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CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

JULY 2019

Shankar IAS Academy™

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G.S PAPER II

1. POLITY

1.1 Cabinet Committees - Two New Committees

Why in news?

The Union government recently released the composition of 8 Cabinet Committees, including two new ones (Investment and Employment).

What are Cabinet Committees for?

- The Cabinet Committee are institutional arrangements to reduce the workload of the Cabinet.
- These committees are extra-constitutional in nature and are nowhere mentioned in the Constitution.
- The executive works under the Government of India Transaction of Business Rules, 1961.
- These Rules emerge out of Article 77(3) of the Constitution.
- Accordingly, the President shall make rules for the more convenient transaction of the business of the Government of India, and for the allocation among Ministers of the said business.
- The Rules mandate the minister-in-charge of a department (ministry) to dispose of all business allotted to a department under him or her.
- However, on subjects involving more than one department, decision will have to be taken on concurrence.
- On failing such concurrence, decision will have to be taken by or under the authority of the Cabinet.

How are they formed?

- The Prime Minister constitutes Standing Committees of the Cabinet and sets out the specific functions assigned to them.
- S/he can add or reduce the number of committees.
- Ad hoc committees of ministers, including Groups of Ministers, may be appointed by the Cabinet or by the Prime Minister for specific matters.
- The strength of each committee varies from three to eight members.
- It usually includes cabinet ministers but non-cabinet members are not debarred.

What are the key Cabinet Committees?

- **Cabinet Committee on Appointments** - This panel makes appointments to posts of three service chiefs, Director General of Military Operations, chiefs of all Air and Army Commands.
- It also makes appointments to the posts of -
 - i. Director General of Defence Intelligence Agency
 - ii. Scientific Advisor to the Defence Minister
 - iii. Director General of Armed Forces Medical Services
 - iv. Director General of Ordnance Factories
 - v. Director General of Defence Estates
 - vi. Controller General of Defence Accounts
 - vii. Director of Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses
 - viii. Solicitor-General
 - ix. Governor of the Reserve Bank of India
 - x. Chairman and Members of the Railway Board
 - xi. Chief Vigilance Officers in Public Sector Undertakings
 - xii. Secretariat posts of and above the rank of Joint Secretary in the Central Government

- It also decides on all important empanelments and shift of officers serving on Central deputation.
- **Cabinet Committee on Accommodation** - This determines the guidelines or rules with regard to the allotment of government accommodation.
- It also takes a call on the allotment of government accommodation to non-eligible persons and organisations, and decides the rent to be charged from them.
- It can consider the allotment of accommodation from the General Pool to Members of Parliament.
- It can consider proposals for shifting existing Central Government Offices to locations outside the capital.
- **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs** - This panel is supposed to review economic trends, problems and prospects.
- The objective is to evolve a consistent and integrated economic policy.
- It also does the following:
 - i. coordinates all activities requiring policy decisions at the highest level
 - ii. deal with fixation of prices of agricultural produce and prices of essential commodities
 - iii. considers proposals for investment of more than Rs 1,000 crore
 - iv. deal with industrial licensing policies
 - v. review rural development and the Public Distribution System
- **Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs** - This draws the schedule for Parliament sessions and monitors the progress of government business in Parliament.
- It scrutinises non-government business and decides which official Bills and resolutions are to be presented.
- **Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs** - The committee addresses problems related to Centre-state relations.
- It also examines economic and political issues that require a wider perspective but have no internal or external security implications.
- **Cabinet Committee on Security** - It deals with issues relating to law and order and internal security.
- It also deals with policy matters concerning foreign affairs with internal or external security implications.
- It also goes into economic and political issues related to national security.
- It considers all cases involving capital defence expenditure of more than Rs 1,000 crore.
- It also considers issues related to the -
 - i. Department of Defence Production
 - ii. the Department of Defence Research and Development
 - iii. Services Capital Acquisition plans
 - iv. schemes for procurement of security-related equipment

What are the two new panels?

- **Cabinet Committee on Investment** - This Committee will identify key projects required to be implemented on a time-bound basis.
- This applies to projects involving investments of Rs 1,000 crore or more, or any other critical projects, as may be specified by it, with regard to infrastructure and manufacturing.
- It will prescribe time limits for giving requisite approvals and clearances by the ministries concerned in identified sectors.
- It will also monitor the progress of such projects.
- **Cabinet Committee on Employment and Skill Development** - This is supposed to provide direction to all policies, programmes, schemes and initiatives for skill development.

- The objective is increasing the employability of the workforce for effectively meeting the emerging requirements of the economy.
- It facilitates mapping the benefits of demographic dividend.
- The committee is required to enhance workforce participation, foster employment growth and identification.
- It will work towards removal of gaps between requirement and availability of skills in various sectors.
- The panel will set targets for expeditious implementation of all skill development initiatives and to periodically review the progress in this regard.
- The addition of the two committees is indicative of the new focus areas for the government. The goal of both is new jobs.

1.2 Concerns with Foreigners Tribunal - Abdul Kuddus Case

What is the issue?

- The Supreme Court recently decided on a batch of 15 petitions, regarding the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam, under the title Abdul Kuddus v Union of India.
- The judgement, strengthening the Foreigners Tribunal, seems contentious on human rights grounds, and thus need a relook.

What are the concerns in citizenship registration process?

- In the State of Assam, there are two ongoing processes concerning the question of citizenship -
 - i. proceedings before the Foreigners Tribunals, which have been established under an executive order of the Central government
 - ii. the NRC, a process overseen and driven by the Supreme Court
- [Foreigner's Tribunal is a quasi-judicial body meant to decide whether a person is a foreigner or not within the meaning of Foreigners Act, 1946.]
- While nominally independent, both processes nonetheless influence one another.
- This has caused significant chaos and confusion for individuals who have found themselves on the wrong side of one or both.
- Evidently, citizenship proceedings were mixed with administrative (and other kinds of) errors.
- However, this often came to light much later, and often by chance; but the implications were serious.

What is the petition?

- The petition was to resolve a "perceived conflict" in the Schedule to the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003.
- It involved the status of an "opinion" rendered by a Foreigners Tribunal, as to the citizenship (or the lack thereof) of any individual.
- The petitioners argued that an opinion rendered by the Foreigners Tribunal had no greater sanctity than an executive order.
- Under the existing rules, this meant that an adverse finding against an individual would not automatically result in their name being struck off the NRC.
- Furthermore, the Tribunal's opinion could be subsequently reviewed, if fresh materials come to light.
- The petitioners called for challenging the decision of the Foreigners Tribunal if it is used to justify keeping an individual out of the NRC.
- This would then have to be decided independently of the decision arrived at by the Tribunal.
- In short, the petitioners' case was that the processes of the Foreigners Tribunal and of the NRC should be kept entirely independent of each other.
- Also, primacy should not be given to one over the other.



What is the Court's judgement?

- The Supreme Court rejected the petitioners' arguments.
- It held that the "opinion" of the Foreigners Tribunal was to be treated as a "quasi-judicial order".
- It was, therefore, final and binding on all parties including upon the preparation of the NRC.
- The Supreme Court's judgement might severely affect the rights of millions of individuals, as there are serious shortfalls with the Foreigners Tribunal's functioning.

What are the concerns with Foreigners' Tribunals?

- Essentially, Foreigners Tribunals were established by a simple executive order.
- **Officials** - The qualifications to serve on the Tribunals have been progressively loosened.
- Notably, the vague requirement of "judicial experience" has now been expanded to include bureaucrats.
- **Functioning** - The Foreigners' Tribunals are far from the normal understandings of 'courts', both in its form and functioning.
- Under the current rules, Tribunals are -
 - i. given sweeping powers to refuse examination of witnesses if in their opinion it is for unworthy/unjustified purposes
 - ii. bound to accept evidence produced by the police
 - iii. not required to provide reasons for their findings
- [As it is not a judgment, a concise statement of the facts and the conclusion would suffice unlike courts that add "reasons" to "facts" and "conclusions".]
- **Flaws** - In effect, Tribunals are left free to regulate their own procedure for disposal of cases.
- Consequently, over the last few months, glaring flaws in the working of the Foreigners Tribunals have come to light.
- As many as 64,000 people have been declared non-citizens in ex-parte proceedings, i.e., without being heard.
- People are often not even served notices telling them that they have been summoned to appear.

Why is the judgement contentious?

- The Court says that fixing time limits and recording of an order rather than a judgment is to ensure that these cases are disposed of expeditiously and in a time bound manner.
- However, rejecting a person's citizenship could have drastic and severe result of rendering a human being stateless.
- So, when adjudicating upon a person's citizenship, only the highest standards of adjudication can ever be morally or ethically justifiable.
- The Foreigners Tribunal, however, is by design and practice manifestly the exact opposite of this principle.
- So, in further strengthening the Tribunal, the Supreme Court has fallen short of being the last protector of human rights under the Constitution.
- It seems to be a departure from the most basic principles of the rule of law.
- Given this, if Article 21 (right to life) of the Constitution is to be meaningful, this entire jurisprudence must be reconsidered.

1.3 Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland

Why in news?

The Nagaland government has initiated a move to implement its own version of citizenship register.



What is Nagaland's initiative?

- The Government of Nagaland has decided to set up a Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN).
- [This comes 4 years after Assam started revising its National Register of Citizens (NRC). Click [here](#) to know more]
- The aim is to prevent fake 'indigenous inhabitants' certificates.
- The RIIN will be the master list of all indigenous inhabitants of the state.
- The process will be conducted across Nagaland and will be done as part of the online system of *Inner Line Permit* (ILP), which is already in force in Nagaland.
- The entire exercise will be monitored by the Commissioner of Nagaland.
- In addition, the state government will designate nodal officers of the rank of a Secretary to the state government.
- Their role will be to monitor the implementation, and will have no say in the adjudication process.

Inner Line Permit (ILP)

- ILP is an official travel document required by Indian citizens residing outside certain "protected" states while entering them.
- The ILP is issued by the Government of India.
- With the ILP, the government aims to regulate movement to certain areas located near the international border of India.
- ILP's origin dates back to the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations, 1873, which protected the British Crown's interest in tea, oil and elephant trade.
- It prohibited "British subjects" or Indians from entering into these protected areas.
- After Independence, in 1950, the word "British subjects" was replaced by Citizens of India.
- Also, the focus of the ban on free movement was explained as a bid to protect tribal cultures in north-eastern India.

How does it work?

- **Survey** - The RIIN list will be based on "an extensive survey".
- The preparation of the list will start from July 10, 2019, and the whole survey process will be completed within 60 days from the start.
- The list would be prepared under the supervision of the district administration.
- It will involve official records of indigenous residents from rural and (urban) wards.
- **Provisional list** - The database will note each family's original residence, current residence as well as the concerned Aadhaar numbers.
- This provisional list will then be published in all villages, wards and on government websites.
- **Review procedure** - Over the next 30 days (from provisional list), claims and objections can be made.
- Respondents will be given an opportunity to make their case before the authorities.
- Eventually, respective Deputy Commissioners will adjudicate on the claims and objections based on official records and the evidence produced.
- This process will be completed before December 10, 2019.
- **RIIN** - Based on the adjudication and verification, a list of indigenous inhabitants will be finalised.
- The final list or the RIIN will be created and its copies will be placed in all villages and ward.
- Electronic copies of the list will also be stored in the State Data Centre.
- A mechanism or electronic and SMS-based authentication will be put in place.
- Each person will be given a unique ID.
- All indigenous inhabitants of the state would be issued a bar-coded and numbered Indigenous Inhabitant Certificate.
- **Updation** - Once the RIIN is finalised, no fresh indigenous inhabitant certificates will be issued.
- The only exception is newborn babies of the indigenous inhabitants of Nagaland.
- Those left out of the RIIN will have to file an application before Home Commissioner.

- S/he will get the matter verified and take necessary action for updating the RIIN if needed.

What are the likely challenges?

- The Assam experience shows that in the complex demographics of the Northeastern States, the registration process may not be that easy.
- As many as 40 lakh people were left out of the NRC listing in Assam, in the alleged process to filter out 'illegal immigrants'.
- Indeed, in Nagaland, various local attempts have been made to determine non-locals, non-tribals and non-Nagas.
- Efforts have been taken to identify what some people refer to as the 'Illegal Bangladeshi Immigrant', but not full-fledged.
- The situation on the ground is already volatile and the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act is routinely extended there too.
- All these pose significant challenges to the citizenship registration process.

1.4 Challenges to Nagaland's RIIN Initiative

What is the issue?

- The Nagaland government has initiated a move to compile a [Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland \(RIIN\)](#).
- In this context, here is an overview of the challenges that are likely to come up in the process.

What are the likely challenges?

- **Naga peace talks** - The negotiators engaged in the ongoing [Naga peace talks](#) could now articulate new and hardened positions.
- The talks on the contentious issue of integration of contiguous Naga-inhabited areas (of Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh) could take pace now.
- **NSCN(I-M)** - The National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah) is engaged in peace talks with the government of India since 1997.
- The self-styled government of the People's Republic of Nagalim is the parallel government run by the NSCN(I-M).
- This has opposed the compilation of RIIN, saying that all Nagas, wherever they are, were indigenous in their land by virtue of their common history.
- So it sees the RIIN process as being contradictory to the inherent rights of the Nagas.
- **Cut-off date** - Since 1977, to be eligible to obtain a certificate of indigenous inhabitants of Nagaland, a person has to fulfil either of the below conditions:
 - i. the person must be settled permanently in Nagaland prior to December 1, 1963
 - ii. his or her parents or legitimate guardians were paying house tax prior to the cut-off date (December 1, 1963)
 - iii. the applicant, or his/her parents or legitimate guardians, acquired property and a patta (land certificate) prior to this cut-off date
- The compilation of RIIN involves the complexities of deciding on the claims of the children of non-Naga fathers as well as non-Naga children adopted by Naga parents.
- In this regard, the Nagaland government may choose to go ahead with the above cut-off date.
- In such case, all Naga people who have migrated to the State after this day will have to be excluded.
- These include migrants from the neighbouring Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh and elsewhere in India.
- The public opinion is still divided on compiling RIIN without a consensus on the cut-off date.



- **ILP** - There is a proposal to link RIIN with the ILP (Inner Line Permit) system.
- [The ILP is a travel document issued by the government of India to allow a 'domestic tourist' to enter Nagaland, and is valid for 30 days.]
- The complexity is that unless otherwise officially clarified, the RIIN proposal may require large numbers of non-indigenous inhabitants to obtain an ILP to carry out day-to-day activities.
- Notably, most of them are migrated ones from other States and have been carrying out trade, business and other activities for decades, especially in the Dimapur district.
- **Certificates** - There is the limitation of non-issuance of domicile certificates or permanent residence certificates to a large number of non-Naga, non-indigenous inhabitants.
- This could also make the RIIN task even more difficult for the Nagaland government.

1.5 Supreme Court on Rohingya issue

Why in News?

The Supreme Court has decided to examine whether illegal immigrants are entitled to refugee status in the context of the Rohingya Muslims of Myanmar.

What is the debate?

- There is an opinion that they breach the law because they are **undocumented**.
- Obviously, those escaping persecution in their home country are invariably undocumented.
- There is another opinion that those fleeing conditions of war or conflict should be **treated as refugees first** before their cases can be examined in detail, and deemed fit for deportation as illegal entrants.

What is the definition?

- The **Government of India** defines **illegal immigrant** as any foreigner,
 1. Entering India without valid travel documents, or
 2. Overstays a permitted period of stay.

What do the court's decision mean?

- The court's decision to go into the issue, offers an opportunity to clarify India's approach to the refugee question.
- It will be strange if any court holds that no illegal immigrant is entitled to refugee status, as it would amount to a denial of the very existence of refugees as a class.

Why a positive ruling is needed?

- The Centre is taking a stand against treating the Rohingya as refugees.
- So, a positive ruling is needed from the apex court to prevent their forcible deportation.

What is India's position?

- India is not a signatory to the UN Convention on the Status of Refugees, 1951.
- It has also not signed a Protocol adopted in 1967 on the subject.
- However, since Independence it has by and large adhered to the larger humanitarian principles underlying these instruments.
- India's approach has generally been favourable to vulnerable entrants, but is stridently hostile to the Rohingya.

What is the concern?

- The present regime is determined to deport the Rohingya,
 1. In utter disregard of the danger to their lives in Myanmar, and



2. In violation of the principle of non-refoulement.

- It will be amoral and unjust if this most vulnerable group from Myanmar's Rakhine states is denied refugee status.

Why is the government keen to deport?

- Its keenness is rooted in the technicalities of its **citizenship law**.
- It rules out giving citizenship by registration to such illegal immigrants.
- The amendments it proposes to the Citizenship Act **do not cover Muslim immigrants** and are limited to persecuted Afghan, Bangladeshi and Pakistani minorities.

Why the government shouldn't deport?

- India should not besmirch its fine record of humane treatment of refugees by pursuing the deportation option without relent.
- India should work with the world community on the voluntary repatriation of the Rohingya.

Principle of non-refoulement

- Non-refoulement is a fundamental principle of international law.
- It **prohibits states from forcibly returning refugees** to conditions that caused them to flee their homes in the first place, where they would be likely **in danger of persecution** based on race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

2. GOVERNMENT ACTS & POLICIES

2.1 Code on Wages Bill, 2019

Why in news?

The Union Cabinet has cleared the New Code on Wages bill, 2019.

What is the current situation?

- At present, minimum wages are fixed on the basis of categories such as **Skillset** (skilled, unskilled, semi-skilled, high skilled), **geographical location** and **nature of work/sector**.
- At present, there are 2,500 minimum wage rates across the country.
- There are **13 categories** of work for which minimum wage is fixed.
- The minimum wages are fixed by both the State and the Centre.
- The Centre can notify the minimum wage rate for railway, agriculture, mining or central government entities.
- The **current floor wage** that was fixed in 2017 is **Rs 176/day**, but some states have minimum wages lower than it.

What are the changes made?

- As per the Bill, minimum wages will be linked only to factors such as **skillset** and **geographical location**.
- This is expected to reduce the number of minimum wage rates across the country to 300.
- The minimum wage law will be **extended to all sectors**, this move is expected to ensure universal wage protection against exploitation.
- **National Floor Level Minimum Wage** – To be set by the Centre to be revised every five years.
- States will fix minimum wages for their regions, which cannot be lower than the floor wage level.

What previous legislations would be replaced?

- Payment of Wages Act, 1936
- Minimum Wages Act, 1948

- Payment of Bonus Act, 1965
- Equal Remuneration Act, 1976.

What are the challenges?

- The proposed Bill empowers the Centre to fix a statutory minimum wage. But this may differ from state to state or from one geographical area to another.
- This idea of a differentiated national minimum wage rate was taken forward by a government-appointed committee.
- The committee has suggested a national minimum wage level for **five different zones**.
 1. Four of these are grouped using varied socio-economic and labour market factors.
 2. The 5th group includes all North-eastern states except Assam.
- Despite the grouping, a regional-level minimum wage rate can lead to disparity among various regions with varying economic profiles.

2.2 NIA (Amendment) Bill, 2019

Why in News?

The Lok Sabha has passed the National Investigation Agency (Amendment) Bill, 2019.

What is NIA?

- The National Investigation Agency (NIA) was **set up in 2009** under the **NIA Act, 2008**.
- It was set up in the wake of the Mumbai terror attack.
- At present, NIA is functioning as the **Central Counter Terrorism Law Enforcement Agency** in India.
- It aims to be a thoroughly **professional investigative agency** matching the best international standards at the national level, by developing into a highly trained, partnership-oriented workforce.
- It aims to **discourage** the existing and potential terrorist groups/individuals.
- It aims to develop as a **storehouse of terrorist related information**.

What are the provisions of NIA act, 2008?

- **Type of offences** - NIA can investigate offences under Acts such as the Atomic Energy Act, 1962 and the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, 1967.
- **NIA's jurisdiction** - For the offences under its purview, NIA officers have the same power as other police officers and these extend across the country.
- **Trial Courts** - The existing Act allows the Centre to constitute special courts for NIA's trials.

What are the changes in NIA (Amendment) Bill 2019?

- **Type of offences** that the NIA can investigate and prosecute is now expanded.
- This will enable NIA to additionally investigate offences related to human trafficking, counterfeit currency, manufacture or sale of prohibited arms, cyber-terrorism, and offences under the Explosive Substances Act, 1908.
- **NIA's jurisdiction** - The Bill gives NIA officers the power to investigate offences committed outside India. The Special Court in New Delhi will have jurisdiction over these cases.
- Its jurisdiction outside India will be subject to international treaties and domestic laws of other countries.
- **Special trial courts** can be designated by the Central government for the offences that come under NIA's purview or the "scheduled offences".
- The Bill enables the Centre to designate sessions courts as special courts.

- The Centre is required to consult the Chief Justice of the High Court under which the Sessions Court is functioning, before designating it.
- The state governments may also designate Sessions Courts as Special Courts for the trial of scheduled offences.

2.3 Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY)

Why in News?

The Ministry of labour and employment has presented some data in the Lok Sabha about the Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY).

What is the data?

- Over one crore new employees had joined the workforce as part of the PMRPY between August 2016 and March 2019.
- About 57% of them came from **5 States** – Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Gujarat and Haryana.
- Of the total new employees who joined the workforce during this period,
 - a) 40 % - Joined 'expert services'
 - b) 2 % - Joined in financial establishments
 - c) 7 % (each) - Commercial trading, textiles and building construction
 - d) 5 % (each) - Garment-making and engineering sectors.

Beneficiaries under PMRPY

(August 1, 2016 to March 3, 2019)

State	Number of employees
Maharashtra	21,06,405
Tamil Nadu	14,17,808
Karnataka	11,51,215
Gujarat	10,28,838
Haryana	9,70,736
India	1,18,05,003

Industry-wise PMRPY statistics

Industry	Employee benefited
Expert services	47,06,945
Trading – Commercial	8,09,949
Textiles	7,79,321
Building and construction	7,57,435
Garment making	6,18,104

Source: Ministry of Labour and Employment data presented in the Lok Sabha on July 15, 2019

What is PMRPY about?

- It is being implemented by the **Ministry of Labour and Employment** and is operational since August, 2016.
- It was launched for incentivising employers for generation of new employment.
- The **Government** of India will **pay the entire employer's contribution** (12 per cent or admissible contribution) towards the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) and the Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS) for all eligible new employees for all sectors for **3 years**.
- All new eligible employees will be covered under the PMRPY Scheme **till 2019-20**.

Who are eligible?

- All **establishments registered with EPFO** i.e. Employees' Provident Fund Organisation can apply for availing benefits under the scheme subject to the certain conditions.
- Employees who are earning **wages less than Rs 15,000/-** per month are eligible.

What are the benefits of the scheme?

- The employer is incentivised for increasing the employment base of workers in the establishment.
- A large number of workers will find jobs in such establishments.
- A direct benefit is that these workers will have access to social security benefits of the organized sector.

2.4 Right to Information (Amendment) Bill, 2019

Why in news?

The government recently introduced in Lok Sabha the Right to Information (Amendment) Bill, 2019.



What are the key changes proposed?

- The Bill primarily amends **Sections 13 and 16 of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005**.
- **Term** - Section 13 of the original Act sets the term of the central Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) and Information Commissioners (ICs) at 5 years (or until the age of 65, whichever is earlier).
- Likewise, Section 16 sets the term for state-level CICs and ICs at 5 years (or 65 years of age, whichever is earlier).
- The amendment now proposes that the appointment for both will be “for such term as may be prescribed by the Central Government”.
- **Salary, etc** - Under Section 13, salaries, allowances and other terms of service of the CIC shall be the same as that of the Chief Election Commissioner.
- Those of an Information Commissioner shall be the same as that of an Election Commissioner.
- Similarly, under Sec 16, the original Act prescribes salaries, allowances and other terms of service of the state CIC and state ICs as the same as that of an Election Commissioner and Chief Secretary to the State respectively.
- The amendment proposes that the salaries, allowances and other terms of service of both CIC and ICs at both central and state levels shall be such as may be prescribed by the Central Government.

What is the government’s rationale?

- The mandate of Election Commission of India and Central and State Information Commissions are different.
- Hence, their status and service conditions need to be rationalised accordingly.
- The Central Information Commissioner has been given the status of a Supreme Court judge.
- But, his judgments can be challenged in the High Courts, which is inconsistent.
- Besides, the RTI Act did not give the government rule-making powers, which the amendment proposes to correct.

How significant is the RTI Act?

- Introduced almost 14 years ago, the RTI Act is regarded as one of the most successful laws of independent India.
- Corruption and the arbitrary use of power is a widespread phenomenon in the country.
- Given this, the RTI has been a constant challenge to the misuse of power, arbitrariness, privilege, and corrupt governance.
- It has been a breakthrough in creating mechanisms for public vigilance that are fundamental to democratic citizenship.
- It has resulted in a fundamental shift, empowering ordinary citizens and giving them access to power and decision-making.
- The key issues where RTI has been instrumental in ensuring accountability include the Rafale fighter aircraft deal, non-performing assets, appointment of the Central Vigilance Commissioner, etc.
- According to estimates, nearly 60 lakh applications are being filed every year, by citizens as well as the media.
- It is also to be noted that more than 80 RTI users have been murdered because their determination in using the RTI had been a challenge to unaccountable power.
- Given the above, the amendments seem to be diluting the very purpose of the RTI Act.

What are the concerns with the amendments?

- The Right to Information (Amendment) Bill is a twin attack on accountability and the idea of federalism.
- **Federalism** - The separation of powers is a concept which underscores independence and is vital to India’s democratic checks and balances.

- The Commission which is vested by law with status, independence and authority, will now function like a department of the Central government.
- When power is centralised and the freedom of expression threatened, it affects the fundamental federal fabric.
- **Independence** - The original Act had quantified the tenures, and defined the salaries in terms of existing benchmarks.
- The existing institutional architecture thus ensures that the RTI authorities function in an independent and effective manner.
- The amendments empower the Central government to unilaterally decide the tenure, salary, allowances and other terms of service.
- These will now be decided on a case-to-case basis by the government.
- This is more likely to take away the independence of the RTI authorities.
- **Amendment Process** - The amendments were pushed through without any citizen consultation, bypassing examination by the standing committee.
- The mandatory pre-legislative consultative policy of the government has been ignored.
- Preserving the fundamental nature and purpose of the RTI Act is crucial to guarantee democratic citizenship in India, and so the amendments need a relook.

