country.
- The management interventions in these corridors will be operationalised through a Tiger Conservation Plan, mandated under section 38V of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- The tiger corridors are,

## Shivalik Hills & Gangetic Plains

1. Rajaji-Corbett - Uttarakhand
2. Corbett-Dudhwa - Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Nepal
3. Dudhwa-Kishanpur-Katerniaghat - Uttar Pradesh, Nepal

## Central India & Eastern Ghats

4. Ranthambhore-Kuno-Madhav - Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan
5. Bandhavgarh-Achanakmar - Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh
6. Bandhavgarh-Sanjay Dubri-Guru Ghasidas - Madhya Pradesh
7. Guru Ghasidas-Palamau-Lawalong - Chhattisgarh & Jharkhand
8. Kanha-Achanakmar - Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh
9. Kanha-Pench - Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra
10. Pench-Satpura-Melghat - Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra
11. Kanha-Navegaon Nagzira-Tadoba-Indravati - Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh
12. Indravati-Udanti Sitanadi-Sunabeda - Chhattisgarh, Odisha
13. Similipal-Satkosia - Odisha
14. Nagarjunasagar-Sri Venkateshwara National Park - Andhra Pradesh

## Western Ghats

15. Sahyadri-Radhanagari-Goa - Maharashtra, Goa
16. Dandeli Anshi-Shravathi Valley - Karnataka
17. Kudremukh-Bhadra - Karnataka
18. Nagarahole-Pusphagiri-Talakavery - Karnataka
19. Nagarahole-Bandipur-Mudumalai-Wayanad - Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu
20. Nagarahole-Mudumalai-Wayanad - Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu
21. Parambikulam-Eranikulam-Indira Gandhi - Kerala, Tamil Nadu
22. Kalakad Mundanthurai-Periyar - Kerala, Tamil Nadu

## North East

23. Kaziranga-Itanagar WLS - Assam, Arunachal Pradesh
24. Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong - Assam
25. Kaziranga-Nameri - Assam
26. Kaziranga-Orang - Assam
27. Kaziranga-Papum Pane - Assam
28. Manas-Buxa - Assam, West Bengal, Bhutan
29. Pakke-Nameri-Sonai Rupai-Manas - Arunachal Pradesh, Assam
30. Dibru Saikhowa-D'Ering-Mehaong - Assam, Arunachal Pradesh
31. Kamlang-Kane-Tale Valley - Arunachal Pradesh

32. Buxa-Jaldapara - West Bengal

# SPECIES IN NEWS

## *Peregrine Falcon*

- It is one of the world's most common predatory birds, has the fastest vision in the animal kingdom,

- It can register nearly 130 frames per second, where humans see up to a maximum of 50 to 60 blinks per second.

- This new discovery was published in Journal of Experimental Biology, it is the first time scientists have studied the speed of vision among birds of prey.

- The speed at which different birds of prey process visual impressions is related to their hunting needs.

- For the peregrine falcon, which hunts fast-flying birds, the ability to spot ultra-speed movements helps them detect prey sufficiently early in order to have time to react.

## *Himalayan Gold*

- In the Himalayas, the reliance of local communities on the trade and collection of Himalayan Gold, caterpillar fungus has become extremely popular in recent decades.

- Caterpillar fungus (Ophiocordyceps Sinensis) is a fungal parasite of larvae (caterpillars) that belongs to the ghost moth.

- It has been used in traditional Tibetan and Chinese medicine as a tonic, as a therapeutic medicine for lung, liver and kidney problems.

- In the recent times, it has widely traded as an aphrodisiac (stimulating sexual desire) and a powerful tonic, often called the 'Himalayan Viagra'.

- It is endemic to the Tibetan Plateau, including the adjoining high Himalaya (3,200-4,500 metres above sea level).

- It is locally known as Kira Jari (in India), Yartsagunbu (in Tibet) and Yarsagumba (in Nepal).

- It has been found in alphine meadows of Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve, Askot Wildlife Sanctuary, Kanchendzonga Biosphere Reserve and Dehan-Debang Biosphere Reserve.

- The harvesting of fungus starts at the beginning of May and lasts till the end of June.

- It depends on factors such as weather, snow cover on the pasture and elevation of collection sites.

- TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network reported that the illegal trading of it is also a significant issue.

