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EXCLUSIVE CURRENT AFFAIRS FOR

PRELIMS

JANUARY 2020

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Polity

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1. Agreement to settle Bru refugees in Tripura inked

News: The Centre, the governments of Tripura and Mizoram and representatives of Bru tribe has signed a new agreement to settle the Bru refugees in Tripura from Mizoram

Facts:

About the agreement:

- It provides that 34,000 Bru tribal will now be settled in the state of Tripura from Mizoram, (who are currently living in relief camps in Tripura)
- The Centre has sanctioned a 600-crore rupee package for the rehabilitation of the people from Bru community.
- The Bru refugees will also get 40 x 30 feet plot along with a fixed deposit of four lakh rupees, cash assistance of five thousand rupees per month for two years and free ration.

Additional Facts:

About Bru Refugees:

- Bru or Reang is a community indigenous to Northeast India living mostly across Assam, Mizoram and Tripura. In Tripura, they are recognised as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group.
- Brus speak the Reang dialect of Bru language which is Tibeto Burmese origin and is locally referred to as Kau Bru.
- The Hojagiri folk dance of the Reang subtribe is well known all over the world. The most popular festival of Reang tribes is Buisu.

About the conflict:

- In Mizoram, the Bru community has been targeted by groups (such as Young Mizo Association) that do not consider them indigenous to the state.
- In 1997, ethnic clashes erupted and Brus fled from Mizoram and were accommodated in relief camps in Tripura. Since then, thousands of Bru refugees are living in the six relief camps in North Tripura.

2. Classical Languages in India

News: At the 93rd edition of the Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan, a resolution was passed demanding the declaration of Marathi as a 'Classical' language.

Facts:

About Classical languages:

- Currently, six languages enjoy the 'Classical' status namely Tamil (declared in 2004), Sanskrit (2005), Kannada (2008), Telugu (2008), Malayalam (2013), and Odia (2014).

Guidelines for declaring a classical language:

- High antiquity of its early texts/recorded history over a period of 1500-2000 years;
- A body of ancient literature/texts, which is considered a valuable heritage by generations of speakers;
- The literary tradition be original and not borrowed from another speech community;
- 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.

Benefits provided to a classical language:

- Two major annual international awards for scholars of eminence in classical Indian languages.
- A Centre of Excellence for studies in Classical Languages is set up.

- The University Grants Commission can be requested to create, to start with at least in Central Universities, a certain number of professional chairs for classical languages, for scholars of eminence in the concerned language.

3. Official Language

News: Activists have demanded to include Tulu in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

Facts:

About Tulu Language:

- Tulu is a Dravidian language whose speakers are concentrated in two coastal districts of Karnataka and Kasaragod district of Kerala.
- Kasaragod district is called the 'Sapta bhasha Samgama Bhumi' (the confluence of seven languages) and Tulu is one among the seven.

Advantages of including Tulu in the Eighth Schedule:

- If included in the Eighth Schedule, Tulu would get recognition from the Sahitya Akademi.
- Tulu books would be translated into other recognized Indian languages.
- Members of Parliament and MLAs could speak Tulu in Parliament and State Assemblies, respectively.
- Candidates could write all-India competitive examinations like the Civil Services exam in Tulu.

Additional information:

About Eighth Schedule:

- The Eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India lists the official languages of the Republic of India.
- It consists of the following 22 languages:-(1) Assamese, (2) Bengali, (3) Gujarati, (4) Hindi, (5) Kannada, (6) Kashmiri, (7) Konkani, (8) Malayalam, (9) Manipuri, (10) Marathi, (11) Nepali, (12) Oriya, (13) Punjabi, (14) Sanskrit, (15) Sindhi, (16) Tamil, (17) Telugu, (18) Urdu (19) Bodo, (20) Santhali, (21) Maithili and (22) Dogri.

4. Article 131

News: The Kerala government has moved the Supreme Court against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act under Article 131 of the Constitution.

Facts:

About Article 131:

- It vests the Supreme Court with original jurisdiction over disputes occurring between states or between states and the Centre.
- The original jurisdiction means the power to hear a case for the first time, as opposed to appellate jurisdiction in which the court reviews the decision of a lower court.
- Further, unlike the original jurisdiction under Article 32 which gives the top court the power to issue writs but the jurisdiction in Article 131 is exclusive meaning it is only the Supreme Court which has this authority.

Disputes on which Article 131 can be used: The Supreme Court shall to the exclusion of any other court have original jurisdiction in any dispute on:

- between the Government of India and one or more States; or
- between the Government of India and any State or States on one side and one or more other States on the other; or
- between two or more States

Exception:

- The dispute must involve a question (whether of law or fact) on which the existence or extent of a legal right depends.
- The jurisdiction shall not extend to a dispute arising out of any treaty, agreement or other similar instrument which having been entered into or executed before the commencement of this Constitution continues in operation after such commencement or which provides that the said jurisdiction shall not extend to such a dispute.

Cases related to Article 131:

- In State of Bihar v. Union of India, the Supreme Court held that the dispute between the state of Bihar and the Hindustan Steel Ltd did not fall under Article 131 as Hindustan steel was not considered to be a state.
- In the case of State of Rajasthan v. Union of India, the question was whether the word states come under the meaning of the state government or not. The Supreme Court held that it had the original jurisdiction to entertain the proceeding.

5. Private Property is a human right: Supreme Court

News: Recently, In Vidya Devi Vs State of Himachal Pradesh case, the Supreme Court has held that a citizen's right to own private property is a human right and the state cannot take possession of it without following due procedure and authority of law.

Facts:

Background:

- The case was of an 80-year-old woman whose 3.34-hectare land was forcibly taken by the Himachal Pradesh Government in 1967 for constructing a road.

Key takeaways from the judgement:

- The court ruled that the citizen's right to own private property is a human right.
- It said that to forcibly dispose of citizens of their private property without following the due process of law would be to violate a human right as also the constitutional right.
- The apex court also referred to the earlier verdict in State of Haryana v. Mukesh Kumar case (2011) wherein it was held that the right to property is not only a constitutional or statutory right but also a human right.
- The court also said that the state cannot be permitted to perfect its title over the land by invoking the doctrine of adverse possession.
- Further, the apex court also used its extraordinary jurisdiction under Article 136 and Article 142 of the Constitution to direct the government to pay the woman compensation of 1 crore rupees.

Additional Facts:

About Right to property:

- The Constitution of India 1949 contained Article 19(1)(f) as well as Article 31, which provided the fundamental right of private ownership of property, and freedom to acquire, enjoy and dispose of it by lawful means.
- However, the 44th Amendment of 1978 deleted the right to property from the list of fundamental rights. It was made a Constitutional right under Article 300A.
- Article 300A requires the state to follow due procedure and authority of law to deprive a person of his or her private property.

Right to Adverse possession:

- The right to Adverse possession is a legal doctrine that allows a person who possesses or resides on someone else's land for an extended period of time to claim legal title to that land.
- In India, the person who is not the original owner of the land becomes the owner because of the fact that he has been in possession of the property for a minimum of 12-years within which the real owner did not seek legal recourse to oust him.

About Article 142:

- Article 142 provides for the enforcement of decrees and orders of Supreme Court. It consists of two clauses:
- Article 142(1) states that the Supreme Court in the exercise of its jurisdiction may pass such decree or make such order as is necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before it and the orders shall be enforceable throughout the territory of India.

Article 136(Special leave petition):

- Under Article 136 of the Constitution, the Supreme Court is authorised to grant in its discretion special leave to appeal from (a) any judgment, decree determination, sentence or order (b) in any case or matter or (c) passed or made by any court or tribunal in the territory of India.
- The only exception to this power of the Supreme Court is with regard to any judgment of any court or tribunal constituted by or under any law relating to the armed forces.

6. SC verdict on internet shutdown in Kashmir

News: The Supreme Court in Anuradha Bhasin vs Union of India ruled that the freedoms of speech and expression, Trade and Commerce through the medium of Internet are constitutionally protected under Articles 19(1)(a) and Articles 19(1)(g) of Constitution.

Facts:

- This ruling came on a petition on Internet blockade in Jammu and Kashmir due to revoking of Article 370.
- The cases were also related to the impact of the prohibitory orders issued under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) on press freedom.

What did the petitioner argue?

- The petitioner argued that the internet shutdown in Kashmir was not compliant with the Rules as the (a)rules require the suspension to be temporary and (b)order claims a law-and-order danger as opposed to a public order danger specified in the Rules.

Key takeaways from the judgement

Court on Suspension of Internet services:

- The Supreme Court has directed the Jammu and Kashmir authorities to review all orders imposing curbs in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The court observed that suspending Internet services indefinitely is impermissible under the Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services [Public Emergency or Public Service] Rules, 2017.
- The suspension could be done for temporary duration only and the same is subject to judicial review.

Court on Freedom of Speech and expression:

- The Court declared that freedom of speech and expression and the freedom to practice any profession or carry on any trade, business or occupation over the medium of internet enjoys constitutional protection under Art 19(1)(a) and 19(1)(g).

- Hence, the restrictions on fundamental rights cannot be done by an arbitrary exercise of powers.It should follow the mandate of Article 16(2) and Art 16(6), inclusive of doctrine of proportionality.
- The doctrine of Proportionality postulates that the nature and extent of the State's interference with the exercise of a right must be proportionate to the goal it seeks to achieve.

Court on Section 144:

- The court said that Section 144 cannot be used to suppress the legitimate expression of opinion or grievance or the exercise of democratic rights
- The imposition of Section 144 must strike a balance between the rights of the individual and the concerns of the state.
- Further, the powers under Section 144 should be exercised in a reasonable and bona fide manner and the order must state material facts in order to enable judicial review.

Additional information:

About Section 144:

- Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) of 1973 authorizes the Executive Magistrate of any state or territory to issue an order to prohibit the assembly of four or more people in an area.
- It is imposed in urgent cases of nuisance or apprehended danger of some event that has the potential to cause trouble or damage to human life or property.

About Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services Rules,2017:

- The rules are based on the powers conferred by section 7 of the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885.
- Reason for imposition: public safety or emergency
- Authority to pass orders: home secretary and state's home department.

7. State can regulate minority institutions, says Supreme Court

News: The Supreme Court has upheld the constitutionality of West Bengal Madrasah Service Commission Act 2008 observing that there is no absolute and unqualified right of appointment for minority educational institutions.

Facts:

Background:

- The West Bengal Assembly had passed an act called West Bengal Madrasah Service Commission Act of 2008.
- The Act mandated that the process of appointment of teachers in aided madrasahs, recognised as minority institutions would be done by a Commission whose decision would be binding.
- The act was challenged in the apex court by managing committees of various madrasas on the basis that the act violates Article 30 of the Constitution which deals with the right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions.
- Calcutta High Court in 2015 had declared the Act ultra vires to Article 30 of the Constitution

About the Supreme Court Judgement:

- The Court held that the State is well within its rights to introduce a regulatory regime in the national interest to provide minority educational institutions with well-qualified teachers in order for them to achieve excellence in education.
- The court also applied the principles laid down in the decision in TMA Pai Foundation case. It observed that the provisions of the Act are not transgressing the rights of the minority institutions.
- Further, the court also said that the managements of minority institutions cannot ignore a legal regime by saying that it is their fundamental right under Article 30 of the Constitution to establish and administer their educational institutions according to their choice.

Additional Facts:

About Minority Institutions:

- Article 30(1) provides religious and linguistic minorities to establish and administer educational institutions.
- A majority community can also establish and administer educational institutions, but they will not enjoy special rights under Article 30(1)(a).

Special Rights enjoyed by Minority institutions:

- Under Art 30(1)(a), a minority institution enjoys the right to education as a Fundamental Right. But, in case the property is taken over by the state, due compensation to be provided to establish institutions elsewhere.
- In P.A. Inamdar Vs. State of Maharashtra case, the court had said that (a)policy of reservation in admission cannot be made applicable to a minority institution and (b)policy of reservation in employment cannot be made applicable to a minority institution.
- Further, a minority educational institution covered under Article 30(1) of the Constitution including a Madrasa is exempted from the purview of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act.
- In St Stephens's vs. Delhi University case,1992, the SC has ruled that the minority institution can have approximately 50% of seats reserved for the minorities.
- In TMA Pai & others vs. State of Karnataka & others 2002 case, the SC ruled that minority institutions can have separate admission process which is fair, transparent and merit based.

8. Election Commission of India launches PPRTMS

News: The Election Commission has launched Political Parties Registration Tracking Management System (PPRTMS).

Facts:

Political Parties Registration Tracking Management System (PPRTMS):

- It is an online system that will allow political parties to track their applications for registration with the ECI on a real-time basis.

Additional Facts:

Registration of Political Parties

- Registration of political parties in India is governed by section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.
- An association seeking registration has to submit an application to the ECI within a period of 30 days from the date of its formation.

9. Belgaum tension between Maharashtra and Karnataka

News: Decades-old border dispute related to Belgaum between Maharashtra and Karnataka has flared up again.

Facts:

About the Belgaum dispute:

- The dispute between Maharashtra and Karnataka over Belgaum and other border areas is a longstanding issue between the two states.
- The erstwhile Bombay Presidency had included the present-day Karnataka districts of Bijapur, Belgaum, Dharwar and Uttara-Kannada (previously North Kanara).
- In 1948, the Belgaum municipality requested that the district having a predominantly Marathi-speaking population be incorporated into the proposed Maharashtra state.

However, the States Reorganisation Act of 1956 which divided states on linguistic and administrative lines made Belgaum a part of the then Mysore State (which was renamed Karnataka in 1973).

Additional Facts:

Mahajan Commission:

● The Maharashtra government contested the inclusion of Belgaum in Karnataka and lodged a protest with the Central Government in September 1957.

● This led to the formation of the Mahajan Commission under former Chief Justice Mehr Chand Mahajan in October 1966.

● The commission recommended that 264 villages be transferred to Maharashtra and that Belgaum and 247 villages remain with Karnataka.

● However, Maharashtra rejected the report and continues to claim over 865 villages along the border as well as Belgaum city which are currently part of Karnataka.

10. Chhattisgarh challenges NIA Act

News: The Chhattisgarh government has moved the Supreme Court against the 2008 National Investigative Agency (NIA) Act stating it is violative of the Constitution.

Facts:

About the NIA Act,2008:

● National Investigation Agency (NIA) is a central counter-terrorism agency established under the National Investigative Agency (NIA) Act,2008.

● **Powers**: to take suo motu cognizance of terror activities in any part of India, register a case to enter any state without permission from the state government and to investigate and arrest people.

Chhattisgarh Government objections:

● "Police" is a state subject according to the 7th schedule of the constitution, hence beyond the jurisdiction of the Parliament.

Additional Facts:

About NIA Amendment Bill,2019:

● The bill enables NIA to additionally investigate offences related to
  ○ (a) human trafficking (b) counterfeit currency (c) manufacture or sale of prohibited arms (d) cyber-terrorism and (e) offences under the Explosive Substances Act,1908.
  ○ Power to investigate offences committed outside India subject to international treaties and domestic laws of other countries.
  ○ Enables the Central government to designate sessions courts as special courts

11. Assam: National Democratic Front of B (S) signs Suspension of Operations agreement with Centre

News: The National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB(S)) has signed a tripartite agreement with the central and Assam governments to suspend operations and join peace talks with the government.

Facts:

About NDFB:

● An outfit named Bodo Security Force (BdSF) was formed in 1986. In 1994, the BdSF renamed itself as the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB).

- The outfit is an armed separatist outfit which seeks to obtain a sovereign Bodoland for the Bodo people.
- The group has carried out several attacks in Assam targeting non-Bodo civilians as well as the security forces.
- In 2008, NDFB was divided into two factions namely NDFB(Progressive) and NDFB (RD). In 2012 NDFB(RD) again broke away and the NDFB(S) faction was formed.
- Currently, all these factions are in peace talks with the Union Government of India.

Additional Facts:

About Bodos:

- Bodos are the single largest tribal community in Assam making up over 5-6% of the state's population.
- The Bodos demanded a separate state called Bodoland.
- This demand and their armed struggle led to the signing of Bodo Accord in 2003. The accord provides for the establishment of a Bodoland Territorial Council under Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India.
- The four districts in Assam namely Kokrajhar, Baksa, Udalguri and Chirang constitutes the Bodo Territorial Area District (BTAD).

12. Department of Military Affairs (DMA)

News: The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has approved the rules of business for the newly created Department of Military Affairs (DMA).

Facts:

About the Department of Military Affairs (DMA):

- The Department of Military Affairs (DMA) is headed by the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS).
- It is the fifth department in the Ministry of Defence (MoD). The others being the Department of Defence, the Department of Defence Production, the Department of Defence Research and the Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare.

Services under the Department of Military Affairs (DMA):

- Promotions and postings of senior officers
- War wastage reserves of 3 forces
- Procurement of ammunition
- Major Infrastructure projects like the creation of new naval bases
- Overseas deployment of warships
- Size, shape and composition of the army
- Supply of arms and ammunition to neighbouring nations.

Services retained by Ministry of Defence:

- All capital procurements
- Any matter that has an impact on defence policy
- Secretariat of Defence acquisition Council among others.

13. Supreme Court bats against transfer of community resources

News: The Supreme Court has held that the government has no right to transfer invaluable community resources like village water ponds for commercialization of the property.

What was the issue?

- The petition was filed against the transfer of village ponds sites of Saini Village in the National Capital Region to some private industrialists by the Greater Noida Industrial Development Authority.

Key points of the judgement:

- The protection of village commons is essential to safeguard the fundamental right guaranteed by Article 21 of our Constitution.

- These common areas are the lifeline of village communities and often sustain various chores and provide the resources necessary for life.
- Further, the State cannot divest villagers of their existing source of water even if it promises to provide them an alternative site where the water body can be replicated.
- Such an attitude would display mechanical application of environmental protection.

Article 21(Protection of life and personal liberty): No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to the procedure established by law.

14. Dubai declared 'reciprocating territory' by India

News: The Ministry of Law and Justice has issued an order declaring the United Arab Emirates to be a reciprocating territory under Section 44A of the Civil Procedure Code,1908.

Facts:

About Reciprocating territory:

- Reciprocating territory means that decrees passed by courts in the UAE can now be executed in India as if they were passed by Indian civil courts.
- The mechanism for conferring such a status to foreign civil decrees has been outlined in Section 44A of the CPC.
- Apart from Dubai, the other countries that have been declared to be reciprocating territories are: United Kingdom, Singapore, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Trinidad & Tobago, New Zealand, the Cook Islands (including Niue) and the Trust Territories of Western Samoa, Hong Kong, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Aden.

Additional Facts:

About Section 44 of the CPC:

- Section 44A Civil Procedure Code,1908 provides the law on the subject of execution of decrees of Courts in India by foreign Courts and vice versa.

15. Manipur tribes call a truce after decades of conflict

News: The organisations of Naga and Kuki tribes namely Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs) and the Kuki National Organisation (KNO) have signed a declaration to settle contentious issues and inter-community differences peacefully.

Facts:

About Naga-Kuki conflict:

- The Kuki–Naga conflict mainly fought on land and identity issues led to loss of lives and internal displacement.
- The British colonial policy of governance in the north-east frontier of India and the rise of ethnic nationalism among both the Kukis and Nagas in the post-independence period were the roots of the conflict.