Quick Facts

Central Information Commission

- The Commission has been constituted under the Right to Information Act, 2005.
- The jurisdiction of the Commission extends over all Central Public Authorities. It is the highest appellate body under the Right to Information Act.
- The Commission includes Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) and not more than 10 Information Commissioners (IC) who are appointed by the President of India.
- Section 12(3) of the RTI Act 2005 provides for search committee to appoint CIC and IC which includes –
 1. The Prime Minister, who shall be the Chairperson of the committee
 2. The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha
 3. A Union Cabinet Minister to be nominated by the Prime Minister
- Similarly, the State CIC and ten State ICs are appointed by the Governor on the recommendation of the committee consisting of
 1. the Chief Minister as Chairperson
 2. the Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly
 3. a state Cabinet Minister nominated by the Chief Minister

2.5 The Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Bill, 2019

Why in News?

- The Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Bill, 2019 was passed in Lok Sabha recently.
- The Bill amends the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993.

What is the Act about?

- The Act provides for the following,
 1. National Human Rights Commission (NHRC),

2. State Human Rights Commissions (SHRC),
3. Human Rights Courts.

What are the provisions of the Act?

- **Composition of NHRC:** The chairperson of the NHRC is a person who has been a Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.
- The Act provides for 2 persons having knowledge of human rights to be appointed as members of the NHRC.
- **Members of the NHRC:** The chairpersons of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, and National Commission for Women.
- **Chairperson of SHRC:** A person who has been a Chief Justice of a High Court.
- **Term of office:** The chairperson and members of the NHRC and SHRC will hold office for 5 years or till the age of 70 years, whichever is earlier.
- The Act allows for the reappointment of members of the NHRC and SHRCs for a period of 5 years.
- **Powers of Secretary-General:** The Act provides for a Secretary-General of the NHRC and a Secretary of a SHRC, who exercise powers as may be delegated to them.

What are the amendments made?

- **Composition of NHRC:** The Bill provides that a person who has been Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, or a Judge of the Supreme Court can be the chairperson of the NHRC.
- The Bill allows 3 members to be appointed, of which at least one will be a woman.
- **Members of the NHRC:** The chairpersons of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, and National Commission for Women, National Commission for Backward Classes, the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights, and the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities.
- **Chairperson of SHRC:** The Bill provides for a person who has been Chief Justice or Judge of a High Court can be chairperson of a SHRC.
- **Term of office:** The Bill reduces the term of office to 3 years or till the age of 70 years, whichever is earlier.
- The Bill removes the five-year limit for reappointment found in the act.
- **Powers of Secretary-General:** The Bill allows the Secretary-General and Secretary to exercise all administrative and financial powers (except judicial functions), subject to the respective chairperson's control.
- **Union Territories:** The Bill provides that the central government may confer on a SHRC human rights functions being discharged by Union Territories. Functions relating to human rights in the case of Delhi will be dealt with by the NHRC.

2.6 Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2019

Why in news?

The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2019 was introduced in Lok Sabha.

What is the Code for?

- A healthy workforce would be more productive and occurrence of less accidents and mishaps at work would be economically beneficial.
- So, safety, health, welfare and improved working conditions are pre-requisite for well being of the worker and the country's economic growth.
- With this in mind, the Code repeals and replaces 13 labour laws relating to safety, health and working conditions.
- These include the Factories Act, 1948, the Mines Act, 1952, and the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970.

- The Code enhances the ambit of provisions from existing about 9 major sectors to all establishments having 10 or more employees.
- It does not apply to apprentices.
- Further, it makes special provisions for certain types of establishments and classes of employees, such as factories, mines, and building and construction workers.



What are the key provisions?

- **Relevant authorities** - All establishments covered by the Code must be registered with registering officers.
- Further, Inspector-cum-facilitators may inquire into accidents, and conduct inspections of establishments.
- Both these authorities are appointed by the central or state government.
- Additionally, the government may require certain establishments to set up safety committees comprising representatives of employers and workers.
- **Advisory Bodies** - The central and state governments will set up Occupational Safety and Health Advisory Boards at the national and state level, respectively.
- These Boards will advise the central and state governments on the standards, rules, and regulations to be framed under the Code.
- **Duties of employers** - The Code specifies several duties of employers which include -
 - i. providing a workplace that is free from hazards that may cause injury or diseases
 - ii. providing free annual health examinations to employees, as prescribed
- In case of an accident at the workplace that leads to death or serious bodily injury of an employee, the employer must inform the relevant authorities.
- **Rights and duties of employees** - Duties of employees under the Code include -
 - i. taking care of their own health and safety
 - ii. complying with the specified safety and health standards
 - iii. reporting unsafe situations to the inspector
- Every employee will have the right to obtain from the employer information related to safety and health standards.
- **Working Hours** - Work hours for different classes of establishment and employees will be provided as per the rules prescribed by the central or state government.
- For overtime work, the worker must be paid twice the rate of daily wages.
- Female workers, with their consent, may work past 7pm and before 6am, if approved by the central or state government.
- **Leave** - No employee may work for more than 6 days a week.
- However, exceptions may be provided for motor transport workers.



- Workers must receive paid annual leave for at least one in 20 days of the period spent on duty.
- For sales promotion employees, medical leave must be provided for at least one-eighteenth of the period of service.
- During medical leave, the worker must be paid half his daily wages.
- **Working conditions and welfare facilities** - The employer is required to provide a hygienic work environment.
- These include ventilation, comfortable temperature and humidity, sufficient space, clean drinking water, and latrine and urinal accommodations.
- Other welfare facilities may be provided as per standards prescribed by the central government.
- These facilities may include separate bathing places and locker rooms for male, female and transgender employees, canteens, first aid boxes, and creches.
- **Offences and penalties** - An offence that leads to the death of an employee will be punishable with imprisonment of up to 2 years, or a fine up to Rs. 5 lakh, or both.
- Further, courts may direct that at least 50% of such fine be given as compensation to the heirs of the victim.
- For any other violation where the penalty is not specified, the employer will be penalised with a fine between 2 and 3 lakh rupees.
- If an employee violates provisions of the Code, s/he will be subject to a fine of up to Rs 10,000.

2.7 The Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2019

Why in News?

The Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2019 was introduced in the Lok Sabha earlier this month by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

How does it regulate surrogacy?

- It prohibits commercial surrogacy, but allows altruistic surrogacy.
- **Altruistic surrogacy** - No monetary compensation to the surrogate mother other than the medical expenses and insurance coverage during the pregnancy.
- **Commercial surrogacy** - Monetary benefit or reward exceeding the basic medical expenses and insurance coverage will be given to the surrogate mother.
- Surrogacy clinics must apply for registration within a period of 60 days from the date of appointment of the appropriate authority.

When is surrogacy permitted?

- When the intending couples suffer from proven infertility.
- When Altruistic and not commercial.
- When Children are not produced for sale, prostitution or other forms of exploitation.
- For any condition or disease specified through regulations.

What are the eligibility criteria for intending couple?

- They should have 'certificate of essentiality' and a 'certificate of eligibility' issued by the appropriate authority.
- **Certificate of essentiality** –
 1. A certificate of proven infertility of one or both of the couple from a District Medical Board;
 2. An order of parentage and custody of the surrogate child passed by a Magistrate's court;

3. Insurance coverage for a period of 16 months covering postpartum delivery complications for the surrogate.

- **Certificate of eligibility –**

1. They must be Indian citizens and married for at least 5 years;
2. Wife - 23 to 50 years old and Husband - 26 to 55 years old;
3. They do not have any surviving child (biological, adopted or surrogate).

What are the eligibility criteria for surrogate mother?

- She should get a **certificate of eligibility** from the appropriate authority, the surrogate mother has to be:
 1. A 25 to 35 years old married woman with a child of her own, who is a close relative of the intending couple.
 2. Can surrogate only once in her lifetime.
 3. Should possess a certificate of medical and psychological fitness for surrogacy.
 4. She cannot provide her own gametes for surrogacy.

What are National and State Surrogacy Boards?

- **Central governments** shall constitute the National Surrogacy Board (NSB) and by **state governments** the State Surrogacy Boards (SSB).
- **Functions** of the NSB include, advising the Centre on policy matters, laying down the code of conduct of surrogacy clinics and supervising the SSBs.

What are the other procedures?

- A child born out of a surrogacy procedure will be deemed to be the **biological child of the intending couple**.
- An abortion requires the written consent of the surrogate mother and the authorisation of the appropriate authority, compliant with the **Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971**.
- The surrogate mother will have an option to withdraw from surrogacy before the embryo is implanted in her womb.

What are the offences and penalties?

- The offences under the Bill include:
 1. Undertaking or advertising commercial surrogacy;
 2. Exploiting the surrogate mother;
 3. Abandoning, exploiting or disowning a surrogate child;
 4. Selling or importing human embryo or gametes for surrogacy.
- The penalty for such offences is imprisonment up to 10 years and a fine up to 10 lakh rupees.

2.8 National Medical Commission (NMC) Bill

Why in news?

The National Medical Commission (NMC) Bill was recently introduced in the Lok Sabha.



What is the Bill about?

- Once the NMC Bill is enacted, the Indian Medical Council Act, 1956, will stand repealed.
- The existing Act provides for the Medical Council of India (MCI), which is the medical education regulator in India.
- An earlier version of this Bill was introduced in the last Lok Sabha. Click [here](#) to know more.
- It had passed the scrutiny of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare.
- However, that Bill lapsed at the end of the term of the last Lok Sabha.
- The present Bill has made some changes to the earlier version.

What are the shortfalls with MCI?

- The MCI is primarily intended to producing competent doctors, ensure adherence to medical education quality standards, etc.
- The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare examined the functioning of the MCI in its 92nd report (in 2016).
- It noted that the MCI has repeatedly been found short of fulfilling its mandated responsibilities.
- Resultantly, the quality of medical education in India is at its lowest ebb.
- The current medical education model is not producing the right type of health professionals that meet the basic health needs.
- This is because medical education and curricula are not integrated with the needs of the country's health system.
- Those coming out of medical colleges are ill-prepared to serve in poor resource settings like Primary Health Centre and even at the district level.
- Medical graduates lack competence in performing basic health care tasks like conducting normal deliveries.
- Consequently, instances of unethical practice continue to grow and the respect for the profession has diminished.
- Besides these, inefficient individuals have been able to make it to the MCI.
- But, the Ministry is not empowered to remove or sanction a Member of the Council even if s/he has been proved corrupt.

What are the key provisions of the Bill?

- **NMC** - The Bill provides for the constitution of a 25-member NMC to replace the MCI.
- The members will be selected by a search committee headed by the Cabinet Secretary.
- **Advisory Council** - A medical advisory council will advise and make recommendations to the NMC.
- It will include -
 1. one member representing each state and Union Territory (vice-chancellors in both cases)
 2. chairman of the University Grants Commission
 3. director of the National Accreditation and Assessment Council
- **Autonomous boards** - According to the proposed legislation, NMC will have four autonomous boards to regulate the sector.
- These are:
 1. Undergraduate Medical Education Board
 2. Postgraduate Medical Education Board
 3. Medical Assessment and Rating Board
 4. Ethical and Medical Registration Board



- The structure is in accordance with the recommendations of the Group of Experts headed by Ranjit Roy Chaudhury.
- It was set up by the Union Health Ministry to study the norms for the establishment of medical colleges.
- **Test** - The Bill provides for just one medical entrance test across the country, the National Exit Test (NEXT).
- The NEXT would serve as -
 1. the final MBBS exam, which will work as a licentiate examination
 2. the screening test for foreign medical graduates
 3. the screening test for admission to PG medical courses
- [NEXT is different from the NEET which is to be taken before joining UG course.]
- **Fees** - The Bill proposes to regulate the fees and other charges of 50% of the total seats in private medical colleges and deemed universities.
- **Regulation** - The Bill marks a radical change in regulatory philosophy.
- Under the NMC regime, medical colleges will need permission only once - for establishment and recognition.
- There will be no need for annual renewal.
- Also, colleges would be free to increase the number of seats on their own, subject to the present cap of 250.
- They would also be able to start postgraduate courses on their own.
- Fines for violations, however, are steep at 1.5 times to 10 times the total annual fee charged.

What are the key changes in the 2019 Bill?

- There are two key changes, following the recommendations of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare.
- One, the Bill has dropped a separate exit examination.
- Two, it has dropped the provision on a bridge course.
- [It allowed for AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy) practitioners to prescribe allopathy medicines after a bridge course.]
- Besides, the Bill has also removed the exemption hitherto given to Central institutions, the AIIMS and JIPMER, from NEET for admission to MBBS and allied courses.
- Notably, there was resentment and a charge of elitism at the exclusion of some institutions from an exam that aimed at standardizing testing.

3. SOCIAL ISSUES

3.1 Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2015

What is the issue?

- In 2016, a 17-year-old murdered his 3-year-old neighbour in Mumbai.
- The Mumbai city Juvenile Justice Board and a children's court directed that he be tried as an adult under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2015.
- But the Bombay High Court set aside these orders last week and directed that the accused be tried as a minor.

What is the JJ act?

- The Juvenile Justice Act 2000 (JJ act), amended in 2015 with a provision allowing for Children in Conflict with Law (CCL) to be tried as adults under certain circumstances.



- It defines a child as someone who is under age 18.
- For a CCL, age on the date of the offence is the basis for determining whether he or she was a child or an adult.
- The amended Act distinguishes children in the age group 16-18 as a category which can be tried as adults if they are alleged to have committed a heinous offence.
- Heinous offence (Here) – One that attracts a minimum punishment of 7 years.
- The Act does not make it mandatory for all children in this age group to be tried as an adult.

Why was the amendment made?

- The amendment was proposed by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2014.
- This was proposed in the backdrop of the 2012 Delhi gang-rape of a woman inside a bus, in which one of the offenders was 17-year-old.
- The Ministry also cited an increase in cases of offenders in that age group.
- But the child rights activists objected to the amendment.
- J S Verma Committee constituted to recommend amendments also stated that it was not inclined to reduce the age of a juvenile from 18 to 16.

What the Bombay High Court do?

- In the case, the accused was a juvenile at the time of offence be tried as a minor.
- The Bombay High Court's observation - Trial as an adult is not a default choice; a conscious, calibrated one. And for that, all the statutory criteria must be fulfilled.

What are the criteria under JJ Act?

- As per Section 15 of the JJ Act, there are three criteria that the Juvenile Justice Board in the concerned district should consider while conducting a preliminary assessment to determine whether the child should be tried as an adult or under the juvenile justice system.
- The 3 criteria are,
 - a. Whether the child has the mental and physical capacity to commit such an offence;
 - b. Whether the child has the ability to understand its consequences;
 - c. Whether the child knows the circumstances in which the offence was committed.
- If the Board finds that the child can be tried as an adult, the case is transferred to a designated children's court, which again decides whether the Board's decision is correct.

How do these criteria relate to this case?

- Both the Juvenile Justice Board and the children's court had relied on,
 - a. Probation officer's social investigation report and
 - b. A Government hospital's mental health report.
- **Probation officer's report** stated that,
 - c. The child or his family did not have a criminal record, and
 - d. Called the juvenile **highly manipulative**
 - e. The child had **confessed** that the victim was killed **accidentally**.
 - f. The juvenile was counselled on focusing on his studies, and that he had taken and passed his exams while lodged in the observation home.
- **Mental health report** said the juvenile had no psychiatric complaints at present, was normal, and suffers from no mental incapacity to commit the offence.

What was the court's response?

- The High Court said that neither report brought out any exceptional circumstances to compel the juvenile to face trial as an adult.

- It also said that it had undertaken no independent assessment.
- It said, the statute permits a child of 16 years and above to stand trial as an adult in case of heinous offence, but doesn't mean that all those children should be subjected to adult punishment.
- One of the court's key observations was that the trial in the regular court is **offence-oriented** (prison is the default opinion); in the juvenile court, it is **offender-oriented** (societal safety and the child's future are balanced, prison is the last resort).

3.2 MHA Order on Detention Centres

Why in news?

The Centre has asked all states and UTs to set up at least one detention centre each with modern amenities for illegal migrants/foreigners.

What is the order?

- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) came up with the '2019 Model Detention Manual'.
- It has called for setting up of "one detention camp in the city or district where major immigration check post is located".
- It also said that all members of a family should be housed in the same detention centre.
- The states do not need specific approvals from the Union home ministry for setting up a detention or holding centre.
- Every detention centre shall have a cell which will provide help to the detainee foreigners.
- These may include contacting the concerned mission/embassy/consulate or their family through proper procedure.
- A "skill centre" and "creche facilities for children" may be provided within the detention camp.
- The home ministry has directed that detention centres or camps be set up outside jail premises.
- This comes after the observation that detention centres in most states were being run from prison.
- Nonetheless, the ministry has called for proper security measures so that illegal immigrants do not escape from the detention centres.
- A proper boundary wall with dense barbed wire fencing above it should be erected.
- The boundary wall should be minimum 10 feet high with main gate, wicket gate and strict access control measures.
- The naming of these centres can be decided by the state government concerned.

What are the objectives?

- The development comes amid the exercise to finalize the [National Register of Citizens \(NRC\) in Assam](#).
- The move comes as an effort to address the concerns over the lack of basic amenities at existing centres.
- The detention centres are meant to house the illegal migrants/foreigners for longer periods.
- It restricts the movement of foreigners staying back illegally.
- It thereby ensures that they are physically available at all times for expeditious repatriation or deportation when legally ordered.
- [The powers to deport illegally staying foreign nationals have been entrusted under Article 258 (1) of the Constitution to state governments.]

What are the concerns?

- The move raises some discomfiting questions about the government's broader social agenda centred on citizenship.

- The move has some dangers that may come with any selective detention policy.
- Millions of Indians born before the mid-eighties do not have birth certificates.
- They may have other documents such as a passport or an Aadhaar card or voter ID.
- But none of these can be considered incontrovertible proof of citizenship.
- This leaves considerable discretion in the hands of the state police to harass people, and the detention centres would amplify that menace.
- The already rampant human rights violations at such centres in Assam remain a cause for concern.
- It places in the hands of the state security apparatus unwarranted powers over the citizenry.
- It is also uncertain if the recommendations for humane conditions specified in the order would be followed in letter or spirit.

3.3 Odisha's Women Empowerment Model

What is the issue?

- The Odisha government is among the first to reserve 50% of seats in Panchayati Raj institutions for women.
- Other States could take a cue from Odisha, which has empowered women politically and financially.

How is women's political participation in India?

- Adequate representation of women in politics eventually result in an increase in the level of attention given to gender-specific policy and planning.
- However, the number of women taking leadership roles in India is rather small compared to the global average.
- The representation of women MPs in the 17th Lok Sabha has seen an improvement from 11% in 2014 to 14% in 2019.
- However, it is still lower than the world average of 24.3%.
- In 2019, 715 women candidates contested the Lok Sabha election, while the number of men who contested stood at 7,334.

What are Odisha's measures in this regard?

- Odisha may be seen as one of the underdeveloped States in the country and backward in terms of some human development indicators.
- However, Odisha government's model for women's empowerment has much to teach for other states.
- The Biju Janata Dal (BJD)-led Odisha government was among the first to reserve 50% of seats in Panchayati Raj institutions for women.
- Further, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik nominated women for one-third of the seats in Lok Sabha election.
- Thus, 7 candidates out of 21 fielded by the party for the 2019 election were women.
- The success rate among the women candidates was higher than for men, as 5 out of the 7 won the elections.
- Other sops include issuing of smartphones, award of work contracts, and higher entitlements in the State's health insurance scheme, arguably superior to the Ayushman Bharat.
- The State government has also announced an accident insurance scheme for all members of self-help groups.

How effective are women self-help groups there?

- Besides empowering women politically, Odisha government has been organising women into self-help groups in the last two decades for their economic empowerment.



- As of now, Odisha has 6 lakh self-help groups with 7 million women under its flagship 'Mission Shakti' programme.
- The programme aims at empowering women by helping them start income-generating activities.
- The self-help groups are linked to the Odisha Livelihoods Mission and Odisha Rural Development and Marketing Society.
- Members of the self-help groups are encouraged to sell products at fairs and exhibitions organised by the State round the year.
- This gives them an opportunity to travel across different parts of the State and gain greater exposure.
- The State government had also announced an interest-free loan of Rs. 3 lakh in January 2019 to each of the self-help groups.
- This amount was increased to Rs. 5 lakh just before the general election.
- The Women and Child Development Department has been rechristened as the 'Women and Child Development and Mission Shakti Department'.
- Mr. Patnaik also nominated Ms. Pramila Bisoi, a self-help group leader, as a candidate for a Lok Sabha constituency.
- This was a move to bring self-help group members to the forefront of public life.

4. GOVERNANCE

4.1 Strengthening the Civil Societies

What is the issue?

Citizen-led upsurges bring about change, but the gains are lost in sheer organizational dynamics.

What is the efficacy of civil society movements?

- Civil society movements apply considerable pressure on governments to change laws and re-allocate public resources.
- Loose citizens' movements are often more effective as advocates for change.
- History abounds with examples, The mass civil disobedience movement with which Mahatma Gandhi wore down the British Empire in India, and whose methods for changing public attitudes and government policies have been adopted by civil rights movements in the US and elsewhere.
- Recent instances are sighted with the Arab Spring citizens' movements in 2011 which upturned dictatorships.
- The nation-wide anti-corruption movement in India in 2013 which led to the downfall of the Congress-party led government.
- Civil society movements form to advocate for causes and bring about change in established systems.

What are the failings of the civil societies?

- Actions by groups of motivated strikers to disrupt governments, which inconvenience the masses, are not effective in the long run because they diminish public support for the organization and may even harm the cause.
- Such actions have lost public support for labour unions and sadly have dampened societal support for the rights of working people.
- Whereas participative movements can be effective instruments for advocacy for change, they are generally unable to produce the coherence required for implementation, this was the fate of the Arab Spring movements.

- Recognizing the need for stronger organization, the anti-corruption movement in India spawned a political party, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) with a requisite hierarchy.

What is the role of civil societies in governance?

- Governments are expected to perform three roles: provide law, order and stability; deliver public services and relief; and catalyze development of the society and the economy.
- Juxtaposed with this, civil society organizations perform three roles too.
- And just as political parties and governments need organizational structures to perform effectively, civil society organizations need appropriate organizational strategies too.
- Not-for-profit civil society organizations can provide public services, such as education and healthcare, they may also deliver charitable relief to people in distress.
- In delivering these services they can be effective partners of governments.

How structural changes can strengthen the civil societies?

- The governance of catalytic civil society organizations requires power-shifts and mind-shifts that leaders of historically control-oriented and charity-oriented organizations are finding hard; but they must make these shifts if they wish to serve society well.
- Advocacy strategies of the civilian led movements can be confrontational or persuasive, Confrontational strategies can be sharply disruptive and peacefully persuasive.
- An organization must choose its strategy, and it must develop suitable competencies for execution of its strategy.
- Business management can provide good role models here, and it is not surprising that as civil society organizations 'scale up' to deliver they adopt business-like practices of management and governance.
- Gandhi's insight was that civil disobedience is effective only when it is mass, and the participants are seen to suffer personally, not merely cause pain to others.
- The role, catalyzing development of societies with changes in their social and economic structures, requires very different capabilities as Gandhiji had pointed out.
- In contrast, the approach taken by Japanese unions, where workers worked longer and harder to shame the management, produced more lasting respect for workers' rights.
- Similarly, Gandhiji persuaded Indians to make personal sacrifices to show their support, and not merely demand change from others.
- In the same vein, movements for the care of the environment are more effective when people are persuaded to change their own behaviors and consumption habits, not just demand actions by governments.
- Thus International civil society organizations must introspect on their purpose, the roles they should perform, and the competencies they require.

5. HEALTH

5.1 India's Malnutrition Crisis

Why in news?

A new report, 'Food and Nutrition Security Analysis, India, 2019', authored by the Government of India and the UNWFP has been released.

What is the status of nutrition coverage in India?

- India has long been home to the largest number of malnourished children in the world.

- The highest levels of stunted and underweight children are found in Jharkand, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra.
- Some progress has been made in reducing the extent of malnutrition.
- The proportion of children with chronic malnutrition decreased from 48% percent in 2005-06 to 38.4% in 2015-16.
- The percentage of underweight children decreased from 42.5% to 35.7% over the same period.
- Anaemia in young children decreased from 69.5% to 58.5% during this period.
- In India over 40% of children from Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes are stunted.
- Close to 40% of children from the Other Backward Classes are stunted.
- Despite rapid economic growth, declining levels of poverty, enough food to export, and a multiplicity of government programmes, malnutrition amongst the poorest remains high in India.

What are the concerns with malnutrition?

- Malnutrition is a reflection of age-old patterns of social and economic exclusion.
- Malnutrition status of a nation punctures the image of a nation marching towards prosperity.
- It raises moral and ethical questions about the nature of a state and society.
- India after 70 years of independence, still condemns hundreds of millions of its poorest and vulnerable citizens to lives of hunger and desperation.

What is the highlights of the report?

- United Nations World Food Programme (UNWFP) , paints a picture of hunger and malnutrition amongst children in large pockets of India.
- The report shows the poorest sections of society caught in a trap of poverty and malnutrition, which is being passed on from generation to generation.
- Mothers who are hungry and malnourished produce children who are stunted, underweight and unlikely to develop to achieve their full human potential.
- The effects of malnourishment in a small child are not merely physical.
- A developing brain that is deprived of nutrients does not reach its full mental potential.
- Undernutrition can affect cognitive development by causing direct structural damage to the brain and by impairing infant motor development.
- This in turn affects the child's ability to learn at school, leading to a lifetime of poverty and lack of opportunity.
- These disadvantaged children are likely to do poorly in school and subsequently have low incomes, high fertility, and provide poor care for their children, thus contributing to the intergenerational transmission of poverty.
- The findings in the report are not new, many studies over the last five years have exposed the failure of the Indian state to ensure that its most vulnerable citizens are provided adequate nutrition in their early years.

What are the issues with measures taken in this regard?

- The government's National Nutrition Mission (renamed as Poshan Abhiyaan) aims to reduce stunting (a measure of malnutrition that is defined as height that is significantly below the norm for age) by 2% a year, bringing down the proportion of stunted children in the population to 25% by 2022.
- But even this modest target will require doubling the current annual rate of reduction in stunting.
- The minutes of recent meetings of the Executive Committee of Poshan Abhiyaan do not inspire much confidence about whether this can be achieved.