# 23.   SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

# SPACE

## *Cyclones in Jupiter*

- NASA's Juno probe was launched in 2016 to reveal the story of Jupiter's formation and evolution.

- When Juno first arrived in Jupiter, it discovered **giant cyclones** encircling the planet's poles (9 in the north and 6 in the south).

- Each is nearly as wide as the continental US.

- It was discovered using data from Jovian Infrared Auroral Mapper (JIRAM) instrument.

- It has recently discovered a new cyclone on Jupiter's South pole on its 22nd flyby of the planet. Now the South Pole has 7 cyclones.

Click here to know more about Juno

### CHEOPS Satellite

- CHEOPS – CHaracterising ExOplanet Satellite is a new telescope going to be launched by European Space Agency.

- Unlike, NASA's Kepler and TESS mission, it is a follow-up mission for the study of exoplanets rather than a discovery machine.

- Thus, it will help in determining planet sizes and other information.

- It will lift-off as a secondary passenger on a Soyuz-Fregat rocket.

- Its aim is to measure size of known transiting exoplanets and search for transits of exoplanets previously discovered via radial velocity.

- It is the first mission dedicated to searching for exoplanetary transits by performing **ultra-high precision photometry** on bright stars already known to host planets.

- The Mission objectives are,

    i. Use ultra-high precision photometry to measure accurate sizes of a large sample of Earth to Neptune sized planets,

    ii. Seeks to measure light curves of hot Jupiters to see how energy is transported in planetary atmospheres,

    iii. Combine CHEOPS size measurements with existing planet masses to constrain their composition and internal structures.

    iv. Identify prime targets to search for the fingerprints of key molecules in the planets' atmospheres using future observatories on Earth.

### Comet 2I/Borisov

- Recently, NASA's Hubble space telescope have captured Comet 2I/Borisov to enter the solar system.

- It is the first interstellar comet to enter the solar system and the closest comet to the Sun.

- It speeds past the sun at 160,000 kilometres per hour.

- Borisov is only the second interstellar object ever seen entering the solar system. The first was **Oumuamua** in 2017.

- The mass of ice and dust particles and the comet's centre is 1 km long.

- The comet will pass Jupiter in mid-2020 before making its way back to interstellar space and remaining there for billions of years.

Click here to know more about Hubble Space Telescope

### Heliosphere, Heliopause and Interstellar Space

- The sun creates heliosphere by sending a constant flow of particles and a magnetic field out into space at over 670,000 miles per hour. This stream is called the 'solar wind.'

- Heliopause marks the end of a region created by our sun that is called the heliosphere.

- It is the boundary between our Solar System and the interstellar medium.

- It is the place where the sun's constant flow of material and magnetic field stop affecting its surroundings.

- Interstellar Space is the part of space that exists between stars with cold particles around it.

- Inside the heliosphere, the solar particles are hot but less concentrated. Outside of the bubble, they are very much colder but more concentrated.

- Once an object arrives in interstellar space, there would be an increase of "cold" particles around it.

### PSLV C-48

- PSLV in its 50th flight (PSLV-C48), successfully launched RISAT-2BR1 along with 9 commercial satellites.

- RISAT-2BR1 is a radar imaging earth observation satellite weighing about 628 kg.

- It will provide services in the field of Agriculture, Forestry and Disaster Management. The mission life of RISAT-2BR1 is 5 years.

- The nine commercial satellites were from Israel, Italy, Japan and USA.

- These satellites were launched under a commercial arrangement with NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), the commercial arm of ISRO.

- PSLV-C48has launch vehicle in 'QL' configuration i.e with 4 solid strap-onmotors.

## *PSLV*

- It is the3rd generation launch vehicle and first Indian launch vehicle to be equipped with liquid stages.

- It emerged as the reliable and versatile workhorse launch vehicle of India with consecutively successful missions.

- It successfully launched two spacecraft such as Chandrayaan-1 in 2008 and Mars Orbiter Spacecraft in 2013.

- 3 variations in PSLV - PSLV-G (General), PSLV-XL variants and PSLV-CA (Core Alone).

- It has 4 stages in its operation to provide thrust in launching spacecraft to different orbits.