Additional Facts:

About Nagas:

- Naga is an umbrella term for several indigenous communities in North-East India and Upper Burma. They belong to the Indo-Mongoloid Family.
- It covers a number of tribes that reside in Nagaland, Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh states of India and also in Myanmar.
- Some of the major Naga tribes are Angami, Chang, Konyak, Lotha, Phoms, Rengma, Sema, Pochury and Zeliang.
- Naga tribes' biggest festival is the New year festival of January 15th called Kaing Bi festival.

About Kukis:

- The Kukis constitute one of several hill tribes within India, Bangladesh, and Burma.
- In Northeast India, they are present in all states except Arunachal Pradesh.
- Some fifty tribes of Kuki people in India are recognised as scheduled tribes.
- The majority of Kukis are Christians. The main festival of the Kuki tribe is Mim Kut.

16. Tribal Affairs Ministry proposes 6th Schedule Area status to Ladakh

News: Union Tribal Affairs Ministry has proposed 6th Schedule Area status to Union Territory of Ladakh.

Facts:

About Sixth Schedule

- The Sixth Schedule consists of provisions for the administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram, according to Article 244 of the Indian Constitution. It was passed by the constituent Assembly in 1949.
- It seeks to safeguard the rights of tribal population through the formation of Autonomous District Councils (ADC).
- It also provides for separate Regional Councils for each area constituted as an autonomous region.
- The Governors of these four states are empowered to declare some tribal-dominated districts / areas of these states as autonomous districts and autonomous regions.

Additional Facts:

Autonomous District Councils

- Autonomous District Councils are administrative bodies constituted in accordance with the Sixth Schedule, Article 244 (2) & Article 275(1) of the Indian Constitution.
- **Powers**:
  - can constitute village courts within their jurisdiction to hear trial of cases involving the tribes;
  - empowered to make legislative laws on matters like land, forests, fisheries, social security, entertainment, public health, etc. with due approval from the governor;
  - Acts passed by Parliament and state legislatures may or may not be levied in these regions unless the President and the governor gives approval.
- There are 10 autonomous district councils:
  - **Assam**: Bodoland Territorial Council, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council and Dima Hasao Autonomous District Council.
  - **Meghalaya**: Garo Hills Autonomous District Council, Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council and Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council.
  - **Tripura:** Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council.
  - **Mizoram**: Chakma Autonomous District Council, Lai Autonomous District Council, Mara Autonomous District Council.

Fifth Schedule:

- It deals with the administration and control of Scheduled Areas as well as of Scheduled Tribes residing in any State **other than** the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

Policy

1. [India commences world's largest ever vaccination programme to control FMD & Brucellosis in 2019](#)

News: Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying is implementing the largest vaccination program under the National Artificial insemination program.

Facts:

About National Animal Disease Control Programme for FMD and Brucellosis:

- It is a 100% centrally funded programme.
- It aims to control Foot and Mouth Disease and Brucellosis by 2025 with vaccination and eventual eradication by 2030.

Additional Facts:

About Nationwide Artificial Insemination Programme (NAIP):

- It was launched in September 2019 by the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying.
- It is a campaign mode genetic upgrading program covering all breeds of bovines to enhance milk production using low cost breeding technology for improving genetic merit of milch animals with high-quality seed.
- The aim of the program is to inseminate over 1 crore bovines in 6 months & ear-tag them with 'Pashu Aadhaar' which is a unique identifier provided to the animals so as to enable the Government to identify and track the animals.
- Under NAIP, more than 11 lakhs of Artificial Insemination (AI) has been done on 31st December 2019.

About Quality Milk Programme:

- The Quality Milk Programme was launched in the year 2019 by the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying.
- The programme aims to achieve Global (Codex) standards for domestic consumption of milk and ensuring traceability & increasing share of milk and milk products in world exports.

About Foot-and-mouth disease and Brucellosis

- Foot-and-mouth disease is an infectious and viral disease that affects cloven-hoofed animals, including domestic and wild bovids. The virus causes a high fever for two or three days followed by blisters inside the mouth and on the feet that may rupture and cause lameness.
- Brucellosis is a zoonotic infection caused by the bacterial genus Brucella. The bacteria are transmitted from animals to humans by ingestion through infected food products, direct contact with an infected animal or inhalation of aerosols. It is also known as undulant fever, Malta fever, and Mediterranean fever.
- National Animal Disease Control Programme for Foot and Mouth Disease and Brucellosis, 100% centrally funded programme aims to control Foot and Mouth Disease and Brucellosis by 2025 with vaccination and eventual eradication by 2030.

2. [Cabinet clears Ordinance to remove restrictions on coal block bidding](#)

News: The Union Cabinet has approved the Promulgation of Mineral Laws (Amendment) Ordinance 2020 which amends Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act 1957 and Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act 2015.

Key features:

- Allows companies that do not have coal mine operations in India to also participate in coal block auctions.
- It provides for composite prospecting licence-cum-mining lease for coal and lignite blocks.

Significance:
- access to high-end technology for underground mining used by global miners
- Boost to production and mining efficiency
- Less imports
- affordable fuel leading to affordable electricity prices for consumers

3. Open Acreage Licensing Programme (OALP)

News: Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas signed contracts for 7 blocks, awarded under Open Acreage Licensing Programme (OALP) Bid Round – IV.

Facts:

Open Acreage Licensing Programme (OALP):
- Started in 2016, OALP, is a part of Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP).
- It is aimed at enabling faster survey and assessment of areas with oil and gas potential.
- It enables companies to apply for particular areas they deem to be attractive to invest in, and the Centre then puts those areas up for bids.

Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP):
- Introduced in 2016, it is a contractual and fiscal model for award of hydrocarbon acreages towards exploration and production (E&P). Major Characteristic Features of HELP are:
- Single License for both conventional and unconventional Hydrocarbons
- Transition from Cost Recovery mechanism to Revenue Sharing mechanism.
- Full Marketing & Pricing Freedom
- Low regulatory burden
- Fiscal incentives provided to investors

Implementing Agency: Directorate General of Hydrocarbons (DGH), Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas

Additional Information:

National Data Repository: It is an integrated data repository of Exploration and Production (E&P) data of Indian sedimentary basins.

4. In Phase-II to Fame India Scheme 2636 EV Charging Stations sanctioned

News: Department of Heavy Industries has sanctioned 2636 charging stations under FAME India (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles in India) scheme phase II.

Facts:

About Fame India Scheme
- It was launched in 2015.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Heavy Industries & Public Enterprises
- **Aim:** to support hybrid/electric vehicles market development and Manufacturing ecosystem.

Objectives:
- Encourage faster adoption of electric and hybrid vehicle by offering upfront Incentive on purchase of Electric vehicles
- Establish necessary charging Infrastructure for electric vehicles.

FAME I:
- Four focus areas namely (i) Demand Creation, (ii) Technology Platform, (iii) Pilot Project and (iv)Charging Infrastructure.
- The phase I of the scheme continued up to 31st March 2019.
- The FAME scheme is part of the National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP)

FAME II:
- commenced from 01st April 2019 for a period of 3 years

- In 3-wheeler and 4-wheeler segment incentives are applicable mainly to vehicles used for public transport or registered for commercial purposes.
- In the case of the electric 2-wheeler segment, the emphasis is on private vehicles.
- charging stations to be established in metros, other million-plus cities, smart cities and cities of Hilly states and major highways connecting major city clusters

Additional Information:

National Electric Mobility Mission Plan 2020: Launched in 2013, it aims to achieve national fuel security by promoting hybrid and electric vehicles in the country.

5. UJALA & Street Lighting National Programme Completed Five Successful years of Illuminating India

News: The Government of India's UJALA scheme and Street Lighting National Programme (SLNP) of the central government has completed five successful years.

Facts:

About UJALA:

- UJALA stands for Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All. The scheme was launched in 2015.
- **Aim:** It aims at promoting efficient usage of energy consumption, energy savings and efficient lighting for all.
- **Implementation:** Electricity Distribution Company and Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL), a public sector body is implementing the programme.
- As per the scheme, Electricity Distribution Company would distribute LED bulbs at subsidized rates to every grid-connected customer with a metered connection.
- **Eligibility:** Every domestic household having a metered connection from their respective Electricity Distribution Company is eligible to get the LED bulbs under the UJALA Scheme.

About Street Lighting National Programme (SLNP):

- Street Light National Programme (SLNP) was launched in 2015 to convert conventional street and domestic lights with energy-efficient LED lights.
- **Aim:** It aims to replace 3.5 crore conventional streetlights with energy-efficient LED lights.
- This replacement is expected to result in an annual energy saving of 900 crore units and a financial saving of Rs 5,500 crore.
- **Implementation:** Energy Efficiency Services Limited, a Public Energy Services Company under the administration of the Ministry of Power, Government of India (GoI) is the implementing agency for SLNP.

Additional information:

About EESL:

- Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) is a joint venture of four National Public Sector Enterprises– NTPC Limited, Power Finance Corporation Ltd (PFC), REC (Regional electrification corporation) and POWERGRID. It is set up under the Ministry of Power.
- It is a Super Energy Service Company (ESCO) and leads the market-related activities of the National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency (NMEEE), one of the eight national missions under the Prime Minister's National Action Plan on Climate Change.

6. Vertical Farming: A silent Revolution in Agriculture

News: Vertical Farming is emerging as a silent revolution in the agricultural production sector.

Facts:

About Vertical Farming:

- Vertical Farming is the process of growing agricultural crops in vertical stacks, mostly in a controlled indoor environment with or without soil.
- This protects the crops from incessant rains, unruly winds and dry climate.
- The crop yield in vertical farming is also more than traditional farming as it adopts two major farming techniques namely hydroponics and aeroponics.
- Some common choices of structures to house vertical farming systems include buildings, shipping containers, underground tunnels, and abandoned mine shafts.

Status of Vertical Farming in India:

- In India Vertical Farming has been introduced in the year 2019.
- Indian Institute of Agriculture Research (ICAR) is working on techniques and adaptations to introduce in the market. However, it has still not found its application at a wider level.

Additional information:

About Hydroponics and Aeroponics:

- Hydroponics is the technique of growing plants without soil by using water solvent which consists of mineral nutrients.
- On the other hand, Aeroponics is a farming method where plants are grown in closed or semi-closed environments with nutrients sprayed in the air.

7. Govt awards over Rs 2000 crores for completing Z Morh Tunnel

News: A Concession Agreement for completing the 6.5-kilometre long Z-Morh tunnel in Jammu and Kashmir was signed between NHIDCL and APCO Amarnathji Tunnelway.

Facts:

About Z-Morh Tunnel:

- Z-Morh Tunnel is a long two-lane bi-directional road tunnel project constructed near Ganderbal district of Jammu and Kashmir providing all-weather connectivity between Srinagar and Kargil in Ladakh region of India.
- Further, along with Zoji-la Tunnel, the Z-Morh tunnel will ensure year-long road connectivity between Srinagar and Kargil.

Additional information:

About Zoji-la Tunnel:

- Zoji-la Tunnel is a 14.2-km long tunnel project in Jammu and Kashmir to provide all-weather connectivity between Srinagar, Kargil and Leh.
- Once Constructed, the Zoji-la tunnel will be the longest bi-directional tunnel in Asia.
- The project is being implemented by the ministry of road transport and highways (MoRT&H) through the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL).

8. NISHTHA: National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement

News: Union Minister of Human Resource Development has inaugurated NISHTHA programme for the teachers of Jammu and Kashmir.

Facts:

About NISHTHA Programme:

- NISHTHA is a capacity building programme for improving the quality of School Education through Integrated Teacher Training.
- **Aim:** To train teachers and school principals at the elementary stage so that they can encourage and foster critical thinking in students.

- The training will be conducted by Key Resource Persons (KRPs) and State Resource Persons (SRP) identified by the State and UTs.

Coverage: The programme aims to build the capacities of around 42 lakh participants covering

- all teachers and heads of elementary Government schools
- faculty members of State Councils of Educational Research and Training (SCERTs) and District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) and
- Block Resource Coordinators and Cluster Resource Coordinators in all States and UTs

9. Bharat Parv 2020

News: Bharat Parv,2020 will be celebrated from 26th to 31st January 2020.

Facts:

About Bharat Parv:

- Bharat Parv aims to generate a patriotic fervour, promote the rich cultural diversity of the country and to popularize the idea of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat.
- It is organized by the Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with other central Ministries.
- Central theme of Bharat Parv 2020 is 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' and 'Celebrating 150 Years of Mahatma Gandhi.

Additional information:

About Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat:

- **Aim:** To promote engagement amongst the people of different states/UTs so as to enhance mutual understanding and bonding between people of diverse cultures, thereby securing stronger unity and integrity of India.
- The Ministry of Human Resource Development has been designated Nodal Ministry for coordination of the programme.

ForumIAS

International Relations

1. India, Nepal to hold talks on Kalapani border issue

News: The Ministry of External Affairs said that India will resolve the Kalapani border issue through dialogue.

Facts:

About Kalapani:

- Situated on the Kailash Mansarovar route, Kalapani is a valley that is administered by India as a part of the Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand.
- However, Nepal claims Kalapani as an integral part of its territory. It claims that the river located towards the west of the territory is the main Kali river and thus it falls in Nepal.
- On the other hand, India claims that there is a ridgeline towards the east of the Kalapani territory and hence includes it in the Indian Union.

Origin of Dispute:

- The Treaty of Sugauli was signed by the Kingdom of Nepal and British India (after Anglo-Nepalese War) in 1816 located the Kali River as Nepal's western boundary with India.

Additional information:

Susta Area Dispute:

- In 1816, a treaty was signed which took the Gandak as the international boundary between India (Bihar) and Nepal. The right bank of Gandak came under Nepal's control and the left bank became Indian territory.
- At the time the treaty was signed, Susta was on the right bank of the Gandak and a part of Nepal. But, over the years, the Gandak changed its course and Susta moved to the left bank that is on the Indian side of the river.
- Hence, Nepal alleges that over 14,860 hectares of Nepali land in Susta has been encroached upon by India.

2. Iran will no longer abide by nuclear deal limits

News: Iran has completely withdrawn from JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) nuclear deal. This announcement came after the US troops had killed General Qassem Soleimani.

Facts:

About Iran Nuclear Deal:

- The Iran nuclear deal also called as Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was signed between Iran and the P5 (US, China, France, Russia, and UK) plus Germany and the EU in 2015.
- The deal restricts Iran's nuclear program, in return for lifting most economic sanctions against it.
- Under the deal (a)most of Iran's enriched uranium was shipped out of the country (b)a heavy water facility was rendered inoperable and (c)operational nuclear facilities were brought under international inspection.

What has Iran decided now?

- Iran has been gradually rolling back its commitments under the Iran Nuclear agreement after United States had unilaterally withdrew from the accord in 2018 and renewed sanctions on Iran.

- However, Iran has now announced to completely withdrawal from the Iran Nuclear deal after U.S. targeted strike killed the country's Quds Force Commander Qassem Soleimani.
- This means that Iran will no longer observe any limits on the number of centrifuges it can install to enrich uranium or the level to which it enriches it.

3. Gulf of Guinea

News: Nineteen Indians, kidnapped by pirates from a commercial vessel from Gulf of Guinea, were released.

Facts:

Gulf of Guinea

- It is the north easternmost part of the tropical Atlantic Ocean from Cape Lopez in Gabon, north, and west to Cape Palmas in Liberia.
- The Equator and Prime Meridian intersects in the Gulf of Guinea
- Volta and Niger are major rivers that drain into the Gulf of Guinea
- **Basin countries:** Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, São Tomé and Príncipe, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola
- According to the International Maritime Bureau (IMB), Gulf of Guinea is the world's most pirate-infested sea

4. 1st Session of India-Norway Dialogue on Trade & Investment

News: The first Session of India-Norway Dialogue on Trade & Investment (DTI) was convened in New Delhi on 15-16 January 2020.

Facts:

India-Norway Relations:

- The total bilateral trade between India and Norway stands around $1.1 billion in 2015-16.
- Further, the cumulative FDI equity inflows to India from Norway from April 2000 to September 2019 were around USD257 million.
- Apart from trade, diplomatic ties with Norway is important for India for its Arctic research. India has two important research stations in Norway, namely the Himadri and IndARC.

Additional Facts:

About Himadri:

- Himadri is India's first permanent Arctic research station located at Spitsbergen, Svalbard, Norway. It was inaugurated in 2008 by the Minister of Earth Sciences.
- The primary aim of research includes research on aerosol radiation, space weather, food-web dynamics, microbial communities, glaciers, sedimentology and carbon recycling.

About IndARC:

- IndARC is India's first underwater moored observatory in the Arctic region.
- It was deployed in 2014 at Kongsfjorden fjord, Svalbard, Norway which is midway between Norway and the North Pole.
- Its research goal is to study the Arctic climate and its influence on the monsoon.

5. Bangladesh: Bhashan Char Island to house 100,000 Rohingya refugees

News: The Bangladesh Government has planned to accommodate 100,000 Rohingya refugees in its Bhasan Char Island.

Facts:

About Bhashan Char Island:

- The Bhashan Char is an uninhabited island around 30-kilometre east of Hatiya island in the South East Bangladesh.
- The Island was formed with Himalayan silt in 2006 on the mouth of river Meghna.
- The Island falls in an ecologically fragile area prone to floods, erosion and cyclone. The island remains underwater between June and September due to monsoon rains.
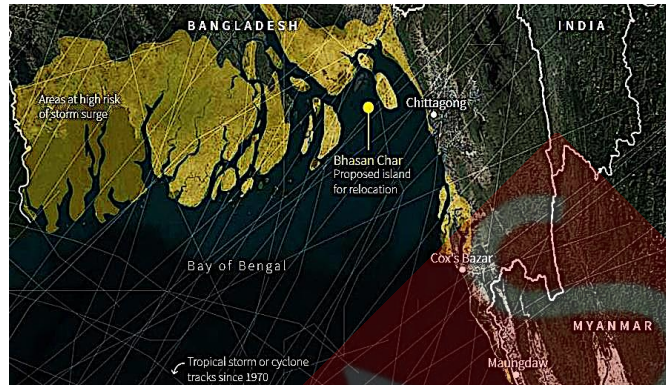
Additional information:

About Rohingya:

- Rohingya are an ethnic group largely comprising Muslims who predominantly live in the Western Myanmar province of Rakhine.
- In Myanmar, they are classified as resident foreigners or as associate citizens.
- Lakhs of Rohingyas have fled to neighbouring countries like Bangladesh and India after facing religious and ethnical persecution in Myanmar.

6. Bilateral Trade and Investment Agreement needed between India and the European Union: Edgars Rinkevics

News: Latvian foreign minister has said that India-EU trade cannot increase until the Bilateral Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA) between the European Union and India is negotiated.

Facts:

About Bilateral Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA):

- Bilateral Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA) is a Free Trade Agreement between India and EU which was initiated in 2007.
- The negotiations on the agreement are based on the commitment made by political leaders at the 7th India-EU Summit held in 2006.
- So far, 15 rounds of negotiations have been held alternately at Brussels and New Delhi.

7. Iran says it may pull out of nuclear treaty over Europe dispute

News: Iran has warned to withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) if the European countries refer the dispute over its Nuclear programme to the United Nation Security Council.

Facts:

About the issue:

- Britain, France and Germany launched a process last week charging Iran with failing to observe the terms of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.
- This move could result in the UN Security Council reimposing international sanctions on the country.

Additional Facts:

About Non-proliferation Treaty of Nuclear Weapons (NPT):

- The Non-proliferation Treaty is an international treaty signed in 1968 and came into force in 1970.

- The treaty aims to (a) prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology (b) promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and (c)further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament.