- A year after it was launched, State and Union Territory governments have only used 16% of the funds allocated to them.
- Fortified rice and milk were to be introduced in one district per State by March this year, but officials in charge of public distribution had not yet got their act together.
- The matter is under active consideration of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution”.
- Anganwadis are key to the distribution of services to mothers and children.
- But many States, including Bihar and Odisha, which have large vulnerable populations, are struggling to set up functioning anganwadis, and recruit staff.

5.2 Global Stats on Measles Elimination

Why in the news?

- World Health Organization has declared that Sri Lanka has eliminated Measles.

What is Measles?

- Measles is a serious and highly contagious disease.
- It can cause debilitating or fatal complications, including encephalitis, severe diarrhoea and dehydration, pneumonia, ear infections and permanent vision loss.
- The disease is preventable through two doses of a safe and effective vaccine.
- In 2017, over 109,000 deaths occurred from measles all around the world.
- Rubella, more commonly known as German measles, can have severe consequences during pregnancy.
- An infection just before conception and in early pregnancy may result in miscarriage, foetal death or congenital defects known as congenital rubella syndrome (CRS).
- A woman infected with the rubella virus early in pregnancy has a 90% chance of passing the virus to the foetus.

What is the status of global measles vaccination?

- A global report by WHO says since 2000, over 21 million lives have been saved through measles immunisation.
- For several years, the global coverage with the first dose of measles vaccine has stalled at 85%.
- This is far short of the 95% needed to prevent outbreaks, and leaves many people, in many communities, susceptible to the disease.
- Second dose coverage stands at 67%.
- Globally, there are concerns about vaccination gaps that are allowing the disease to resurface in areas where it is not very common.

What is the case with Sri Lanka?

- Sri Lanka is the fifth country in WHO's Southeast Asia region to eliminate measles.
- The other four countries are Bhutan, Maldives, DPR Korea and Timor-Leste.
- Sri Lanka's success follows its persistent efforts to ensure maximum coverage with two doses of measles and rubella vaccines being provided in the childhood immunisation programme.
- The vaccination coverage in the country has been consistently high – over 95% with both the first and second doses provided to children under the routine immunisation programme.
- Additionally, mass vaccination campaigns with a measles-rubella vaccine have been held periodically to plug immunisation gaps, the last one in 2014.

- The country has a strong surveillance system and all vaccine-preventable diseases are an integral part of the communicable disease surveillance system.

What is the performance of India in this regard?

- India currently gives a measles rubella vaccine in its universal immunisation programme to tackle both measles and rubella.
- The latest Global Measles and Rubella Update, says India reported 47,056 measles cases and 1,263 rubella cases during April 2018- April 2019.
- India, as part of the global initiative, has targeted elimination of measles and control of rubella by 2020.
- Rubella control is achieved when a country reduces the number of rubella cases by 95% as compared to the number of cases in 2008.
- India has initiated the world's largest Measles-Rubella (MR) Campaign targeting vaccination of 410 million children and adolescents aged between 9 months and 15 years.
- The MR campaign began in February 2017, and as of November 2018, 135 million children have been vaccinated in 28 states/UTs.
- Under the programme, two doses of measles and rubella vaccines are to be given at ages 9-12 months and 16-24 months.

5.3 Self-Care Health Interventions - WHO Guidelines

Why in news?

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has recently launched its first guidelines on self-care interventions for health.

What is self-care?

- Self-care would mean the ability of individuals, families and communities to access health care with or without the support of a health-care provider.
- This may include promoting health, preventing disease, maintaining health, and coping with illness and disability.
- The practice of self-care has been there for long.
- But now, increasingly, there are new diagnostics, devices and drugs that are transforming the way common people access care.
- Self-care interventions are thus gaining more importance now than before.

What are the recent WHO guidelines on?

- In its first volume, the WHO guidelines focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- Some of the interventions include -
 - i. self-sampling for human papillomavirus (HPV) and sexually transmitted infections
 - ii. self-injectable contraceptives
 - iii. home-based ovulation predictor kits
 - iv. human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) self-testing
 - v. self-management of medical abortion
- Self-care neither replaces high-quality health services nor are they a shortcut to achieving universal health coverage.
- Instead, the guidelines look at the scientific evidence for health benefits of certain interventions that can be done outside the conventional sector.

What is the need for self-care?



- Millions of people, including in India, face the twin problems of acute shortage of healthcare workers and lack of access to essential health services.
- WHO reports that over 400 million across the world already lack access to essential health services.
- Also, around 1 in 5 of the world's population could be living in settings that are experiencing humanitarian crises.
- Reportedly, there will be a shortage of about 13 million health-care workers by 2035.
- So, self-care offers the possibility to meet the health care needs with or without reliance on health-care workers.

What is the WHO's observation?

- Self-help would mean different things for people living in very diverse conditions.
- For people of the upper strata who have easy access to healthcare facilities, self-help would mean convenience, privacy and ease.
- In contrast, for those living in conditions of vulnerability and lack access to health care, self-help becomes the primary, timely and reliable form of care.
- These include people who are negatively affected by gender, political, cultural and power dynamics and those who are forcibly displaced.
- Given this, the WHO recognises self-care interventions as a means to expand access to health services.
- So soon, the WHO would expand the self-help guidelines to include other self-care interventions.
- These could include prevention and treatment of non-communicable diseases.
- WHO is also establishing a community of practice for self-care, and will be promoting research and dialogue in this area.

Where does India stand in this regard?

- India has some distance to go before making self-care interventions for sexual and reproductive health freely available to women.
- Home-based pregnancy testing is the most commonly used self-help diagnostics in this area in India.
- Interventions also include self-managed abortions using approved drugs that can be had without the supervision of a healthcare provider.
- E.g. morning-after pills taken soon after unprotected sex, mifepristone and misoprostol taken a few weeks into pregnancy
- While the morning-after pills are available over the counter, the other two are scheduled drugs that need prescription from a medical practitioner, thus defeating the very purpose of the drugs.
- The next commonly consumed drug to prevent illness and disease is the pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for HIV prevention.
- India is yet to come up with guidelines for PrEP use and to include it in the national HIV prevention programme.
- The WHO has approved the HIV self-test to improve access to HIV diagnosis in 2016.
- But despite this, the Pune-based National AIDS Research Institute in India is still in the process of validating it for HIV screening.
- One of the reasons why people shy away from getting tested for HIV is the stigma and discrimination associated with it.
- In this context, the home-based testing provides the much-needed privacy.
- India has in principle agreed that rapid HIV testing helps to get more people diagnosed and opt for treatment, thus reducing transmission rates.

6. INDIA & ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

6.1 High Court Order on Sri Lankan Refugees

What is the issue?

- A recent order of the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court directed 65 refugees from Sri Lanka to apply for Indian citizenship.
- This has again brought into focus the need for the two countries to resolve the long-pending refugee problem.

What is the current refugee presence?

- The Sri Lankan refugee problem concerns the future of about 95,000 refugees in Tamil Nadu who fled Sri Lanka between 1983 and 2012, during the civil war.
- Of them, around 60,000 are housed in 107 State government-run camps with substantial financial assistance from the Centre.
- The rest are called non-camp refugees who live on their own, but are required to report to the local officials at periodical intervals.
- Notably, Tamil Nadu provides accommodation to the largest number of refugees among States.

What is the recent case about?

- The case before the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court concerned 65 “stateless persons.”
- They arrived in Tamil Nadu in 1983-85 period following the anti-Tamil *pogrom* (organized massacre of a particular ethnic group) of July 1983 in Sri Lanka.
- They were mostly put up at a refugee camp in Tiruchi.
- Their ancestors were indentured labourers who were taken to Sri Lanka during the British Raj to work in tea plantations.
- Their main demand now is that they should be regarded on a par with repatriates covered under the *bilateral agreements of 1964 and 1974*.
- They did not want to be mixed up with the Tamil refugees from the Northern and Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka.

What is the Centre’s stance?

- The Union and State governments labeled these refugees as “illegal migrants” as they had entered India without valid documents.
- The Centre maintains that the petitioners could not demand citizenship as a right even if they fulfilled the eligibility criteria.
- The authorities, however, assured the refugees in the early 1990s that they would not be forcibly deported.

What is the recent order?

- The Madurai bench of the Madras High Court agreed that granting citizenship was within the “exclusive executive domain” of the Centre.
- However, it asked the petitioners to apply for Indian citizenship.
- This is considered a moral victory for the petitioners as the judiciary has agreed, in principle, with their contention.

What is the significance?

- 10 years have lapsed since the end of the civil war in Sri Lanka.
- But, the absence of a policy along with other factors has resulted in the slow pace of voluntary repatriation of refugees from Sri Lanka.
- Now, the court ruling has created an opportunity for the Centre to resolve the Sri Lankan refugee problem once and for all.
- The problem is not just about granting or refusing citizenship but also about the absence of a comprehensive migration or refugee policy in India.

- Notably, there are over 2.25 lakh refugees in India, including around 1.08 lakh Tibetans and 18,000 Rohingya.
- **Citizenship Bill** - The case of the refugees from Sri Lanka is unique vis-a-vis other South Asian countries.
- These refugees are excluded from the ambit of a Bill recently tabled in Parliament to [amend the Citizenship Act of 1955](#).
- [Only non-Muslims from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan were covered in the Bill.
- The Citizenship Amendment Bill lapsed, but the government is firm that it will enact it.]

What are the difficulties faced by refugees?

- **Studies and employment** - Estimatedly, 60% of the people in the Sri Lankan refugee camp, including 90% of the minors, were born in Tamil Nadu.
- There are a number of opportunities here for young refugees to pursue higher studies, barring medicine.
- However, qualified persons have not been able to get regular employment, as major companies are reluctant to hire refugees.
- To seek employment in other countries, these refugees require Sri Lankan passports, which they can secure only in that country.
- This process being difficult, some refugees have attempted to leave Tamil Nadu illegally. Such attempts have invariably failed.
- **Identity** – The crisis of identity is another intimidating problem faced by any refugee.
- In this case, questions such as ‘Whether they belong to India or Sri Lanka?’, ‘If the country where they were born, raised, educated and married is not theirs, then where is home?’ remain.

Bilateral agreements of 1964 and 1974 - India and Sri Lanka

- There were a series of bilateral agreements between India and Sri Lanka in 1964 and 1974.
- Under this, Sri Lanka agreed to provide citizenship to a total of 3,75,000 Indian Tamils.
- It was also agreed that India would provide citizenship and 600,000 would be repatriated to India.
- A total of 506,000 people applied for Indian citizenship and 470,000 applied for Sri Lankan citizenship under these agreements.
- The process of granting Indian citizenship was very slow, and in 1982, about 86,000 applications for citizenship to the Indian High Commission were pending.
- A further 90,000 people who had been issued with Indian passports still remained in Sri Lanka.

6.2 ICJ Verdict on Kulbushan Jadhav

Why in news?

- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has directed Pakistan to review Kulbushan Jadhav's conviction and, until then, put his death sentence on hold.
- The court has also asked Islamabad to allow New Delhi consular access at the earliest.

Who is Kulbushan Jadhav?

- Kulbushan Jadhav, 49, was arrested in Pakistan allegedly in March 2016.
- He was sentenced to death on charges of espionage and terrorism in April 2017.
- Pakistan alleges that Jadhav is a serving Indian naval officer, who was tasked by the Indian intelligence agencies to destabilize Pakistan.
- India, however, claims that Jadhav is a former Indian naval officer.
- He was running a business in Iran from where he was kidnapped and shown to have been arrested in Baluchistan.
- India also maintains that he had no links with the government.

What was the contention?

- Despite repeated attempts, Pakistan had denied India consular access to Jadhav under Article 36 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations.



- [The convention deals with the arrest, detention and trial of a foreign citizen. Click [here](#) to know more.]
- India tried initiating legal proceedings against Pakistan before the ICJ for the violation of the convention on providing for consular access.
- However, Pakistan had argued that the International Court of Justice had no jurisdiction in this case.
- Later, the ICJ rejected Pakistan's argument in this regard.
- The court said it could hear the case because it involved an alleged violation of one of the clauses of the Vienna Convention.
- Notably, both Pakistan and India has ascribed to the convention and its interpretation falls under the ICJ's purview.
- The ICJ also directed that meanwhile, Pakistan should take all measures to ensure that Mr Jadhav is not executed till the final decision of the court.
- The court also said Pakistan should inform it of all measures taken in implementation of the order.
- However, this was a preliminary ruling and all issues were open for adjudication at the final stage. Click [here](#) to know more

International Court of Justice

- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) 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 is the current ICJ verdict?

- Pakistan must undertake an “effective review and reconsideration of the conviction and sentence” of Kulbhushan Jadhav.
- Pakistan is under an obligation to inform Jadhav of his rights.
- It should also provide Indian consular officers access to him in accordance with Article 36 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations.
- [ICJ noted that Pakistan deprived India of the right to communicate with and have access to Kulbhushan Jadhav, to visit him in detention and to arrange for his legal representation.]
- However, ICJ rejected India’s call on annulment of military court decision convicting Kulbhushan Jadhav, his release and safe passage to India.
- Pakistan had argued that India had failed to prove Jadhav’s nationality.
- However, ICJ said that it was satisfied that the evidence was sufficient to be certain of Jadhav’s Indian nationality.
- ICJ noted that there was a three-week delay in informing India about Jadhav’s arrest on March 3, 2016.
- This has led to a breach of Pakistan’s obligations under the convention.

6.3 Trump on Kashmir Issue

What is the issue?

- US President Donald Trump has said that Indian PM Modi had asked him to mediate on Kashmir, and that he “would love to help”.
- Trump’s claim has since been refuted by the Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson and the External Affairs Minister.

What is Trump's rationale?

- There could be several reasons for Trump trying to wade into Kashmir.



- Earlier in 2019, he claimed to have defused the India-Pakistan standoff that arose from the [Pulwama attack](#).
- The US is also said to have played a part in the [release of an Indian Air Force pilot](#) who was captured across the LoC.
- The US also played a role in forcing China to agree to the designation of Jaish chief [Masood Azhar](#) as a “global terrorist”.
- Most recently, Trump took credit for the arrest of Lakshar terrorist Hafiz Saeed.
- Besides, it was the US again that defused tensions, and persuaded India away from a war with Pakistan after the 2001 Jaish-e-Mohammad attack on Parliament.
- Perhaps, the US President thinks that if his Administration succeeded in bringing Taliban for negotiating with Afghanistan, it can do the same with India and Pakistan too.

Why is India reluctant to mediation?

- India has always shown mistrust to outsiders meddling in India's internal affairs.
- It has strongly felt the need to protect its secular nationhood project.
- Jawaharlal Nehru, who took Pakistan's invasion in 1947 to the United Nations, was quick to realise his mistake.
- The UN missions flowing from the resolutions were not in line with India's preferences.
- E.g. the Dixon Mission led to the Dixon Plan of 1950 calling for partition of some areas of J&K between India and Pakistan, plus a plebiscite in the Valley
- This strengthened India's determination to not go with international mediation on the Kashmir issue.

What is India's present stance?

- India has now reiterated this longstanding position that there is no room for mediation in Kashmir or on any other India-Pakistan issue.
- It has also emphasized that all outstanding matters between the two countries would be resolved through bilateral dialogue.
- However, this is possible only when Pakistan ends cross-border terrorism in India.
- Moreover, the 9/11 attack on the U.S. ushered in the UNSC-backed international legal regime against terrorism.
- After this, India has looked increasingly to the world for help in dealing with Pakistan.
- Nevertheless, this was only on one issue, which is putting an end to the terrorist groups that flourish on Pakistani territory.
- The objective is to put pressure on the Pakistan Army and political leadership to desist from permitting anti-India terrorist activity on its territory.

What is Pakistan's view?

- The framework for bilateral resolution of problems between India and Pakistan was written into the 1972 Simla Agreement.
- It was again reiterated 27 years later in the Lahore Declaration in 1999.
- Nonetheless, Pakistan has continued to believe in “internationalisation” of the Kashmir issue.
- It sees this as its best bet towards reversing J&K's accession to India.
- Pakistan has thus used every global forum to criticise India's “illegal occupation” of Kashmir.
- Now, Pakistan PM Imran Khan has welcomed Trump's offer of mediation, saying Kashmir will not be resolved bilaterally.

7. BILATERAL RELATIONS

7.1 India-Russia Defence Relations - US Concerns

What is the issue?

- India-Russia defence relation has been a cause for concern for the United States.
- In this context, here is how India's defence ties with Russia evolved and an assessment of its inevitability.

How did Russia evolve as India's defence partner?

- In early 1966, India's Atomic Energy Establishment started a feasibility programme on naval nuclear propulsion.
- Homi Bhabha initiated the programme.
- This was primarily on the expectation that the US Atomic Energy Commission (USAEC) would assist in India's quest to develop marine propulsion.
- [Marine propulsion would demonstrate India's impressive capabilities in the field of nuclear energy.]
- However, the U.S. was wary of sharing its naval reactor technology with other states. Thereupon, the programme languished for almost 15 years.
- India's nuclear scientists and the Indian Naval engineers struggled to design and develop a viable reactor system for naval propulsion.
- In addition, the sanctions regime imposed after the 1974 Peaceful Nuclear Explosion in India made the task more difficult.
- Having technological challenges with the indigenous efforts, Indian government turned to Russia for assistance.
- In the early 1980s, Russia agreed to help India's indigenous nuclear submarine programme.
- It also agreed to leasing India its first nuclear submarine.
- This led to the beginning of Indo-Russian cooperation in naval nuclear submarines.
- So clearly, the idea and inspiration for naval nuclear propulsion for the Indian Navy came from the technological progress made by the US.
- However, its implementation was done with the help of Russia.

What was the U.S.'s role in this regard?

- U.S. was not very happy with the collaboration between Russia and India on nuclear submarines.
- Indian Navy was prepared to take over its first nuclear submarine from the Soviet Union in 1987.
- But, the US put immense pressure upon Russia to defer the lease.
- So in November 1987, even when the process of transfer was almost complete, Soviet naval high command barred the Indian crew from boarding the submarine.
- It resulted in a major diplomatic standoff between New Delhi and Moscow.
- However, during the cold war, the US' disapproval of the Indo-Russian nuclear submarine cooperation was primarily based on nuclear non-proliferation and arms control policy.
- The necessity to maintain a strategic balance in South Asia was also a priority then.
- Eventually, after the end of the cold war, Indo-US relations entered into a period of strategic embrace.
- So, Washington largely ignored the technological partnership between New Delhi and Moscow thereafter.

What are the recent developments?

- In March 2019, India signed an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with Russia.
- It was agreed to lease another of its Akula-Class attack nuclear submarines (SSN).
- The nuclear submarine will join the Indian Navy in 2025.
- India had earlier leased an Akula-class SSBN from Moscow in 2012.



- Rechristened as Chakra in the Indian fleet, it will continue to serve the Indian Navy until the commissioning of the new Akula submarine (2025 likely).

What are U.S.'s present concerns?

- India's Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with Russia has invited serious concern from the U.S.
- Indo-US relations have strengthened significantly in the last quarter of a century.
- U.S. has also made significant presence in India's defence market, which was once an exclusive preserve of the Russian defence industry.
- The resultant market competition and the rising tensions between U.S. and Russia have made things hard for India.
- As U.S. attempts to punish Russia through sanctions, it has increasingly become intolerant of India's arms deals with Russia.

How does the future look?

- Continued Russian assistance is vital to India's indigenous nuclear submarine programme.
- Therefore, the US' disapproval will only marginally affect India's decision-making.
- The concerns are unlikely to give in to the US demands for revising India's defense relationship with Russia.
- India also has a more considerable geostrategic interest in this regard.
- If India gives in to U.S. demand, it would further push Russia to strengthen ties with China.
- Notably, an independent Russia is essential to keep Asia's geopolitics in balance.
- In all, Indo-Russian defence cooperation, especially in the naval nuclear domain, will continue to prosper irrespective of US concerns.

7.2 India's Role as UNSC Non-Permanent Member

What is the issue?

- India recently won the unanimous support of all countries in the 55-member Asia-Pacific Group at the UN in support of its bid for a [non-permanent seat](#) at the UNSC for a 2-year term in 2021-22.
- India must leverage this latest opportunity to project itself as a responsible nation.

How has India's presence in the UNSC been?

- India's representation in the UNSC has become rarer.
- India has already held a non-permanent seat on the UNSC for 7 terms.
- In total, India has been in the UNSC for 14 years.
- This represents roughly a fifth of the time the United Nations (UN) has existed.
- India is to re-enter the Council now, after a gap of 10 year (the previous time, in 2011-12, followed a gap of 20 years).
- This is significant given the geopolitical developments in the Asian region and the world.

How disturbed is the Asian region?

- India finds itself in a troubled region between West and East Asia.
- This region is highly disturbed with insurgencies, terrorism, human and narcotics trafficking, and great power rivalries.
- The Gulf is in turmoil.
- Though the [IS has been defeated](#), Iraq and Syria are not going to be the same as before.
- Surviving and dispersed IS foot soldiers are likely preparing new adventures, many in their countries of origin.



- The turbulence in West Asia is echoed in North and South Asia as well. E.g. -
 - i. the nuclear and missile tests by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea
 - ii. Afghanistan's slow but unmistakable separation from the support provided to groups such as the Haqqani network, the Taliban, and al-Qaeda
- Other problems in Asia include -
 - i. the strategic mistrust or misperception
 - ii. the unresolved borders and territorial disputes
 - iii. the absence of a pan-Asia security architecture
 - iv. the competition over energy and strategic minerals

How is the world order changing?

- The western world is now consumed by primitive, almost tribal instincts.
- It is disregarding the universal values it once espoused as western values.
- The western world is currently grappling with the rise of new nationalism.
- The kind and supportive international system that followed the Cold War has all but disappeared.
- At the beginning of this century, the words 'national interest' had acquired almost a negative connotation.
- They are now back in currency.
- Fear, populism, polarisation, and ultra-nationalism have become the basis of politics in many countries.

How has the UN role been?

- Despite the above, the world is in a better place today than when the UN was first established.
- The record on maintaining international peace and security, one of the prime functions of the UNSC, has been positive.
- However, the world has been distracted from its other shared goals, especially international social and economic cooperation.
- Although coordination between 193 sovereign member nations will be difficult, it is well worth trying.
- The permanent members (P-5) as also other UN members must consider this to reform the UN Security Council.

What should India's priorities be?

- India's growing importance in the global stage due to its consistent economic performance is largely unrecognised by the great powers and other countries.
- So, India should once again become a consensus-builder, instead of being detached as it has become to be.
- India's singular objective as a non-permanent member should be to help build a stable and secure external environment.
- In doing so, India will promote its own people's prosperity, regional and global security and growth, and a rule-based world order.
- It could emerge a partner of choice for developing and developed countries alike.
- There is a deficit of international leadership on global issues, especially on security, migrant movement, poverty, and climate change.
- Given this, India has an opportunity to promote well-balanced, common solutions.

8. INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

8.1 African Continental Free Trade Agreement

What is the news?

African Union (AU) members have signed the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) for goods and services at the 12th AU Summit.

What is the situation?

- Of the 54 countries that have signed AfCFTA, 27 have ratified it.
- Actual cross-border free trade could **start by July 2020**.
- The AfCFTA would be **world's largest FTA**.
- This would create an African Common Market of 1.2 billion people and a GDP of over \$3.4 billion - metrics are comparable to India's.

What are the hurdles?

- **AU's ineffectiveness** - in dealing with the continent's myriad problems such as decolonisation, underdevelopment, etc.,
- The AU's grand plans have been spectacular flops, so may be the AfCFTA.
- **Political, organisational and logistical challenges** to the AfCFTA - the national economies in Africa are weak with a low manufacturing base.
- They also lack competitiveness and mutual complementarity.
- **Countercyclical attitude of the AfCFTA** towards the ongoing global protectionist trends as seen in the U.S.-China trade conflict, Brexit, etc.
- **Reversal of globalisation** - Commodity prices are stagnant and globalisation is often being reversed.
- With Africa accounting for only 3% of global trade, there's a question whether the AfCFTA can defy the contrarian global tendencies.

What are the reasons to be optimistic?

- There are **strong global headwinds** like cooling Chinese ardour for Africa, greater collective self-reliance through African economic integration makes eminent sense.
- The AU Commission has prepared an **extensive road map** towards the AfCFTA with the preliminary work on steps such as tariff reduction, elimination of non-tariff barriers, etc.,
- The logistical and financial networking challenges across the continent can be overcome with **stronger political will**.
- **Informal trade** across national borders is already a fact of African life.
- So, by adopting the AfCFTA, African leaders are only following the economic logic.
- There is a **surge in consumer base**, it would make the proposed AfCFTA even more important.

What is the Indian angle?

- Africa is India's important economic partner with nearly a 10th of our global trade.
- India is Africa's third largest trading partner. India's **exports** to Africa have upwarped recently.
- India needs to anticipate the AfCFTA's likely impact on its interests and try to influence it to enhance India-African economic ties.
- African economies becoming more formalised and transparent would be in India's interest.

What India can do?

- India can help the AU Commission prepare the requisite architecture.
- It can also identify various African transnational corporations which are destined to play a greater role in a future continental common market and engage with them strategically.
- Therefore, the cross-linkages of a three million strong Indian diaspora spread across Africa can also be very valuable.

Quick Facts

African Union

- The African Union (AU) is a continental body consisting of the 55 member states that make up the countries of the African Continent.
- It was officially launched in 2002
- It is successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU, 1963-1999).
- **Vision** - An Integrated, Prosperous and Peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena.

8.2 War Crimes and ICC

Why in News?

The Congolese warlord Bosco Ntaganda was recently pronounced guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity (CAH) by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

What is the story behind?

- These convictions are related to the 2002-03 ethnic conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).
- After a 2006 indictment by the Hague court, it took seven more years for him to surrender and months more before the trial could start.
- The conviction follows the ICC's 2012 sentencing of Thomas Lubanga, the first to be pronounced guilty pertaining to atrocities in the Congo.

What are some other recent cases?

- In **2014**, the ICC charged the **Kenyan President** of crimes against humanity, relating to the death of hundreds in the 2007 post-election ethnic violence.
- This ruling convicted the former Vice President of DRC in 2016 and handed an 18-year sentence.
- In **2019**, former **President of Ivory Coast** was acquitted of crimes against humanity.

What are the challenges for ICC?

- Many African countries feel that they are being **selectively targeted**.
- The ICC faces a **strong resistance** to prosecute the war crimes committed in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- Some countries like Burundi, the Philippines are **quitting** the ICC.
- The **surge of nationalism** around the world is a **challenge to enforce accountability** transcending domestic and regional borders.
- The **refusal of major states** to bring themselves under the court's jurisdiction has dampened the hope to ensure that serious atrocities committed by elected representatives do not go unpunished.