- **Stage I**: It uses solid rocket motor that is augmented by 6 solid strap-on boosters. Strap on boosters are used only in G and XL variation.

- **Stage II**: It uses an Earth storable liquid rocket engine, known as the Vikas engine.

- **Stage III**: It uses solid rocket motor that provides high thrust after the atmospheric phase of the launch.

- **Stage IV**: It comprises two Earth storable liquid engines.

- **Capacity** - 1,750 kg of payload to Sun-Synchronous Polar Orbits of 600 km altitude and to 1,425 kg of payload to Geosynchronous and Geostationary orbits, like satellites from the IRNSS constellation.
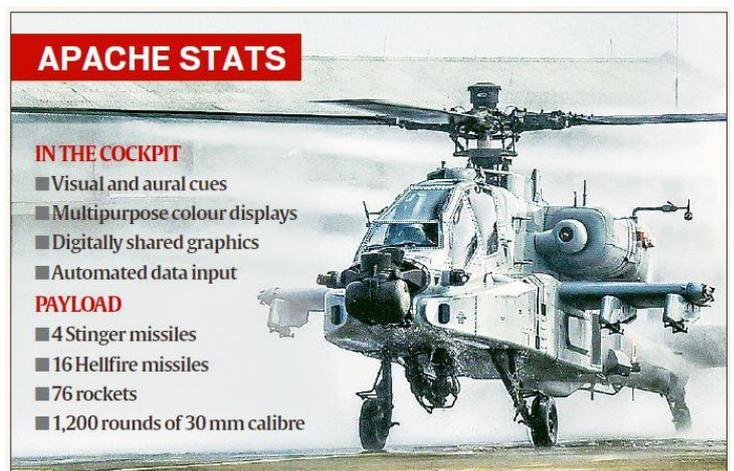
## *Prithvi – II*

- India has recently test-fired Prithvi-II missile off the Integrated Test Range at Chandipur, Odisha.

- Prithvi II is an indigenously developed surface-to-surface nuclear-capable missile.

- It is a single-stage liquid fuelled twin engine missile with a short-range of 350km.

- It is s capable of carrying 500 to 1000 kg of warheads.

- It was inducted into the Indian Defence in 2003.

- It is the first one to have been developed by the DRDO under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme.

- **Prithvi – III** is a short-range, road-mobile, ballistic missile and its model is a departure from Prithvi I, II as it employs a **two-stage, solid propellant motor.**

## DEFENCE

## *Apache Helicopters*

- Apache is the most advanced multi-role heavy attack helicopter in the world.

- Its modern capabilities include, fire-and-forget, anti-tank missiles, air-to-air missiles, rockets, and other ammunition.

- Apaches has their ability to operate at much higher altitudes, unlike the aging Russian Mi-24/Mi-35 attack helicopters.



**APACHE STATS**

**IN THE COCKPIT**
- Visual and aural cues
- Multipurpose colour displays
- Digitally shared graphics
- Automated data input

**PAYLOAD**
- 4 Stinger missiles
- 16 Hellfire missiles
- 76 rockets
- 1,200 rounds of 30 mm calibre

- It also has modern electronic warfare capabilities to provide versatility in network-centric aerial warfare.
- It carries a 30 mm chain gun with 1,200 rounds as part of the area weapon subsystem.
- The helicopter carries the fire control Longbow radar, which has 360-degree coverage.
- It also has a nose-mounted sensor suite for target acquisition and night-vision systems.
- The Radar systems in the helicopter will enhance the capability of the IAF in providing integrated combat aviation cover.
- It is day/night, all weather capable, and have high agility and survivability against battle damage.
- These are easily maintainable even in field conditions and are capable of prolonged operations in tropical and desert regions.
- **Recent Developments -** The deal for 6 Apache attack helicopters for the Indian Army is likely to be signed early next year.
- These are in addition to 22 Apaches being inducted by the Indian Air Force (IAF) which are expected to be delivered by 2020.
- In 2017, the Defence Acquisition Council approved the purchase of six Apache attack helicopters from the U.S. for the Army.
- It will replace the ageing Russian Mi-35 attack helicopters in service.