Key provisions of the treaty: The treaty classified its state-parties into 2 groups namely:

Nuclear Weapon States (NWS):

- The nuclear-weapon states (NWS) are the five states—China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, and the United States—officially recognized as possessing nuclear weapons by the NPT. The treaty legitimizes these states nuclear arsenals but has also mandated that they are not supposed to build and maintain such weapons in perpetuity.
- The other nuclear-armed states—India, Israel and Pakistan have not joined the treaty. Further, North Korea and South Sudan have also not signed the treaty.

Non-Nuclear Weapon States (NNWS):

- The treaty prohibits the Non-Nuclear Weapon States (NNWS) from developing nuclear weapons.

8. India, Brazil to sign Strategic Action Plan

News: Brazilian President will be visiting India as the Chief Guest of the Republic Day celebrations from January 24-27,2020.

Facts:

About the visit:

India and Brazil are expected to sign 20 various agreements across defence, energy, agriculture, healthcare and minerals. Among them, the major ones are:

- **Strategic Action Plan:** India and Brazil will upgrade their strategic partnership with a strategic action plan. The Action Plan will serve as an umbrella agreement to increase defence cooperation, technology sharing and a logistics agreement.
- **Bilateral investment treaty:** The two countries are also expected to sign a Bilateral Investment Treaty which will be the first revised one that India will sign with any country since 2015.
- **Social Security Agreement (SSA):** The two countries will also exchange a Social Security Agreement (SSA) first signed in March 2017. It will allow investments in each other's pension funds to help business processes and encourage the flow of investment.

India-Brazil Relations:

- India and Brazil diplomatic bilateral relations were established in 1948 and relations were elevated to a Strategic Partnership level in 2006.
- They share a close and multifaceted relationship at bilateral level as well as in plurilateral level such as BRICS, BASIC, G-20, G-4, IBSA, International Solar Alliance among others.

9. Explained: What is a Blue Corner notice

News: Interpol has issued a Blue Corner notice to help locate fugitive self-styled godman Nithyananda after the Gujarat Police had sought the agency's intervention.

Facts:

About Interpol:

- The International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) is an intergovernmental organization established in 1923, headquartered at Lyon, France.
- It facilitates worldwide police cooperation and crime control in around 194 countries.
- Each of the member countries hosts an INTERPOL National Central Bureau (NCB). This connects their national law enforcement with other countries and with the General Secretariat of Interpol.

- The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is designated as the National Central Bureau of India.

Interpol Notices:

- INTERPOL Notices are international requests for cooperation or alerts allowing police in member countries to share critical crime-related information.

Note: India will be hosting the 91st Interpol General Assembly in 2022 after its proposal had received support from member countries.

TYPES OF INTERPOL NOTICES

RED NOTICE: To seek the location and arrest of wanted persons with a view to extradition or similar lawful action.

YELLOW NOTICE: To help locate missing persons, often minors, or to help identify persons who are unable to identify themselves.

BLUE NOTICE: To collect additional information about a person's identity, location or activities in relation to a crime.

BLACK NOTICE: To seek information on unidentified bodies.

GREEN NOTICE: To provide warnings and intelligence about persons who have committed criminal offences and are likely to repeat these crimes in other countries.

ORANGE NOTICE: To warn of an event, a person, an object or a process representing a serious and imminent threat to public safety.

INTERPOL-UN SECURITY COUNCIL SPECIAL NOTICE: Issued for groups and individuals who are the targets of UN Security Council sanctions committees.

PURPLE NOTICE: To seek or provide information on modus operandi, objects, devices and concealment methods used by criminals.

10. UNCITRAL dismisses claims against India

News: The Government of India has announced that the International Arbitration Tribunal has dismissed all claims against India in entirety in relation to cancellation of Letters of Intent for providing 2G services.

Facts:

About the issue:

- The arbitration arose against India due to cancellation of issuance of telecom licences to provide 2G services in five telecommunications circles by Russian and Cyprus companies due to India's essential security interests.
- The proceedings were administered by the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA).

Additional Facts:

About UNCITRAL:

- The United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966.
- It is the core legal body of the United Nations system in the field of international trade law.
- UNCITRAL's original membership comprised 29 states and was expanded to 60 in 2004. The membership is representative of the various geographic regions and the principal economic and legal systems of the world.

About Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA):

- PCA is a permanent intergovernmental organization established by treaty at the First Hague Peace Conference, Netherland in 1899.
- It is dedicated to serve the international community in the field of dispute resolution and to facilitate arbitration and other forms of dispute resolution between States.

11. Nepal invites Modi, Imran for Sagarmatha Dialogue

News: Nepal has invited the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan along with several other heads of government for the Sagarmatha Sambad.

Facts:

About Sagarmatha Sambad:

- Sagarmatha Sambad is a multi-stakeholder, permanent global dialogue forum with headquarters at Kathmandu, Nepal.

- It is a joint collaborative initiative of Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA) and the Policy Research Institute (PRI).
- The dialogue aims to deliberate on the most prominent issues of global, regional and national significance.
- It is slated to be held biennially, with the first summit at Kathmandu in April, 2020 with the theme 'Climate Change, Mountains and the Future of Humanity'.

12. ICJ orders Myanmar to prevent Rohingya genocide

News: The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has unanimously ordered Myanmar to take all measures within its power to prevent the genocide of Rohingyas in Myanmar.

Facts:

ICJ Judgement:

- The court indicated four specific "provisional measures" in order prevent the genocide of the stateless Rohingya Muslim minority.
  - The ICJ directed Myanmar to
    - take all measures in its capacity to prevent the commission of genocidal acts against the Rohingya;
    - ensure that its military and allied entities do not commit genocidal acts against the Rohingya;
    - ensure that all evidence relating to the allegations of this case are preserved;
    - and finally, submit a compliance report within four months and, thereafter, after every six months until the final verdict is delivered.

About Rohingya crisis:

- Rohingya are an ethnic group largely comprising Muslims who predominantly live in the Western Myanmar province of Rakhine.
- Myanmar denies the Rohingya citizenship and even excluded them from the 2014 census. It sees them as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.
- Hence, lakhs of Rohingyas have fled to neighbouring countries like Bangladesh and India after facing religious and ethnical persecution in Myanmar.

Additional Facts:

About ICJ:

- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) was established in 1945 by the United Nations charter.
- It is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations situated at the Peace Palace in The Hague (Netherlands).
- The ICJ has two primary functions a) to settle legal disputes submitted by States in accordance with established international laws and b) to act as an advisory board on issues submitted to it by authorized international organizations.

Structure of ICJ:

- It is composed of 15 judges elected to nine-year terms of office by the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council.
- In order to be elected, a candidate must receive an absolute majority of the votes in both UN bodies.
- The 15 judges of the Court are distributed in the following regions a) Three from Africa b) Two from Latin America and Caribbean c) Three from Asia d) Five from Western Europe and other states and e) Two from Eastern Europe.
- Further, to ensure a measure of continuity, one third of the Court is elected every three years and Judges are eligible for re-election.

13. Ashuganj-Akhaura road project

News: India and Bangladesh have signed an agreement to upgrade the 50 km long road between Ashuganj and Akhaura in Bangladesh into a 4-lane highway.

Facts:

About the project:

- The project is part of the $2 billion line of credit extended by India to Bangladesh in 2016.
- It will boost connectivity between Bangladesh and North-eastern part of India which will also facilitate sub-regional connectivity among South and South-east Asian countries.

14. Ganga-Volga Dialogue: India - Russia

News: The Ganga-Volga Dialogue was held between India and Russia in New Delhi.

Facts:

About Ganga-Volga Dialogue:

- The Ganga Volga Dialogue was conceptualized during the 2018 India Russia Summit between Russian President and Indian Prime Minister.
- The dialogue was organised by the Ministry of External Affairs in collaboration with Dr.Syama Prasad Mookerjee Research Foundation.
- The objective of the dialogue was to provide a platform for enhancing the special and privileged strategic partnership between India and Russia.
- The theme of the dialogue: Connectivity

Key takeaways from the dialogue: The dialogue discussed the following key proposals

- Impact of rapidly changing international situation
- Ways of implementation of decisions taken in the India-Russia Summit held in September 2019 at Vladivostok.
- Development of economic activities in the riverine systems of Ganga and Volga.

15. India provides platform, Maldives inches closer to re-enter Commonwealth

News: India has provided a platform for engagement between the Maldives and the Commonwealth Secretariat that could enable Maldives re-entry into the Commonwealth of Nations.

Facts:

About Commonwealth of Nations:

- Established by the London Declaration in 1949, the Commonwealth of Nations, headed by Queen of England is an international intergovernmental organization of countries that were mostly former territories of the British Empire and dependencies.
- The current membership includes 53 Countries. The membership is based on free and equal voluntary cooperation.
- Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGM) are held every two years to discuss issues of common interest.

Economy

1. Finance Minister unveils ₹102 lakh crore National Infrastructure Plan

News: The Finance Minister has released a report of the task force on National Infrastructure on Pipeline (NIP) 2019-2025.

Facts:

About National Infrastructure on Pipeline (NIP) Task force:

- The Central Government had constituted a task force to draw up a National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) from 2019-20 to 2024-25.
- The Task Force has been chaired by the Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance.
- The task force has prepared a roadmap as it is estimated that India would need to spend $4.5 trillion on infrastructure by 2030 to sustain its growth rate.
- Hence, the endeavour of the NIP is to make this happen in an efficient manner.

Key Highlights from the report:

- The task force unveiled the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) with projects worth ₹102-lakh crore.
- The private companies will account for 22% of the investments and the balance will come from the Centre and the states in equal proportions (i.e. 39% each).
- The projects have been classified under two broad categories namely economic infrastructure and social infrastructure for both ease of doing business and ease of living.
- Under the projects, energy sectors make up the lion's share of 24%, followed by roads (19%), urban development (16%) and the railways (13%).
- The shares of rural and social infrastructure projects which includes health, education and drinking water is 8% and 3% respectively.
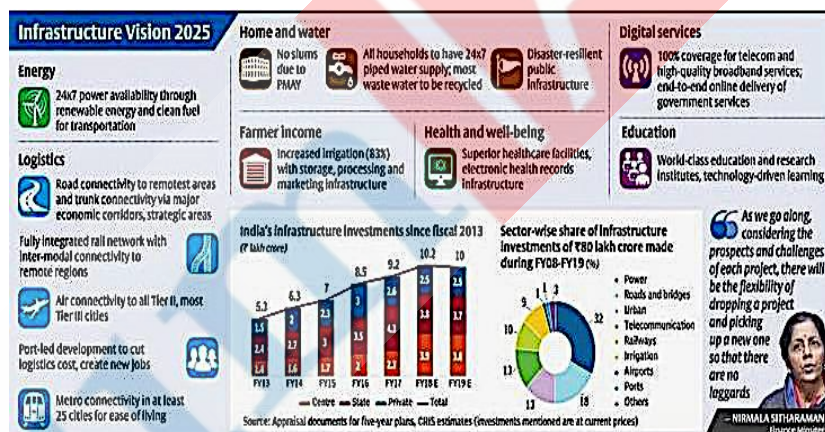
About National Infrastructure Pipeline

- The National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) consists of the projects and programmes with a total allocation of INR 102 lakh crore for infrastructure development in the next five years.
- It is in accordance with the government's vision to make India a $5 trillion economy by 2024-25.
- NIP includes economic and social infrastructure projects in sectors such as Energy (24%), Roads (19%), Urban (16%), and Railways (13%) amount to around 70% of the projected capital expenditure in infrastructure in India.

2. India's rising retail prices stoke worries of stagflation

News: India's retail price inflation has jumped to a 40-month high at a time when India's growth has slowed down to a six-year low. This has prompted some economists to warn that the country could be entering into a stagflationary phase.

Facts:

About Stagflation:

- The term Stagflation was first coined by Paul Samuelson who was the first American to win the Nobel Prize in economics.

- Stagflation is a condition of slow economic growth and relatively high unemployment, or economic stagnation, accompanied by rising prices, or inflation.

- It can also be defined as inflation and a decline in the gross domestic product (GDP).
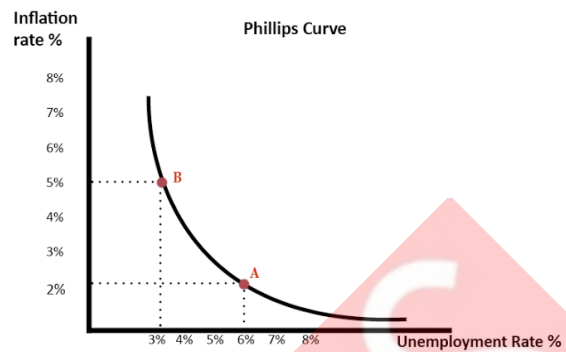
Additional information:

About Phillips Curve:

- Phillips curve is a graphic curve which advocates a relationship between inflation and unemployment in an economy.

- As per the curve, there is an inverse relationship between inflation and unemployment.

- The concept states that with economic growth comes with inflation which in turn should lead to more jobs and less unemployment.

3. LPG Pricing in India

News: Centre raised the price of non-subsidized LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) for the fifth month in a row

Facts:

About LPG Pricing in India

- LPG pricing in India is done on the basis of **import parity price (IPP)** which is a price-setting mechanism for a commodity in which the price is set based on the cost of importing the commodity into a location.

- The IPPO for LPG in India is based on Saudi Aramco's LPG price. It includes the FOB (free on board) price, ocean freight, insurance, custom duties, port dues, etc. This is price is quoted in dollars which is then converted to rupees.

- To this price, the cost of inland freight, marketing costs and margins charged by the oil companies, bottling charges, dealer commission and the GST is added. This gives the retail selling price of the non-subsidized LPG cylinder in India.

4. National Pension Scheme for traders fails to gain traction

News: The National Pension Scheme for traders also called the Pradhan Mantri Laghu Vyapari Maan-dhan Yojana has failed to gain traction among the traders.

Facts:

- The Government has set a target of 50 lakh enrolment by the end of March 2020. However, only 25,000 persons have applied so far.

- Among all states, Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of registrations.

- No one has so far registered in the scheme in the states of Mizoram and Lakshadweep.

- The experts have suggested that the entry age and the premium for the scheme should be raised to encourage more traders to join the scheme.

Additional Facts:

About Pradhan Mantri Laghu Vyapari Maan-dhan Yojana:

- The National Pension Scheme for Traders and Self-Employed Persons Yojana (Pradhan Mantri Laghu Vyapari Maan-dhan Yojana) is a pension scheme for shopkeepers launched in July,2019.

- **Objective:** The scheme assures a minimum monthly pension of ₹3000 per month to small shopkeepers, retail traders and self-employed people after attaining the age of 60 years.

- **Contribution:** They have to contribute to the scheme every month from the time of enrolment and till age 60 for getting the pension. The Government of India will also make a matching contribution in the subscribers' account.

- **Implementation:** The Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) is the pension fund manager for the scheme.

- **Eligibility:** The scheme is available to all small shopkeepers, self-employed persons and retail traders with Goods and Services tax (GST) turnover below Rs.1.5 crore. The age limit is 18-40 years.

- However, the applicants should not be covered under the National Pension Scheme, Employees' State Insurance Scheme and the Employees' Provident Fund or be an Income Tax assessed.

5. Stressed urban cooperative banks to face PCA - like curbs

News: The Reserve Bank of India has revised its supervisory framework for urban co-operative banks (UCBs) to expedite resolution of UCBs experiencing financial stress.

Facts:

About the revised framework:

- The framework imposes restrictions on urban cooperative banks (UCBs) for deterioration of financial position in line with the prompt corrective action (PCA) framework that is imposed on commercial banks.

- The framework was revised in the backdrop of the recent crisis at the PMC Bank.

Features of the framework: Under this revised Supervisory Action Framework (SAF), UCBs will face restrictions for worsening of three parameters:

- when net non-performing assets exceed 6% of net advances,

- when they incur losses for two consecutive financial years or have accumulated losses on their balance sheets, and

- if the capital adequacy ratio falls below 9%.

Additional information:

About Prompt corrective action (PCA):

- Prompt corrective action (PCA) is a framework under which commercial banks with weak financial metrics are put under watch by the RBI.

- The RBI introduced the PCA framework in 2002 as a structured early-intervention mechanism for banks that become undercapitalised due to poor asset quality, or vulnerable due to loss of profitability.

- It aims to check the problem of Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) in the Indian banking sector.

About Co-operative Banks:

- A Co-operative bank is a financial entity which belongs to its members, who are at the same time the owners and the customers of their bank.

- Co-operative banking in India started in the early 20th century with the passing of Co-operative Societies Act in 1904 and later with the Co-operative Societies Act, 1912.

- They are often created by persons belonging to the same local or professional community of sharing a common interest.

- They are classified into two categories namely Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs) and rural co-operative banks.

6. Global Economic Prospects report - 2020

News: The World Bank has released the 2020 Global Economic Prospects report.

Facts:

Key takeaways from the report:

Report on Global and Regional Growth:

- Global growth is set to rise by 2.5% this year from 2.4% in 2019 as trade and investment gradually recover.
- The growth among advanced economies as a group is anticipated to slip to 1.4% in 2020 due to continued slowdown in the manufacturing sector.
- But the growth in emerging markets and developing economies is expected to accelerate to 4.1%. However, this growth is not broad-based as the improvement in performance is likely to come from a small group of large economies
- The report also estimates growth to rise to 5.5% for the South Asian region as a whole in 2020 on the assumption of a modest rebound in domestic demand and improved business confidence.

Report on India:

- The report has lowered its growth estimate for India to 5% for the current fiscal from the earlier projection of 6% for 2019-20.
- The report cited a lingering weakness in credit from non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) as the main cause for the slowdown.
- However, the report expects India's growth to recover only slightly to 5.8% in the next fiscal year.

7. India joins Reskilling Revolution Initiative at World Economic Forum as a Founding Member

News: India has joined as a founding government member of the World Economic Forum's Reskilling Revolution Initiative.

Facts:

About Reskilling Revolution Initiative:

- The initiative aims to future-proof workers from technological change and help economies by providing new skills for the Fourth Industrial Revolution.
- It targets to provide one billion people with better education, skills and jobs by 2030.

Additional Facts:

About Fourth Industrial revolution:

- The fourth industrial revolution is the current developing environment in which disruptive technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), robotics and artificial intelligence (AI) are changing the way we live and work.

About Centre for Fourth Industrial revolution:

- The centre would be based in Mumbai and it has selected drones, artificial intelligence and blockchain as the first three project areas.
- In 2018, India has become the fourth country in the world after the USA, China and Japan where the World Economic Forum in partnership with NITI Aayog has opened its centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution.
- The centre aims to accelerate the adoption of new technologies, minimize their negative effects on society and ensure that everyone has access to the benefits generated by these technologies.

8. SEBI puts in place guidelines for listed REIT, InvIT on rights issue

News: The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has announced guidelines pertaining to rights issue of units by listed real estate investment trusts (REITs) and infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs).

Facts:

Key features of the guidelines:

- The issuer will have to disclose objects of the issue, related-party transactions, valuation, financial details, review of credit rating and the grievance redressal mechanism in the placement document.
- The investment manager on behalf of the REIT and InvIT in consultation with lead merchant banker(s) will decide the issue price before determining the record date.
- The minimum subscription to be received in the rights issue should be 90% of the issue size through the letter of offer.

Additional Facts:

About Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs):

- REITs are securities linked to real estate that can be traded on stock exchanges once they get listed
- Under it, REITs sell units to investors. This money is invested in real estate projects to earn rental income.
- The income is then distributed to unit holders. Besides regular income from rents and leases, gains from capital appreciation of real estate also form an income for the unit holders.