8.3 Key Takeaways from G-20 Summit

Why in news?

2019 G-20 summit has been recently held in Osaka, Japan.

What is g20 grouping about?

- The Group of 20 (G-20), is a group of finance ministers and central bank governors from 19 of the world's largest economies, including those of many developing nations, along with the European Union.

International Criminal Court (ICC)

- ICC is an intergovernmental organization and international tribunal. It is the world's first permanent international criminal court.
- **Headquarter:** The Hague, Netherlands.
- It has the jurisdiction to **prosecute individuals for the international crimes** of genocide, crimes against humanity (CAH), crime of aggression and war crimes.
- It **complements the existing national judicial systems** and so it can only exercise its jurisdiction when certain conditions are met.
- States which become party to the Rome Statute becomes member of ICC.
- The co-operation of the non-party states with ICC is of voluntary nature.
- But when a case is referred by the UNSC to the ICC, all UN member states are obliged to cooperate, since its decisions are binding for all of them.
- **India is not a signatory** to the Rome Statute.



- It is formed in 1999, following the Asian and Russian financial crises, G-20 has a mandate to promote global economic growth, international trade, and regulation of financial markets.
- G-20 is a forum is not a legislative body and its agreements and decisions have no legal impact, but they do influence countries' policies and global cooperation.
- Together, the economies of the G-20 countries represent about 90% of the gross world product (GWP), 80% of world trade, and two-thirds of the world population.
- After its inaugural leaders' summit in 2008, the leaders of the G-20 announced that the group would replace the G-8 as the main economic council of nations.
- The Financial Action Task Force, the mechanism the G20 promoted to monitor and control terror financing, has been one of its more lasting contributions.
- The G20 covers all manner of issues from women's rights to climate change.

What are the highlight decisions of the recent summit?

- The summit delivered expected consensus support for “strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive economic growth”, alongside renewed commitments to reform the World Trade Organization.
- Agreement on key initiatives on digital innovation and e-commerce, financial inclusion for ageing populations and marine plastics was also made.
- More importantly, it provided a much-needed platform for US-China dialogue, bringing the escalating trade war to a halt.
- US has also announced to drop its ban Chinese telecom manufacturer Huawei.
- G20 leaders were unanimous in their backing for the proposal that would increase pressure on tech giants like Facebook to block or remove the spread of violent extremism online.
- India, South Africa, and Indonesia have boycotted the “Osaka Track” on the “digital economy” at the G20 leaders’ summit in Osaka on
- “Osaka Track” on the “digital economy” was initiated and sought the participation of G-20 countries.
- It aims to legitimize the informal plurilateral (two or more countries) negotiations on digital trade that were never approved at the World Trade Organization.
- The Osaka Track, according to the 50 signatories, is a process for promoting “international policy discussions, inter alia, international rule-making on trade-related aspects of electronic commerce at the WTO.”

What are the major takeaways for India?

- India emerged from Osaka with two takeaways, One is the collateral benefit of the resumption of US-China trade talks that offers some breathing space.
- The second is joining countries such as South Africa and Indonesia in boycotting the “Osaka Track” on the digital economy (which has implications for India’s controversial data localization rules).
- India, South Africa, and Indonesia among others chose not to sign the declaration on Osaka Track because it would fundamentally undermine the core WTO principles for arriving at consensus-based decisions.
- India is in pole position to shape the global agenda at a time when multilateralism, which has benefited the country enormously in the past two decades, is increasingly under threat.
- Apart from this on WTO reforms, India and South Africa demanded that “reforms” must be in accordance with the core WTO principles of consensus-based decision-making, multilateral agreed rules, and an impartial and independent functioning of the dispute settlement body.

G.S PAPER III

9. ECONOMY

9.1 India's First Overseas Sovereign Bonds

Why in news?

As a first, the recent Union Budget 2019 proposed funding the fiscal deficit partially by borrowing from international markets in foreign currency.

What is the decision?

- The government plans to raise as much as \$10 billion from its first overseas sovereign bond.
- It would start raising a part of its gross borrowing programme in external markets in external currencies.

What are sovereign bonds?

- A sovereign bond is a specific debt instrument issued by the government.
- They can be denominated in both foreign and domestic currency.
- Just like other bonds, these also promise to pay the buyer a certain amount of interest for a stipulated number of years and repay the face value on maturity.
- They also have a rating associated with them which essentially speaks of their credit worthiness.
- The Yield of the sovereign bond is the interest rate that the government pays on issuing bonds.
- The Yield of the bonds are dependent on primarily 3 factors -
 1. creditworthiness - the issuing countries' perceived ability to repay their debts; this can be obtained from rating agencies
 2. country risk - external/internal factors like unrest and wars tend to jeopardize a country's ability to pay off their debts
 3. exchange rates - in cases where bonds are issued in foreign currency, fluctuations in exchange rate may lead to increased pay out pressure on the issuing government

What is the rationale?

- Public-sector borrowing is putting significant pressure on market rates, along with liquidity in the system.
- This, among other things, is affecting monetary policy transmission.
- The government is already resource-constrained and so large levels of local borrowings could drive up interest rates and crowd out the private sector.
- So, the next safe option is borrowing abroad, as the government can take advantage of low global interest rates.
- Also, India's sovereign external debt is less than 5% of its GDP, one of the lowest in the world.
- This makes the move seem relatively risk-free.
- The basic idea is that by shifting part of its borrowing abroad, the government will reduce the pressure on the domestic market.
- This will, in turn, help keep interest rates at lower levels.

What is the need for caution?

- The government should avoid going overboard because there are multiple inherent risks in the idea.
- **Currency risks** - Primarily, the government will be taking currency risk.
- A depreciation in the rupee will, in turn, increase the government's liability.
- On the other hand, the overall increase in the import of foreign capital could put upward pressure on the rupee.

- This could eventually affect exports and make currency management more difficult for the central bank.
- **Volatility** - Borrowing from international markets will increase the government's exposure to the vagaries of global financial markets.
- With borrowing through sovereign bonds, India's loan repayments would be subject to exchange rate fluctuations.
- Depending on the trend, India may have to repay more than it had originally taken as loan.
- **Investments** - The move could potentially discourage foreign investors from investing in rupee-denominated government bonds.
- This is because they will have the option of investing in hard-currency bonds and avoid the currency risk associated with the rupee.
- This, in turn, could lead to higher volatility, both in the debt and currency markets.
- This can further diminish the gains from accessing international markets.
- **Financial risks** - Forex markets are irregular, especially now, with US-China trade tensions.
- So, any adverse movement can throw off all calculations and make overseas borrowing even more costly than that from local markets.
- Moreover, the domestic bond market serves as a signaling mechanism for the government by making price adjustments in response to the supply of bonds.
- Large issuances in global markets can impede this process.
- In fact, the government will have an incentive to take more of its borrowing abroad because it will help keep domestic interest rates in check.
- Naturally, this will increase risks for financial stability.
- Traditionally, it has been observed that the accumulation of foreign-currency debt can lead to difficulties.
- **Sources** - The use of sovereign bonds indicates that the government may be running out of sources to borrow from within India.
- Notably, India had the second worst debt-GDP ratio among emerging markets.
- India's debt-GDP ratio stands at 68.4%, next only to Brazil.
- India's total debt has risen by almost 50% since 2014.

9.2 Financial Stability Report June 2019 - RBI

Why in news?

The Reserve Bank of India recently released the 19th issue of the Financial Stability Report (FSR).

What is the FSR?

- The FSR reflects the collective assessment of the Sub-Committee of the *Financial Stability and Development Council* (FSDC) on risks to financial stability.
- It gives a picture of the resilience of the financial system.
- The Report also discusses issues relating to the development and regulation of the financial sector.
- The report analyses the overall state of the various segments as well as highlights the risk-related issues that could cause potential challenges.

How is the banking system performing?

- The Financial Stability Report notes that the state of the banking system is encouraging.
- The gross non performing asset (NPA) ratio is 9.3% for all banks as of March 2019.
- This is likely to come down to 9% by March 2020.



- More importantly, the asset recognition process is completed and from now on, the NPAs will be on new credit given and not on earlier lending.
- Credit growth of scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) picked up, with public sector banks (PSBs) registering near double digit growth.
- Capital adequacy of the SCBs improved after the recapitalization of PSBs.
- The PSBs have, in particular, improved the Provision Coverage Ratio to 60.8% as against an average of 60.6% for the entire system.
- In all, the growth in credit has picked up for PSBs which is a sign that they are on the road to normalcy.
- The fact that NPAs are under control means that the other parameters will only improve.
- Lower NPAs mean fewer provisions which in turn improve profits and remove pressure from the net worth and hence further demand for capital.
- The RBI has also indicated that the recovery rate for the cases under the IBC is around 40-45%.
- This is definitely better than the ratios of less than 20% that was the norm prior to the implementation of the IBC.
- **Need for caution** - The report points out that the problem areas in terms of NPAs still remain.
- In metals, mining and engineering, the NPA ratios are above 25%.
- In construction, gems and jewelry and auto that follow next, the ratios are 21.8%, 21.5% and 18.4% respectively.
- It is to be seen as to how the new [norms of dealing with stressed assets](#) by the RBI work out for these sectors.

What is RBI's observation on NBFCs?

- **Significance** - The FSR highlights the Non Banking Financial Companies' importance in the country's financial system.
- Around 70% of their liabilities are raised from the public, with a size of Rs 28.8 lakh crore.
- Compared with the banking assets size of roughly Rs 140 lakh crore, the NBFC sector forms around 20%.
- This conveys the importance of this sector, as it caters to the needs of several corners where probably banks are less interested.
- **Performance** - As per the report, in general, the well-run NBFCs have no problem and are progressing smoothly.
- However, those which started off with a fundamental asset/liability management (ALM) mismatch have faced a series of challenges.
- More regulation which involves putting structures in place which are already in progress, is the possible solution in this regard.
- **Loan share** - The combined loan share of the NBFCs and HFCs (Housing Finance Companies), in comparison with the joint share of banks, is fairly impressive.
- So, they are as important as the banks when it comes to providing finance to the household segment.
- **Concerns** - The worrisome part is that the delinquency rates (wrongdoings) tend to be higher.
- It thus calls for a higher degree of introspection in the NBFC sector.
- **Contagion effect** - Given the size of the housing finance companies (HFCs), they tend to be the largest of the NBFCs.
- Now, their combined strength makes them comparable to the banks.
- This means that any major shock or failure can also have far-reaching implications for the financial system.
- This has already been witnessed in case of the mutual funds industry which has been affected by their investments in paper issued by the NBFCs.



- Their dominance in the corporate bond market is well-known and the progress here too will be impeded in case of such a shock.
- Given these, surveillance is the way out to ensure that the NBFCs continue to grow in a disciplined and secure manner.

Related News: [Financial Stability Report January 2019](#), [Significance of the NBFC Sector](#)

9.3 50 Years of Banks Nationalisation

Why in news?

July 19, 2019 marks 50 years of nationalisation of 14 commercial banks in India by the Indira Gandhi government.

What is bank nationalisation all about?

- State Bank of India was the only public sector undertaking that was nationalised (in 1955) before 1969.
- The SBI nationalisation had happened in the backdrop of private banks going bankrupt at an alarming rate.
- In 1969, Indira Gandhi government carried out bank nationalisation through the Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Ordinance, 1969.
- Fourteen big private banks were nationalised, to be taken control of by the government.
- These lenders held over 80% bank deposits in the country.
- The banks that were nationalised were:
 1. Allahabad Bank
 2. Bank of Baroda
 3. Bank of India
 4. Bank of Maharashtra
 5. Central Bank of India
 6. Canara Bank
 7. Dena Bank
 8. Indian Bank
 9. Indian Overseas Bank
 10. Punjab National Bank
 11. Syndicate Bank
 12. UCO Bank
 13. Union Bank
 14. United Bank of India
- In 1980, the government took control of another 6 banks.
- These included Punjab and Sind Bank, Vijaya Bank, Oriental Bank of India, Corporate Bank, Andhra Bank and New Bank of India.

What was the rationale?

- There were issues related to the reach and flow of credit to important sectors, and these were dealt with through various ad-hoc measures in 1960s.
- E.g., the fragmentation was addressed through consolidation of banks
- The number of banks was brought down from 566 in 1951 to 91 in 1967.

- Before nationalisation in 1969, the government tried addressing some of the issues through “social control”.
- The idea was to attain a wider spread of credit and increase the flow to priority sectors.
- However, overall, banks were failing largely due to speculative financial activities.
- After 1967, when Ms. Indira Gandhi became the PM, banks were not giving credit to agriculture and not enough credit to industry.
- The banks were more interested in extending credit for trade.
- The collapse of banks was causing distress among people.
- People were losing their hard-earned money in the absence of a strong government support and legislative protection to their money.
- Given this, nationalisation of banks was a more populist and rational choice for the government.
- Given these, the key objectives of nationalisation of banks were to -
 - i. address the rising economic difficulties in the 1960s
 - ii. remove control of the few on banking system
 - iii. provide adequate credit for agriculture, small industry and exports
 - iv. professionalize bank management
 - v. encourage a new class of entrepreneurs

What was the implication?

- The nationalization is one of the most significant economic events after India’s independence.
- Bank nationalisation resulted in a significant increase in bank deposits and financial savings.
- In this backdrop, the rising fiscal deficit made the banking sector a captive source of financing.
- With continued political intervention, the profitability of the banks suffered.
- Over the years, this affected bank operations.
- In all, the government succeeded partially in meeting its goal of implementing its development agenda through the banking system.
- However, many in India lacked access to formal finance and a large part of the population remained outside the banking net.

What are the current challenges?

- Today, most public sector banks (PSBs) are not in the desired position.
- The government has pumped in over Rs 2.5 trillion in the last few years (including Rs 70,000 crore in 2019) and it still may not be enough.
- PSBs continue to struggle with a higher level of non-performing assets.
- **Recapitalisation** - The government does not have the fiscal space to continuously pump capital into PSBs. Click [here](#) to know more on recapitalisation.
- The idea of using recapitalisation bonds too has its limits as it is increasing the government’s liability.
- **Technology** - The role of technology in banking and finance is rising rapidly.
- PSBs, with their weak balance sheets, are not in the best position to adapt and compete on this front.
- Naturally, the business will increasingly shift towards private sector banks.
- **Reforms** - It would be hard to implement the required reforms in PSBs in the present set-up.
- PSBs, which account for 66% of outstanding credit and 65.7% of deposits, need functional and operational independence.
- With the government being the majority shareholder, this will be difficult to attain.

9.4 Banning of Blockchain

Why in news?

The Banning of Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill, 2019 has been leaked recently.

Why is there a support for ban?

- There are high chances of cryptocurrencies being misused in money laundering.
- Various government bodies such as IT, CBDT, and the customs departments are supporting its ban.
- The bill has proposed stringent penalties, including 10 years of imprisonment for holding, selling or dealing in cryptocurrencies.

What is a blockchain?

- It is an **accounting ledger** which can store data on any real-world transaction of any kind.
- The unique feature of this ledger is the **decentralised style**.
- Every computer connected to a blockchain network helps validate and record transactions.
- People who connect their computers to a network are known as validators and receive transaction fees in the form of tokens.
- It also has **data encryption**, which makes it highly resistant to tampering.
- It can perform on **public basis** (such as Bitcoin) **or private**, with a single entity operating a closed blockchain system.

What is the potential of blockchain?

- Blockchain technology has the **potential to create new industries** and transform existing ones.
- Some **new companies are investing millions** in research and development.
- Venture capitalists invested \$2.4 billion in blockchain and cryptocurrency start-ups in 2018.
- **Even big technology companies** have started to take blockchain seriously. E.g Facebook's cryptocurrency Libra.

Why shouldn't there be a ban?

- A law to ban cryptocurrency would **prevent Indians from reaping economic benefits** by participating in blockchain networks as validators and earning transaction fees.
- The ban also will **stifle any innovation related** to this disruptive emerging technology.

What India can learn from Europe?

- The European Parliament and European Council are working on an **anti-money laundering directive** known as AMLD5.
- All crypto exchanges and wallet custodians operating in Europe will have to **implement strict know-your-customer (KYC)** on-boarding procedures and need to **register with local authorities**.
- They will be required to **report suspicious activities** to relevant bodies.
- The EU Commission is also proposing
 1. self-declaration by virtual currency owners,
 2. the maintenance of central databases registering users' identities and wallet addresses, and
 3. norms while using virtual currencies as payment or investment means by 2022.
- This is a more reasonable approach, and the Indian government could follow suit.

10. INFRASTRUCTURE

10.1 DHFL Crisis

Why in news?

The shares of Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd (DHFL) plunged 29.15% to Rs 48.50 on the BSE recently.

How did the crisis evolve?

- DHFL is a non-banking finance company with a focus on housing finance.
- Mutual funds had lent to DHFL in the form of debt securities.
- The company (DHFL) delayed interest rate payments in June, 2019.
- It has reportedly missed interest payments of Rs 960 crore.
- Valuation norms require a write-down in the value of assets in case of such payment delays.
- The default in payments by DHFL has hit the net asset values (NAVs) of debt funds.
- Consequently, the NAVs of several debt schemes fell by 6-53%, reflecting the marked-down value of their holdings in DHFL paper.
- DHFL has faced a series of downgrades by rating agencies on its debt in the following 2 months.
- ICRA, CRISIL, CARE and Brickwork Ratings (Brickwork) have downgraded credit ratings on commercial papers of DHFL to 'D' (Default) owing to liquidity concerns.

What is the recent happening?

- With the recent fall, the DHFL stock had plummeted around 96% from the 52-week level of Rs 690, leading to significant losses for the investors.
- DHFL owes close to Rs 1 lakh crore to banks and investors.
- It recently said the company's ability to raise funds had been substantially impaired and the business had been brought to a standstill.
- It also raised significant doubt on the ability of the company to continue as a growing firm.

What do the statements reveal?

- The company has reported a loss of Rs. 2,223 crore for the January-March 2019 quarter.
- With this, DHFL has highlighted three critical financial issues flagged by the independent auditor engaged to verify its accounts.
- One, it says that there have been deficiencies in loan documentation with respect to Rs. 20,750 crore of loans.
- The company's management is now working to remedy this.
- It is unclear if these documentation issues will affect the saleability of its residual mortgage loan portfolio.
- Two, due to the liquidity stress faced by developers, DHFL claims it has been unable to realise cheques relating to around Rs. 16,000 crore worth of wholesale loans.
- Three, the results mention an NHB (National Housing Bank) inspection finding its capital adequacy ratio to be at 10.24% in end-FY18.
- This is well below the statutory minimum of 12%.
- Clarity on these issues will be available only after DHFL's statutory auditors assess the conditions.
- Meanwhile, these issues do raise doubts about the true value of DHFL's loan book, the monetisation of which its lenders are banking on, etc.

What does this call for?

- The statements by the company raise doubts about the sustainability of its operations and the quality of the residual assets it hopes to monetise.
- If the liquidity crisis at DHFL evolves into a solvency issue, the ramifications for financial markets and investor confidence may be far more widespread than due to the [IL&FS](#) case.

- [Unlike IL&FS, DHFL is a listed company that has directly raised retail funds through public deposits and NCDs (Non-Convertible Debentures)]
- Shareholders and lenders to DHFL now need to take note of the developments.
- It is also time for regulators such as the RBI and the NHB, who have so far taken no public stance on the firm.
- All these highlight the urgent need for a detailed resolution framework for distressed financial firms, which are excluded from the IBC route.
- Such a framework was proposed in the [FRDI Bill](#), but it was shelved along with the controversial bail-in clause.
- There is a need for financial regulators for housing finance companies to take their supervisory roles more seriously.
- It is also essential to build in-house capacity to subject the filings of their constituents to more stringent scrutiny.

11. AGRICULTURE

11.1 PM-KISAN: Scope & Implementation

What is the issue?

Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) which was operationalised on February 24, 2019 seems to lag behind in its scope and implementation.

What is the scheme for?

- It provides **assured income support** to the small and marginal farmers through direct benefit transfer (DBT) to their bank accounts.
- It is funded by Government of India.
- The vulnerable landholding farmer families having **cultivable land up to 2 hectares**, will be provided direct income support of **Rs. 6,000** per year.
- It will be transferred in **three equal instalments** of Rs. 2,000 each.
- It would also meet the **emergent needs of the farmers**, especially before the harvest season.

What is the current stance?

- Now, the scheme's original **objective has been broadened** to include all categories of agricultural landowners.
- Broadly speaking, the offer of ₹6,000 per year per household, amounts to about **1/10th of the production cost per hectare** or consumption expenditure only for a poor household.
- Though what it offers is meagre, it promises some **relief to poor farmers by partially supplementing their input costs** or consumption needs.

What is the problem in the scheme?

- The cash transfer is **not linked to the land size** (scale of production) of the farmer.
- So, in effect, it becomes an income supplement to landowning households.
- It has **left the landless tenants** out of its scope.
- The **benefits have not reached farmers** in most parts of the country.





- At present, the list of beneficiaries includes **only 32% of households** owning small and marginal holdings of land in the country.
- If the **budgetary allocations** shift decisively in favour of cash transfers, there will be cause for great concern which need to be addressed like,
 1. **Subsidies** for inputs, extension services, and procurement assurances.
 2. **Food security** through the National Food Security Act is also closely **linked to government interventions** in grain markets.

11.2 Harmful Effects of Chemical Farming

What is the issue?

As chemical farming is undeniably harmful, a budgetary commitment is needed for organic farming.

What was the issue with Green Revolution?

- In the 1970s, India was gravely short of foodgrains
- To push **rapid agricultural production**, especially foodgrains, **Green Revolution** measures were carried on.
- One of the catalytic agents was **chemical fertilisers**.
- Though it **saved the day**, it was far from safeguarding the future.

What are the problems of Green Revolution?

- **Chemical Fertilizers & Pesticides** - Central government subsidy of Rs.70,000 crores for chemical fertiliser
- They were mainly soil-destroying and life-threatening chemicals.
- It was no good to agricultural advancement and public health.
- It was also Water-intensive & pollutive.
- **Costly inputs** - The huge fertiliser **subsidy barely reaches the small farmer**. It is the manufacturer who benefits.
- 80% of farmers in India are small or marginal farmers, and the input costs put them into **debt**.

Is Fertiliser subsidy legal/moral?

- This policy **violates the**
 1. Article 21 - Right to Life
 2. Article 39 (a, b) - right to an adequate means to livelihood & distribution of material resources for common good;
 3. Article 46 - Promotion of economic interests of the weaker sections
 4. Article 47 - Raising the level of nutrition and to improve public health
 5. Article 48 - Organisation of agriculture
 6. Article 48A - Protection of environment
 7. Article 51 A (g, f) - To protect the natural environment
- It **ignores the traditional wisdom** of the Indian farmer and deprives him of an adequate means of livelihood.
- It **puts in danger** the environment, public health and the economic interests of the weaker sections.

What are the effects of chemical farming?

- **Kerala State Organic Farming Policy Report, 2008** - The advent of chemical farming in Kerala has resulted in the near stagnant levels of productivity.

- The farmers are caught in the debt owing to the high cost of farming.
- This leads to increasing instances of suicides.
- **Organic Agriculture's Contribution to Sustainability, 2013 (FAO)** - Chemical Agriculture is associated with Farmers indebtedness for inputs and suicides in Maharashtra.
- **Tata Institute of Social Sciences Report** - In cotton growing areas where chemical fertilisers were used, there was a high incidence of suicides.
- **Report of the Committee on Estimates 2015** - It denounces the present fertiliser subsidy towards chemical farming as it has done maximum damage to Indian agriculture.

What should be done?

- Organic farming shows the way out of the vicious cycle of drought, debts and declining soil fertility.
- **UN Report on the Right to Food 2017** states that agroecology is capable of delivering sufficient yields to feed the entire world population and ensure that they are adequately nourished.
- The Central government subsidy on,
 1. **Synthetic fertilisers sector** is Rs.75,000 crores now from Rs.60 crores in 1976-77.
 2. **Organic sector** is Rs.500 crores.
- The government should **divert the subsidies** from the chemical farming to the organic farming.
- **Organic** farming model of Sikkim (the World's First Organic State) and Andhra Pradesh's '[Zero Budget Natural Farming](#)' should be replicated.
- It should also **train farmers** across the country to make the transition.

11.3 Issues with Zero Budget Natural Farming

What is the issue?

- A dramatic policy shift towards [Zero Budget Natural Farming](#) (ZBNF) was announced in the Budget, 2019.
- This emphasis on ZBNF must be analysed critically and holistically.

What are some concerns?

- **Cost** - ZBNFs ability to reduce the cost of production and raise farmers' net returns from cultivation is yet to be proved.
- Little research has been done on these so far.
- **Yield** - There is a concern whether there will be more yield under this practice in comparison to chemical farming as there are varied agro-ecological conditions across states.
- As the demand for high-value commodities is increasing by the day, there is a doubt whether ZBNF would be appropriate for this.
- **Training** - Farmers aren't equipped with appropriate training to make the shift.
- The availability of livestock for urine and dung is doubtful.
- Farmers might go back to a system followed by their parents during **pre-Green Revolution period**.

What are the other measures to be taken?

- **More investment in irrigation is needed.** 50% of net sown area is rain-fed.
- Farmers cannot remain dependent on rain.
- The government expenditure is more on the operation and maintenance of operational dams in the country and less towards capital intensity.



- The government should encourage private investment through provision of subsidised credit and subsidy on capital.
- **Farmers are unaware of tech interventions and new farming practices.** The NSSO 70th round (2012-13) noted that government extension programmes have not been able to reach most farmers.
- **Marketing of agricultural commodities has hardly progressed.** Farmers receive a small share of the consumer rupee due to a long chain of intermediaries in marketing.
- Sale of produce in APMC-run regulated markets hardly provides solace.
- A survey says that a majority of farmers prefer to sell their produce to village traders and they receive prices below MSP for wheat and rice in most states

12. ENVIRONMENT

12.1 ILO Report: Global Warming

Why in news?

The report “Working on a warmer planet: The impact of heat stress on labour productivity and decent work” was released by International Labour Organisation (ILO).

What does the report say?