## *Pinaka Missile*

- Pinaka Missile System developed by DRDO was successfully flight-tested from the Integrated Test Range, Chandipur off the Odisha coast recently.
- It is an Artillery Missile System capable of striking into enemy territory up to a range of 75 kilometres with high precision.
- The Pinaka MK-II Rocket is modified as a missile by integrating with the Navigation, Control and Guidance System.
- The Navigation system of the missile is also aided by the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS).
- It is to improve the end accuracy and enhance the range.
- The mission achieved all the objectives including enhancing the range, accuracy and sub-system functionality.

## OTHERS

## *Zero-day Vulnerability*

- A zero-day exploit is a cyber-attack that occurs on the same day a weakness is discovered in software.
- At that point, it is exploited before a fix becomes available from its creator.
- Zero-day vulnerabilities are basically bugs in software, which leaves the doors open for cyber criminals to break into the system.
- Cyber security experts have found a zero-day vulnerability in Windows, allowing attackers to gain higher privileges on the target machine.

## *TRAFFIC*

- TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, is a leading non-governmental organisation working globally on trade in wild animals and plants.
- It is a strategic alliance of IUCN and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).
- Its mission is to ensure that trade in wild plants and animals is not a threat to the conservation of nature.
- It plays a vital role in tackling illegal wildlife trade through conducting research and analysis, advocacy and awareness work and by supporting remedial action against illegal wildlife trade.

## *Tyre Pyrolysis*

- It refers to a technique of breaking down used tyres at temperatures between 250° C and 500° C, in the absence of oxygen.

- This process produces liquid oil and gases.

- It leaves fine carbon matter, pyro-gas, oil as residue, thereby inadequate management of these by-products poses health risks.

- However, this is considered a safer technique than burning tyres in open spaces.

- The National Green Tribunal in 2014 prohibited used tyres from being burnt in the open or being used as fuel in brick kilns, because of the toxic emissions.

- Subsequently, Maharashtra Pollution Control Board issued a set of guidelines in which pyrolysis was recommended as an acceptable mode.

- **Recent Developments –** The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has pulled tyre pyrolysis units in 19 States for employing technology that is polluting and harmful to the health of workers employed.

- It orders States to close all pyrolysis units that are not compliant and to strictly regulate import of used tyres.

- India is also a recipient of used tyres from Australia and the U.K., which are sent for recycling and disposal.

## *Rotavac 5D Vaccine*

- Hyderabad based Bharat Bio-Tech, an international biotechnology company, has recently unveiled advanced version of rotavirus vaccine  Rotavac 5D.

- It is the oral rotavirus vaccine to tackle **viral diarrhoea**.

- It has been developed with close coordination with the Department of Biotechnology.

- The current Rotavac vaccine, also manufactured by Bharat Biotech, requires to be stored at -20-degreeCelsius same as oral polio vaccine.

- The newer Rotavac 5D will, however require between two to eight degrees celsius storage temperature, which is the normal refrigeration temperature.

- Rotavac 5D will have reduction in dosage from 2.5 to 0.5ml.

- The vaccine is waiting for prequalification from WHO to supply across the world.

# 24.    INDEX AND REPORT

## *Good Governance Index*

- The index was launched to assess the state of governance in the country.

- The rankings were launched by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, and the Centre for Good Governance.

- The objectives of GGI are to provide quantifiable data to compare the state of governance in all States and UTs.

- It enables them to formulate and implement suitable strategies for improving governance and shift to result oriented approaches and administration.

- It takes into account 10 sectors –

    1.  Agriculture and Allied Sectors,

    2.  Commerce & Industries,

    3.  Human Resource Development,

    4.  Public Health,

    5.  Public Infrastructure & Utilities,

6. Economic Governance,

7. Social Welfare & Development,

8. Judicial & Public Security,

9. Environment and

10. Citizen-Centric Governance.

- The states and UTs are divided into three groups -- big states, north-east & Hill states and UTs.

- Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh topped among the 'Big States'.Odisha, Bihar, Goa, and UP, are poor performers.

- Among the North-East and Hill States, Himachal Pradesh Uttarakhand, Tripura, Mizoram and Sikkim are top performers.

- J&K, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh are poor performers.

- Puducherry is the best governed Union Territory followed by Chandigarh and Delhi. Lakshadweep is the worst performing UT.

### Global Gender Gap Index

- The Global Gender Gap Index for the year 2020 was released by World Economic Forum.