About Infrastructure Investment trusts (InvITs):

- InvITs are investment schemes similar to mutual funds. They allow investment from individuals and institutional investors in infrastructure projects to earn a portion of the income as return.
- They can be considered as a modified version of REITs designed to suit the specific circumstances of the infrastructure sector.
- They attract long term finance to invest in infrastructure projects such as roads or highways which take some time to generate steady cash flows.

Benefits of REITs and InvITs:

- Opportunity to invest in stable return-generating instruments with low risk to capital.
- Decrease the financing burden on banks by reducing exposure to the real estate sector.
- Increased financing for key sectors such as transportation and energy that will help propel the growth of the country
- Creation of direct and indirect employment opportunities.

Environment

1. Over 1 million migratory birds to flock to Chilika this year too

News: The Chilika Development Authority (CDA) has said that it expects over 1 million migratory birds to flock to Chilika lake in 2020.

Facts:

About Chilika lake:

- Chilika lake is Asia's largest brackish water lake. It is located at the Daya River flowing into the Bay of Bengal.
- The lake is also the second largest coastal lagoon in the world after the New Caledonian barrier reef in New Caledonia.
- Chilika lake was also designated as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention in 1981.
- The lake is also home to the largest wintering ground for migratory birds on the Indian subcontinent. These birds travel great distances to reach Chilika Lake.
- The Irrawaddy dolphin (IUCN Red List –Endangered) is the flagship species of Chilika Lake.

About Chilika Development Authority:

- Chilika Development Authority was created under the Forest & Environment Department of Government of Odisha in the year 1991.
- It was formed with an objective for the conservation of ecology of Chilika lagoon and to bring an all-round development in and around the lagoon which calls for multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary development activities.

2. Global meet on marine ecosystems

News: The third international conference on marine ecosystems – challenges and opportunities (MECOS-3) was held in Kochi, Kerala from January 7 to 10,2019.

Facts:

About the Conference:

- The Conference was organized by the Marine Biological Association of India.
- The conference is aimed at reviewing the concerns involved in marine ecosystem and formulating strategies for the better and sustainable utilisation of marine wealth by enhancing livelihood options,
- It will also serve as a platform for discussions on a range of topics, including the impact of the climate crisis on marine ecosystems and an unusual warming of the Arabian Sea.

Conference and SDG:

- The conference would focus on the Sustainable Development Goal of the United Nations, SDG-14.
- SDG-14 says, "Conserve and Sustainably use the oceans and its resources for sustainable development".

3. New technology to boost production of Geranium

News: CSIR (Council of Scientific and Industrial Research) has developed a new low-cost technology to produce Geranium saplings.

Facts:

About Geranium:

- Geranium plants are originally from South Africa and are predominantly used in manufacturing essential oils.
- It acts as an anti-inflammatory and antiseptic agent. It also has several medicinal values.
- In India, the plant is cultivated in Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and North Eastern Regions.

About the new technology:

- This new technology has been developed under the Aroma Mission of CSIR.
- Currently, geranium cultivation is being done in aerated glass houses. With the help of the new technology, geranium can be cultivated at farms just like every other crop.

Additional information:

About Aroma mission:

- Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) had launched the Aroma mission to boost cultivation of aromatic crops and medicinal plants.
- Aromatic plants are a special kind of plants used for their aroma and flavour. Many of them are also used for medicinal purposes such as rosemary, lavender, lemongrass among others.
- The mission aims to develop superior aroma crop varieties and their agro-technologies. The mission also facilitates the assessment of their suitability for large scale cultivation in specific agro-climatic regions.

4. Palau is first country to ban 'reef toxic' sunscreen

News: Palau has become the first country to ban sun cream that is harmful to corals and sea life.

Facts:

About the Ban:

The ban covers chemicals such as oxybenzone and octinoxate used in sunscreen. These chemicals are toxic to wildlife species such as corals, fish, and macroalgae. They can cause:

- corals to become more susceptible to coral bleaching,
- damage the DNA of coral, and
- deform and kill juvenile corals.

Additional Facts:

About Palau:

- It is an island country located in the western Pacific Ocean.
- Rock Islands Southern Lagoon of Palau is a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Palau created the world's first shark sanctuary in 2009.

5. Assam state zoo first to breed endangered Hargila

News: The Assam State Zoo and wildlife NGO Aranyak has jointly bred a pair of Greater Adjutant (Hargila) chicks in an artificial platform within the zoo enclosure.

Facts:

About Greater Adjutant Stork (Hargila):

- It is found in a few isolated pockets in Assam and Bihar in India and PrekToal in Cambodia.
- IUCN status: Endangered
- It is listed under schedule IV of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

6. Gujarat: 10,000 cameras to be used for 2020 lion census

News: The Asiatic Lion Census is scheduled to take place in May 2020.

Facts:

The Gujarat forest department conducts lion census every five years in Asiatic Lion Landscape, which includes Gir National Park and Sanctuary.

About Asiatic Lion

- It is listed as 'Endangered' under the IUCN Red List.
- It is listed in Schedule-I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972
- The only surviving free-ranging population of the Asiatic lion exists in the Gir forest, Gujarat.
- According to the 2015 Lion Census, there are 523 Asiatic Lions.

Note: The African Lion is listed as Vulnerable under the IUCN Red List.

Gir National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary:

- It is situated in the Saurashtra region of Gujarat. The Gir National park was established in 1965.
- It is part of the Kathiawar-Gir dry deciduous forests Ecoregion
- The major perennial rivers of the Gir region are Hiran, Shetrunji, Datardi, Shingoda, Machhundri, Godavari and Raval.

Additional Information:

'Asiatic Lion Conservation Project'

- Started by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, it aims to protect and conserve the Asiatic Lion.
- It is a 3 year-long conservation project. It focuses on
  - o disease management,
  - o habitat improvement and eco-development,
  - o robust wildlife health service with a dedicated veterinary institute,
  - o addressing to man-wild animal conflict issues,
  - o voluntary relocation of Protect Area inhabitants (Maldhari tribe),
  - o monitoring and tracking of animals and creating a wildlife crime cell

7. One-fifth of country's forests prone to fires: study

News: The Forest Survey of India (FSI) in its report State of the forest has talked about the forest fires in the country.

Facts:

Key takeaways from the report:

- About 21.40% of forest cover in India is prone to fires with forests in the north-eastern region and central India being the most vulnerable.
- The extremely fire prone areas account for 3.89% of total forest cover, very highly fire prone areas account for 6.01% and highly fire prone areas for 11.50%. Together, the three categories come to 21.40 % of forest cover.
- The overall green cover has increased in the country but the forest cover in the north-east, particularly in Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland, has decreased.
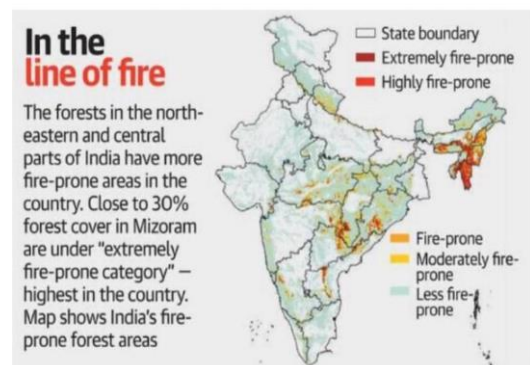
- The seven States of the north-eastern region accounted for about one-third of alerts in the country with Mizoram recording the highest number of fire alerts.
- The reasons for forest fires are mostly man made particularly in cases where people visit forests and leave burning bidis, cigarette stubs or other inflammable materials.
- However, in cases of natural reasons, the scientist pointed to the thunderstorms as the most likely cause.

8. Indore continues to top Swachh Survekshan among cities having ten lakh plus population

News: Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs has announced the results of the first (April-June) and second (July- September) quarters of Swachh Survekshan League 2020.

Facts:

About Swachh Survekshan League 2020:

- Swachh Survekshan 2020 League was launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs in 2019.
- The aim of the survey is to sustain the on-ground performance of cities along with continuous monitoring of service level performance in cleanliness.
- The performance of cities in the League 2020 is crucial to their ranking in Swachh Survekshan 2020 due to the 25% weightage of the quarterly assessments to be included in the annual survey in January 2020.

Key takeaways from the survey:

Cities with a population of 10 lakh and above:

- Indore from Madhya Pradesh has been ranked first in both quarters.
- Bhopal got second and Surat in Gujarat third spot in the first Quarter.
- In the second quarter, Rajkot in Gujarat was at the 2nd spot while Navi Mumbai was at third.

Cities with a population of 1 lakh and above:

- Jamshedpur in Jharkhand has been ranked first in both quarters.
- New Delhi Municipal Council and Khargone in Madhya Pradesh got the second and third spot in the first quarter in this category.
- In the second quarter, Chandrapur in Maharashtra and Khargone got the second and third spot respectively.

9. Kerala for steps to curb alien plants' growth in NBR

News: Kerala forest department is planning to adopt steps to arrest the growth of *Senna spectabilis*, in the forest areas of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR)

Facts:

About *Senna spectabilis*

- It is a plant species native to South and Central America.
- It has been labeled as an invasive species in Africa and South Asia, due to its ability to spread rapidly and impacting the growth of indigenous plants.
- **IUCN Status**: Least Concern

About Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve

- It is the **first biosphere reserve** in India established in the year 1986.
- It is included in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves under the Man and Biosphere Reserve Programme of UNESCO
- **Location**: It is located in the Western Ghats and spreads over parts of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka.
- **Protected Areas within the Reserve**: Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary, Wyanaad Wildlife Sanctuary Bandipur National Park, Nagarhole National Park, Mukurthi National Park, Silent Valley National Park, and Sathyamangalam Wildlife Sanctuary.

10. Great Indian Bustard

News: Conservation efforts are having a positive impact on Great Indian Bustard population in India

Facts:

Conservation Efforts in India

Bustard Recovery Programme:

Initiated by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in 2015, it is a programme for Great Indian Bustard, Lesser Florican and Bengal Florican. It recommends:

- linking local livelihoods with bustard conservation
- state governments to identify the core breeding areas for bustards and keep them inviolate from human disturbances
- Restriction on infrastructure development and land use diversion for roads, high tension electric poles, intensive agriculture, wind power generators and construction.

Project Great Indian Bustard: It is a Rajasthan government project launched in 2018. It envisages constituting enclosures and securing inviolate areas to ensure successful breeding of birds in the Desert National Park

Additional Information

Types of Bustards Found in India

Name	Characteristics	Geographical Extent	IUCN Status
Great Indian Bustard #State Bird of Rajasthan	Can be distinguished by its black crown on the forehead contrasting with the pale neck and head One of the heaviest flying birds (weighing up to 15kgs) # Endemic to Indian subcontinent	Rajasthan (Desert National park), Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh in India and parts of Pakistan	Critically Endangered
Lesser Florican	# Smallest in the bustard family # Endemic to Indian subcontinent	Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and	Endangered
Bengal Florican	Mostly black in colour with largely white wings # Endemic to Indian subcontinent	Terai and the Brahmaputra valley (Uttar Pradesh, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.) Considered to be extinct in Bangladesh.	Critically Endangered
MacQueen's Bustard	Pale sandy in colour	Found in desert and steppe regions of Asia Winter migrant to the desert regions of Rajasthan and Gujarat	Vulnerable

- Great Indian Bustard, Lesser Florican and Bengal Florican – They are listed in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

11. Bhitarkanika census finds an increase of 15 saltwater crocodiles from last year

News: According to official estimates, the population of the saltwater or estuarine crocodile has increased in the water bodies of Odisha's Bhitarkanika National Park to 1,757

Facts:

About Bhitarkanika National Park

- It is located in Kendrapara district of Odisha
- It is inundated by the rivers Brahmani, Baitarani, Dhamra, Pathsala.
- It is the second-largest mangrove ecosystem in India, the first being Sundarbans (West Bengal).
- It has been designated as a Ramsar Site.

Additional Information:
- Odisha is the only state in India having all three species of crocodile— gharial, mugger and saltwater crocodile.

Species of crocodile

Species	IUCN Status
Saltwater Crocodile	Least concern
Mugger	Vulnerable
Gharial	Critically Endangered

Importance of conducting censuses
- Proper planning, implementation and evaluation of conservation programs depend on the numbers and distribution of wildlife populations.
- The knowledge gained from the census allows management of resources effectively and facilitates mitigation of threats to animals.

12. Explained: What carbon numbers mean for climate target

News: According to State of Forest Report (SFR) 2019, carbon stock in India's forests have increased from 7.08 billion tonnes in 2017, to 7.124 billion tonnes in 2019.

Facts:
- **Carbon stock** is the quantity of **carbon** contained in a carbon pool.
- **Carbon pool**: It is a reservoir or system which has the capacity to accumulate or release carbon
- **Carbon sink**: It is any system that absorbs more carbon than it emits. The main natural carbon sinks are **soil, forests and oceans**.

Additional Information:

India's intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) under Paris Agreement
- reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by 33% to 35% by 2030 from 2005 level,
- increase total cumulative electricity generation from fossil free energy sources to 40% by 2030,
- Create additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tons through additional forest and tree cover.

13. Explained: Why eruption of a tiny, 'complex' volcano is causing concern

News: Taal Volcano erupted on 12th January

Facts:

About Taal Volcano
- It is located on the island of Luzon, in the Philippines.
- It is classified as a "complex" volcano.

Additional Information:

Volcano: A volcano on Earth is a vent or fissure in the planet's crust through which lava, ash, rock, and gases erupt

Why is the Philippines prone to volcanic activity and Earthquakes?
- The Philippines lies along the Ring of Fire - a zone of major seismic activity. The country is situated at the boundaries of two tectonic plates — the Philippines Sea Plate and the Eurasian plate
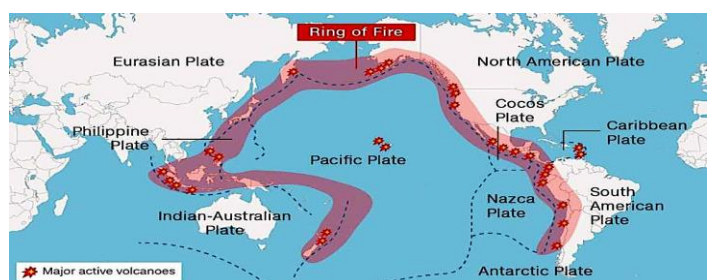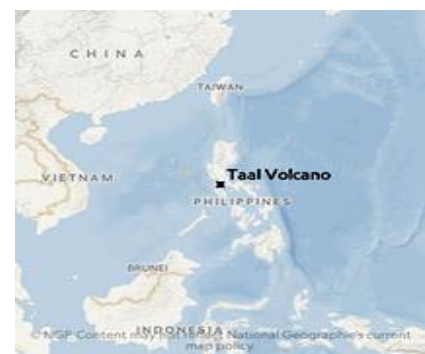
14. Ghataprabha River

News: Migratory birds from Siberia spotted at Ghataprabha River.

Facts:

About Ghataprabha River

- It is a right-bank tributary of the Krishna River. It originates from the Western Ghats and joins the river Krishna at Chikksangam, Karnataka.
- It forms Gokak Falls in Belgaum District of Karnataka.
- It has a hydroelectric and irrigational dam at Hidkal

15. Centre notifies new Wetland Conservation Rules

News: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has put forward Guidelines for implementing Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017

Facts:

Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017

Key Features:

- Prohibits conversion for non-wetland uses, setting up or expansion of industries in wetland areas.
- Prohibits disposal of construction and demolition waste within the wetlands.
- Each state and Union Territory will have to set up wetland authority that will define strategies for wetlands conservation.
- The authority should also enhance awareness among stakeholders and local communities.

16. IMD's State of Climate Report: 2019 the seventh warmest year since 1901

News: India Meteorological Department (IMD) released State of the Climate Report-2019

Facts:

Key takeaways from State of the Climate Report-2019

- The past decade was the hottest on record for India.
- 2019 was the seventh warmest year since 1901.
- The annual rainfall in 2019 was 109% of the long period average for 1961–2010
- Five cyclones were recorded from the Arabian Sea- the highest number of Arabian Sea cyclones since 1902. The normal number is one per year.
- Extreme weather events killed about 1,630 people in 2019.

Additional Information:

State of Global Climate 2019- released by the World Meteorological Organization

- The global average temperature in 2019 (January to October) was about 1.1 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial period.
- Concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere hit a record level of 407.8 parts per million in 2018 and continued to rise in 2019.
- In October 2019, the global mean sea level reached its highest value since the beginning of the high-precision altimetry record (January 1993).

17. A rare migratory eagle sighted near Vijayawada

News: Steppe Eagle (Aquila nipalensis) has been sighted in Andhra Pradesh during Asian Bird Census.

Facts:

About Steppe Eagle:

- It is a large eagle with broad, long wings and a short-rounded tail.
- IUCN Status: Endangered
- Habitat: Russia, Kazakhstan, and Mongolia during the winter season.
- They are also the second-largest migratory eagle species to India.
- The Steppe Eagle appears on the flag of Kazakhstan. It is also the National bird (animal) of Egypt and appears on its flag.
- Threats: (a)habitat loss (b)died due to diclofenac (c)electrocution among others.

18. India achieves complete phase out of one the most potent ozone depleting chemical

News: India has successfully achieved the complete phase out of Hydrochlorofluorocarbon (HCFC)-141 b

Facts:

About Hydrochlorofluorocarbon (HCFC)-141 b

- It is a chemical used by foam manufacturing enterprises.

Environmental Benefits of phase out:

- Will assist the healing of the stratospheric ozone layer,
- Will help towards the climate change mitigation

Ozone Layer:

- Ozone layer, also called ozonosphere is a layer in the stratosphere lying between roughly 15 and 35 km above the Earth's surface, containing relatively high concentrations of ozone molecules (O3).

Montreal Protocol

- It was signed in 1987. It is signed by 197 countries – the first treaty in the history of the United Nations to achieve universal ratification
- **Aim**: To protect the Ozone layer by reducing the production of substances that are supposed to be responsible for the Ozone layer depletion.
- It phases down the consumption and production of the different ozone depleting substances in a stepwise manner, with different timetables for developed and developing countries
- **Kigali Agreement**: Signed in 2016, it is legally binding. It seeks to phase out the production of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) that are potent greenhouse gases by the late 2040s.

19. 1t.org

News: USA has announced to join the recently launched 1t.org initiative.

Facts:

About 1t.org

- It is a World Economic Forum initiative, designed to support the trillion-tree community.
- It offers a platform for leading governments, businesses, civil society and ecopreneurs committed to serving the global trillion trees community.

Objectives:

- To serve and empower the reforestation community.
- To unlock the conditions needed to re-green Earth.
- To break down the barriers preventing conservation and restoration at scale.
- To support the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030, led by UNEP and FAO

Additional Information:

UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030: It aims to massively scale up the restoration of degraded and destroyed ecosystems to fight the climate crisis and enhance food security, water supply and biodiversity.

20. Bushfire crisis: Australia may list Koalas as endangered

News: The Australian government might declare Koalas as an endangered species after the population animal suffered an extraordinary hit in the devastating bushfires.

Facts:

About Koalas:

- Koalas are a tree-dwelling **marsupial** animal endemic to Australia.
- **IUCN Status:** Vulnerable.
- They eat the leaves of eucalyptus that would be toxic or even fatal to most mammals.
- **Threats:** habitat destruction, climate change & severe weather events.