- In 2030, 2.2% of total working hours worldwide will be lost because of higher temperatures.
- The global productivity losses would be around 80 million full-time jobs (equivalent to economic loss of US\$ 2,400 billion).
- The projection of 34 million jobs losses in India would make it the worst affected.
- A third of the southern Asian countries have already incurred losses greater than 4%
- This is a conservative estimate, assuming that the global mean temperature does not rise more than 1.5°C

How it was worked out?

- The report defines heat stress as heat in excess of what the body can tolerate without suffering physiological impairment.
- It generally occurs at temperatures above 35°C, in high humidity.
- Excess heat during work is an occupational health risk and restricts workers’ physical functions and capabilities, work capacity and thus, productivity.
- Assumptions **and basis** for the projections are,
 1. Global temperature rise of 1.5°C by the end of the century,
 2. Labour force trends.

What are the projections for India?

- India to lose the most working hours is southern Asia in 2030.
- It lost 4.3% of working hours in 1995 because of heat stress.
- It is projected to lose 5.8% of its working hours in 2030, which corresponds to 34 million jobs.
- The report projects losses in working hours as
 1. 9.04% in agriculture (in shade),
 2. 5.29% in manufacturing,
 3. 9.04% in construction, and
 4. 1.48% in services.
- Most of the impact will be felt in the agricultural sector.



- More working hours are expected to be lost in the construction sector (where heat stress affects both male and female workers).
- Most areas have drought like conditions so there will be more migration of agricultural workers to urban areas – usually to work in the construction sector.
- There has been no direct job loss at present, with distressed workers switching from one vulnerable sector to another.

What is the bigger picture?

- Globally, the two sectors projected to be hit worst are agriculture and construction, with agriculture worse affected.
- In agriculture – 60% of working hours will be lost due to heat stress by 2030.
- In construction – 19% of global working hours to be lost.
- More inequality between low and high income countries to be seen.
- There will be worsening working conditions for the most vulnerable, as well as displacement of people.
- To adapt to this new reality appropriate measures by governments, employers and workers, focusing on protecting the most vulnerable, are urgently needed.

12.2 European Heat Wave

What is the issue?

Last week, Europe went through a heat wave that lasted for six days. It has smashed temperature records, left many people dead and caused huge fires to break out.

Why is it happening?

- The heat wave in Europe is a result of warm air masses from Africa, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said.
- It follows extreme heat episodes in India, Pakistan, parts of the Middle East and Australia.
- More events are expected to follow during this northern hemisphere summer.

What is a heat wave?

- Heat wave is a weather phenomenon which is a period of prolonged abnormally high surface temperatures relative to those normally expected.
- No standardized definition of a heat wave exists.
- WMO definition: If five or more consecutive days during which the daily maximum temperature surpasses the average maximum temperature by 5 °C or more, it is called heat wave.
- It may be characterized by low humidity (which may exacerbate drought) or high humidity.

How heat waves are classified?

- Classifying a heat wave varies from country to country.
- That is because what is seen as extremely hot in one place may seem within normal range in another.
- In 2016 – The WMO listed several factors to be considered while analysing an extreme weather event such as a heat wave.
- This includes defining a specific threshold for variables such as temperature to be considered extreme as well as a human perspective of extremes.

How are heat waves classified in India?

- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) classifies heat waves.
- It does not consider a heat wave unless the maximum temperature crosses 40°C and 30°C in the plains and hills respectively.

- Where the normal maximum is 40°C or less,
 1. Heat wave departure from normal – 5°C to 6°C
 2. Severe heat wave departure – 7°C or more.
- Where the normal maximum is **more than 40°C**,
 1. Heat wave departure from normal – 4°C to 5°C
 2. Severe heat wave departure – 6°C or more.
- In places where the maximum temperature reaches **45°C or more**, the IMD declares a heat wave irrespective of the normal.

What is the controversy?

- Some scientists – Blamed climate change for these trends.
- WMO – It is too early for such an attribution.
- However, the WMO agreed that the heat wave is consistent with climate scenarios which predict more frequent.
- The WMO says that the drawn out and intense heat events as greenhouse gas concentrations lead to a rise in global temperatures.

What are its health hazards?

- It poses a risk to people's health, agriculture and the environment.
- Babies and older people are particularly vulnerable as their bodies are not as well able to regulate their own temperatures.
- It can cause exhaustion and heat stroke.
- It can cause organ failure and breathing problems.
- The people living in urban areas are trapped in heat islands as steel, concrete, and asphalt structures absorb heat.
- In regions like Europe where people are not used to extremely high temperatures, many buildings don't have air-conditioning.

12.3 Achieving COP21- NDC Targets

What is the issue?

- During the run-up to the Paris climate change meeting (COP-21) in 2015, each country decided the level and kind of effort it would undertake to solve the climate change problem.
- These actions were referred to as nationally determined contributions (NDC).

What is India's NDC?

- India promised to take steps to **reduce** the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and to **adapt** to living in a warmer world. NDCs include,
 1. By 2030, there will be about 1/3rd reductions in the emissions intensity of the GDP below 2005 levels.
 2. By 2030, there will be a total of 40% of the installed capacity for electricity from non-fossil fuel sources.
 3. By 2030, it promised an additional carbon sink (a means to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere) through additional forest and tree cover.
- **Trees and other vegetation** fix carbon as part of photosynthesis. **Soil** too holds organic carbon from plants and animals.

How to enhance the green cover?

- **Forest Survey of India (FSI) study** - Estimated the costs involved, and the opportunities and potential actions needed for additional forest and tree cover to meet the NDC target.



- Recently, there is a gradual increase in the forest and green cover.
- The additional increase in carbon sinks is to be achieved by restoring impaired and open forests; afforesting wastelands, Agro-forestry, etc.,
- 72.3% of the increase will be **by restoring forests and afforestation** on wastelands, with a modest rise in total green cover.
- The **green cover increase** will provide many other **benefits** like improving the water quality, storage of water in wetlands, etc.

What is the role of Natural forests?

- **A recent study in Nature** - Provides insights into what works well with regard to green cover.
- Locking up the carbon from the atmosphere in trees, ground vegetation and soils is one of the safest ways with which to remove carbon.
- Allowing land to be converted into forests naturally will sequester the carbon more efficiently than the artificial conversion of land to a plantation or to an Agroforest.
- **A study in Science** - Estimates that it is possible to add 0.9 billion hectares of canopy cover worldwide.
- This could potentially mitigate up to 2/3rd of historical GHG emissions, which would prevent or delay the worst impacts from climate change.

Why is restoration type a key?

- **Studies** - Indicate that forest restoration has enormous potential in mitigating climate change.
- The amount of carbon stored depends on the type of forest restoration carried out.
- The most effective way is through **natural forest regeneration** with appropriate institutions to facilitate the process.
- **First**, India needs to ensure that deforestation is curtailed to a maximum extent.
- **Second**, the area allocated to the restoration of impaired and open forests and wastelands should be focussed on natural forests and agroforestry.
- Instead of plantations, growing food forests managed by local communities would have additional co-benefits.
- Protecting the established natural forests is important.
- Protecting and nurturing public lands and preventing their private enclosure is also paramount.
- **Active forest management by local people** has long history in India and needs to expand to meet climate, environment and social justice goals.

Quick Facts

Paris Agreement (COP21)

- Paris Agreement is an agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to combat climate change.
- Aims of Paris Agreement are,
 1. To keep the global temperature rise of this century well below 2°C above the pre-industrial level
 2. To pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase further to 1.5°C
 3. To strengthen the ability of countries to deal with the impacts of climate change

12.4 Understanding Assam Floods

What is the issue?

- Assam is in the grip of yet another flood, with lakhs of people displaced and some killed, besides hundreds of animals.

- In this context, here is a look at why Assam has traditionally been flood-prone and an assessment of the measures taken.

Why are floods so destructive in Assam?

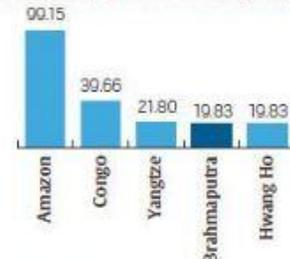
- Apart from heavy and constant rainfall during the monsoon, there are many contributory factors, both natural and man-made that make floods so destructive in Assam.
- **Brahmaputra** - The very nature of the river Brahmaputra is dynamic and unstable.
- Its 580,000 sq km basin spreads over four countries (China, India, Bangladesh and Bhutan) with diverse environments.
- The Brahmaputra features among the world’s top five rivers in terms of discharge as well as the sediment it brings.
- The vast amount of sediment comes from Tibet, where the river originates.
- Tibet is a cold and arid region, and lacks plantation. Glaciers melt, soil erodes and all of it results in a highly sedimented river.
- On the other hand, Assam primarily comprises floodplains surrounded by hills on all sides.
- So, by the time the Brahmaputra enters Assam, i.e. from a high slope to a flat plain, its velocity decreases suddenly.
- This results in the river unloading the sediment.
- Also, following the devastating earthquake of 1950, the level of the Brahmaputra rose by two metres in Dibrugarh area in eastern Assam.
- Because of the earthquake-prone nature of the region, the river has not been able to acquire a stable character.
- So the river’s channels prove inadequate amid the siltation, in turn, leading to erosion and floods.

AREA OF INFLUENCE

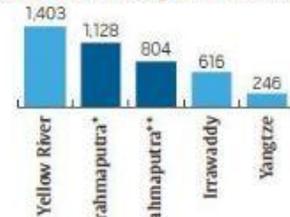


STRONGEST & SILTIEST

AVERAGE DISCHARGE AT MOUTH (1,000 CUBIC m/sec)



SEDIMENT YIELD (TONNES PER sq km PER YEAR)



*at Bahadurabad, Bangladesh; **at Pandu, Guwahati

- **Man-made factors** - Besides the natural factors are the man-made ones which lead to higher sedimentation.
- These include habitation, deforestation, population growth in catchment areas (including in China), etc.
- For instance, the sediment deposition itself creates temporary sandbars or river islands.
- It is common for people to settle in such places, which further restricts the river flowing space.



- When rainfall is heavy, it combines with all these factors and leads to destructive floods.

How effective are the flood control measures?

- **Dams** - In its master plan on the river in 1982, the Brahmaputra Board had suggested that dams and reservoirs be built to mitigate floods.
- However, the idea of dams has traditionally been a double-edged sword.
- One of objectives of dams is to regulate the release of flood waters.
- But, the release, when it comes, can sometimes be beyond the capacity of the channels downstream, further leading to floods there.
- In the Brahmaputra basin, there were protests against dam-building plans on grounds of displacement and destruction of ecology.
- All these prevent the plans from moving forward.
- **Embankments** - Given the above, the government has been using only one approach towards floods, which is building embankments on the river.
- Embankments were proposed only as an interim and ad hoc measure for short-term mitigation and thus, they lack durability.
- Since they were temporary measures, the government did not spend on high-specification embankments, and so, are weak and are regularly breached.
- **Dredging** - The government also considered dredging (digging up the riverbed and making the river deeper).
- However, this is not a wise idea given the fact that Brahmaputra sediment yield is among the highest in the world.
- Even if the silt is taken out this year, more silt will be deposited the following year, making the very expensive effort futile.
- Overall, most of the government's measures have been piecemeal and short-term, and the problem is not addressed at the source.

12.5 Seashore as 'Land' - Maharashtra

Why in news?

The Maharashtra government has decided to treat a part of the Arabian Sea shoreline at Mumbai's Nepeansea Road as "revenue land".

What is the area in question?

- It is the part of the seashore lying between the low tide mark and the high tide mark in a particular part of South Mumbai.
- The part of the shoreline in question was marked as "sea" at the time of Mumbai's last land survey.
- Since then, about 100 shanties (huts) have come up illegally on a portion of this land.
- Mumbai's latest approved Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP) categorises it as an inter-tidal zone or foreshore.
- [Under The Maharashtra Land Revenue Code, 1966, ownership of foreshore areas vests in the state government.
- Revenue land, in other words, means land that is utilisable and disposable, and which can generate revenues.]
- It has been placed in the ecologically sensitive CRZ-1B category.
- The CZMP shows it as lying to the seaward side of the high tide line.

What is the recent decision?

- Maharashtra CM gave in-principle approval to a proposal for a survey, and to give a cadastral survey (CS) number to the identified portion of the shoreline.

- [A cadastral survey is done to determine the land boundaries of a city, ward, or plot.]
- The foreshore area was under water when the last survey was carried out, and exists beyond the current boundaries.
- So a survey is necessary to determine its boundaries. The survey will also effectively increase the ward boundaries.
- The Superintendent of Land Records carries out the survey and marks the new boundaries.
- After this, the Mumbai Collector's office would be expected to decide the ownership of the newly formed land, and assign it a CS number.
- An independent property card will then be generated containing all the details.
- The CS number and the property card are essential documents for the assessment and development of any land.

What is the plan?

- Official documents show that the Revenue Department had processed the proposal for surveying the foreshore area.
- The CM has said that the “developability” of the newly surveyed “land” would be assessed in accordance with -
 - i. Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) norms
 - ii. rules governing construction activity in Mumbai
- Meanwhile, a developer has submitted an in situ slum redevelopment project for the land.
- This has been admitted by the state-run Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA).

Is it legally permissible?

- As per the CRZ notifications (2011 and 2019), no development or construction is permissible on this portion even if it is categorised as revenue land.
- Maharashtra's environment department has clarified this.
- The 2019 notification allows only foreshore facilities such as jetties, harbours, and ports in such places.
- However, slum-dwellers on this illegally reclaimed portion of the shore have come together to form a “housing society”.
- They have authorised the developer to carry out in situ re-development.
- It is said that the decision to carry out the survey would amount to recognising illegal reclamation of the seashore.
- This, and other such claims, would expose the coastal areas to a fresh wave of construction.

What could be done?

- Instead of treating such proposals on a case-to-case basis, a policy should be framed in consultation with the affected groups and various stakeholders.
- The impact on coastal livelihoods and the environment should also be examined in this regard.
- It should be ensured that the CRZ notification under The Environment Protection Act, 1986 is followed in letter and spirit.

Related News: [CRZ notification 2018](#)

12.6 Status of Tigers in India, 2018 Report

Why in News?

The 4-year tiger census report, Status of Tigers in India of 2018, released recently shows numbers of the big cat have increased across all landscapes.

What is it all about?

- The total number of tigers has risen by 33% since 2014.
- This is by far the biggest increase in terms of both numbers and percentage since the census using camera traps and the capture-mark-recapture method began in 2006.
- The 2018 figure has a great degree of credibility because 83% of the total tigers have been photographed by trap cameras.

Why is a tiger census needed?

- As tiger sits at the peak of the food chain, its conservation is important to ensure the well-being of the forest ecosystem.
- The tiger estimation exercise includes habitat assessment and prey estimation.
- The numbers reflect the success or failure of conservation efforts.
- The Global Tiger Forum, an international collaboration of tiger-bearing countries, has set a goal of doubling the count of wild tigers by 2022.
- More than 80% of the world's wild tigers are in India, and it's crucial to keep track of their numbers.

Where has the tiger population increased the most?

- The biggest increase has been in Madhya Pradesh, 71% as compared to the numbers in 2014.
- In Maharashtra, Karnataka and Uttarkhand, the number has gone up by 64%, 29% and 30% respectively.
- However, since tigers keep moving between states, conservationists prefer to talk about tiger numbers in terms of landscapes.
- **India's five tiger landscapes:** Shivalik Hills and Gangetic Plains, Central Indian Landscape and Eastern Ghats, Western Ghats, North-East Hills and Brahmaputra Plains, and the Sundarbans.

Which states/regions have done badly?

- Only one of the 20 tiger-bearing states has seen a fall in numbers — Chhattisgarh, where the number reduced to 19 from 46 of 2014.
- The report has cited law and order as the reason, as large parts of the state are hit by the Maoist insurgency.
- No tiger has been found in the Buxa, Palamau and Dampa reserves.

How the census were was carried out?

- **Phases 1 and 2 –**
 1. Forest beats (15 sq km each) covered by Forest Departments,
 2. Collection of the signs of tiger presence like scat and pugmarks.
- **Phase 3 –**
 1. Sample areas are of 2 sq.km. parcels and trap cameras were laid in these grids.
 2. The information was plotted on the forest map prepared with remote-sensing and GIS application.
- **Phase 4 –** The data were extrapolated to areas where cameras could not be deployed.

Why have the numbers gone up?

- The success owes a lot to **increased vigilance and conservation efforts** by the Forest Department.
- The number of tiger reserves went up in 2018, extending protection to larger numbers of tigers over the years.
- The fact that organized poaching rackets have been crushed.



- The increased protection has encouraged the tiger to breed.
- The rehabilitation of villages outside core areas in many parts of the country has led to the availability of more inviolate space for tigers.
- Since state boundaries do not apply to the movement of tigers, conservationists prefer to talk about tiger numbers in terms of landscapes rather than of states.

13. INTERNAL SECURITY

13.1 Indo-Russia Naval Nuclear Ties

What is the issue?

India's Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) has invited serious concern from US over India's defense relationship with Moscow.

What is the brief history of India's naval nuclear program?

- In early 1966, India's Atomic Energy Establishment started a feasibility programme on naval nuclear propulsion.
- Homi Bhabha initiated the programme on the expectation that the US Atomic Energy Commission (USAEC) would assist in India's quest to develop marine propulsion.
- Bhabha's request was however denied by US mainly on account of Admiral Rickover's unhappiness in sharing naval reactor technology with other states.
- Washington's non-proliferation policy was an additional factor.
- Thereupon, the programme languished for almost 15 years as India's nuclear scientists and the Indian Naval engineers struggled to design and develop a viable reactor system for naval propulsion.
- Notwithstanding the severe shortcomings of India's atomic energy establishment, the sanctions regime imposed after the 1974 Peaceful Nuclear Explosion made the job equally tricky.
- As the indigenous effort hit a technological bump by late 1970s, the Indian government turned to Moscow for assistance.
- In the early 1980s, Moscow agreed to help India's indigenous nuclear submarine programme.
- It also acquiesced to leasing India its first nuclear submarine, it led to the beginning of Indo-Russian cooperation in naval nuclear submarines.

What is the IGA about?

- In March 2019, India signed an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with Russia to lease another of its Akula-Class attack nuclear submarines (SSN).
- The nuclear submarine will join the Indian Navy in 2025, after a major refit of the hull in Russia's Arctic port of Severodvinsk.
- India had earlier leased an Akula-class SSBN from Moscow in 2012.
- Rechristened as Chakra in the Indian fleet, it will continue to serve the Indian Navy until the commissioning of the new Akula submarine, most likely by 2025.

Why the agreement concerns US?

- Washington was never happy with the collaboration between Moscow and New Delhi on nuclear submarines.
- As the Indian Navy prepared to take over its first nuclear submarine from the Soviet Union in 1987, the US put immense pressure upon Moscow to defer the lease.



- Estranged democracies during the Cold War, Indo-US relations have strengthened significantly in the last quarter of a century.
- Washington has also made significant inroads into India's defense market which was once an exclusive preserve of the Russian defense industry.
- Market competition notwithstanding, the rising tensions between Washington and Moscow have pushed New Delhi into a corner.
- As US attempts to punish Russia through sanctions, it has increasingly become intolerant of India's arms deals with Moscow.

What will be the reaction of India in this regard?

- As Indo-US relations entered into a period of strategic embrace after the end of the Cold War, Washington DC largely ignored the technological partnership between New Delhi and Moscow.
- America's current concerns are merely a spillover of its fractured domestic debate over Russia.
- India unlikely to give in to the US demands for revising its defense relationship with Moscow especially in the domain of naval nuclear propulsion.
- The US' disapproval, however, will only marginally affect India's decision-making.
- Indo-Russian defense cooperation, especially in the naval nuclear domain, will continue to prosper irrespective of US concerns.

What is the significance of Indo-Russian Naval ties?

- Continued Russian assistance is vital to India's indigenous nuclear submarine programme.
- Leasing Russian nuclear submarines not only ascertain continuous technological assistance from Moscow but also provides the Indian Navy necessary operational experience.
- India also has a more considerable geostrategic interest in the fray.
- American pressure has forced Russia to seek some alignment with China, If India gives in to American demand, it will further push the Russians into Beijing's lap.
- Thus an independent Moscow is essential to keep Asia's geopolitics in balance.

PRELIM BITS

14. HISTORY, ART & CULTURE

Classical status for Marathi

- A proposal for granting **classical language** status to **Marathi** is under '**active consideration**'.
- Marathi is an Indo-Aryan language of western and central India.
- It is the **official language of Maharashtra** and co-official language in Goa.
- It is descended from the '**Mahārāṣṭrī Prākṛit**', Marāṭhī literature books are printed in **Devanāgarī script**, which is also used for handwriting.
- Although for handwriting there is also an alternate cursive form of Devanāgarī called **Modi**.
- **Marathi** gained prominence with the rise of the **Maratha Empire** beginning with the reign of Chhatrapati Shivaji (1674–1680).
- **Criteria** for Classical language status,
 1. High antiquity of its early texts/recorded history over a period of 1500-2000 years.

2. A body of ancient literature/texts, which is considered a valuable heritage by generations of speakers.
 3. The literary tradition is original and not borrowed from another speech community.
 4. The classical language and literature being distinct from modern, there may also be a discontinuity between the classical language and its later forms or its offshoots.
- Current Classical Languages in India are,
 1. Tamil (since 2004)
 2. Sanskrit (since 2005)
 3. Telugu (since 2008)
 4. Kannada (Since 2008)
 5. Malayalam (since 2013)
 6. Odiya (since 2014)
 - Benefit of declaring Indian language as the Classical Language,
 1. A **Centre of Excellence for Studies** in Classical Languages will be set up.
 2. The UGC can be requested to create, a certain number of **professional chairs** for classical languages, for scholars of eminence in the concerned language in Central Universities.
 3. Two major annual international awards for scholars of eminence in the classical language.

Rath Yatra - Puri

- Ratha Jatra or Rath Yatra is the **Festival of Chariots** of **Lord Jagannatha** is celebrated every year at **Puri**, the temple town in **Odisha**.
- It is associated with **Lord Jagannath** or **Lord Krishna's** annual journey to his aunt's residence along with his brother and sister.
- The festival is also known as Gundicha Jatra, Ghosa Jatra, Navadina Jatra, Dasavatara Jatra and by a variety of other names.
- It is the **oldest Ratha Yatra**, whose descriptions can be found in Brahma Purana, Padma Purana, Skanda Purana and Kapila Samhita.
- The temple of Puri is dedicated to **Lord Jagannath**, his elder brother **Balabhadra** or **Balaram** and their sister **Subhadra**.
- Before the Ratha Yatra starts, the three idols are given a ceremonial bath with 108 pitchers of water. This is known as **Snana Yatra**.
- The **chariot** of **Lord Jagannath** is named as **Nandighosha** or **Garudadhwaja** or **Kapiladhwaja**.
- Lord Krishna is the eighth avatar (incarnation) of Lord Vishnu. He is worshipped as Jagannath.
- The name comes from the conjugation of two Sanskrit words - **Jagat (world)** and **natha (master)**. Hence, the word "**Jagannath**" means '**Master of the world**'.
- Ratha Yatra transcends all religious boundaries and is not only celebrated by Hindus but also draws Muslims, Buddhists and members from many other communities.

Rath Yatra - Ahmedabad

- The Ahmedabad Rath Yatra turns into its 142nd year.
- A **sadhu** by the name of **Hanumandasji** settled down in this forest area of Ahmedabad on the banks of the Sabarmati river.
- It is said that his successor, **Sarangdasji**, was a devotee of Lord Jagannath.
- On one of his visits to the Puri Jagannath in Odisha, he had a dream where the Lord directed him to go back to Ahmedabad to install the idols of the holy trinity of Lord Jagannath.
- The temple was thus founded and a cowshed was built alongside.



- In 1878, the fourth successor **Mahant Narsinhdasji** introduced the **Rath Yatra** on the lines of Puri.
- The yatra is conducted on the day of **Ashaadi beej**, which also marks the **Kutchhi new year**.
- It is believed that this is the only time of the year when the Lord goes out to meet devotees on his chariot (rath), especially those who are physically challenged and unable to come to the temple.
- In Ahmedabad, the yatra returns from the maternal aunt's place the same evening unlike in Puri the siblings spend at least seven days at their aunt's and return to the main temple.

Mahesh's Rath Yatra

- It is the second biggest rathayatra in the world after Puri's Rath Yatra.
- It has been celebrated since 1396, held in **Mahesh**, a historical locality within Serampore city in the **West Bengal**.
- It is referred to as '**Naba Nilachal**', meaning new Puri. This year marks its **623rd edition**.
- The establishment of this Mahesh temple indicates that religious custom of following Jagannath had spread to Bengal.
- Bengali sadhu '**Drubananda Brahmachari**' established the temple at Mahesh and the chariot festival was started by one of Sri **Chaitanya's** early disciples.
- The new Mahesh temple in Kolkata was built by **Nayanchand Mallik** of Pathuriaghata in 1755 and the present Rath was donated by **Krishnaram Basu**.
- Unlike the idols in Puri's Jagannath temple, which are changed every 12 years, the idols made by the temple's founder for the first Rath Yatra are used till date.
- One big part of the local ritual is treating the lord to his favourite **sweet** called the '**Ghutke sandesh**'.

Jaipur gets UNESCO World Heritage tag

- Jaipur is a fortified city in Rajasthan.
- It is known for its iconic architectural legacy and vibrant culture.
- It is also known as the **Walled City**, the **Pink City**.
- It was founded in 1727 by **Sawai Jai Singh II**.
- Unlike other cities in the region located in hilly terrain, Jaipur was established on the plain and built according to a grid plan interpreted in the light of Vedic architecture.
- The city's urban planning shows an exchange of ideas from ancient Hindu and modern Mughal as well as Western cultures.
- Its iconic monuments such as the Govind Dev temple, City Palace, Jantar Mantar and Hawa Mahal excel in artistic and architectural craftsmanship of the period.
- Jaipur is an expression of the astronomical skills, living traditions, unique urban form.
- The city was nominated for its value of being an exemplary development in town planning and architecture and got UNESCO World Heritage tag.
- With this inclusion, the number of UNESCO World Heritage sites across India has grown to **38**, including 30 cultural properties, 7 natural properties and 1 mixed site.
- **Ahmedabad** became the first Indian city to get into the list.
- Apart from Jaipur, other cultural sites that have been designated as World Heritage site recently are,
 1. The Dilmun Burial Mounds in Bahrain
 2. The Budj Bim cultural landscape in Australia
 3. The archaeological ruins of Liangzhu city in China
 4. The Ombilin coal mining heritage of Indonesia's Sawahlunto



5. The mounded tombs of ancient Japan and
6. Megalithic Jar Sites in Laos' Xiengkhouang.

Prosecco hills

- **Italy's Prosecco hills** join UNESCO World Heritage list.
- The hills of **Conegliano** and **Valdobbiadene** are the home to the **grapes** that produce **world-famous sparkling Wine 'Prosecco'**.
- The landscape is characterized by **ciglioni**, small plots of vines on narrow grassy terraces, forests, small villages and farmland.
- Its the ancient tradition of wine-making and the territory is known for its well-preserved early settlements.