- Iceland, Norway, and Finland occupy the top three spots in the Report. Yemen ranked at the last place (153rd).

**GLOBAL GENDER GAP INDEX RANKINGS 2020**

| Rank | Country | Score |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Iceland | 0.877 |
| 2 | Norway | 0.842 |
| 3 | Finland | 0.832 |
| 4 | Sweden | 0.820 |
| 5 | Nicaragua | 0.804 |
| 6 | New Zealand | 0.799 |
| 7 | Ireland | 0.798 |
| 8 | Spain | 0.795 |
| 9 | Rwanda | 0.791 |
| 10 | Germany | 0.787 |
| 21 | United Kingdom | 0.767 |
| 50 | Bangladesh | 0.726 |
| 53 | United States | 0.724 |
| 81 | Russian Federation | 0.706 |
| 92 | Brazil | 0.691 |
| 101 | Nepal | 0.680 |
| 102 | Sri Lanka | 0.680 |
| 106 | China | 0.676 |
| 112 | India | 0.668 |
| 121 | Japan | 0.652 |
| 151 | Pakistan | 0.564 |
| 153 | Yemen | 0.494 |

- India has ranked 112th among 153 countries, slipped four places from the previous year ranking.

- Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and China are ranked at 50, 101, 102 and 106respectively. Pakistan is ranked at 151.

- It measures progress towards parity between men and women in –

1. Economy

2. Education

3. Health &

4. Political representation.

- The index lies between 0 and 1, with 1 denoting complete parity and 0, complete inequality.

- **Key Findings -** The largest gender disparity is in political empowerment.

- Only 25% of the total seats in parliaments around the world are occupied by women, and only 21% of the ministers are women.

- By following the current trends, the overall global gender gap will close in 99.5 years.

- It can potentially be closed 71.5 years in South Asia.

- Globally, the average distance completed to gender parity is at 68.6%, which is an improvement since last edition.

- **India** – Ranked 18th in political empowerment and 4th in the number of years a female or a male ruled a state.

- Ranked in the bottom-five in terms of women's health and survival and economic participation.

- On health and survival, four large countries such as Pakistan, India, Vietnam and China fare badly with millions of women not getting the same access to health as men.

- It has closed  two-thirds of its overall gender gap (score of 66.8%)

**Other Gender Related Reports**

- The Gender Parity Index is released by UNESCO.
- The Gender Inequality Index is released by UNDP.

## *Climate Change Performance Index*

- It is an annual publication by Environment think tank German Watch, the New Climate Institute and the Climate Action Network since 2005.
- The index tracks countries' efforts to combat climate change.
- It is an independent monitoring tool  aims to enhance transparency in international climate politics.
- It evaluates and compares the climate protection performance of 57 countries and the EU, which are together responsible for more than 90% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
- 80% of the evaluation is based on objective indicators of emissions trend and emissions level.
- 20% of the index results are built upon national and international climate policy assessments by more than 200 experts from the respective countries.
- Country's ranking is defined by 14 indicators within 4 categories – GHG Emissions, Renewable Energy, Energy Use and Climate Policy.
- The CCPI ranking is qualified in relative terms (better–worse) rather than in absolute terms.
- In CCPI 2020, no country performs well enough in all index categories to achieve an overall very high rating in the index, thus the first 3 ranks remain empty.
- Sweden leads the ranking on rank 4, followed by Denmark and  Morocco.
- The bottom 3 countries are Taiwan, Saudi Arabia and United States.
- **India**, for the first time, ranks at 9 among the top 10 in the index.

## *Human Development Index*

- Human Development Report was recently released by UN Development Programme (UNDP).
- It unveils Human Development Index (HDI) which measures average achievement in three basic dimensions of human development,

    i.     Life expectancy,

    ii.    Education and

    iii.   Per capita income.

- According to its recent report, India ranks 129 out of 189 countries on the 2019HDI, up by one position (130) from last year.
- Norway, Switzerland, Ireland occupied the top 3 positions followed by Germany & Hong Kong in 4th and Australia in 5th ranking.
- Among India's neighbours, Sri Lanka (71) and China (85) are higher up the rank scale.
- Bhutan (134), Bangladesh (135), Myanmar (145), Nepal (147), Pakistan (152) and Afghanistan (170) were ranked lower on the list.
- **Inequality-Adjusted HDI (IHDI)** indicates percentage loss in HDI due to inequalities.
- In IHDI, India's position drops by one position to 130.