About Marsupial:

- Marsupials are those animals which are born in an incomplete state.
- They have a short-lived placenta that nourishes their young for just a few days before they're born, the rest of their nutrition coming from the mother's teats inside the pouch.
- Instead of the placenta, the mother's milk nourishes the young and allows it to grow and develop.

21. Indian Railways' first waste to energy plant commissioned

News: The first waste to energy plant of Indian Railways has been commissioned by the East Coast Railways (ECoR).

Facts:

About the waste to energy plant:
- The waste to energy plant converts waste collected from the garbage disposal units into carbon powder, diesel and gas (without leaving any waste) using Poly Crack Technology.
- The diesel oil is to be sold by the Railways to other stakeholders for commercial purposes.
- The gas and carbon powder are to be used in brick manufacturing.

Additional Facts:

About Poly crack technology:
- Poly crack technology is a process which converts multiple feed stocks into hydrocarbon liquid fuels, gas, carbon and water.
- The benefit of this process is that it does not require pre-segregation. However, it requires a larger area for processing.

Note: This is the fourth waste to energy plant in the country. The first was set up by Infosys at Bangalore in 2011.The second one was established at Moti Bagh, Delhi in 2014 and third one was set up at Hindalco in 2019.

22. 10 more wetlands from India get the Ramsar site tag

News: Ramsar has declared 10 more wetland sites from India as sites of international importance. With this, the numbers of Ramsar sites in India are now 37

Facts:

The new Indian Ramsar sites include:
- Nandur Madhameshwar bird sanctuary- **Maharashtra**
- Beas conservation reserve, Keshopur-Miani community reserve and Nangal wildlife sanctuary- **Punjab**
- Nawabganj bird sanctuary, Parvati Arga bird sanctuary, Saman bird sanctuary, Sarsai Nawar Lake, Samaspur bird sanctuary and Sandi bird sanctuary- **Uttar Pradesh**

Additional Facts;

Ramsar Convention on Wetland (1971): It is an intergovernmental treaty which provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources

Montreux Record: It is a register of wetland sites on the List of Ramsar wetlands of international importance. It shows such sites where there has been or likely to be adverse ecological changes due to anthropogenic activities. Indian sites in the Montreux Record are Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan), Loktak Lake (Manipur).

Wetland Restoration in India:
1. **Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017:** It prohibits conversion for non-wetland uses, setting up or expansion of industries in wetland areas and disposal of construction and demolition waste within the wetlands. Each state and Union Territory will have to set up wetland authority that will define strategies for wetlands conservation.
2. **National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems (NPCA):** Launched in 2015 by merging of the National Lake Conservation Plan and the National Wetlands Conservation Programme. It aims at holistic conservation and restoration of lakes and wetlands.
3. **Wetland health cards:** In 2019, the government identified 130 wetlands in the country to be restored in the next five years. Each wetland will be issued a health card, which will denote its health.
4. **Wetland Mitras:** Selected individuals for taking care of the 130 identified wetlands across India.

23. SC allows centre to introduce African cheetah to suitable habitat in India

News: The Supreme Court has allowed the introduction of African Cheetah from Namibia in India. The Court also set up a three-member committee to guide the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) on cheetah reintroduction.

Facts:

Cheetah:
- **IUCN Status:** Vulnerable

- **Geographic range**: North, Southern and East Africa, and a few localities in Iran
- **Cheetah in India**: Extinct in India since 1947

Background: The Supreme Court had earlier stayed African Cheetah reintroduction in Pradesh's Kuno-Palpur Wildlife Sanctuary.

National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA): Established in 2005, NTCA is a statutory body under MoEFCC which oversees management of Project Tiger and Tiger Reserves in India.

Kuno- Palpur Wildlife Sanctuary:

- **Location:** Sheopur and Morena districts of Madhya Pradesh
- Status of the wildlife sanctuary changed to Kuno National Park in 2018.

24. India begins coral restoration in Gulf of Kachchh

News: The Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), with help from Gujarat's forest department, is attempting for the first time a process to restore coral reefs using biorock or mineral accretion technology.

Facts:

About biorock or mineral accretion technology

- Biorock is the substance formed by electro-accumulation of minerals dissolved in seawater.
- The technology works by passing a small amount of electrical current through electrodes in the water
- As a result of the process, calcium carbonate is formed, and coral larvae adhere to the CaCO3 and grow quickly.

Corals and Coral Reefs in India

- Corals are small (0.25-12 inches), soft-bodied marine organisms.
- They live in colonies called reefs that they build using a limestone skeleton (calicle) lying at their base.
- In India, coral reefs are located in 7 regions: Goa coast, Kerala coast, Palk Bay, Gulf of Kucch, Gulf of Mannar, Lakshadweep islands, Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Science and Technology
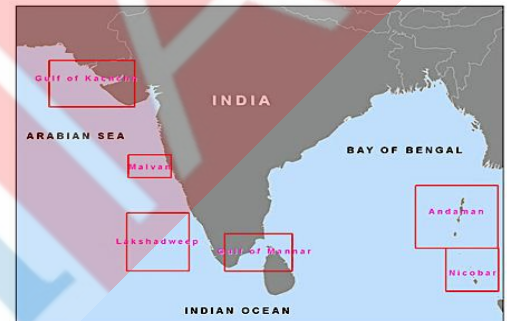
1. ISRO plans to launch satellite Aditya to study Sun

News: Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that ISRO is planning to launch a satellite called Aditya L1 to study the sun

Facts:

About Aditya L1

- It will be **India's first satellite** to study the sun. It is scheduled to be launched in 2021 aboard a Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-XL) from Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh
- **Aim**: To study the Sun's corona (outer layer of the sun) from a halo orbit around the Sun-Earth Lagrangian point 1.
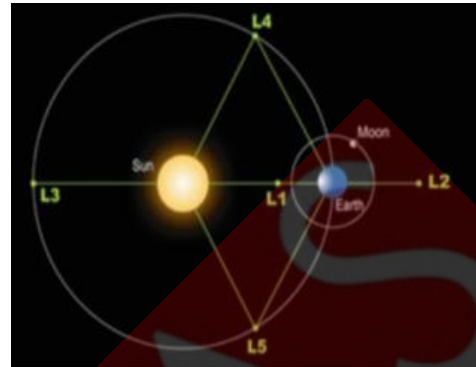
Additional Information:

Lagrangian points:

- Lagrange points are the locations where the combined gravitational pull of two large masses roughly balance each other. Any small mass placed at that location remains at a constant distance relative to the large masses.
- The path followed by an artificial satellite around a Lagrange point is known as **Halo orbit.**
- There are 5 such points as shown in the diagram.

2. Kerala institute gets US patent for turmeric-based cancer treatment

News: Thiruvananthapuram based Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology got a US patent for turmeric-based cancer therapy. The development of the technology was supported by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

About the turmeric-based cancer therapy

- The technique uses curcumin to directly target malignant tissues to reduce inflammation and post-surgical bleeding.
- Curcumin is a bright yellow chemical produced by Curcuma longa (Turmeric) plants.

3. ISRO signs pact with astrophysics institute to set up Optical Telescopes

News: The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) signed a pact with the Indian Institute of Astrophysics to establish an optical telescope under Project NETRA.

Facts:

About Project NETRA:

- Project NETRA is an early warning system in space to detect debris and other hazards to Indian satellites.
- Under the project, ISRO plans to put up many observational facilities: connected radars, telescopes; data processing units and a control centre.
- They can spot, track and catalogue objects as small as 10 cm up to a range of 3,400 km and equal to a space orbit of around 2,000 km.

Additional information:

About DRDO's NETRA:

- Apart from ISRO, Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) also operates NETRA (Network Traffic Analysis). It is a software network used to analyse internet traffic.
- It is used by Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), Intelligence Bureau (IB) and other intelligence agencies of the Government of India.

4. New data relay satellites to keep Gaganyaan crew in touch with Earth

News: ISRO is planning to launch Indian Data Relay Satellite System

Facts:

About Indian Data Relay Satellite System

- It is a set of satellites that will track, send and receive information from other Indian satellites

Significance:

- track and be constantly in touch with Indian satellites, particularly those in low-earth orbits
- useful in monitoring launches
- Help crew of Gaganyaan to maintain contact with mission control throughout

Additional Information

Other such satellite systems

1. TDRS (Tracking & Data Relay Satellites): USA
2. Satellite Data Relay Network: Russia
3. European Data Relay System: Europe
4. Tianlian II series: China

Gaganyaan Mission: It is India's first Human Space Flight Programme to be launched by Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) by 2022.

5. ISRO's communication satellite GSAT-30 was launched on Jan 17 from French territory Ariane

News: ISRO launched GSAT-30 onboard Ariane-5 launch vehicle (VA 251) from French Guiana on January 17

Facts:

About GSAT-30

- It has been designed and manufactured by ISRO
- It is an operational communication satellite for DTH, Television Uplink and VSAT services.
- It will replace the INSAT-4A satellite currently used by cable operators to broadcast their channels overseas.
- It has a mission life of 15 years

Applications:

- High-quality television, telecommunications and broadcasting services to the mainland and India's islands.
- Extended coverage in the C-band, which helps television broadcasters beam their programs across India, Gulf countries, a number of Asian countries and Australia
- Has one Ku-band beacon downlink signal for ground tracking purposes.

6. NASA's ARTEMIS mission

News: NASA wants to send the first woman and the next man to the Moon by the year 2024 under the Artemis lunar exploration program

Facts:

About ARTEMIS

ARTEMIS stands for Acceleration, Reconnection, Turbulence and Electrodynamics of the Moon's Interaction with the Sun.

Objectives:

- Establishing of lunar outpost
- Investigating the Moon's resources and how they might be exploited
- Using Moon as a base to explore Mars and further into deep space
- Broaden commercial and international partnerships
- Inspire a new generation and encourage careers in STEM

Note: ARTEMIS is named after the Greek Goddess of the Moon and twin sister of the god Apollo.

7. ISRO's NavIC to feature in mobiles

News: 3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP) (the mobile communications standards body) has approved NavIC to be included in mobiles along with GPS

Facts:

About NavIC

Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS): NavIC

- IRNSS (NavIC) is an independent regional navigation satellite system developed by the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO).
- It provides accurate position information service to users in India as well as the region extending up to 1500 km from its boundary which is its primary service area
- The space segment consists of the IRNSS constellation of eight satellites, NavIC
- **Types of Services**:
  - **Standard Positioning Service (SPS)**: It will be provided to all the users.
  - **Restricted Service (RS):** It is an encrypted service that will be provided only to authorized users (military and security agencies).

Additional Information:

Global Positioning System (GPS): It is a U.S.-owned satellite-based radio navigation system that provides users with positioning, navigation, and timing (PNT) services

Other global navigation systems: GLONASS (Russia), Galileo (EU), BeiDou (China).

8. LIGO team detects the second merger of two neutron stars

News: For the second time ever, the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO) has detected gravitational wave signals. The gravitational wave event is likely due to the collision of two neutron stars.

Facts:

Neutron Stars: Neutron stars are the remnants of giant stars which died in a fiery explosion known as a supernova. They have a mass of about 1.4 times that of the sun.

Gravitational waves:

- Gravitational waves are ripples in space-time caused by massive objects (e.g. neutron stars or black holes) moving with extreme accelerations
- Albert Einstein predicted the existence of gravitational waves in 1916 in his General Theory of Relativity.
- The first gravitational-wave detection of merging neutron stars was spotted by LIGO in 2017

LIGO

- LIGO is the world's largest gravitational wave observatory.
- It operates three gravitational-wave detectors: two are at Hanford, USA; and one is at Livingston, USA.

Additional Information

LIGO India

- It is a planned advanced gravitational-wave observatory and will be a part of the global network of LIGO Observatories.
- LIGO India will come up near Aundha in Hingoli district of Maharashtra
- The project will be jointly funded by the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and the Department of Science & Technology (DST)

9. Lithium-sulphur battery

News: Researchers from Australia have claimed that they have developed the world's most efficient Lithium-Sulfur (Li-S) battery.

Facts:

About Lithium-Sulfur (Li-S) battery

- It is a type of rechargeable battery with Lithium or Lithium alloys as anodic material and Sulfur as cathodic material.

Advantages:
- lower cost of production due to use of Sulfur
- capable of storing up to 10 times more energy than Lithium-ion ones

Disadvantages:
- Battery physically breaks apart under the stress from repeated charging and discharging of the battery

Additional Information:

Lithium-ion battery
- It is a type of rechargeable battery that uses an intercalated Lithium compound as the material at the positive electrode and typically Graphite at the negative electrode
- Lithium-ion batteries are commonly used for portable electronics, electric vehicles, and aerospace applications

Advantages:
- low maintenance
- self-discharge is less
- lithium-ion cells cause less harm when disposed

Disadvantages
- Susceptible to overheating
- Prone to damage at high voltages
- Start losing their capacity over time
- High cost due to need for rare earth metals
- Safety hazards

Did you Know? John B. Goodenough, M. Stanley Whittingham and Akira Yoshino received Nobel Prize in Chemistry 2019 for the development of lithium-ion batteries.

10. Neon, the world's first 'Artificial Human'

News: Samsung-backed Star Labs has unveiled Neon, the world's first "artificial humans".

Facts:

About Neon
- Neon is a humanoid AI chatbot
- It aims to deliver a personalised experience with an AI. It has the ability to show emotions and intelligence.

Additional Information:
1. **Artificial Intelligence:** It refers to the ability of machines to perform cognitive tasks like thinking, perceiving, learning, problem-solving and decision making. (NITI Aayog)
2. **Kamakoti Committee:** Ministry of Commerce and Industry, in 2017, set up AI Task Force headed by V. Kamakoti to explore possibilities to leverage AI for development across various fields.
3. **National strategy on artificial intelligence**: Released by NITI Aayog in 2018, it identifies 5 core areas for application of artificial intelligence: Healthcare, Agriculture, Education, Smart Cities and Infrastructure and Smart Mobility and Transportation

11. NASA planet hunter finds Earth-sized world in habitable zone

News: Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) has discovered an Earth-sized planet, termed as "TOI 700 d", within the habitable range of its star TOI 700, located in constellation Dorado.

Facts:

"Goldilocks zone"/ circumstellar habitable zone (CHZ)/ habitable zone: It is the range of distances from a star where liquid water might be found on an orbiting planet given sufficient atmospheric pressure.

Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS):
- It is an all-sky survey mission launched by NASA in 2018
- It seeks to discover exoplanets around nearby bright stars

12. Challakere to be ISRO's astronaut training hub

News: Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has proposed a ₹ 2,700-crore master plan to create the Human Space Flight Centre (HSFC)

Facts:

About Human Space Flight Centre (HSFC)

- It is a body under ISRO to coordinate the Indian Human Spaceflight Programme.
- It will be established in three years at Challakere ("Science City"), in Chitradurga district of Karnataka.
- At present, it works from a temporary place at the ISRO Headquarters, Antariksh Bhavan, Bengaluru.

13. Coronavirus

News: Scientists have said that the mysterious respiratory illness that has affected dozens of people in a Chinese city may be caused by a new coronavirus.

Facts:

About Coronavirus:

- A coronavirus is a common form of virus that typically causes upper-respiratory tract illness. The infections can range from common cold to symptoms of severe respiratory and intestinal diseases.
- Human coronaviruses (HCoV) were first identified in the 1960s in the noses of patients with the common cold.
- There are six different kinds of coronavirus which are known to infect humans. Four of these are common and most people will experience at least one of them at some point of time in their lives.
- The two other types cause SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) which are less common but far more deadly

Symptoms:

- The common human coronaviruses usually cause mild to moderate upper-respiratory tract illnesses like the common cold.
- However, other human coronaviruses such as MERS and SARS have known to cause severe symptoms such as cough, fever, shortness of breath which often lead to pneumonia.

Transmission:

- These viruses can be spread from an infected person to others through the air by coughing or sneezing, close personal contact like shaking hands and touching an object or surface with the virus on it. However, it rarely spreads through faecal contamination.

Treatment:

- There are no specific treatments for illnesses or diseases caused by coronaviruses which means there is no cure for a coronavirus infection

14. What is H9N2?

News: Indian scientists have detected the country's first case of infection with a rare variant of the virus called A(H9N2) that causes Avian Influenza or Bird Flu

Facts:

About A(H9N2) Virus:

- H9N2 is a subtype of Influenza A virus that causes human Influenza as well as Bird Flu
- The subtype was isolated for the first time in Wisconsin, US in 1966 from turkey flocks
- According to NCBI (National Centre for Biotechnology Information) US, H9N2 viruses are found worldwide in wild birds and are endemic in poultry in many areas. However, they are somewhat neglected.

H9N2 in Humans:

- H9N2 influenza virus can be transmitted by air droplets, dust, feed or water.
- However, the H9N2 virus infections in humans are rare but likely under-reported due to typically mild symptoms of the infections.
- The first case globally was reported from Hong Kong in 1998. The cases have also been observed in China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Egypt.

- Recently, the virus was detected in India during a community-based surveillance study in villages of Korku tribes in Melghat district of Maharashtra.

15. Shopper malware affects over 14% Indians: Kaspersky report

News: According to a report, a new Trojan called 'Shopper malware' is increasing its presence among smartphone users.

Facts:

About Shopper Malware:

- The Malware is targeting the retail applications. Around 14 percent of Indians have been affected by this malware.
- As the Trojan gains permission, it interacts with the system interfaces and captures every data being featured on the screen. It is also capable of reading data being entered on the screen.

About Malware:

- Malware (malicious software) refers to any kind of software that is designed to cause damage to a single computer, server or computer network.
- It is an umbrella term used to refer to a variety of forms of hostile or intrusive malicious software including computer viruses, worms, Trojan horses, spyware, and ransomware among others.
- Trojan horse is a malware that disguises itself as a normal file or program to trick users into downloading and installing malware.

16. WHO endorses indigenous molecular diagnostic tool for tuberculosis diagnosis

News: The World Health Organisation (WHO) endorsed 'TrueNat' which is an indigenous molecular diagnostic tool for Tuberculosis (TB) diagnosis.

Facts:

About TrueNat:

- The TrueNat is a new molecular test that can diagnose TB in one hour as well as testing for resistance to the drug 'Rifampicin'.
- The test has been developed by the Indian firm MolBio Diagnostics Pvt Ltd Goa.
- The test works by rapid detection of TB bacteria using the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) technique.

Additional information:

About Tuberculosis (TB)

- Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious airborne *bacterial disease* caused by Mycobacterium Tuberculosis.
- When TB infection becomes resistant to the first line of treatment — Isoniazid and Rifampicin it is called Multi-drug resistant TB (MDR-TB).
- However, when the infection becomes resistant even to the second-line treatment it is called Extensively-drug resistant Tuberculosis (XDR-TB).

About Polymerase chain reaction (PCR):

- Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) is a common laboratory technique used to make many copies (millions or billions) of a particular region of DNA.
- The goal of PCR is to make enough of the target DNA region that it can be analysed or used in some other way.
- PCR is used in many areas of biology and medicine, including molecular biology research, medical diagnostics, and even some branches of ecology.

17. Yada Yada Virus

News: Recently, a virus detected in Australian mosquitoes has been provisionally named the Yada Yada virus (YYV).

Facts:

About Yada Yada Virus:

- Yada Yada Virus belongs to the group alphavirus. The virus poses *no threat to human beings* because it is a part of a group of viruses that only infect mosquitoes.

● The other viruses which are part of the group alphaviruses include Tai forest alphavirus and the Agua Salud alphavirus.