Kharchi Pooja

- It is an important festival celebrated in **Tripura**.
- The word **Kharchi** is derived from the word '**Khya**' which means '**Earth**'. It is basically done to worship mother Earth.
- It is performed after '**Ama pechi**' or '**Ambu bachi**' period.
- According to Tripuri, '**Ama Pechi**' is menstruation of mother goddess or mother Earth.
- Among Tripuri the menstruation of a woman is considered as unholy.
- During this period all the auspicious functions performed by women are prohibited.
- After the menstruation period '**Ama pechi**', mother Earth is considered to become unholy.
- So even the soil is not ploughed nor digging of any where on this day, to give it time to cleanse.
- The Puja is performed to wash out the sins and to clean the post menstrual phase of mother earth's menstruation.
- The festival lasts for 7 days and 14 gods of the dynasty deity of Tripuri people are worshipped.
- The 14 gods are worshipped by the royal priest called **Chantai**.
- Only members of chantai family descendants are allowed to take the post of '**Chantai**'.
- All of rituals are of tribal origin but both tribal and non-tribal people join together to celebrate the festival.

Sree Narayana Guru

- Sree Narayana Guru was a great saint, scholar, philosopher, poet and the forerunner of social renaissance in Kerala.
- He was born in 1856 in a peasant family of then untouchable Ezhava caste, in Thiruvananthapuram.
- He led a reform movement in Kerala, against the injustice in the caste-ridden society in order to promote social equality.
- He gave the universal message, "One caste, one religion, one God."
- '**Sahodaran Ayyappan**' (Pulaya Ayyappan), a social reformer from Kerala coined a rejoinder '**No Caste, No Religion, No God for Mankind**'.
- '**Aravipuram Movement**' was launched by Narayana Guru.
- He defied the religious restrictions traditionally placed on the Ezhava community and consecrated an idol of Shiva at Aravipuram.
- He was a follower of Advaita philosophy.
- He translated Tamil works like "Thirukkural" into Malayalam.

- He had written number of hymns to different gods and some of the notable ones are "Atmopadesa Sathakam" and "Darsanamala".
- He lent his support to the 'Vaikom Satyagraha'. Mahatma Gandhi met him during this time.
- 'Sivagiri pilgrimage' was conceived by three of the disciples, Vallabhasseri Govindan Vaidyar, T. K. Kittan and Muloor S. Padmanabha Panicker.
- The goal of the pilgrimage was the promotion of education, cleanliness, devotion to God.

15. GEOGRAPHY

Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)

- The DMZ has come into the spotlight with Donald Trump becoming the first serving American President to visit the area.
- It is a strip of land running across the Korean Peninsula.
- It is established by the provisions of the **Korean Armistice Agreement** to serve as a buffer zone between North Korea and South Korea.
- It roughly follows latitude **38° N** (the 38th parallel), the original demarcation line between North Korea and South Korea at the end of World War II.
- The site where the Armistice was signed is called the **Joint Security Area (JSA)**.
- It continues to be the venue where successive peace discussions concerning the region are conducted, including the recent Trump – Kim meet.
- Both North and South Korea maintain '**Peace villages**' in sight of each other's side of the DMZ.
- In September 2018, an agreement was signed with plans to convert the DMZ into a '**Peace park**'.
- Other major international borders of –
 - 1) **Durand Line** - Pakistan and Afghanistan.
 - 2) **Radcliffe Line** - India and Pakistan, India and Bangladesh
 - 3) **MacMohan Line** - India and China
 - 4) **49th Parallel, Medicine Line** – U.S and Canada
 - 5) **Maginot line, Siegfried Line** – France and Germany
 - 6) **Hindenburg Line** - Germany and Poland.
 - 7) **17th Parallel** - North Vietnam and South Vietnam.



El Nino

- A weak **El Nino** prevailing in the Pacific Ocean since the start of this year is beginning to dissipate as reported recently.
- It is a naturally occurring phenomenon that occurs every 2-7 years, and can last anywhere between nine months and two years.
- **El Nino** (The Little Boy) is a climate pattern with unusual warming of surface waters in equatorial Pacific Ocean.
- It is the "**Warm phase**", off the coast of Peru.
- The opposite of El Nino is **La Nina** (The Little Girl), is when sea surface temperatures in the Pacific drop to lower-than-normal levels.
- It is the "**Cool phase**".

- These warm and cool phases are part of a recurring climate pattern that occurs across this section of the Pacific, known as the El Nino-Southern Oscillation (**ENSO**).
- The air circulation as a result of difference in surface pressure and temperature over the western and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean is known as **Walker circulation**.
- The two conditions influence weather events worldwide, including the Indian monsoon.
- It affects precipitation in few areas, drought can be widespread affecting southern Africa, India, Southeast Asia, Australia.
- El Nino is known to suppress rainfall during the monsoon months in India.
- During an El Niño, the trade winds weaken in the central and western Pacific.
- The clouds and rainstorms associated with warm ocean waters also shift toward the east.
- So, the beginning of dissipation of El Nino is a good news for India which is hoping to get good rainfall in the remaining part of the monsoon season.
- Other effects around the world include,
 - i. Flooding in South America
 - ii. Drought in Indonesia and Australia
 - iii. Warmer, drier winters in the eastern and midwestern US
 - iv. Wetter winters in California and the Southwest
 - v. Declining fisheries
 - vi. More hurricanes in the Pacific, fewer in the Atlantic
 - vii. Higher global temperatures

Kartarpur Corridor

- It is a road link for Sikh pilgrims to visit the famous Kartarpur Sahib Gurdwara in Pakistan.
- It would link two important holy sites related to the founder of Sikhism located in Pakistan and in India.
- The 16th century Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur is on the banks of the river Ravi.
- The gurudwara was established by the first Sikh Guru in 1522.
- It was here that Guru Nanak assembled a Sikh community and lived for 18 years until his death in 1539.
- Recently it had been agreed between two countries for a visa-free Kartarpur corridor to operate daily with a limit of 5,000 pilgrims per day.
- This would also be open to pilgrims of Indian origin who are citizens of other countries.
- A four-lane Highway will connect Dera Baba Nanak from Gurdaspur-Amritsar Highway to International border.
- The length of the corridor is about 4 km, 2 km on either side of the International Border.
- It comes at the time of 550th birth anniversary year of Guru Nanak.



Ujh and Basantar Bridge

- The Ujh and Basantar are two strategically important bridges inaugurated near International Border in J&K.
- The bridges have been built under Project Sampark, by Border Roads Organisation (BRO).
- The 1 Km long 'Ujh bridge in Kathua, over Ujh river is the longest bridge constructed by BRO.
- The 617 m Basantar bridge in Samba has been constructed over Basantar river.



- These bridges will provide smooth connectivity and are vital for the army for deployment on border areas.
- The BRO develops and maintains road networks in India's border areas and friendly neighboring countries.
- It functions under 'Ministry of Defense'.

Lightning Strike

- 29 people have been killed by lightning over the past 36 hours in Bihar.
- India sees 2000-2500 lightning deaths every year on average.
- Lightning is the biggest contributor to accidental deaths due to natural causes.
- It is a rapid, massive discharge of electricity in the atmosphere, some of which is directed towards the Earth's surface.
- It is an electrical discharge caused by imbalances between storm clouds and the ground, or within the clouds themselves.
- Occurrences of lightning are not tracked in India, as not enough data for scientists to work with.
- As water vapour moves upward in the cloud, the falling temperature causes it to condense.
- As they move to temperatures below zero degrees celsius, the water droplets change into small ice crystals.
- They continue to move up, gathering mass until they are so heavy that they start to fall to Earth.
- This leads to a system in which, simultaneously, smaller ice crystals are moving up and bigger crystals are coming down.
- Collisions triggers the release of electrons, a process that is very similar to the generation of sparks of electricity.
- This process results in a situation in which the top layer of the cloud gets positively charged, while the middle layer is negatively charged.
- The electrical potential difference between the two layers is huge, of the order of a billion to 10 billion volts.
- In very little time, a massive current, of the order of 100000 million amperes, starts to flow between the layers.
- While the Earth is a good conductor of electricity, it is electrically neutral.
- However, in comparison to the middle layer of the cloud, it becomes positively charged.
- As a result, about 15%-20% of the current gets directed towards the Earth as well.
- It is this flow of current that results in damage to life and property on Earth.
- Lightning rarely hits people directly, people are most commonly struck by what are called "ground currents".
- The electrical energy, after hitting a large object (such as a tree) on Earth, spreads laterally on the ground for some distance.
- The people in this area receive electrical shocks.
- It becomes more dangerous if the ground is wet or if there is metal or other conducting material on it.
- Water is a conductor, and many people are struck by lightning while standing in flooded paddy fields.
- Taking shelter under a tree is dangerous, lying flat on the ground too, can increase risks.
- Grounded buildings offer protection but occupants who uses a landline phone may be shocked by conducted electricity.

16. GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

Van Dhan Vikas Kendras

- It is an initiative of the 'Ministry of Tribal Affairs' and TRIFED.
- It seeks to improve the livelihood of tribal population by harnessing the incomes through wealth of forest.
- 'Van Dhan Vikas Karyakram' is primarily a component under the Mechanism for marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP).
- Marketing is done through Minimum Support Price (MSP).
- 'Van Dhan Vikas Kendras' will provide skill upgradation and capacity building to the traditional knowledge of tribal people.
- It seeks to convert the tribal wisdom into a remunerative economic activity.
- MFP is a major source of livelihood for tribals living in forest areas.
- Tribals derive 20-40% of their annual income from MFP.
- So, this will help in optimum utilization of natural resources and provide sustainable MFP based livelihood for tribals.
- A typical Van Dhan Vikas Kendra shall constitute of 10 tribal Van Dhan Vikas Self Help Groups (SHG).
- The grass root level procurement of MFP is proposed to be undertaken through SHG.
- SHGs shall be appropriately trained on sustainable harvesting, primary processing & value addition of MFP.

Poshan Abhiyaan

- The POSHAN Abhiyaan (National Nutrition Mission) is a flagship programme of the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD).
- It aims to achieve improvement in nutritional status of Children (0-6 years), Adolescent Girls, Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers.
- The NNM is an apex body which monitors, fixes targets and guides the nutrition related interventions across the Ministries.
- It targets to reduce stunting, undernutrition, anemia and reduce low birth weight by 2%, 2%, 3% and 2% per annum respectively.
- Mission 25 by 2022 – Although it targets to reduce stunting by 2%, Mission would strive to achieve reduction in Stunting from 38.4% (NFHS-4) to 25% by 2022.
- Behavior change communication is the key component for converting it into Jan Andolan (People's movement).
- The Government of India and UNICEF have jointly signed the "Country Programme 2018-2022".
- The goal of the country programme is to contribute to national efforts to enable all children, especially the most disadvantaged, to have their rights progressively fulfilled.
- To develop their full potential in an inclusive and protective society.
- UNICEF provides technical support to MWCD for the Programme.
- It is also supporting in the following matters:
 1. In designing of all guidelines.
 2. Preparing Posters and Hoardings
 3. Preparation of audio visual.
 4. In preparation and designing of Jan Andolan Guidelines and
 5. In preparation of Dashboard/Google link for Jan Andolan.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the programme will be anchored in the principles of results-based management and guided by verifiable data and statistics.

Compensatory Afforestation (CA)



- Telangana woman forest officer, on plantation drive, as a part of compensatory afforestation for the at Kaleshwaram project site was thrashed by a mob.
- It refers to **afforestation and regeneration activities** carried out as a way of compensating for forest land diverted to non-forest purposes.
- As per the **Forest (Conservation) Act 1980**, whenever a forest land is to be diverted for non-forestry purposes, the equivalent non forest land has to be identified for compensatory afforestation.
- In case, non-forest land for CA is not available in the same district, non-forest land for CA is to be identified anywhere else in the State/Union.
- Any project proponent, government or private must apply for forest clearance from Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), before the conversion of land take place.
- If clearance is given, then compensation for the lost forest land is also to be decided by the ministry and the regulators.
- The scheme for compensatory afforestation should contain the following details,
 - 1) Details of equivalent non-forest or degraded forest land identified for raising compensatory afforestation.
 - 2) Delineation of proposed area on a suitable map.
 - 3) Agency responsible for afforestation.
 - 4) Details of work schedule proposed for compensatory afforestation.
 - 5) Cost structure of plantation, provision of funds and the mechanism to ensure that the funds will be utilised for raising afforestation.
 - 6) Details of proposed monitoring mechanism.
- **National CAMPA Advisory Council** has been established as per the Supreme Court order with the following mandate,
 - 1) Lay down broad guidelines for State CAMPA.
 - 2) Facilitate scientific, technological and other assistance that may be required by State CAMPA.
 - 3) Make recommendations to State CAMPA based on a review of their plans and programmes.
 - 4) Provide a mechanism to State CAMPA to resolve issues of an inter-state or Centre-State character.
- **State CAMPA** has been constituted across the states.
- The State CAMPA would administer the amount received from the Adhoc CAMPA and utilize the funds collected for undertaking compensatory afforestation.
- The prime task of **State CAMPA** would be regenerating natural forests and building up the institution engaged in this task in the State Forest Department.
- The government enacted **Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act 2016** to provide a proper institutional mechanism for compensatory afforestation matters.
- It established the National Compensatory Afforestation Fund under the Public Account of India, and a State Compensatory Afforestation Fund under the Public Account of each state.
- The act also provides for annual audit of the accounts by the Comptroller and Auditor General.
- The funds for CA are to be recovered from the user agencies on the basis of the rates fixed by the State Forest Department.
- The money received is to be used as per site specific schemes submitted by the State along with the approved proposals for diversion of forest land.
- To compensate for the loss of tangible as well as intangible benefits from the forest lands which has been diverted for non forest use, the **net present value** of the land is to be recovered from the user to adequately compensate for the loss of natural forests.
- Net Present Value (NPV) of the diverted forest is calculated for a period of 50 years.
- An expert committee calculates the NPV for every patch of forest.



- Availability of these funds will help in creation of more than 15 crores man-days of direct employment, as per the Government data (press release dated 28 July 2016)
- Majority of employment will be generated in tribal dominated and backward areas of the country.
- It will thus help in improvement of the overall living standards of the forest dependent communities.

Kisan Suvidha Mobile App

- It is an **omnibus mobile app** developed to help farmers by providing relevant information to them quickly.
- The following services and information are available on the App,
 - Weather Forecast
 - Extreme Weather Alert
 - Market Price of commodities
 - Dealers - Fertilizer, Seeds, Pesticide, Seeds etc.
 - Plant protection for 12 major crops
 - Agro advisories
 - Soil Health card
 - Soil testing labs
 - Cold Stores & Godowns
 - Vet Labs & Diagnostic Centres
 - Crop Insurance
 - Government Schemes
- A farmer can also get extreme weather alerts like hailstorms or unseasonal rains.
- It is developed by Department of Agriculture & Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
- The app is available in 9 languages, English, Hindi, Tamil, Gujarati, Oriya, Punjabi, Marathi, Bengla and Telugu.

Operation Thirst

- The 'Railway Protection Force'(RPF), Ministry of Railways launched "Operation Thirst".
- It is an all India Drive to crack down selling of unauthorised Packaged Drinking Water.
- Almost all major stations over Indian Railway were covered during this operation.
- The bottles of unauthorised Packaged Drinking Water (PDW) have been seized under section 144 and section 153 of **Indian Railway Act**.

International Cooperation Scheme

- The Scheme is implemented by 'Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises'(MSME).
- It's **objective**,
 1. is to enhance the competency of MSMEs,
 2. Capturing new markets for their products,
 3. exploring new technologies for improving manufacturing capacity.
- The Scheme covers the following activities,
 1. Visit of MSME business delegations to other countries to international exhibitions, trade fairs for exploring new areas of technology up-gradation, facilitating joint ventures.
 2. Holding international Conferences and Seminars on topics and themes of interest to the Indian MSMEs.



3. Visit and participation by Indian MSMEs for improving market for MSMEs products, foreign collaborations.
- It will provide financial assistance on reimbursement basis to the eligible,
 1. State/Central Government Organisations
 2. Registered Industry Associations,
 3. societies/trusts associated with promotion and development of MSME sector.
 - Government Institutions and Registered Industry Associations associated with promotion and development of MSME sector can apply for financial assistance.

Jalyukta Shivar

- It is the flagship programme of the Maharashtra government.
- It aims to make 5,000 villages free of water scarcity.
- It target the drought-prone areas by improving water conservation measures to make them more water sustainable.
- It also proposed to strengthen and rejuvenate water storage capacity.
- Dedicated committees were formed to assist in construction of watersheds like farm ponds, cement nullah bunds alongside rejuvenating the existing water bodies in the villages.
- More than 11,000 villages where Jalyukta Shivar was introduced are declared drought-free.
- The water storage capacity has been improved and the overall agriculture productivity jumped up 30 to 50 % in these areas.

National Bamboo Mission (NBM)

- It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme under **Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare**.
- Bamboo is a versatile group of plants which is capable of providing ecological, economic and livelihood to the people.
- The restructured NBM focuses to supplement farm income with the development of complete value chain of bamboo sector and link growers with markets.
- Its Objectives are,
 1. To increase the area under bamboo plantation in non forest Government and private lands.
 2. To improve post-harvest management through establishment of innovative primary processing units and market infrastructure.
 3. To promote product development by assisting R&D, entrepreneurship & business models at MSME level.
 4. To rejuvenate the under developed bamboo industry in India.
 5. To promote skill development, capacity building, awareness generation for development of bamboo sector.
 6. To realign efforts so as to reduce dependency on import of bamboo and bamboo products by improved productivity.
- The Mission would adopt the following strategies,
 1. Development of bamboo in limited States where it has social, commercial and economical advantage
 2. Production of genetically superior planting material
 3. Adoption of end to end solution.
 4. Capacity building.
 5. Set up National, State and sub-State level structures, to ensure adequate returns and eliminate middlemen

- For popularizing use of bamboo & bamboo based products, seminars, conferences, awareness campaign at National, State & District Levels are organised under the restructured NBM.
- Awareness is also created through print and electronic media.

Solar Charkha Mission

- It is the employment generating venture of Ministry of MSME to train rural people in weaving.
- The looms and spindles will be completely powered by Solar energy.
- It is being implemented by Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC).
- Objectives of the mission,
 - To ensure inclusive growth by generation of employment, especially for women and youth.
 - Sustainable development through solar charkha clusters in rural areas.
 - To leverage low-cost, innovative technologies, boost rural economy etc
 - The geographical distribution of the clusters covers throughout the country.
 - At least 10% clusters located in the North Eastern Region (NER), J&K and hilly states.

Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana (ABVKY)

- It is to financially support those who lost their jobs and were covered under the Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948.
- It benefits mainly to formal sector Insured Persons' (IP).
- It was launched by 'ESI Corporation' under 'Ministry of Labour & Employment'.
- The cash benefit will be of 25% of the average per day earning during the previous four contribution periods.
- It is payable in case of unemployment or during a search for new engagement.
- The scheme will be funded by the employees themselves from their ESI contribution.
- It is to be paid up to maximum 90 days of unemployment once in lifetime.
- It will be applicable to all factories and establishments employing at least 10 workers.

Swadesh Darshan Scheme

- It is a flagship scheme of Ministry of Tourism.
- It is for an integrated development of theme based tourist circuits in the country.
- The following thematic circuits have been identified, for development namely,
 - North-East India Circuit, Buddhist Circuit,
 - Himalayan Circuit, Coastal Circuit, Krishna Circuit,
 - Desert Circuit, Tirtankar circuit, Tribal Circuit,
 - Eco Circuit, Wildlife Circuit, Rural Circuit,
 - Spiritual Circuit, Sufi circuit, Ramayana Circuit and Heritage Circuit.
- Recently the sanctioned project in Andhra Pradesh, Kakinada Hope Island has been developed as a world Class Coastal & Eco Tourism Circuit.
- The Buddhist Circuit of Shalihundam in A.P and the Coastal Circuit of Sri Potti Sriramalu, Nellore are at stage of completion.
- The scheme would result in increased tourist inflow thereby creating employment opportunities for the local community.
- It is different from "PRASAD" scheme of Ministry of Tourism.



- PRASAD focus on holistic development, beautification and rejuvenation of the identified sites.

17. NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

New Space India Ltd. (NSIL)

- The Public Sector Enterprise, “**New Space India Ltd. (NSIL)**” has been incorporated as a **new commercial arm** of **Department of Space**, as announced in the Budget 2019-20.
- It will commercialise ISRO’s space products like launch vehicles, Transfer of Technology (TOT) and marketing of space products.
- It will tap the benefits of the Research & Development carried out by ISRO.
- It will be responsible for manufacturing of Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) and Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) through technology transfer mechanisms.
- It will develop private entrepreneurship in space related technologies.
- **NSIL** will act in the presence of another commercial arm of ISRO, “**Antrix**”, which has been carrying out all the commercial business of the **ISRO**.
- India is currently processing its ‘**Space Activities Bill**’ to align its liability in outer space with international standard.
- This means that in case any Indian space objects cause damage to another (natural or man-made) object in space, India will have a financial plan in place.

Gaganyaan - National Advisory Council

- Gaganyaan is a India’s manned mission to space.
- It is a crewed orbital spacecraft which is expected to carry three people into the space for seven days.
- The mission is on track to be realized by the 75th Independence day or earlier.
- A “**Gaganyaan National Advisory Council**” has been created with members from different institutions and industries.
- The council comprises of,
 1. Secretaries of Department of Space, Science and Technology, Defence Research and Development, Scientific and Industrial Research
 2. Principal Scientific Advisor to PM
 3. Senior Officials from Armed Forces, Indian Coast Guard
 4. Former Chairman of ISRO
 5. Member of Space Commission
 6. Former Director of Aeronautical Development Agency
 7. Former Indian Astronaut
 8. Directors of Premier Academic and Research Institutions and Heads of various Indian Industries.
- The council will discuss on the overall project status of Gaganyaan, covering technical details as well as collaboration with various national stake holders.
- It set priorities at various National Institutions including Industries to accomplish Gaganyaan.

NIA

- The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has been constituted under the NIA Act, 2008.
- It was set up in 2009 in the wake of the Mumbai terror attack.

- It acts as the Central Counter Terrorism Law Enforcement Agency.
- It functions under Ministry of Home Affairs.
- The agency is empowered to deal with terror related crimes across states without special permission from the states.
- It aims to set the standards of excellence in counter terrorism and other national security related investigations at the national level, matching the best international standards.
- It strives towards developing a highly trained, partnership oriented workforce to excel in its objective.

BIS

- The **Bureau of Indian Standards Act** 2016 was notified by Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution.
- The Act establishes the 'Bureau of Indian Standards' (BIS) as the National Standards Body of India.
- It has been established for a harmonious development of the activities of standardization, marking and quality certification of goods
- It has a enabling provisions for the Government to bring under compulsory certification regime for any goods of any industry, process, system or service which it considers necessary.
- BIS is involved in various activities includes,
 1. Standards Formulation
 2. Product Certification Scheme
 3. Compulsory Registration Scheme
 4. Foreign Manufacturers Certification Scheme
 5. Hall Marking Scheme
 6. Laboratory Services
 7. Laboratory Recognition Scheme
 8. Sale of Indian Standards
 9. Consumer Affairs Activities
 10. Promotional Activities
 11. Training Services, National & International level
 12. Information Services
- The Bureau is a licensing authority for quality standards.
- The Bureau shall establish Indian Standards in relation to any goods, article, process, system.
- The **BIS Standard Mark (ISI Mark/Hallmark)** is a quality/Purity mark and has established its brand image.
- A hallmark will be used to certify precious metal articles including silver, gold, platinum, and palladium or their alloys.
- It indicates a proportionate content of the precious metal in the article, as per the Indian standard.
- The Bureau may recall a good or article which is already out for sale, if its convinced that the good does not conform to the requirement of a particular standard.
- Some of the important initiatives taken for effective implementation of the BIS Act, 2016 are,
 1. Under the new BIS (Hallmarking) Regulations, government has notified "Gold jewellery and artefacts" and "Silver jewellery and artefacts" to be marked with Hallmark.
 2. Under the BIS (Conformity Assessment) Regulations, provides for multiple types of simplified conformity assessment schemes including Self Declaration Of Conformity (SDOC)
 3. Penal provisions for better and effective compliance.

4. Guideline for procedure to be followed by the line Ministries for making the use of a mark under licence or certificate of conformity compulsory.
- New thrust areas identified in standardization are.
 1. Alternate fuels
 2. E-mobility
 3. Medical Devices
 4. Smart Cities
 5. Digital Technologies
 6. New and Renewable energy.
 - A company which commits an offence, the persons responsible for or in charge of the company will be presumed to be guilty.
 - An appeal against an order regarding the granting of a license or certificate of conformity, or compounding of offences, may be made to the Director General of the Bureau.
 - A further appeal against the order of the Director General may then be made to the central government.

18. INTERNATIONAL ISSUES AND EVENTS

Group of Twenty (G20)

- The 14th edition of the **G-20 Summit** is currently underway in **Japan's Osaka**.
- **G20** is a global forum comprised of twenty of the world's largest economies.
- It focuses on addressing global economic challenges.
- Its membership includes **19 countries** and **European Union**.

G20 members



Note: The European Union is also a member

BBC

- The members are divided into **5 groups**, consisting of a maximum of four states for choosing the President:
 1. **Group 1:** Australia, Canada, United States, Saudi Arabia.
 2. **Group 2:** India, Russia, South Africa, Turkey.
 3. **Group 3:** Argentina, Brazil, Mexico.
 4. **Group 4:** France, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom.
 5. **Group 5:** China, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea.
- In addition to the member countries Spain is a permanent guest and always participates in the G20 summits. Every year, the host country also chooses other guests.