**Ups and downs**

Among India's neighbours Sri Lanka moved up five rungs on the HDI ladder while Madives fell three ranks. While Pakistan slipped two spots, Bangladesh moved up one

Source: Human Development Report, UN

| Country | 2017 Rank | 2018 Rank |
|---|---|---|
| India | 130 | 129 |
| Brazil | 79 | 79 |
| China | 86 | 85 |
| Russia | 49 | 49 |
| South Africa | 113 | 113 |
| Pakistan | 150 | 152 |
| Afghanistan | 168 | 170 |
| Sri Lanka | 76 | 71 |
| Bhutan | 134 | 134 |
| Nepal | 149 | 147 |
| Bangladesh | 136 | 135 |
| Maldives | 101 | 104 |

- In the **Gender Inequality Index (GII),** India is at 122 out of 162 countries. Neighbours China (39), Sri Lanka (86), Bhutan (99), Myanmar (106) were placed above India.

- **Report Highlights** - South Asia was the fastest growing region in human development progress followed by East Asia and the Pacific.

- The world is not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030 as per the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

- It forecasts that it may take 202 years to close the gender gap in economic opportunity.

- It presents a new index indicating how prejudices and social beliefs obstruct gender equality.

- It shows that only 14% of women and 10% of men worldwide have no gender bias.

- It also highlights that new forms of inequalities will manifest in future through climate change and technological transformation.

## *Global Climate Risk Index*

- The index is released by Environment think tank, Germanwatch for the for 2018 and from 1999 to 2018.

- According to the index, Japan is the most affected followed by the Philippines as well as Germany in 2018.

- Madagascar was the 4th most affected followed by India as 5th most vulnerable country to climate change.

- India's rank has worsened from the 14th spot in 2017 to 5th in 2018 in the global vulnerability ladder.

- For the period from 1999 to 2018 Puerto Rico, Myanmar and Haiti rank highest.

- **Reason for ranking** – In 2018, a severe summer heatwave in Japan killed 138 people and caused more than 70,000 people to be hospitalised with heat stroke and exhaustion.

- Philippines was battered by top-strength Typhoon Mangkhut.

- In Germany, the period from April-July 2018 was the hottest ever recorded in the country, leading to the deaths of over 1,200 people.

- In Madagascar, two cyclones killed about 70 people and forced 70,000 to seek refuge.

- India suffered water shortages, crop failures and worst flooding.

## *World Malaria Report*

- World Malaria Report 2019 was recently released by the World Health Organization (WHO).

- Malaria is mainly caused by Plasmodium falciparum and Plasmodium vivax parasites.

- It is transmitted to people through the bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes.

- Malaria is transmitted by blood, so it can also be transmitted through an organ transplant, a transfusion and use of shared needles or syringes.

- It is preventable and curable.

- **Report Highlights** – Plasmodium falciparum is the most prevalent malaria parasite in the African, South-East Asia, Eastern Mediterranean, Western Pacific region.

- Plasmodium Vivax is the predominant parasite in American region and its burden is high in South-East asia region with the majority being in India.

- 19 countries in sub-Saharan Africa and India accounted for 85 per cent of the global malaria burden in 2018.

- Globally, malaria cases reported in 2018 is marginally lower than the number of cases in 2017.

- Africa and India saw the maximum dip in malaria cases between 2017 and 2018, but they still accounted for 85 per cent deaths.

- Nigeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Republic of Tanzania, Angola, Mozambique and Niger reported higher number of cases in the African region.

- The African region accounted for 94% of all malarial deaths

- India (58%), Indonesia (21%) and Myanmar (12%) accounted for the total reported deaths in the region.
- **Status of India –** It is the highest burden country in the South-East Asia region.
- Ithas one of the lowest funding per person at risk of being inflicted with malaria at just US$0.2.
- It showed a reduction in reported cases of 51 per cent compared to 2017 and of 60 per cent compared to 2016.
- In the South-East Asia region, the major challenges remain decreased funding, treatment failures and vector resistance to pyrethroids, the insectides used against the vectors.

**************