18. NIC sets up 'Centre of Excellence in Blockchain Technology' in Bengaluru

News: The National Informatics Centre (NIC) set up a block chain technology centre in Bengaluru.

Facts:

About the Blockchain centre:

● The Centre aims to provide Blockchain as a service to all the stakeholders who are interested in shared experiences, learning and resources.

● It will also share its block chain-based proof of concepts with selected government entities.
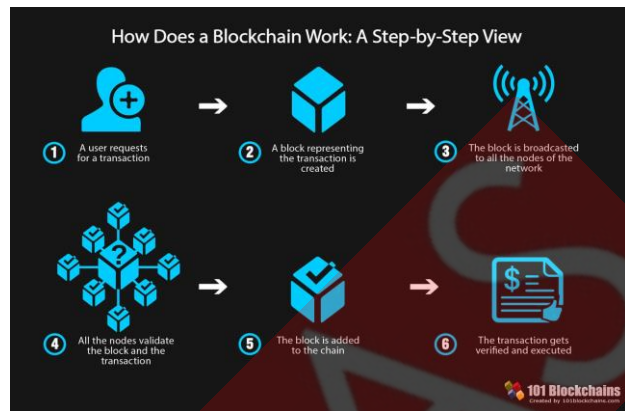
Additional information:

About Blockchain:

● Blockchain is a digital, immutable, distributed ledger that chronologically records transactions in near real time.

● In simple words, it is an interlinked and continuously expanding list of records stored securely across a number of interconnected systems.

About National Informatics Centre (NIC):

● The National Informatics Centre (NIC) is an institute set up by the Indian government in 1976 to drive its technology and e-governance initiatives in the country.

● The institute is part of the Indian Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

19. Hyperloop technology

News: The proposed Pune-Mumbai Hyperloop project, an ultra-modern transport system may be scrapped by the Maharashtra government.

Facts:

About Hyperloop:

● Hyperloop is a proposed mode of transportation that moves freight and people quickly, safely, on-demand and direct from origin to destination.

● The concept was first proposed by Elon Musk, the CEO of the aerospace firm SpaceX.

About Mumbai-Pune Hyperloop Project:

● In 2018, the Maharashtra Government had approved the Mumbai-Pune Hyperloop project.

● The responsibility of the project was given to the Pune Metropolitan Region Development Authority (PMRDA) which announced that the project will be implemented in two phases.

● However, the current government has said that the Hyperloop project will be implemented after it has been successfully implemented elsewhere in the world.
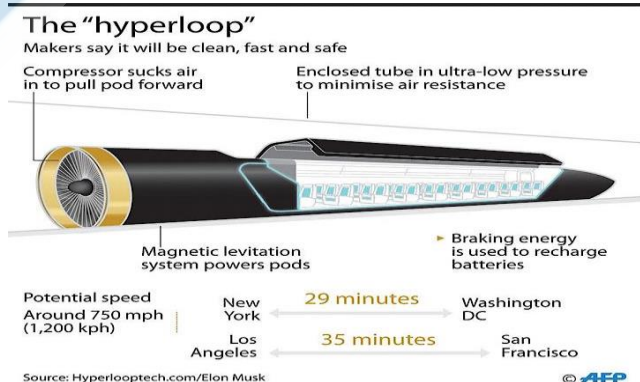
20. India, co-builder of Hawaii telescope, wants it shifted out of proposed site

News: India has said it wants the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) project to be moved out of the proposed site at Mauna Kea.

Facts:

About Thirty Meter Telescope
- It is a proposed astronomical observatory with an extremely large telescope (ELT) to be built on Mauna Kea, a dormant volcano and the highest point in Hawaii.
- The TMT is being designed and developed by the TMT International Observatory LLC (TIO) – a non-profit international partnership of institutions from the USA, Japan, China, India and Canada. India will contribute about 10% of the cost of building the telescope and observatory.
- The TMT will provide information about
  - the nature of "first-light" objects and their effects on the universe's evolution.
  - the formation and development of large-scale structures by looking at faint distant galaxies and the intergalactic medium,
  - information about the nature of dark matter that is inaccessible
  - help detect and investigate black holes
  - study in detail the black hole in the centre of the Milky Way.
- TMT will also help in advancing knowledge of the physical processes that lead to star and planet formation.

21. 'Vyom Mitra' - the humanoid for Gaganyaan

News: The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) unveiled a human-robot, named Vyommitra, that will be sent to space as part of the Gaganyaan mission.

Facts:

About Gaganyaan Mission
- Gaganyaan is India's first Human Space Flight Programme to be launched by the ISRO by 2022.

About Vyommitra
- Vyommitra is a half-humanoid who can mimic human actions
- Prior to the Gaganyaan mission, the Vyommitra will go on unmanned journeys for testing

Additional Information:

Other Robots in Space
1. Fedor (Final Experimental Demonstration Object Research): Russia
2. Robonaut 2: NASA, USA
3. Kirobo: Japan

22. What is Xenobot?

News: Tiny living robots have been created using cells taken from frog embryos by scientists in the United States

Facts:

About Xenobot
- It is a biological machine named after the African clawed frog (Xenopus laevis).

Significance:
- It could help the development of useful soft robots that can heal themselves when damaged.
- Because they are made of living tissue, they also decay once they stop working.
- In future, such living robots could be used to clean up microplastics, digest toxic materials, or even deliver drugs inside human bodies

23. India in talks to be part of East Asian Observatories Consortium

News: India is in preliminary discussions to be a part of the East Asian Observatories Consortium.

Facts:

About East Asian Observatories Consortium
- It is formed by EACOA (East Asian Core Observatories Association).
- At present, China, Japan, Taiwan, Korea are full members and Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Indonesia are 'observers',
- It seeks to pursue joint projects in astronomy within the East Asian region

24. Australia's Yarrabubba Asteroid Impact Crater Is Oldest on Earth

News: According to a new study, the Yarrabubba impact structure is the oldest known asteroid crater on Earth

Facts:

About Yarrabubba Asteroid Impact Crater

- The Yarrabubba impact occurred during the Proterozoic eon.
- The asteroid crater is 2.229 billion years old.

Internal Security

1. The National Aerospace Laboratory wants government push for Saras Mk2 takeoff

News: The National Aerospace Laboratory said that the Government of India should buy at least 50-60 Saras Mk2 aircraft to make production commercially viable

Facts:

About Saras Mk2 aircraft:

- Saras Mk2 is the first Indian multi-purpose light transport civilian aircraft. It is designed by the National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL).
- The project started in 1991 and the first prototype was introduced in 2004. However, the project was scrapped after the aircraft crashed in 2009.
- In 2017, the project was revived again. The upgraded SARAS PT1N completed its test flight in 2018
- It is capable of executing both day and night missions.
- It can take off and land from semi-prepared airfields and even on grass runways

2. The Royal Navy of Oman ships arrive in Goa for naval exercise Naseem Al Bahr

News: Recently, ships from Oman arrived in Goa to participate in Naseem Al Bahr - the Indo-Oman bilateral naval exercise.

Facts:

About Exercise Naseem Al Bahr:

- The exercise has been conducted since 1993.
- The exercise had two phases - the harbour phase in Goa followed by the sea phase off the Goan coast
- During the harbour phase, the countries conducted subject matter expert exchanges on professional topics. On the other hand, the sea phase had reciprocal receptions and planning conferences.

Additional information:

Other exercises between India and Oman:

- **Exercise Al-Najah:** It is an army exercise conducted between India and Oman
- **Exercise Eastern Bridge:** It is an Air Force exercise that is held between India and Oman.

3. Home Minister Amit Shah dedicates National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal to the nation

News: The Union Minister for Home Affairs inaugurated the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) and also dedicated National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal to the nation

Facts:

Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)

- It was approved in 2018 to combat cybercrime in India in a comprehensive and coordinated manner.
- It functions under the Ministry of Home Affairs. It is located in New Delhi
- It has seven components such as the National Cybercrime Threat Analytics Unit, National Cybercrime Reporting Portal and National Cybercrime Forensic Laboratory Ecosystem etc.

National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal

- It is a citizen-centric initiative that will enable citizens to report cybercrimes online through the portal.

4. Naval version of Tejas LCA lands on INS Vikramaditya for first time

News: Recently, Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas has successfully landed on INS Vikramaditya. With this, the LCA becomes the first aircraft to make an arrested landing on a naval ship.

Facts:

About LCA Tejas:

- LCA Tejas has been built under the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) program, which began in the 1980s to replace India's aging MiG-21 fighters.
- It is designed by the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) and developed by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).

- It is a single-seat, single-jet engine, multi-role light fighter. Its design is highly manoeuvrable with a tailless, compound delta wing configuration.
- It has stronger landing gears which can absorb forces exerted by the ski jump ramp during take-off. It also has the capability to be airborne within 200m, as against 1000 m required for normal runways.

About INS Vikramaditya:
- INS Vikramaditya is a modified Kiev-class aircraft carrier. It served with the Soviet Navy and later with the Russian Navy.
- It was commissioned into the Indian Navy in 2013.

5. Indo-Japanese joint exercise 'Sahyog-Kaijin' begins off Chennai Coast
News: The Coast Guards of India and Japan took part in a joint exercise 'Sahyog-Kaijin' off the Chennai coast.
Facts:
About Sahyog-kaijin:
- The exercise is aimed at further strengthening bilateral ties and mutual understanding between the two coast guards and to enhance interoperability in communication, search and rescue procedures and sharing of best practices.

Additional information:
Other exercises between India and Japan:
- **JIMEX-** It is a bilateral maritime exercise between India and Japan naval forces,
- **Exercise Malabar**– It is a trilateral naval exercise involving the United States, Japan and India as permanent partners.
- **Exercise DHARMA GUARDIAN-** It is an annual joint military exercise between Indian and Japan since 2018.
- **Exercise MINEX**- The exercise is an annual Mine Countermeasure Exercise between Indian and Japanese naval forces.

6. Indian Army conducts biggest airborne exercise 'Winged Raider'
News: The Indian Army has conducted its biggest airborne exercise called the 'Winged Raider' consisting of more than 500 special forces troops in the North-Eastern theatre.
Facts:
About Winged Raider exercise:
- The exercise aims to demonstrate the operational preparedness of the paratroopers and air warriors to undertake airborne missions.
- The newly inducted aerial platforms and equipment were also validated during the exercise with clockwise precision and seamless integration between the Army and the Air Force.

7. India successfully test-fires K-4 nuclear capable missile
News: India has successfully test-fired the 3,500-km range K-4 submarine launched ballistic missile.
Facts:
About K-4 missile:
- K-4 is a nuclear-capable *Intermediate-range submarine-launched ballistic missile*.
- The missile has been developed by India's Defence Research and Development Organisation(DRDO).
- The missile has a maximum range of about 3500 km. It is powered by solid rocket propellants.
- The missile is to be fitted into the indigenously built Arihant-class nuclear-powered submarines of the Indian Navy.
- Only the US, Russia and China have submarine-launched ballistic missiles of 3,500-kilometre range.

Additional information:
About INS Arihant:
- INS Arihant is an indigenously designed nuclear-propelled, nuclear ballistic missile submarine (SSBN).
- The missiles are envisaged for this purpose are (a) the Sagarika with a range of 750 km and (b) the K-4 with a range of 3500 km.

- The missile is designed to prowl the deep ocean waters carrying nuclear weapons and provide an assured second-strike capability which is the capability to strike back after being hit by nuclear weapons first.

8. Dhanush, India's first indigenous long-range artillery gun

News: The Dhanush gun system was showcased for the first time at the 71st Republic Day parade.

Facts:

About Dhanush:

- Dhanush is the first indigenous long-range artillery gun developed by Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) and manufactured by the Gun Carriage Factory.
- The gun is a 155 mm-45 calibre gun with a maximum range of 36.5 km and has the capability of automatic alignment and positioning.
- It is equipped with inertial navigation-based sighting system, auto-laying facility, onboard ballistic computation and an advanced day and night direct firing system.

Additional information:

About Ordnance Factory Board (OFB)

- Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) is the oldest and largest industrial setup which functions under the Department of Defence Production of the Ministry of Defence.
- It is engaged in research, development, production, testing, marketing and logistics of a comprehensive product range in the areas of air, land and sea systems.

Social

1. Bhima - Koregaon village prepares for historic day

News: The people of Maharashtra are gearing up to celebrate the 202nd Anniversary of the Bhima-Koregaon War.

Facts:

About Bhima-Koregaon War:

- Bhima Koregaon is a small village in Pune district of Maharashtra. In 1818, a battle was fought here between the forces of the Peshwa and the British.
- The British army comprised primarily of Dalit soldiers. They had joined the British army after Peshwa Bajirao II had insulted the Mahar community and terminated them from the service of his army.
- On the other hand, the Peshwa army was led by the Peshwa Bajirao II which had upper caste domination.
- The Dalit-dominated British troops defeated the Peshwa army. The victory was seen as a win against caste-based discrimination and oppression.

Significance of Bhima-Koregaon:

- The victory has come to be seen as a symbol of Dalit pride because a large number of soldiers in the Company force were the Mahar Dalits.
- Babasaheb Ambedkar had also visited the site in 1927 to revitalise the memory of the battle for the Dalit community making it a rallying point and an assertion of pride.

2. Religion no bar for Padmanur's Yakshagana

News: Yakshagana committee hosted the 60th annual Yakshagana in the Padmanur village, Karnataka. It is a multi-faith committee consisting of Hindus, Christians and Muslims and it hosts Yakshagana every year.

Facts:

About Yakshagana:

- Yakshagana literally means the song (gana) of the yaksha (nature spirits). It is believed to have originated somewhere between the 10th and the 16th century.
- It is a traditional theatre form that combines dance, music, dialogue, costumes, make-up, and stage techniques with a unique style and form.
- It was mainly developed in Udupi, Karnataka.
- Yakshagana is traditionally presented from dusk to dawn. Its stories are drawn from Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavata and other Hindu epics.
- The Yakshagana performance consists of background music played by a group of musicians (known as the himmela) and a dance and dialog group (known as the mummela) who together enact poetic epics on stage.

3. Mizoram govt to organise Zo Kutpui to unify Mizo tribes

News: The Mizoram government is organizing Zo Kutpui (festival) in at least 10 states across India and countries such as the US, Myanmar, and Bangladesh.

Facts:

About Zo Kutpui Festival:

- The Zo Kutpui festival aims to unify and strengthen the brotherhood among various Mizo tribes living in different parts of the world.
- The first edition of the festival will start in Tripura and then move to other states which have significant Mizo population.
- The festival will witness various cultural programmes by different Mizo tribes.

Additional information:

About Mizo Tribe:

- The Mizos are tribal people that are spread between Myanmar in the east to Bangladesh in the west. In India,the Mizo population is mainly found in Manipur,Tripura and Mizoram.
- There are 12 major Mizo clans identified. It includes Lusei people, Lushai hills people, Chin people, Pawi-Lusei, Tlau, Khiangte, Hualngo among others.

4. Telling Numbers: Projected drop in male tobacco use underlines shifting trends

News: World Health Organization has launched "Global report on trends in the prevalence of tobacco use 2000-2025 third edition

Facts:

Key highlights:

- The tobacco use prevalence was at 33.3% in 2000 and is projected to reach 20.9% in 2025.
- India had a 44% prevalence of tobacco use in 2000, and, this is expected to reduce to 22.3% by 2025.

Tobacco Control in India

Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act, 2003 (COTPA)

- It prohibits advertisement of cigarettes and other tobacco products in India.
- Smoking in public places (including indoor workplaces) is prohibited.

Pictorial warnings: Pictorial warnings on both sides of packages of cigarettes, bidis and all forms of chewing tobacco products is compulsory and currently cover 85% of the packet.

Global Initiative: WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), 2003

- Objective: To provide a framework for supply and demand reduction measures for tobacco control at the national, regional and global levels.
- India is a signatory.

MPOWER: It is a package of selected demand reduction measures put forward by WHO. It includes:

- **M**onitor tobacco use and prevention policies
- **P**rotect people from tobacco smoke
- **O**ffer help to quit tobacco use
- **W**arn about the dangers of tobacco
- **E**nforce bans on tobacco advisement, promotion and sponsorships
- **R**aise taxes on tobacco

5. Annual Status of Education Report Flags Poor Learning Outcomes in Schools

News: NGO Pratham released the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER 2018)

Facts:

Key ASER 2018 (Rural) findings

Enrolment:

- Since 2007, the enrolment of children for the age group 6 to 14 has been above 95%.
- 1% of children in the 15-16 age group are not in school.

Learning Levels:

- Five-year-old children in private schools fared better in learning tasks than those in govt. schools and Anganwadi
- Only 16% of children in Class 1 can read the text at the prescribed level, while almost 40% cannot even recognize letters.
- Only 41% of these children could recognize two-digit numbers

State-wise Disparity: In Uttar Pradesh, over 60% of Class 3 children cannot recognize letters or read words whereas in Himachal Pradesh over 70% of children are either at grade-level or only close behind.

Choice of School: Parents are more likely to opt for a private school when selecting a school for boys while government schools are the primary choice of parents when it comes to girls' education.

Key Recommendations:

- Strengthening and expansion of the existing network of Anganwadi Centres

- Age of students play an important role in the development of language, numeracy, social and emotional learning
- Enrolling students in primary grades at right age important for the overall development
- Age group between 4 to 8 years seen as continuous progressive stages, so curriculum development should be done in accordance with it.

Additional Information:

Annual Status of Education Report: It is an annual survey that aims to provide reliable annual estimates of children's schooling status and basic learning levels for each state and rural district in India. It was first conducted in 2005.

6. Govt publishes policy for treatment of rare diseases

News: Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare published a national policy for the treatment of rare diseases, listing 450 diseases as rare.

Facts:

Rare Disease: It is a health condition of low prevalence that affects a small number of people compared with other prevalent diseases in the general population. Example: Haemophilia, Thalassemia, Sickle cell anemia, auto-immune diseases etc.

National Policy for Treatment of Rare Diseases

Three Categories of Rare Diseases:
1. diseases requiring one-time curative treatment,
2. diseases which need long-term treatment, but the cost is low, and
3. diseases that require life-long treatment and the cost is high

Key measures suggested
- Arriving at a definition of rare diseases suited to India
- Creating a patient registry for rare diseases housed in ICMR
- Strengthen laboratory networks for diagnosis of rare diseases
- Centre to provide assistance of Rs 15 lakh to patients suffering from rare diseases that require one-time curative treatment under the Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi scheme

Additional Information

Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi scheme: It provides financial assistance to patients, living below poverty line and who are suffering from major life-threatening diseases, to receive medical treatment.

7. Transgender Persons Act comes into effect

News: Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment notified Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019

Facts:

Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019

Aim: Social, economic and educational empowerment of transgender persons.

Definition of Transgender: Those whose gender does not match the gender assigned to that person at birth.

Key Provisions:
1. **Right to Self-Identification**: Person would have the right to choose to be identified as a man, woman or transgender, irrespective of sex reassignment surgery and hormonal therapy.
2. **Acquiring Certificate:** transgender persons need to go through a district magistrate and district screening committee to get certified as a transpersons
3. **Prohibition of Discrimination**: No discrimination against transgender persons in accessing education, employment and healthcare
4. **National Council for Transgender persons (NCT):** It would advise the central government on related policies and legislation and also act as a centre for grievance redressal
5. **Responsibilities of Government**:
   - Provide health facilities to transgender persons including separate HIV surveillance centres
   - Provide, through an insurance scheme, medical expenses for sex reassignment surgery, hormonal therapy, laser therapy or any such health-related expenses

- Take steps for rescue and rehabilitation, vocational training and self-employment
- Create transgender sensitive schemes, and promote their inclusion in cultural activities

Additional Information:

1. **NALSA Judgement, 2014:** The Supreme Court in National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India & Ors. upheld that transgenders should be treated as a third gender for the purpose of safeguarding their fundamental rights.