- G20 was conceived in 1999, while the repercussions of the Asian financial crisis of 1997 still lasted.
- In a **G7** meeting, it was decided to expand the group and make it more **representative in order to generate policies that have an impact in the economy.**
- So a new forum of finance ministers and presidents of Central Banks, which would later become the **G20.**
- With the global financial crisis of 2008, the **G20** became the main instrument and thereafter, **Presidents and Heads of State joined the G20.**
- The group **does not have permanent offices or employees.**
- The **President** is chosen by a rotation system amongst the member countries.
- There are **two working channels of G20,**
 1. **Finance Channel** - It covers meetings between **finance** ministers and central bank presidents.
 2. **The Sherpas Channel** - It covers **non-financial issues**, such as political commitment, the fight against corruption, development, gender equality, trade and energy.
- Civil societies through, **Affinity groups** participate in the **G20** that seeks to enrich submit.
- The key regional organizations like ASEAN, African Union, OECD, ILO are usually invited to participate and are represented by the country that holds the presidency.
- In the recent submit in **Osaka**, India held talks with member countries to address the Trade and Security issues.

Japan Resumes Commercial Whaling

- Japan resumes commercial whaling after three decades as it withdrew from the **International Whaling Commission (IWC)** last year.
- Whale hunting was **banned in 1986** by the IWC due to dwindling whale populations, with a worldwide moratorium placed on the practice to allow the species to rebound.
- But Japan then began what it called **scientific whaling.**
- Japan has been whaling in their own waters every year, despite the moratorium on whaling in 1986.
- Whaling is deeply ingrained in Japanese culinary culture and the Whale meat also served as critical sources of protein in the post-war period as the nation grappled with poverty.
- The Japanese government was trying hard to persuade the IWC to allow its commercial whaling operations.
- IWC refused to budge and rejected the proposal which made Japan to move out of IWC.
- The World Wide Fund for Nature estimates nearly 32,000 whales have been killed by whaling since the moratorium was imposed.
- Iceland and Norway are the only other nations which allows commercial whaling.
- Whales are directly affected by climate change, plastic pollution, oil exploration, industrial fishing and habitat loss.

19. ECONOMY

Sovereign Gold Bonds scheme

- Sovereign Gold Bonds (SGB) are government securities denominated in grams of gold.



- It's **objective** is to reduce the demand for physical gold and shift a part of the domestic savings of gold into financial savings.
- The bonds are denominated in units of 1 gram of gold and multiples thereof.
- Persons **resident in India** as defined under Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 are eligible to invest in SGB.
- Eligible investors include individuals, HUFs, trusts, universities and charitable institutions.
- Bonds are sold through Nationalised Banks, Scheduled Private Banks, Scheduled Foreign Banks, designated Post Offices, Stock Holding Corporation of India and the authorised stock exchanges either directly or through their agents.
- Minimum investment in the bonds is **1 gram** with a maximum limit of subscription of **500 gram** per person per fiscal year.
- The maximum limit of subscription is 4 kg for individual and Hindu Undivided Family (**HUF**) and 20 kg for **trusts** and similar entities per fiscal.
- Investors are assured of the market value of gold at the time of maturity and periodical interest.
- The Bonds bear **interest** at the rate of **2.5%** (fixed rate) per annum on the amount of initial investment.
- The bonds are held in the books of the RBI or in demat form eliminating risk of loss of script.
- The **tenor** of the bond is **8 years**, early encashment/redemption of the bond is allowed after 5th year from the date of issue.
- The bond will be tradable on Exchanges, if held in demat form. It can also be transferred or gifted to any other eligible investor.
- It can also be used as **collateral** for loans from banks, financial Institutions and Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFC).
- Interest on the Bonds will be **taxable** as per the provisions of the Income-tax Act, 1961.
- **Tax Deducted at Source** (TDS) is not applicable on the bond. However, it is the responsibility of the bond holder to comply with the tax laws.
- The SGB Scheme 2019-20 (Series II) will be opened for subscription for the period July 08-12, 2019.

Buyback tax

- Union Budget has proposed to **tax buyback of shares** by companies at **20%** . .
- Currently buyback tax is applicable only for unlisted companies.
- A buyback is essentially a scheme by which a company repurchases a certain amount of its outstanding shares.
- It was felt that many companies were avoiding dividend payouts because of the 'dividend distribution tax' (DDT).
- So, the companies were returning cash to shareholders through share buybacks.
- The proposed tax on share buybacks is aimed at plugging this loophole.
- Instead of declaring dividends, the promoters were using the buyback route to enhance their wealth and effectively increasing their shareholding in the company.
- In this process, the government loses, as it was not getting paid the DDT.
- So the proposed tax may nudge companies to payout surpluses through dividends rather than resort to buybacks.
- This would plug the loophole and promoters now have to pay tax whichever way they go, be it dividend payout or the buyback.

Cooperative Societies

- A co-operative society is a **voluntary association** of individuals having common needs who join hands for the achievement of common economic interest.
- Its aim is to serve the interest of the poorer sections of society through the principle of self-help and mutual help.
- People come forward as a group, pool their individual resources, utilise them in the best possible manner, and derive some common benefit out of it.
- A Co-operative Society can be formed as per the provisions of the **Co-operative Societies Act, 1912**.
- It is a Central Act. However, '**Cooperative Societies**' is a **State Subject**.
- **Right to form a 'Cooperative Society' is made a 'Fundamental Right' under 97th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2011.**
- At least ten persons above of 18 years, having the capacity to enter into a contract with common economic objectives, like farming, weaving, etc. can form a Co-operative Society.
- At the State level, the Registrar of Cooperative Societies (RCS) of respective States exercises control over the Cooperative Banks.
- However, the banking functions of the Cooperative Banks are regulated by RBI under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.
- The Government has taken the following measures to revive the **Short Term Cooperative Credit Structure (STCCS)**,
 1. Based on the recommendation of **Vaidyanathan Committee**, government implemented a revival package for STCCS.
 2. It encompasses legal and institutional reforms, measures to improve the quality of management and financial assistance as necessary for their democratic, self-reliant and efficient functioning.
 3. Recognizing the need to revamp ailing Cooperative Banks so that they are able to cater to the needs of farmers at their doorstep.
- To enable Cooperative Banks to meet the crop loan and term loan requirements of farmers, Government has set up two Funds in NABARD.

Defence Industrial Corridor

- Proposal in the Budget to set up **Defence Industrial Corridor** in Tamil Nadu and in Uttar Pradesh.
- It refers to a route along which domestic productions of defence equipment by public sector, private sector and MSMEs are lined up to enhance the operational capability of the defence forces.
- Development of these corridors will help in accelerated growth and regional industry agglomeration.
- It will encourage domestic production and benefit all small and medium manufacturers along the corridor.
- The locations of these corridors are strategically decided by the Defence Ministry.
- The proposed corridor in Tamil Nadu will connect Kattupalli port, Chennai, Tiruchirapalli, Coimbatore, Hosur and Bengaluru.
- In U.P it is planned through Agra, Aligarh, Chitrakoot, Jhansi, Kanpur and Lucknow.

Mutual Funds to NBFCs

- According to analysis by CARE Ratings, the overall exposure of Mutual Funds to NBFCs has declined.
- It had declined from 19% (of the total funds) in July 2018 to 14.8% in June 2019.
- The fall is much steeper in the exposure of MFs to the '**Commercial papers**' of NBFCs as against '**Corporate debt**' of NBFCs.
- The recent crisis in the NBFC sector, lead to the overall decline of Mutual funds to NBFCs.
- **Mutual Fund** - It is a type of financial vehicle which collects money from investors and invests the money on their behalf.

- The investment can be in securities such as stocks, bonds, money market instruments, and other assets.
- **NBFC** – ‘Non-Banking Financial Company’ is a company registered under the **Companies Act, 1956**.
- They are the financial institutions that offer various banking services but do not have a banking license.
- They can lend and make investments but cannot accept demand deposits. cannot issue cheques drawn on itself.
- They are of two types, Deposit-taking NBFCs and Non-deposit taking NBFCs.
- NBFCs whose asset size is of Rs 500 cr or more are considered as ‘systemically important NBFCs’.
- **Commercial paper (CP)** - It is a **short-term** debt instrument issued by companies.
- It is generally to raise funds for a time period up to one year.
- It is an **unsecured** money market instrument.
- Individuals, banking companies, other corporate bodies and non-resident Indians and FII can invest in CPs.
- **Corporate debt - Debt** markets are often called as "**bond markets.**"
- These are securities issued by private and public corporations.
- It is to raise money for a variety of purposes, such as building a new plant, growing the business, generally for a **long-term**.
- The company promises to return the principal money on a specified maturity date.
- It also pays interest in regular instalments, in most cases, every six months or once a year.
- They are less safe than government bonds.

20. ENVIRONMENT

Vembanad Lake

- A group of fishermen have been conducting plastic collection drive every year to get the lake rid of plastic waste in Vembanad Lake.
- The Lake is also known as ‘Vembanad Kayal’, ‘Vembanad Kol’, ‘Punnamada Lake’ and ‘Kochi Lake’.
- It is the largest in Kerala and the longest in India.
- The longest railway line in India, Vembanad Rail Bride is also named after the lake.
- ‘Nehru Trophy Boat Race’ is held every year in Vembanad Lake.
- It is the ‘Wetland of international importance’, as defined by the **Ramsar Convention**.
- The ‘**Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary**’ is located on the east coast of the lake.
- It is included in the ‘National Lake Conservation Programme’ (NLCP) for conservation and management of the lake.
- Plastic pollution is the major threat to the lake ecosystem and to the entire biodiversity,
- So, houseboats and resorts in the district have started replacing single-use plastic water bottles with glass jars and glass bottles.
- Other Ramsar sites in Kerala,





1. Ashtamudi Wetland
2. Sasthamkotta Lake

HT Bt cotton – GM Cotton

- **Herbicide-tolerant Bt (HT Bt) Cotton** is genetically modified cotton crop.
- It is also known as **BG-III cotton**, an advanced version of **Bt Cotton**, as it takes care of weeds problem.
- Herbicide is like a poison which is used to destroy unwanted vegetation.
- They are designed to tolerate specific broad-spectrum herbicides, which kill the surrounding weeds, but leave the cultivated crop intact.
- The herbicide-tolerant trait was developed and commercialised by US-based multinational seed giant Monsanto.
- Currently, **Bt-Cotton** is the only GM crop allowed to be grown in India.
- **Herbicide-Tolerant Bt-cotton** has unapproved genes which is not permissible in India.
- The herbicide-resistant gene in HT cotton can spread through pollen into biodiversity system leading to transformation of weeds into super weeds.
- It will threaten growth and yields of all crops in future and leads to health hazards.
- But farmers in Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Maharashtra cultivates the unapproved HTBT cotton, as they want improved seeds and technology for better crops.
- In the absence of government approval, production of **HT Bt cotton** is illegal.

Coastal Regulation Zone

- The Bombay High Court has quashed the Environment Ministry's Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) clearance for the southern stretch of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's (BMC's) Coastal Road project.
- The BMC has proposed a coastal road along the western coast of the city.
- According to the BMC, the main purpose is to ease the congestion on the city's roads.
- The project site falls under the **Coastal Regulations Zone 1 category**.
- So the project's critics also say it will destroy fishing areas, leading to loss of livelihood for fishermen.
- Coastal Regulation Zone (**CRZ**) are the notification for regulation of activities in the coastal area.
- It was issued under the **Environment Protection Act, 1986** by **Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF)**.
- As per the notification, the coastal land up to 500m from the High Tide Line (HTL) and a stage of 100m along banks of creeks, estuaries, backwater and rivers subject to tidal fluctuations, is called the Coastal Regulation Zone(CRZ).
- CRZ along the country has been placed in four categories.
- **CRZ I - Ecologically Sensitive Areas**
 1. They lie between low and high tide line.
 2. These areas are essential in maintaining the ecosystem of the coast.
 3. These include national parks/marine parks, sanctuaries, reserve forests, mangroves and coral reefs.
 4. Exploration of natural gas and extraction of salt are permitted
- **CRZ II - Shore Line Areas**
 1. The areas that have been developed up to or close to the shoreline which fall within the Municipal limits.
 2. Unauthorized structures are not allowed to construct in this zone.



- **CRZ III - Undisturbed Area**, has been divided into CRZ- IIIA and CRZ- III B in the **CRZ Notification 2018**,
 1. Rural and Urban localities which fall outside I and II.
 2. **CRZ - III A** - it Includes those areas where population density is more than 2161 per sq km as per the 2011 census.
 3. Such areas shall have a No Development Zone of 50 meters from the HTL as against 200 meters stipulated in the CRZ Notification, 2011
 4. **CRZ - III B** - it includes all the other areas of CRZ- III where population density is below 2161 per sq km as per the 2011 census.
 5. Such areas shall continue to have an NDZ of 200 meters from the HTL.
 6. Only certain activities related to agriculture and some public facilities are allowed in this zone.
- **CRZ IV - Territorial Area**
 1. An area covered between Low Tide Line and 12 Nautical Miles seaward.
 2. Fishing and allied activities are permitted in this zone.
 3. Solid waste should be let off in this zone.
- **Shailesh Nayak committee** on CRZ recommended relaxation on the terms set up by the CRZ 2011 notification.
- The major objective behind the recommendations was to boost tourism, port construction and real estate.
- The projects which falls under the CRZ- I and CRZ- IV areas only require the approval of the Environment Ministry.
- States and the Union territories shall consider all other projects.

21. SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

High Methane Levels on Mars

- High amounts of **Methane** in the air on **Mars was rediscovered by Curiosity**.
- **This** lead to excitement whether this was an indication of life on the Red Planet.
- On Earth, methane (CH₄) is a naturally occurring gas.
- Most of the methane on **Earth** is produced in biological processes.
- However, methane can also be produced by abiotic processes as chemical reactions, found in rocks, springs and aquifers.
- Since many living organisms in Earth releases methane, the presence of methane in Mars is considered a potential indicator of life.
- **Curiosity** has an instrument called the **Sample Analysis at Mars** which is a **laser spectrometer** capable of measuring atmospheric composition.
- But it cannot definitively say whether the source of the methane is biological or geological.
- In most previous observations on **Mars**, the concentration of methane in the Martian air has been low (**7 parts per billion**).
- Last week's initial readings were an unprecedented **21 parts per billion**.
- But the the second reading had **fallen back** to less than **1 part per billion**.
- So this suggests that last week's methane detection was a transient **methane plume**.
- However scientists haven't been able to determine how long the spikes last or why they differ.



Thorium-Based Nuclear Reactors

- Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) has planned the use of large deposits of Thorium available in the country as a long-term option.
- India's three-stage nuclear power programme was formulated by **Homi Bhabha** in the 1950s to secure the country's long term energy independence.
- [The Three-Stage Nuclear Power Programme](#) are,
 - a. [Stage I – Pressurized Heavy Water Reactor \[PHWR\]](#)
 - b. [Stage II – Fast Breeder Reactor](#)
 - c. [Stage III – Thorium Based Reactors](#)
- Thorium as a viable and sustainable option in the Stage III.
- **India** has **20 Uranium (U238) -based nuclear reactors** producing **4,385 MW of electricity** already in operation and has another 6 under construction, 17 planned, and 40 proposed.
- The Fukushima disaster reminded the dangers inherent in Uranium-fueled nuclear reactors.
- The conversation, "nuclear good but uranium dangerous" leads towards a suitable alternative to Uranium as '**Thorium**'.
- Thorium sits in the same row as of Uranium on the periodic table, as Elements in the same row share characteristics.
- The key similarity is that both can absorb neutrons and transmute into fissile elements.
- That means Thorium could be used to fuel nuclear reactors, just like Uranium.
- It is more abundant in nature than uranium.
- It is not fissile on its own, which means reactions can be stopped when necessary.
- It produces waste products that are less radioactive, and generates more energy per ton.
- Also Thorium reactors do not produce plutonium, which is what needed to make a nuke.
- Most of the world's thorium exists as the useful isotope, which means it does not require enrichment.
- India is a home to a quarter of the world's known Thorium reserves and notably lacking in uranium resources.
- So India envisions meeting 30% of its electricity demand through thorium-based reactors by 2050.
- However it is not possible to build a nuclear reactor using Thorium (Thorium-232) alone due to its physical characteristics.
- Thorium has to be converted to Uranium-233 in a reactor before it can be used as fuel.
- Development of technologies pertaining to utilisation of Thorium has been a part of ongoing activities in Department of Atomic Energy.
- Efforts are currently on to enlarge the present Thorium related R&D work to a bigger scale towards development of technologies for Thorium based reactors.

Artificial Gravity

- A team from the University of Colorado is working on making a device which could create artificial gravity in space
- Artificial gravity is a force that simulates the effect of gravity in a spaceship.
- It is not caused by the attraction to the Earth but is instead caused by **acceleration** or **centrifugal force**.
- **Artificial gravity** or **rotational gravity**, is thus the appearance of a **centrifugal force** in a rotating frame of reference.
- The research centrifuge is called as '**Human Eccentric Rotator Device**' (**HERD**) and the device is compact enough to fit into a small room.
- A rotating circular space station can create artificial gravity.

- The rate of rotation is necessary to duplicate the Earth's gravity depends on the radius of the circle.
- Future astronauts heading into an **artificial-gravity room** to spend time on a small revolving system.
- It is build with the aim of counteracting the negative effects of weightlessness.

Chandrayaan-2 Mission

- India is aiming to be the 4th country to land on the lunar surface after the USA, Russia and China.
- ISRO will launch Chandrayaan-2, its second spacecraft to the moon on July 15, 2019.
- **Chandrayaan-1** was designed to just orbit the Moon and make observations, while **Chandrayaan-2** is created to land on the Moon.
- This mission is aimed at landing a rover near the **unexplored South Pole**.
- According to ISRO, there is a possibility of the presence of water in permanently shadowed areas around it.
- South Pole region also has craters that are cold traps and contain a fossil record of the early Solar System.
- Chandrayaan 2, has three important components — the Orbiter, the Lander 'Vikram', and Rover 'Pragyan'.
- The Chandrayaan will be tucked into the **GSLV Mk-III** rocket.
- It is also called as '**Baahubali**', the country's heaviest and most powerful rocket to date.
- It is a three-stage heavy-lift launch vehicle developed by ISRO.
- The vehicle has two solid strap-ons, a core liquid booster and a cryogenic upper stage.
- This mission will help us to better understand the origin and evolution of the moon.
- Studies of lunar topography, mineralogy, elemental abundance, and signatures of water ice are the prime objectives.
- The orbiter has 8 instruments fitted into it and 7 of them are India's.
- NASA has one payload onboard called the Laser Retroreflector Array (LRA).
- The '**Terrain Mapping Camera-2**'(TMC-2) will map the lunar surface and help to prepare 3D maps of it.
- The '**Miniature Synthetic Aperture Radar**'(Mini SAR) will also map the surface of water-ice in the South Pole and thickness of the lunar dust on the surface.
- The '**Dual Frequency Radio Science**'(DFRS) will study the density of the electrons in the moon's ionosphere.
- The orbiter has a high-resolution camera (OHRC) that ensures that the lander makes a safe touchdown on the lunar surface by taking 3D images of the landing site.
- The '**Solar X-ray Monitor**'(XSM) measures the intensity of the solar rays and the outer most part of the atmosphere or its corona.
- **CLASS** (Chandrayaan 2 Large Area Soft X-ray Spectrometer) measures the light absorbed by the Moon and will check for different metals that are present in its spectrum.
- Thermo-physical property of the lunar surface and seismic activities will also be measured.
- The orbiter will continue to orbit the Moon for a year, at an altitude of 100 kilometres.
- The Rover which is 6-wheeled, AI-powered and the Lander are designed to work for only 14 days (1 lunar day).

Ploonet

- When the moons of exoplanets break away from their own orbits, went rogue and acts like a planet, it is called "**Ploonet**."
- It gets its name from 'Planet + moon = **Ploonet**'.
- As the exoplanets move inward toward their suns, the orbits of their moons are often disrupted.

- So the moon may run away from their exoplanets and could become 'Ploonets', according to new study models.
- This is because of the combined gravitational forces of the planet and the star.
- This gravitational force would inject extra energy into the moon's orbit, pushing it farther from its planet until eventually it escapes.
- This process happens in every planetary system composed of a giant planet in a very close-in orbit.
- As for Earth's own Moon, it is a potential ploonet.
- It moves about 4cm farther away from Earth every year.
- Going at this rate, it won't break away from the Earth's orbit for about next 5 billion years.
- However, astronomers not yet confirmed the existence of a single exomoon, it just remains hypothetical in research papers.
- Criteria to classify any object as a "**Planet**", according to the **International Astronomical Union** are,
 - i. It needs to be in orbit around a any fully fledged star.
 - ii. It needs to have enough gravity to pull itself into a spherical shape.
 - iii. It has cleared the neighbourhood around its orbit

Tiangong-2

- Tiangong-2 ("Heavenly Palace") is a Chinese Space Laboratory.
- It is an experimental space station which carried out research and human operations in Low Earth Orbit (LEO).
- It was launched on September 2016 and it was has deorbited on July 19, 2019 spent over 1,000 days in orbit.
- It was brought down to Earth in a controlled fashion and burned up over the South Pacific ocean by China.
- It followed the Tiangong-1, China's first space station, which crashed into the southern Pacific Ocean on 2018.
- It deploys to space the first-ever 'Cold Atomic Fountain Clock' which has a higher precision than conventional atomic clocks.
- It detected 55 'gamma-ray bursts' by a device names POLAR installed on the spacecraft.
- It also docked a micro-satellite that took high-resolution pictures of the connected space lab and Shenzhou-11 manned spacecraft.

22. INDEX AND REPORT

Odisha's Rasagola - GI Tag

- Odisha gets GI tag for its version of Rasagola
- The name of the geographical indication will be read as "Odisha Rasagola".
- West Bengal got GI tag for its 'Banglora Rasagola' which has been existing since 1863.
- Now both Odisha and West Bengal has GI Tag for their own version of Rasagola.
- The mention of the word 'rasagola' was found in the 15th Century Odia Dandi Ramayan written by the medieval poet 'Balaram Das'.
- It is made with chhena (cottage cheese) cooked in sugar syrup, which is very soft, juicy and non- chewy and can be swallowed without teeth pressure.
- In its 'Ajodhya Kanda', there is an elaborate descriptions of chhena and chhena- based products including rasagola.

- Odisha is celebrating the ‘Rasagola Dibasa’ every year on the day of ‘Niladri Bijē’ (Return of Lord Jagannath from Rath Yatra into the temple).
- The deities are offered Rasagola by servitors before entering the temple.

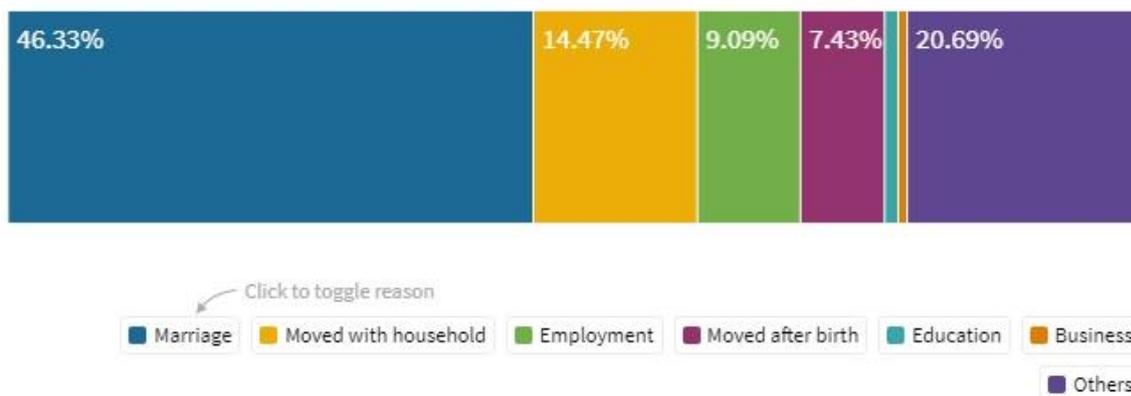
Global Innovation Index-2019

- It is an annual ranking that quantifies the state of national innovation ecosystem across countries.
- Its co-published by World intellectual property organisation (WIPO), Cornell University and INSEAD.
- The CII, Dassault Systèmes and the National Confederation of Industry (CNI) and SEBRAE are its Knowledge Partners.
- It ranked 129 economies based on 80 indicators ranging from intellectual property filing rates to mobile-application creation, education spending and scientific and technical publications.
- This year’s theme– “Creating Healthy Lives - The Future of Medical Innovation”.
- Switzerland is the world’s most-innovative country followed by Sweden, the U.S, the Netherlands and the U.K.
- India maintains its top place in the Central and Southern Asia region as the 52nd ranked (57th in 2018).
- India remains 2nd among middle-income economies in the quality of innovation.
- It maintains top ranks in indicators such as productivity growth and exports of services related to information and communication technologies.
- Bengaluru, Mumbai and New Delhi features in the GII ranking on the world’s top science and technology clusters.
- India lags in areas like,
 1. Overall quality of education,
 2. Access to information and communication technologies.
 3. Student to teacher ratio in secondary level education.
 4. Proportion of women with advanced degrees in the workforce.
- **GII 2019 Key Findings –**
 1. Middle-income economies especially in Asia are increasingly contributing to global R&D.
 2. Public R&D expenditures particularly in some high-income economies are growing slowly or not at all.
 3. Increased protectionism poses risks. It may lead to a slowdown of growth in innovation productivity.
 4. Innovation inputs and outputs are still concentrated in very few economies.
 5. Most top science and technology clusters are in the U.S., China and Germany.
 6. Brazil, India, Iran, the Russian Federation, and Turkey feature in the top 100 list.

Census Data on Migrations

- Census 2011 data on migration has been released recently.
- When a person is enumerated in census at a different place than her/his place of birth, then she/he is considered a ‘migrant’.
- Over 45.58 crore Indians were found to be “migrants” according to the Census 2011.
- The bulk of the migration takes place within individual states.
- Only 11.91% (5.43 crore) had moved to one state from another, while nearly 39.57 crore had moved within their states.
- In that, ‘Women’ comprised two-thirds of the total migrant population.

- Marriage and employment are the major reasons for migration.



- U.P and Bihar have a disproportionately high number of out-migrants.
- Migrants constitute more than one-third of the population in metros like Delhi and Mumbai.
- U.P has the highest share of out-migrants while Maharashtra has the highest share of in-migrants
- The 4 states U.P, Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh accounted for 50% of India's total inter-state migrants.
- The most common migration path was U.P to Delhi.
- U.P to Maharashtra and Karnataka to Maharashtra are also among the top migration paths.
- Gujarat, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh are among the top destinations to which people migrate.
- Among southern States, Karnataka to Andhra Pradesh and Kerala to Tamil Nadu are the most common migration patterns.
- Tamil Nadu had 16.5 lakh immigrants in Census 2011, the largest number in the south.
- The northeast States are among those with the lowest numbers of immigrants.
- The 8 northeast States together accounted for just 2% of the total immigrants.
- In Assam, illegal migrations from Bangladesh, where 64,117 peoples' last place of residence was in Bangladesh.
- About 38% of the migration was from rural to urban areas, while urban to urban migration accounted for the second highest 32%.

Child labour in India

- Government said that instances of child labour detected during 2014 to 2018 have reduced successively.
- “Child” as defined by the **Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986** is a person who has not completed the **age of 14** years.
- **International Labour Organisation (ILO)** defines the term ‘**Childlabour**’ as, “work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development.
- According to **2011 Census**, there were more than **10.2 million** children in the age group of 5 to 14-5 as **Child labour** which includes 6 million boys and 4.5 million girls.
- The **factors** that contribute to child labour includes the poverty and illiteracy, the family's social and economic circumstances, lack of access to basic and meaningful quality education and skills training.
- There are five states which are the India's biggest child labour employers- Uttar Pradesh, Bihar Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.
- As per 2011 Census, 1 in 11 children are working in India (5-18 years)

- 80% of the child labour in India is concentrated in rural areas

Year	Percentage of working children (5-14)			Total number of working children (5-14) (in millions)		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
2001	5.9	2.1	5.0	11.4	1.3	12.7
2011	4.3	2.9	3.9	8.1	2.0	10.1

*Source – Census 2001 and 2011

Distribution of working children by type of work in 2011

Area of work	Percentage	Numbers (in millions)
Cultivators	26.0	2.63
Agricultural labourers	32.9	3.33
Household industry workers	5.2	0.52
Other workers	35.8	3.62

*Source – Census 2011

Note: 'Other workers': Workers other than cultivators, agricultural labourers or workers in household industries

- ILO 2016 data indicates that there are 152 million working children in the world between 5-17 years, of which 23.8 million children are in India. So 16% of working children are in India.

Suicides in India

- NCRB released 'Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India' report.
- According to WHO, 'Suicide' is an emerging and a serious public health issue in India.
- The most vulnerable and affected age group is between 15-29 years.
- The suicide mortality rate in India is **15.7 per 1,00,000 population** in 2015, the global average is 10.7 per 1,00,000.
- The nation accounts for over a third of the world's annual female suicides and nearly a fourth of male suicides.
- The report lists 1,336,623 suicides across the country in 2015.
- **Maharashtra** tops the list with 16,970 suicides followed by **Tamil Nadu** 15,777 suicides and **West Bengal** (14602)

STATES WITH HIGHEST SUICIDE COUNTS, 2015

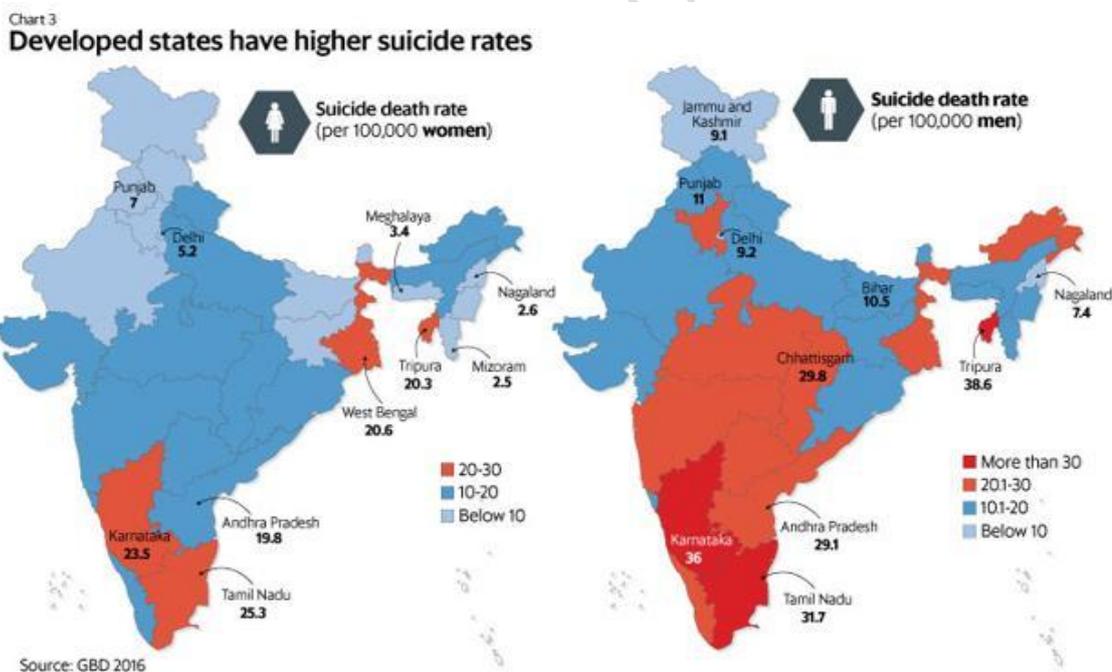
Maharashtra	16,970
Tamil Nadu	15,777
West Bengal	14,602
Karnataka	10,786
MP	10,293
Telangana	10,140
Kerala	7,692
Gujarat	7,246
Chhattisgarh	7,118
Andhra	6,226

OTHER LARGE STATES

UP	3,902	Bihar	516	Rajasthan	3,457
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Source for all data: 'Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India' (NCRB) via Home Ministry

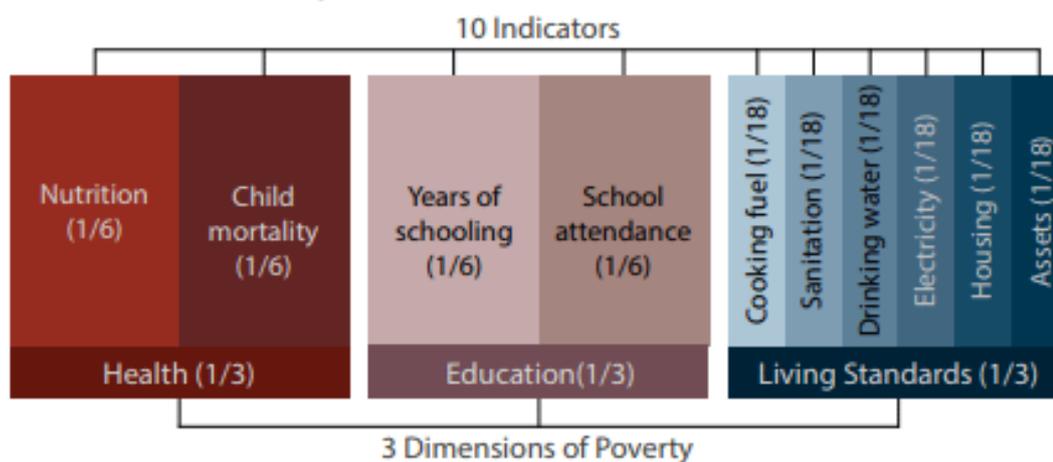
- If Indian states were countries, three states would have been in top 10 worst rates of suicides in the world.
- **Men** commit suicide at a higher rate than women across India but also India has the 6th highest **female** suicide death rate in the world.



- India's southern states are more developed, but also more suicide-prone.
- This follows a global pattern, with more developed states having higher suicide rates.
- In 2012, 80% of the suicide victims were literate, higher than the national average literacy rate of 74%
- The NCRB data show that one-third of the suicides in the country in 2015 were committed by young adults under age 30.
- **“The Mental Healthcare Act 2017”** decriminalizes the attempt to commit suicide, assuring adequate medical relief to those who attempt suicide, thus protecting them from the harsh aftermath.

Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)

- Global **MPI** report for 2019, released by UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI).
- It is an international measure of acute multidimensional poverty covering over 100 developing countries.
- It defines poor not only on the basis of income, but on other indicators, including poor health, poor quality of work and the threat of violence.
- The global MPI factors are measured using 10 indicators,



- The MPI assesses poverty at the individual level.
- If someone is deprived in a third or more of ten indicators, the global index identifies them as 'MPI poor'.
- About 1.3 billion people are 'multi-dimensionally poor' across the globe, according to the report.
- India has reduced MPI from 0.283 to 0.123 in a decade lifting 271 million people out of poverty in 10 years.
- The number of people living in multidimensional poverty has gone down from 690.55 million in 2005-06 to 369.55 million in 2015-16.
- It was found that Jharkhand has made the fastest improvement among Indian states in reducing poverty .
- Jharkhand reduced the incidence of multidimensional poverty from 74.9 % to 46.5 % between 2005-06 and 2015-16.
- Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh together accounted for 196 million MPI poor people more than half of all multidimensionally poor in India.
- The report also showed that children suffer poverty more intensely than adults and are deprived in all 10 indicators.

Jalan committee report

- It was set up to review the economic capital framework of the **RBI**.
- According to **Section 47 of the RBI Act**, profits of the RBI are to be transferred to the government, after making various contingency provisions.
- The contingency provisions includes public policy mandate of the RBI, financial stability considerations etc.
- The committee proposes transfer of RBI reserves to govt in tranches over 3-5 years.
- It recommended transferring of funds from both contingency and revaluation reserves to the government.
- The panel has also sought a 'period review' of the RBI capital framework.
- In the past, the issue of the ideal size of RBI's reserves was examined by three committees,
 1. **V Subrahmanyam** (1997)
 2. **Usha Thorat** (2004) and



3. Y H Malegam (2013).

- At present RBI continue with the recommendation of the Subrahmanyam panel.
- The RBI board did not accept the recommendation of other committees.
- For the year ending June 2018, RBI had total reserves of Rs 9.59 lakh crore.
- It comprises mainly currency and gold revaluation account (Rs 6.91 lakh crore) and contingency fund (Rs 2.32 lakh crore).
- The government was seeking Rs 3.6 lakh crore from the RBI.
- The transfer of surplus capital may help the government meet its fiscal deficit target.

23. DEFENCE

Varuna

- It is a **Indo-French Joint Naval Exercise**.
- It is held either in the Indian Ocean or Mediterranean sea with the aim of improving Indo-French coordination.
- The Indian Navy is represented by
 - 1) Aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya,
 - 2) destroyer INS Mumbai,
 - 3) the Teg-class frigate,
 - 4) INS Tarkash,
 - 5) the Shishumar-class submarine INS Shankul, and
 - 6) the Deepak-class fleet tanker INS Deepak.
- It is the largest ever joint exercise undertaken by the two navies.
- The exercise was conducted in two phases with first phase being held in **Goa**.
- The second sea phase is scheduled to be held at the end of May in **Djibouti**, located on the Horn of Africa.
- The exercise underscores the shared interests and commitment of both nations in promoting maritime security.

India & Outer Space

- India has no intention of entering into an arms race in outer space.
- India believes that Outer space is the common heritage of humankind and it is the responsibility of all to preserve it.
- India already implements a number of Transparency and Confidence Building Measures(TCBMs) includes,
 1. Registering space objects with the UN register,
 2. Pre-launch notifications,
 3. Measures in harmony with the UN Space Mitigation Guidelines,
 4. Participation in Inter Agency Space Debris Coordination (IADC) activities with regard to space debris management,
 5. Undertaking SOPA (Space Object Proximity Awareness) and COLA (Collision Avoidance)
 6. Participating in all sessions of the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.



- India also supported UNGA resolution 69/32 on ‘No First Placement of Weapons on Outer Space’.
- India supports the substantive consideration of the issue of ‘Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space’ (PAROS).
- India is a signatory to 1967 Outer Space treaty.
- It prohibits only weapons of mass destruction in outer space, not ordinary weapons.

Kleptocracy

- It refers to the society whose leaders make themselves rich and powerful by stealing from the rest of the people.
- It is also known as “rule by thieves”.
- It is closely associated with military juntas, oligarchies, dictatorships and nepotism or autocratic regimes.
- Russia is often pointed out as an example of a modern kleptocracy.
- Africa has many of the world’s kleptocratic leaders, who have driven their economies into ruin.
- There is a common trend in Africa where the poorest and least developed countries are often kleptocracies.
- The US often portrayed as the model of true democracy, but in recent years, has been labeled as a kleptocracy.
- ‘Narco-kleptocracy’, also known as ‘Narco-economies’, are nations where drug money has compromised the integrity of the government.
- It is through bribing of senior government officials to allow the illegal drug trade to be conducted within the country. E.g Guinea, Panama, Tajikistan and Venezuela.
- “Digital Kleptocracy” is a means by which rich tech companies mine poor people’s data.
- In fact, companies steal, in most cases the person is unaware of their data being harvested and used for profit.
- Each time you click on a link, or even hover your mouse over one, your behaviour is being tracked.
- It is then analysed to understand your preferences, needs and being sold to companies to enable “targeted” advertising.
- Centralising data means that a single data breach can compromise all aspects of the individual life.
- Strong data protection and privacy law can address this issue.

Mission Shakti

- It was India’s successful ‘Anti-satellite (ASAT) missile’ test.
- An Indian satellite at 300 km in Low Earth Orbit was targeted and destroyed through ‘collision’ (rather than warheads).
- It made India to join the ranks of the US, Russia and China.
- It gives teeth to India’s space programme and military posture.
- It was the prerogative of DRDO.
- The DRDO’s Ballistic Missile Defence interceptor was used.
- A BMD, by destroying incoming missiles, provides a strategic umbrella,
- ASAT adopted ‘Direct Ascent Kinetic Kill’ method.

INS Shivalik and INS Sindhukirti

- These are the Indian Navy’s indigenously conceived design and constructed frontline stealth frigate.
- INS Shivalik is the Shivalik-class advanced, stealth-minded, guided-missile frigate warship.
- It is the first stealth warship built by India at Mazagon Dock Limited in Mumbai s part of the Indian Navy’s Project 17.



- It is equipped with a wide range of electronics and sensors.
- In addition, it uses HUMSA (hull-mounted sonar array), ATAS/Thales Sintra towed array systems.
- It is equipped with a mix of Russian, Indian and Western weapon systems.
- It also has improved stealth and land attacking features over the preceding Talwar-class frigates.
- It is the first Indian navy ship to use the CODOG (COMbined Diesel Or Gas) propulsion system.
- INS Sindhukirti is the seventh Sindhughosh-class, diesel-electric submarine of the Indian Navy, built at the Admiralty Shipyard and Sevmash in the Soviet Union.
- It is among the oldest operational submarines in the Navy.
- It has been virtually rebuilt with modern sensors weapons and systems which make it "a hole in the water" for the Navy.

Losharik (AS-12 or AS-31)

- It is a highly advanced **Nuclear powered submarine** of **Russia**.
- This week a fire accident was reported on the submarine within the Russian territorial waters.
- It is a deep-diving special missions ship, operated by the Russian Navy.
- It is capable of withstanding high pressures at great depths, enabling it to survey the ocean floor.
- It's interior hull is built using titanium spheres which makes the vessel dive up to 6000 metres. A regular submarine can go to the depth of only 600 metres.
- It is generally carried under the hull of a larger submarine and is capable of releasing a smaller submarine itself.
- According to Russian military the submarine was carrying out 'bathymetric measurements' or underwater mapping.
- But the US and its allies feared that Russia might be developing new, secretive ways to tap or even cut undersea **Fiber-optic cables** that carry transatlantic Internet traffic.
- In recent years, U.S. and British military officials have warned that Russian submarines have been spotted close to the cables.

ASRAAM Missile

- Advanced Short Range Air-to-Air Missile (**ASRAAM**) is the next generation **infrared-guided** missile of UK.
- It is also known as 'heat seeking', because infrared is radiated primarily by heat.
- It is designed and built by MBDA, UK to provide enhanced aerial combat capabilities for fighter aircraft.
- It is widely used as a '**Within Visual Range**' (WVR) air dominance missile with a range of over 25km.
- It can also be fired at targets behind its aircraft.
- The Indian Air Force (IAF) is looking to adopt ASRAAM across its fighter fleet.
- This plan is to bridge the missile gap between the IAF and the Pakistan Air Force (PAF), which displayed an edge during the 27 February dogfight.
- The missile was shortlisted through a tender and MBDA was working with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) on the integration.

Sagar Maitri Mission-2

- It is a unique initiative of **DRDO** which aligns with the objective of "**Safety And Growth for All in the Region(SAGAR)**".
- Marine & Allied Interdisciplinary Training and Research Initiative(**MAITRI**) is the specific scientific component of DRDO.



- It is to promote greater scientific interaction especially in ocean research among 'Indian Ocean Rim' (IOR) countries.
- **INS Sagardhwani**, will embarks on a two-month long mission.
- The mission commemorates the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of India's lone research ship **INS Kistna's** mission.
- **INS Sagardhwani** will revisit the selected tracks of INS Kistna.
- The prime objectives of the mission are,
 1. data collection from the entire North Indian Ocean,
 2. focussing on the the Andaman Sea and adjoining seas and
 3. establishing long-term collaboration with IOR countries in the field of ocean research and development.
- It will promote closer co-operation in socio-economic aspects with IOR countries.
- The **IOR** countries, includes Oman, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Myanmar.

INS Sagardhwani

- It is the Oceanographic research vessel of **DRDO**.
- It is maintained and operated by the Indian Navy.
- It is a 'Marine Acoustic Research Ship' (**MARS**) designed and developed by 'Naval Physical and Oceanographic Laboratory' (**NPOL**), Kochi.
- NPOL is a premier systems laboratory of DRDO.
- The ship is fitted with state-of-the-art equipments like the latest wave height measuring radars, marine radio etc.
- It is exclusively used for the scientific and research programmes of NPOL.

Bhabha Kavach

- It is the India's lightest and cheapest 'bullet-proof jacket' for the CRPF and the Ministry of Home Affairs personnel.
- It is indigenously developed by the Ordnance Factories Board, a public sector undertaking MIDHANI along with BARC.
- It is named after nuclear physicist Dr. Homi J. Bhabha.
- The jacket weighs just 6.6 kg in comparison to the 17-kg jackets in use.
- It can shield from AK-47 (7.62 mm hard steel bullets), SLR and INSAS (5.56 mm) weaponry.
- It is made using extremely hard boron carbide ceramics, carbon nano-tubes and composite polymer.
- It is available in 3 variants as per the requirement of the armed forces.
- BARC has transferred the technology to Mishra Dhatu Nigam, Hyderabad, for its large-scale production.

24. HEALTH

Rising dengue cases in Mumbai

- Mumbai registered its first dengue death this year and already 71 dengue cases have been confirmed by the BMC.
- Dengue is the fast emerging 'mosquito-borne viral infection'.

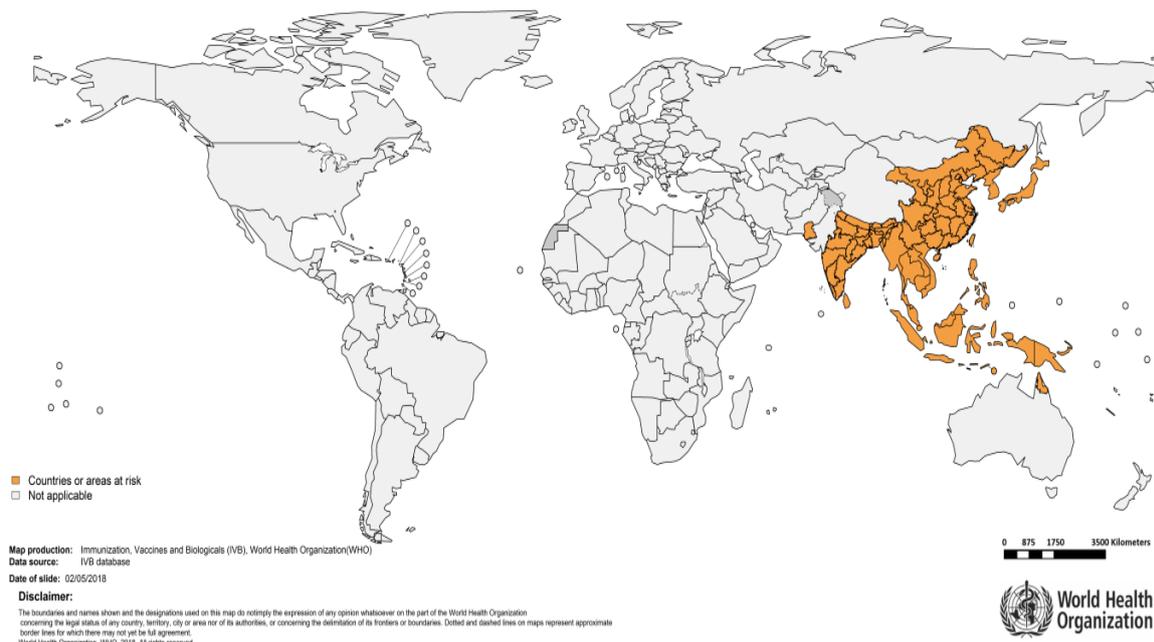


- It flourishes in urban poor areas, suburbs mostly in tropical and subtropical countries.
- The dengue virus (DEN) comprises four distinct serotypes, which belong to the genus Flavivirus, family Flaviviridae.
- The 'Aedes aegypti' mosquito is the main vector.
- 'Aedes aegypti' mosquito breeds in freshwater. (unlike Malaria mosquito (Anopheles) breeds in any water accumulating in open areas).
- The breeding sites can be domestic atmosphere, under refrigerator plates, water containers, ACs in households.
- The mosquito mainly acquires the virus while feeding on the blood of an infected person.
- It develops severe flu-like symptoms which includes,
 1. Severe headache
 2. Pain behind the eyes
 3. Nausea, Vomiting
 4. Swollen glands
 5. Muscle and joint pains
 6. Rashes
- In India it peaks from Monsoon every year.
- It is prevalent in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Delhi, Harayana, Punjab, West Bengal and most of southern India.
- There is no specific treatment for dengue fever and the patients are advised to drink plenty of fluids.
- Maintenance of the patient's circulating fluid volume is the central feature of such care.
- The only current method of controlling dengue is to effectively combat the vector mosquitoes.
- It is implemented using 'Integrated Vector Management' (IVM) approach.
- IVM is a rational decision-making process for the optimal use of resources for vector control.
- Dengue cases have been recorded by the 'National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme' (NVBDCP).

Japanese Encephalitis

- Japanese Encephalitis has been recently reported in Assam.
- It is a **mosquito-borne viral infection**.
- It is a **flavivirus** family related to dengue, yellow fever and West Nile viruses.
- It is the leading cause of viral encephalitis in Asia.
- It will not spread from one person to another.
- There is **no cure** for the disease. Treatment is focused on relieving severe clinical signs and supporting the patient to overcome the infection.
- Most JEV infections have mild (fever and headache) or without apparent symptoms.
- Approximately 1 in 250 infections results in severe clinical illness. The incubation period is between 4-14 days.
- Safe and effective vaccines are available to prevent JE.

Japanese encephalitis, countries or areas at risk



- ‘SA 14-14-2’ vaccine become the most widely used vaccine in endemic countries, and it was prequalified by WHO.
- Since the recent outbreak in Assam, all 27 districts of Assam were covered under the JE vaccination campaign for those aged between 1 to 15 years.
- Migratory birds along with pigs in the community play an important role in the transmission of JE from one area to another.

Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) In India

- **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** released the report entitled “**India: Health of the Nation’s States**”, Contribution of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)
- According to the report total death in the Country due to NCDs was 61.8% in 2016, as compared to 37.9% in 1990.
- Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are a group of diseases that affect individuals over an extended period of time causing socio-economic burden to the nation.
- The major NCDs has 5 behavioural risk factors -
 1. Unhealthy diet,
 2. Lack of physical activity,
 3. Use of tobacco and alcohol,
 4. Ageing,
 5. Rapid unplanned urbanization.
- There are primarily 5 types of Non-communicable diseases -
 1. Cancer,
 2. Chronic respiratory disease,
 3. Stroke
 4. Cardiovascular diseases
 5. Diabetes, which are responsible for a majority of morbidity and mortality in the country.



- Mental health and injuries also have a considerable burden.
- NCDs cause 61% of deaths in India states WHO report
- Cardiovascular diseases is at the top, in 2016 a staggering 28.1% of all deaths in India were caused by heart conditions.
- Also India has the highest number of diabetes cases in the world, with 72 million reported in 2017.
- Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, all wealthy states, were found to have some of the highest rates of heart disease in the country.
- **Public health is a State subject,**
- **National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS)** under the **National Health Mission (NHM)** is an effort by Central Government which supplements State Governments effort.
- The objectives of the programme include health promotion activities and opportunistic screening for common NCDs including cancer.
- **Affordable Medicines and Reliable Implants for Treatment (AMRIT)** Deendayal outlets have been opened at 159 Institutions/Hospitals.
- It's objective is to make available Cancer and Cardiovascular Diseases drugs and implants at discounted prices to the patients.
- **Jan Aushadhi stores** are set up by Department of Pharmaceuticals to provide generic medicines at affordable prices.
- Chandigarh hosted the World NCD Congress in November 2017, spotlighting the impact of NCDs both in India and on the global stage.
- India has shown commitment towards Preventing Non-communicable Diseases as it became the first country to adopt the WHO's Global Monitoring Framework on Non-communicable Diseases.

Menstrual Hygiene Scheme (MHS)

- It is a scheme for promotion of menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls in the age group of 10-19 year in **rural areas.**
- It comes under Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- The major **objectives** of the scheme are,
 - To increase awareness among adolescent girls on Menstrual Hygiene
 - To increase access to and use of high quality sanitary napkins to adolescent girls in rural areas.
 - To ensure safe disposal of Sanitary Napkins in an environmentally friendly manner.
- Funds are provided to States/UTs through National Health Mission (NHM).
- The funds are for decentralized procurement of sanitary napkins packs primarily to rural adolescent girls at a subsidized rate of Rs 6 for a pack of 6 napkins.
- The **ASHA** will be responsible for distribution of napkins.
- They will receive an incentive of Re 1 per pack sold and a free pack of napkins every month for her own personal use.
- A range of **IEC** (Information Education and Communication) material has been developed around MHS.
- It is a 360 degree approach to create awareness about safe and hygienic menstrual health practices.
- It includes audio, video and reading materials for adolescent girls.
- **MHS** is a part of **Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram**, which is to ensure holistic development of adolescent population.