2. **Section 377 Judgement, 2018**: SC in Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India case decriminalized homosexuality by partially striking down the certain provisions of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

3. **Marriage between Man and Trans woman**: In April 2019, Madras High Court upheld that the marriage solemnized between a man and a trans woman was valid under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 and ordered its registration. This is the first time in India where marriage between a man and Trans woman has been legally recognized.

8. India's under-5 mortality of girls exceeds that of boys, unlike global trend, says report

News: United Nations (UN) inter-agency group for child mortality released a report titled 'Levels and Trends in Child Mortality'

Facts:

'Levels and Trends in Child Mortality': Key Takeaways

Global:

- Globally, 85% of deaths among children and young adolescents in 2018 occurred in the first five years of life
- Half of all under-5 deaths in 2018 occurred in five countries: India, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ethiopia.

India:

- The mortality under-5 years of girls exceeded that of boys
- · The majority of child mortality cases are attributable to deaths during the neonatal period.
- The major causes of neonatal mortality are pre-term birth, intrapartum related events, and neonatal infection.
- In the post-neonatal period, the major direct causes of death are diarrhea and pneumonia.

Additional Information:

Under-five mortality rate - Probability of dying between birth and five years of age expressed per 1,000 live births.

9. Explained: The Pulse Polio Programme and why India still runs it

News: Recently, Rashtrapati Bhavan became the site of a polio vaccination drive, to mark the beginning of this year's Pulse Polio Programme.

Facts:

About Polio:

- Polio is an acute infectious disease caused by poliovirus. Polio mainly affects children under 5 years of age.
- It is transmitted from one person to another by oral contact with secretions or faecal material from an infected person.
- There is no cure for polio as it can only be prevented.
- India was declared polio-free in 2014 and the last case was reported in January 2011.

About Pulse Polio Programme:

- India had launched the Pulse Polio immunisation programme in 1995 after a resolution for a global initiative of polio eradication was adopted by the World Health Assembly (WHA) in 1988.
- The children in the age group of 0-5 years are administered polio drops during national and sub-national immunisation rounds (in high-risk areas) every year.

Why is India still running the programme?
- To prevent the virus from coming to India, the government has since March 2014 made the Oral Polio Vaccination (OPV) mandatory for those travelling between India and polio-affected countries such as Afghanistan, Nigeria, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Syria and Cameroon.

10. India helps Maldives tackle measles outbreak

News: India dispatched over 30,000 doses of measles and rubella (MR) vaccine to the Maldives.

Facts:

Measles and Rubella
- Measles and Rubella (German measles) are a contagious viral disease that is spread by contact with an infected person through coughing and sneezing. Measles is caused by the Rubeola virus and Rubella is caused by the Rubella virus.
- Both of them can be entirely prevented with a two-dose of MMR (Measles, Mumps, and Rubella) vaccine.

Elimination Efforts

India:
- India has initiated the world's largest Measles-Rubella (MR) Campaign in 2017. It targets vaccination of 410 million children and adolescents aged between 9 months and 15 years.
- It is also covered under **Mission Indradhanaush**. Launched in 2014, the mission aims to cover all those children by 2020 who are either unvaccinated or are partially vaccinated against vaccine-preventable diseases

Global:
- **Global Vaccine Action Plan**: Under the Global Vaccine Action Plan, WHO has targeted to eliminate measles by 2020
- **'Measles Elimination and Rubella/CRS Control by 2020'**: In 2013, WHO SEAR initiated 'Measles Elimination and Rubella/CRS Control by 2020'. It seeks to curb and control measles and rubella through immunization, surveillance and developing and maintaining an accredited measles laboratory network.

Additional Information:
- India and Maldives have signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Health cooperation in 2019.
- The MoU envisages capacity building and training of doctors and medical professionals, disease surveillance, training of mental health professionals, setting up of digital health capacities in Maldives.

Miscellaneous

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1. GeM Samvaad and GeM

News: A capacity building programme was conducted by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) on GeM.

Facts:

About Government e-Marketplace (GeM)

- Started in 2016, it is an e-marketplace for procurement of common use Goods & Services required by various Government Departments / Organizations / PSUs.
- **Aim:** to enhance transparency, efficiency and speed in public procurement.
- Directorate General of Supplies and Goods (DGS&D) with technical support of National eGovernance Division (Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology) has developed GeM portal.

About GEM Samvaad

- It is a national outreach programme aimed at getting feedback from all the States and UTs regarding GeM

2. India improves Sustainable Development Goals Index score by three positions

News: NITI Aayog has released the sustainable development goals index 2019-20.

About SDG India Index:

- SDG India Index and Dashboard has been developed by NITI Aayog in collaboration with the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI), Global Green Growth Institute and the United Nations.
- The index indicates where the country and its States and UTs currently are on SDG implementation. It also charts the distance to be travelled to reach the SDG targets.
- The 2019 Index covers 16 out of 17 SDGs and a qualitative assessment on Goal 17.

Key takeaways from the Index:

- India's composite score has improved from 57 in 2018 to 60 in 2019-20 with major success in water and sanitation, power and industry.
- However, nutrition and gender equality continue to be problem areas for India requiring more focused approach from the government.
- Kerala has topped the index. It was followed by Himachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Telangana.
- Amongst Union territories, Chandigarh topped the list, while Puducherry is ranked second. Dadra and Nagar Haveli has been ranked third among Union territories.

3. Harvest Festivals in India

News: Harvest festivals celebrated across India on 15th January

Festival	State/Region
Makar Sankranti	North India& Karnataka
Pongal	South India Especially Tamil Andu
Magh Bihu	Assam
Uttarayan	Gujarat
Sajhi	Shimla District of Himachal Pradesh
Kicheri	Uttar Pradesh
Pedda Panduga	Andhra Pradesh

4. Raisina Dialogue 2020 to host ministers from across globe

News: The Raisina Dialogue was held from January 14 to 16, 2020 in New Delhi.

Facts:

About Raisina Dialogue:

- The Raisina Dialogue is a multilateral conference committed to addressing the most challenging issues facing the global community.
- The dialogue is organised by the Ministry of External Affairs and the Observer Research Foundation.
- Every year, global leaders in policy, business, media and civil society are hosted in New Delhi to discuss cooperation on a wide range of pertinent international policy matters.
- The Dialogue is structured as a multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral discussion involving heads of state, cabinet ministers and local government officials as well as major private sector executives of the media and academics.
- The theme for 2020 Dialogue is 21@20: Navigating the Alpha Century.

5. Global Risks Report, 2020

News: The World Economic Forum (WEF) released the 'Global Risks Report 2020'.

Facts:

About Global Risks report:

- The report describes changes occurring in the global risks landscape from year to year and identifies global catastrophic risks.
- This is the first time in the report's 10-year-history that all of the top five issues that are likely to impact the world this year are environmental.

Additional information:

About World Economic Forum (WEF)

- WEF was established in 1971 as a not-for-profit foundation and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- The objective of WEF is to improve the state of the world by engaging business, political, academic and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas.
- The reports published by the WEF are (a) Global Competitiveness Report (b) Global Gender Gap Report © Global Risks Report and (d) Global Travel and Tourism Report among others.

6. India falls to 51st spot in EIU's Democracy Index

News: Economist Intelligence Unit released the Democracy Index 2019

Facts:

About Democracy index:

- It is based on **five categories**: electoral process and pluralism; the functioning of government; political participation; political culture; and civil liberties.
- It ranks countries based on their scores on 60 indicators.

- It classifies them as one of **four types of regime**: full democracy, flawed democracy, hybrid regime and authoritarian regime.

Key Takeaways from Democracy index 2019
- The index was topped by Norway, followed by Iceland and Sweden
- North Korea was at the bottom of the global ranking at 167th place.
- India was ranked 51ˢᵗ and included in the "flawed democracy" category.

7. India ranks low at 76th place on Global Social Mobility Index

News: World Economic Forum has released its maiden Social Mobility Index

Facts:

Social Mobility: It is a change in **social** status relative to one's current **social** position within a given society. WEF defines social mobility as the ability of a child to experience a better life than their parents.

Social Mobility Index:

It measures 82 countries on five key dimensions:
- health;
- education (access, quality and equity);
- technology;
- work (opportunities, wages, conditions); and
- Protections and institutions (social protection and inclusive institutions).

Key Takeaways:
- **Denmark** tops the rankings with a social mobility score of 85.2, followed by Finland and Norway
- India has been ranked 76th

Additional Information:

About World Economic Forum (WEF)
- WEF was established in 1971 as a not-for-profit foundation and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- **Objective:** To improve the state of the world by engaging business, political, academic and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas.
- **Reports Published**:
  - o Global Travel and Tourism Report
  - o Global Competitiveness Report,
  - o Global Information Technology Report,
  - o Global Gender Gap Report,
  - o Financial Development Report
  - o Global Enabling Trade Report
  - o Global Risks Report

8. World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) 2020

News: The United Nations (UN) has released its World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) 2020.

Facts:

About WESP Report,2020:
- The report is released annually by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN/DESA), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the five United Nations regional commissions.

Report on Global Economy:
- The global economy suffered its lowest growth in a decade slipping to 2.3 per cent in 2019 due to prolonged trade disputes.
- However, the growth could improve to 2.5 percent in 2020. But a flareup of trade tensions, financial turmoil or an escalation of geopolitical tensions could slow down the growth to 1.8% in 2020.
- East Asia remains the world's fastest-growing region and the largest contributor to global growth,

Report on India's Growth:
- The report lowered its GDP growth estimate for India to 5.7% from 7.6% in the financial year 2019-20. However, the UN has projected India's GDP growth to accelerate to 6.6 per cent in 2020-21.
- Further, the report has also forecasted a growth rate of 6.3% for the fiscal beginning in 2021.
- The report has also said that one in five countries will see per capita income stagnate or decline this year. But India will be among the few countries where the per capita GDP growth rate could exceed 4% level in 2020.

9. World Economic Outlook Report: IMF

News: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has released its World Economic Outlook report.

Facts:

Report on Global Growth:
- The report has reduced its global growth projection to 2.9 percent in 2019, 3.3 percent in 2020 and 3.4 percent for 2021.
- The global growth forecasts have been reduced due to sharper than expected slowdowns in India and other emerging markets.
- But the report has said that a US-China trade deal is an expected sign that trade and manufacturing activity may soon recover.

Report on India:
- The report has revised downward India's gross domestic product (GDP) growth projection to 4.8% for the financial year 2020 (FY20) and 5.8% for FY21.
- The downward is attributed to the current slowdown in the country, stress in the non-bank financial sector and weak rural income growth.
- However, the growth is expected to pick up to 6.5 percent in FY22, supported by monetary and fiscal stimulus as well as subdued oil prices.

About International Monetary Fund
- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is an organization of 189 countries. It was established in 1945.
- The main goal of the IMF is to ensure the stability of the international monetary system.
- It also seeks to facilitate international trade, promote high employment and sustainable economic growth, and reduce poverty around the world.

10. World Employment and Social Outlook Trends 2020 (WESO) report: ILO

News: The United Nations, International Labour Organization (ILO) has released the World Employment and Social Outlook Trends 2020 (WESO) report.

Facts:

About the report:
- The report analyses key labour market issues, including unemployment, labour underutilisation, working poverty, income inequality, labour income share and factors that exclude people from decent work.

Key findings of the report:
- The number of people unemployed around the world stands at some 188 million in 2019. This is projected to increase further by around 2.5 million in 2020.
- The percentage of the global workforce who work in the informal economy is around 60%.
- Around 630 million people in 2019 have lived in working poverty meaning they made less than $3.20 per day in purchasing power parity.

About ILO:
- The International Labour Organization (ILO) was founded in 1919 to promote social justice and thereby contribute to universal and lasting peace.
- It is the only tripartite United Nations agency that brings together representatives of governments, employers and workers to jointly shape policies and programmes promoting decent work for all.
- The six conventions of ILO which have been ratified by India are (a) Forced Labour Convention (b) Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (c)Equal Remuneration Convention (d) Discrimination

(Employment Occupation) Convention (e) Minimum Age Convention and (f) Worst forms of Child Labour Convention.

● The other two conventions namely (a) Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organised Convention (b) Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention has not been ratified by India.

11. Jharia most polluted place in India in 2018, Greenpeace report

News: Greenpeace India has released an annual report on the most polluted cities in India in 2018.

Facts:

About the report:

● The report is based on analysis of particulate matter data across 287 cities.
● It has used Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data to rank the most polluted cities in India.

Key takeaways from the report:

● Most polluted: Jharia in Jharkhand which is known for its underground coal fires.
● Second most polluted: Dhanbad in Jharkhand.
● Delhi was 10th most polluted city in 2018, an improvement by two ranks as compared to 2017.
● Least polluted: Lunglei in Mizoram followed by Meghalaya's Dowki.
● Further, six of the top-10 polluted cities are in Uttar Pradesh namely Noida, Ghaziabad, Bareilly, Allahabad, Moradabad and Firozabad.

About Greenpeace:

● Greenpeace is a non-governmental environmental organization established in 1971.It is headquartered in Amsterdam, Netherlands.
● Its goal is to ensure the ability of the Earth to nurture life in all its diversity and focuses its campaigning on global issues such as climate change, deforestation, anti-nuclear issues among others.

12. India slips two places on global Corruption Perception Index

News: India's ranking has slipped from 78 to 80 compared to 2018 in the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI-2019) released by Transparency International

Facts:

About the Corruption Perceptions Index

● It ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption, according to experts and businesspeople.
● It uses a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean)

Key takeaways from Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI-2019)

● The global average score for 2019 is 43
● The top-ranked countries are New Zealand and Denmark, with scores of 87 each, followed by Finland and Singapore
● The countries ranked at the bottom of the list are Somalia, South Sudan and Syria

13. Nature risk rising report

News: World Economic Forum (WEF) has released Nature Risk Rising Report

About Nature Risk Rising Report

● It was produced by WEF in collaboration with PwC and the first report in a series of New Nature Economy (NNE) reports.
● It explains how nature-related risks matter to business, why they must be urgently mainstreamed into risk management strategies

Pointly

1. 'Lai Haraoba' : is a ritual ceremonial festival observed by the Meitei community since ancient times to please the Umang Lai, the traditional deities of Sanamahism. The festival is celebrated through oral literature, music, dance and rituals. Several Manipuri martial arts, folk music and dances are performed during the festival. The festival is especially known for its folk song named 'Lai Haraoba Ishei' which is played mainly for the Lai Haraoba festival.

2. Operation Sankalp : Indian Navy had commenced Maritime Security Operations code named Operation Sankalp in the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman in June 2019 to ensure safe passage of Indian Flag Vessels transiting through the Strait of Hormuz.

3. Currency Manipulator : The U.S. defines currency manipulation as a situation when countries deliberately influence the exchange rate between their currency and the US dollar to gain unfair competitive advantage in international trade. US removed India from its currency monitoring list of major trading partners in May 2019.

4. Harmonised System of Nomenclature(HSN) code: introduced in 1988 by the World Customs Organization (WCO) is used by various countries as a basis for their Customs tariffs and for the collection of international trade statistics. The code is also called the universal economic language for goods. It is a multipurpose international product nomenclature.

5. Thai Amavasai: is the New moon day in the Tamil month 'Thai' (January – February). It marks the first New Moon that comes after the Sun starts moving towards the Northern hemisphere

6. National Voters Day: The 10th National Voters Day (NVD) was celebrated on January 25, 2020. The day is celebrated to mark the foundation day of the Election Commission of India. The theme of this year was: "Electoral Literacy for Stronger Democracy".

7. National Data and Analytics Platform (NDAP): being developed by NITI Aayog, platform aims to democratize access to publicly available government data. It will host the latest datasets from various government websites, present them coherently and provide tools for analytics and visualization.

8. India opens its first Mahatma Gandhi convention centre in Niger: The Mahatma Gandhi Convention Centre is the first centre to be established in Africa by India to honour Mahatma Gandhi. Besides Niger, convention centres will also be set up by India in eight other African nations -- Uganda, Zambia, Malawi, Gambia, Burkina Faso, Togo, Gabon and Libera upon request by these countries.

9. India Climate Collaborative: Recently, Philanthropy arms of top corporate groups have announced a partnership to launch an initiative called India Climate Collaborative to minimise the impact of climate change. It is a first-of-its kind India-focused collaboration that aims to work together to build a compelling, India-focused climate narrative and drive solutions that help people and nature thrive.

10. Archaeon: Scientists at the National Centre for Microbial Resource — National Centre for Cell Science (NCMR-NCCS) have discovered a new archaeon (a kind of microorganism) in Sambhar Salt Lake in Rajasthan. The new archaeon discovered in Sambhar Lake has been named Natrialba swarupiae after Dr Renu Swarup, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology for her initiative in supporting microbial diversity studies in the country.

11. Khelo India Youth Games: The 3rd Khelo India Youth Games was held from 10 January 2020 and 22 January 2020 in Guwahati, Assam, India. Khelo India Programme was introduced by the Ministry of Sports and

Youth affairs to revive sports culture in India at grass-root level. The objective of the programme is to build a strong framework for all sports played in our country and establish India as a great sporting nation.
The programme is the merger of following schemes (a)Rajiv Gandhi Khel Abhiyan (RGKA) (b)Urban Sports Infrastructure Scheme (USIS) and (c)National Sports Talent Search Scheme (NSTSS).

12. Scientific Social Responsibility: Scientific Social Responsibility (SSR) is the confluence of scientific knowledge with visionary leadership and social conscience. The main objective of SSR policy is to harness the voluntary potential that is latent in the country's scientific community to strengthen science and society linkages so as to make the S & T ecosystem vibrant.

13. Youth Co:Lab: Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), NITI Aayog and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) hosted a three day long Youth Co:Lab -national innovation challenge in New Delhi. Youth Co:Lab was co-created in 2017 by UNDP and the Citi Foundation. The initiative aims to create an enabling ecosystem to promote youth leadership, innovation, and social entrepreneurship.

14. Munich Security conference: Munich Security conference is an annual conference where world leaders discuss the international security challenges. It takes place in Munich, Germany and was founded in 1963 by Ewald-Heinrich von Kleist-Schmenzin. It is the world's largest gathering of its kind. Its motto is Peace through Dialogue. The conference also publishes the Munich Security Report, an annual report of relevant figures, maps, and research on crucial security challenges.

15. National Start-up Advisory Council: Government has set up the National Startup Advisory Council to advise the government on nurturing the culture of innovation among the citizens. National Startup Advisory Council was formed with an aim to drive sustainable economic growth and generate employment opportunities.

16. Giant Tortoise Restoration Initiative (GTRI): The Galápagos National Park has announced it is ending the Giant Tortoise Restoration Initiative (GTRI), captive breeding program, for Española Giant Tortoises.

17. ICGS Annie Besant, ICGS Amrit Kaur: ICGS Annie Besant ship would be based at Chennai under the operational and administrative control of the Commander, Coast Guard Region (East). ICGS Amrit Kaur ship will be based at Haldia under the operational and administrative control of the Commander, Coast Guard Region (North East).

18. Indian History Congress: Indian History Congress (IHC) was founded in 1935.It is the largest association of professional historians in South Asia. The first session of Indian History Congress (IHC) took place in Bharat Itihas Sanshodhak Mandal, Poona in 1935. Bharat Itihas Sanshodhak Mandal is an Indian institute providing resources and training for historical researchers. It is located at Pune in Maharashtra state. The institute was founded in 1910 by the veteran Indian historian Vishwanath Kashinath Rajwade and Sardar K. C. Mehendale.

19. State energy Efficiency Index: developed by Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) in association with Alliance for an Energy Efficient Economy (AEEE), it tracks the progress of Energy Efficiency (EE) initiatives in 36 states and union territories. Haryana, Karnataka and Kerala have topped the State Energy Efficiency Index 2019

20. Padma Awards: The Padma Awards are one of the highest civilian honours after the Bharat Ratna announced annually on the eve of Republic Day. The award is given for distinguished and exceptional achievements in all fields of activities/disciplines. (a) Padma Vibhushan: For Exceptional and distinguished service. (b) Padma Bhushan: For Distinguished service of high order. (c) Padma Shri: For distinguished service in any field.

21. Global Investment Trend Monitor Report: It is published by United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

22. World Gold Council: The World Gold Council is the market development organisation for the gold industry. It is an association of the world's leading gold producers. It was established in 1987 and is headquartered in the United Kingdom. According to its World Gold Outlook 2020 RBI ranks 6th in buying gold abroad.

23. Carbon Disclosure Report: was released by the Global Reporting Initiative, a non-profit organization, is an annual report on carbon reduction activities of different countries and their firms.

24. The International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC): established in the year 1919, it is headquartered in Zürich, Switzerland. It has the responsibility of naming all new elements and compounds, declaring atomic weights and physical constants, updating the Periodic table and carrying out research projects.

25. NetSCoFAN (Network for Scientific Co-operation for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition): It is a network of research & academic institutions working in the area of food & nutrition

26. International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife: The WHO has designated 2020 as the "Year of the Nurse and midwife", in honour of the 200th birth anniversary of Florence Nightingale

STATIC QUESTIONS

Q.1) Which of the following falls within the meaning of the 'State' under Article 12 of the Indian Constitution?
1. High Court
2. District Boards
3. Life Insurance Corporation of India
4. Panchayats
Select the correct answer using the code given below:
a) 1 and 3 only
b) 1 and 4 only
c) 1, 3 and 4 only
d) 2, 3 and 4 only

Q.2) Which of the following sets of pairs is/are correctly matched?
Schedule Provisions
1. Ninth Schedule - To protect laws from judicial scrutiny
2. Eleventh Schedule - Powers, authority and responsibility of Panchayats
3. Fifth schedule - Administration of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
Select the correct answer using the code given below:
a) 1 only
b) 2 and 3 only
c) 1, 2 and 3
d) 3 only

Q.3) Consider the following statements:
1. Model code of conduct are statutory provisions, violation of which amount to electoral offence.
2. Bribery to voters is a corrupt practice but not covered under electoral offences.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.4) Who among the following can revoke, directly or indirectly an ongoing National emergency?
1. President
2. Prime minister
3. House of the people
4. Council of states

Select the correct answer using the code given below:
a) 3 only
b) 1, 3 and 4 only
c) 1 and 3 only
d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Q.5) Which of the following matters comes under the original jurisdiction of the High Courts?
1. Dispute relating to the election of Member of Parliament.
2. Enforcement of fundamental rights of citizens
3. Any matter related to criminal offence.
Select the correct answer using the code given below:
a) 1 only
b) 1 and 2 only
c) 2 and 3 only
d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.6) Arrange the following according to their increasing order of 'liquidity':
1. Saving deposits with the banks.
2. Currency and coins with the public.
3. Demand deposits with the banks.
4. Term deposits with the banks.
Select the correct answer using the code given below:
a) 4-1-3-2
b) 2-3-4-1
c) 3-4-1-2
d) 1-2-3-4

Q.7) Consider the following statements regarding the Financial Sector Development Council (FSDC):
1. The Finance Secretary acts as its Chairperson.
2. It is entrusted with the task to resolve inter-regulatory disputes.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.8) Sale/purchase of government bonds, as a means to control the money supply in the market, is termed as:
a) Open Market Operation
b) Liquidity Adjustment Facility
c) Marginal Standing Facility

d) Market Capitalisation

Q.9) Which of the following items come under 'Current Account' of the Balance of Payment?
1. Exports
2. Interest payments
3. Private remittance
4. FDI
5. External lending and borrowing
Select the correct answer using the code given below:
a) 1, 2 and 3
b) 2, 3 and 4
c) 1, 2, 3 and 5
d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Q.10) Which of the following countries provide Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) benefits to India?
1. USA
2. Kazakhstan
3. Japan
4. Turkey
Select the correct answer using the code given below:
a) 1 and 3 only
b) 3 only
c) 2, 3 and 4 only
d) 2 and 4 only

Q.11) Which of the following sets of pair(s) is/are correctly matched?

Pass	*Connecting Cities*
1. Thal Ghat	Mumbai and Pune
2. Bhor Ghat	Nasik and Mumbai
3. Pal Ghat	Coimbatore and Kozhikode

Select the correct answer using the code given below:
a) 1 only
b) 3 only
c) 2 and 3 only
d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.12) Arrange the following hills from North to South:
1. Javadi Hills
2. Shevaroy Hills
3. Anaimalai
4. Nilgiri Hills
5. Cardamom Hills
Select the correct answer using the code below:
a) 3-1-2-4-5
b) 1-2-4-3-5
c) 4-1-3-2-5
d) 3-1-2-5-4

Q.13) Which of the following animals are listed as critically endangered by the IUCN?
1. Orangutan
2. Purple Frog
3. Kashmir stag
4. Chinkara
Select the correct answer using the code given below:
a) 1 and 2 only
b) 2, 3 and 4 only
c) 1 and 3 only
d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Q.14) Which of the following is geographically closest to the Great Nicobar Islands?
a) Sumatra
b) Borneo
c) Java
d) Sri Lanka

Q.15) Consider the following statements about the Climate Action Network (CAN):
1. It is an intergovernmental body of African Nations.
2. It promotes individual action to limit human-induced climate change.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.16) Animals like Hoolock Gibbon, Tigers, Elephants and Rhinos can be found here. It was the first natural World Heritage site declared by UNESCO in India. The National park hosts two-thirds of the world's great one-horned rhinoceroses. It was also declared as a Tiger Reserve. This National Park is:
a) Orang National Park

b) Manas National Park

c) Kaziranga National Park

d) Nameri National Park

Q.17) With Reference to the 'Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules 2017', consider the following statements:

1. Conservation and management principles will be determined by wetlands authority.
2. Rules replaced national wetland committee with the central wetlands regulatory authority (CWRA).
3. Under rules Centre will prepare list of all wetlands in India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 only

b) 1 and 2 only

c) 1 and 3 only

d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.18) Arrange the following Greenhouse Gases in order of increasing Global Warming Potential (in a time horizon of 20 years):

1. Methane
2. Carbon dioxide
3. Nitrous Oxide
4. Sulphur hexafluoride

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

a) 1-2-3-4

b) 2-1-3-4

c) 4-3-2-1

d) 3-1-2-4

Q.19) Which of the following correctly define 'Biodiversity Coldspots'?

a) High biological diversity of endemic plants with high rate of habitat loss

b) High biological diversity of endemic plants with low rate of habitat loss

c) Low biological diversity of endemic plants with low rate of habitat loss

d) Low biological diversity of endemic plants with high rate of habitat loss

Q.20) The Op-Blue Freedom, recently seen in the news is related to?

a) It is a nation-wide adaptive scuba diving programme for people with disabilities as well as the able bodied.

b) It is a new trust under World Bank to clean river waters.

c) It is an initiative of Government of India to develop seaports and maritime transport sectors under Sagarmala programme.

d) It is an initiative of WWF for the sustainable economic development of the ocean.

Q.21) Consider the following statements about Permanent Settlement Act of 1793:

1. The Zamindars were made owners of the whole zamindari land both in relation to tenant and to the East India Company as well.
2. The Zamindars' right of ownership of land was made hereditary and transferable.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 only

b) 2 only

c) Both 1 and 2

d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.22) Match the following sets of pair(s):

Newspaper	Personality/Founder
1. Mirat-ul-akbar	A. Sir syed Ahmed
2. Jnanavesan	B. Rammohan Roy
3. Indian mirror	C. Keshub Chandra sen
4. Tahzib-al-akhlaq	D. Vivian derozio

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

a) D-1, C-2, B-3, A-4

b) B-1, D-2, C-3, A-4

c) A-1, D-2, C-3, B-4

d) B-1, A-2, D-3, C-4

Q.23) Consider the following regarding the Wood's Despatch (1854):

1. It suggested to educate only a small section of upper and middle classes in line with Macaulay's minutes.
2. It recommended English as the medium of instruction for higher studies and vernaculars at school level.
3. It laid stress on female and vocational education, and on teachers' training.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 and 2 only

b) 2 and 3 only

c) 1 and 3 only

d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.24) Consider the following statements regarding Kolleru lake:

1. Kolleru wetland is one of the 94 identified wetlands by the Ministry of Environment and Forests for conservation and management.

2. It has become a safe breeding ground for two migratory species namely, Grey Pelicans and Painted Storks.

3. The lake was declared as a wildlife sanctuary and designated a wetland of international importance under the international Ramsar Convention.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 2 and 3 only

b) 1 and 2 only

c) 1 and 3 only

d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.25) Which of the following states introduced compulsory primary education throughout its territories in 1906:

a) Hyderabad

b) Madras

c) Awadh

d) Baroda

STATIC QUESTIONS – ANSWER KEY

1	D	11	B	21	B
2	A	12	B	22	B
3	D	13	C	23	B
4	C	14	A	24	C
5	B	15	B	25	D
6	A	16	C		
7	B	17	A		
8	A	18	B		
9	A	19	D		
10	C	20	A		

STATIC QUESTIONS – EXPLANATION

Q.1) Exp) Option (d) is the correct answer.

Article 12 has defined the term for the purposes of Part III. According to it, the State includes the following:

(a) Government and Parliament of India i.e. executive and legislative organs of the Union government.

(b) Government and legislature of states i.e. executive and legislative organs of state government.

(c) All local authorities i.e. municipalities, panchayats, district boards, improvement trusts, etc.

(d) All other authorities i.e. statutory or non-statutory authorities like LIC, ONGC, SAIL, etc.

Thus, the 'State' has been defined in a wider sense so as to include all its agencies. It is the actions of these agencies that can be challenged in the courts as violating the Fundamental Rights. According to the Supreme Court, even a private body or an agency working as an instrument of the State falls within the meaning of the 'State' under Article 12.

Q.2) Exp) Option (a) is the correct answer.

Pair 1 is correctly matched. Ninth Schedule -Acts and Regulations (originally 13 but presently 282) 19 of the state legislatures dealing with land reforms and abolition of the zamindari system and of the Parliament dealing with other matters. This schedule was added by

the 1st Amendment (1951) to protect the laws included in it from judicial scrutiny on the ground of violation of fundamental rights. However, in 2007, the Supreme Court ruled that the laws included in this schedule after April 24, 1973, are now open to judicial review.

Articles covered: 31-B.

Pair 2 is correctly matched. Eleventh Schedule - Specifies the powers, authority and responsibilities of Panchayats. It has 29 matters. This schedule was added by the 73rd Amendment Act of 1992.

Articles covered: 243-G.

Pair 3 is incorrectly matched. Fifth Schedule - Provisions relating to the administration and control of scheduled areas and scheduled tribes.

Articles covered: 244

KB) **Sixth Schedule** - Provisions relating to the administration of tribal areas in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

Articles covered: 244 and 275

Twelfth Schedule -Specifies the powers, authority and responsibilities of Municipalities. It has 18 matters. This schedule was added by the 74th Amendment Act of 1992.

Articles covered: 243-W

Source) Laxmikant 4th edition, Salient features of the constitution, Page no. 3.11

Q.3) Exp) Option (d) is the correct answer.

The Election Commission of India releases the guidelines to conduct free and fair elections in the country. These guidelines give an overview to the political parties and candidates about what to "do and don't" before and during the election.

In other words, Model Code of Conduct is a set of instructions to be followed by both candidates in the fray and political parties contesting elections. The Model Code of Conduct is a set of guidelines and instructions on campaigning, general conduct and meetings etc. during elections. The Model Code of Conduct remains effective till the entire elections process is not completed.

Statement 1 is incorrect. Model code of conduct is a **non-statutory** set of norms laid down by Election Commission of India with consensus of recognised political parties. Thus, their violation can bring about

penalties and fines like reducing days for campaigning or putting a ban on campaigning for a certain time period.

Statement 2 is incorrect. Bribery to voters is both a corrupt practice and an electoral offence under section 171 of IPC. Corrupt practices are basically a general term and include bribery undue influence etc. having specific reference to electoral systems. Such practices were declared against the law by many nations in the beginning of 19th century as these were considered interferences in the free exercise of the right to vote.

Source)https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/laying-down-the-dos-and-donts-of-elections/article26449376.ece

https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/66073/9/09_chapter%203.pdf

Q.4) Exp) Option (c) is the correct answer.

A proclamation of emergency may be revoked by the **President** at any time by a subsequent proclamation. Such a proclamation does not require parliamentary approval.

Further, the President must revoke a proclamation if the Lok Sabha passes a resolution disapproving its continuation. Again, this safeguard was introduced by the 44th Amendment Act of 1978. Before the amendment, a proclamation could be revoked by the president on his own and the Lok Sabha had no control in this regard. **The 44th Amendment Act of 1978 also provided that, where one-tenth of the total number of members of the Lok Sabha give a written notice to the Speaker (or to the president if the House is not in session), a special sitting of the House should be held within 14 days for the purpose of considering a resolution disapproving the continuation of the proclamation**

Q.5) Exp) Option (b) is the correct answer.

Original Jurisdiction It means the power of a high court to hear disputes in the first instance, not by way of appeal. It extends to the following:

(a) Matters of admiralty, will, marriage, divorce, company laws and contempt of court.

(b) **Statement 1 is correct.** Disputes relating to the election of members of Parliament and state legislatures.

(c) Regarding revenue matter or an act ordered or done in revenue collection.

(d) **Statement 2 is correct.** Enforcement of fundamental rights of citizens.

(e) Cases ordered to be transferred from a subordinate court involving the interpretation of the Constitution to its own file.

(f) The four high courts (i.e., Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and Delhi High Courts) have original civil jurisdiction in cases of higher value.

Statement 3 is incorrect.

Before 1973, the Calcutta, Bombay and Madras High Courts also had original criminal jurisdiction. This was fully abolished by the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973.

Q.6) Exp) Option (a) is the correct answer.

Out of the four statements, **term deposits are the least liquid** as the depositor can withdraw money after a specific period. **Currency and coins with the public are the most liquid** as they can be spent very easily. Demand deposits will have more liquidity than the saving deposits as the former includes the 'current accounts' of the firms (the most liquid deposit with the banks).

Q.7) Exp) Option (b) is the correct answer.

Statement 1 is incorrect- FSDC is an apex-level body constituted by the government of India in the year 2010, with **Union Finance Minister as its chairman**. Its members include Governor of RBI, Finance Secretary, Chief Economic Advisor, Chairman SEBI, Chairman IRDA, Chairman PFRDA, Joint Secretary (capital market) etc.

Statement 2 is correct- FSDC is entrusted with the responsibility of **inter-regulatory coordination and resolving their disputes.** Apart from this, it envisages to strengthen and institutionalise the mechanism for maintaining financial stability, financial sector development along with monitoring macro-prudential regulation of economy.

Q.8) Exp) Option (a) is the correct answer.

Open Market Operation (OMO) is an instrument of monetary policy under which sale /purchase of government Treasury Bills and bonds take place. It is

used as a means of controlling the money supply in the market. They are conducted by the RBI via the sale/purchase of government securities to/from the market with the primary aim of modulating rupee liquidity conditions in the market. Other than the institutions, now individuals will also be able to participate in this market.

KB) Liquidity Adjustment Facility is the key element in the monetary policy operating framework of the RBI. **The Reserve Bank of India's** liquidity adjustment facility or LAF helps banks to adjust their daily liquidity mismatches. LAF has two components -- repo (repurchase agreement) and reverse repo. When banks need liquidity to meet its daily requirement, they borrow from RBI through repo. The rate at which they borrow funds is called the repo rate. When banks are flush with funds, they park with RBI through reverse repo mechanism at reverse repo rate.

MSF is a penal rate that is why remains always higher than the repo rate. While putting this route in place the RBI has permitted banks to borrow a maximum 1 percent of their Net Demand and Time Liabilities, in coming times it was cut down, too.

Q.9) Exp) Option (a) is the correct answer.

In the external sector, it refers to the account maintained by every government of the world in which every kind of current transactions is shown—basically this account is maintained by the central banking body of the economy on behalf of the government.

Current transactions of an economy in foreign currency all over the world are—**export, import, interest payments, private remittances and transfers.**

Capital account: Every government of the world maintains a capital account, which shows the capital kind of transactions of the economy with outside economies. Every transaction in foreign currency (inflow or outflow) considered as capital is shown in this account—external lending and borrowing, foreign currency deposits of banks, external bonds issued by the Government of India, FDI, PIS and security market investment of the QFIs (Rupee is fully convertible in this case). There is no deficit or surplus in this account like the current account.

Q.10) Exp) Option (c) is the correct answer.

GSP is a preferential tariff system extended by developed countries to developing countries. It is a preferential arrangement in the sense that it allows concessional low/zero tariff imports from developing countries. It was formulated under the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

As per the WTO, India is a beneficiary of GSP provided by **Armenia, Australia, European Union, Japan, Kazakhstan, New Zealand, Norway, Russian Federation, Switzerland and Turkey**.

Q.11) Exp) Option (b) is the correct answer.

Important Passes of Western Ghats

- **Pair 1 is incorrectly matched. Thal Ghat**: It links Nasik to Mumbai.

- **Pair 2 is incorrectly matched. Bhor Ghat**: It links Mumbai to Pune.

- **Pair 3 is correctly matched. Pal Ghat**: It connects Kerala to Tamil Nadu (link Kochi to Chennai).

- **Senkota pass:** It is located between the Nagercoil and the Cardamom hills links Thiruvananthapuram and Madurai.

Q.12) Exp) Option (b) is the correct answer.
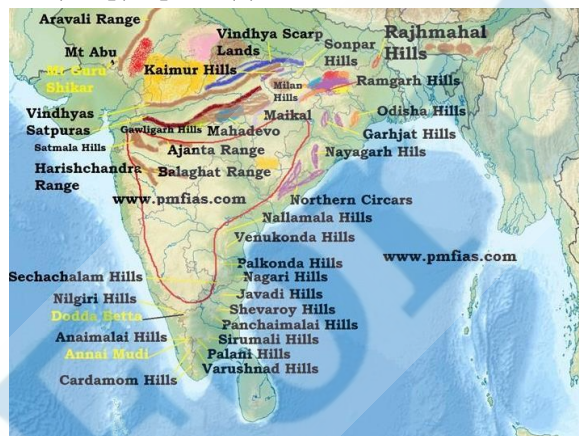
Q.13) Exp) Option (c) is the correct answer.

Orangutans: They are three extant species of great apes native to Indonesia and Malaysia. Orangutans are currently only found in the rainforests of Borneo and Sumatra. **It is listed as critically endangered by IUCN**.

Purple frog: It is a frog species belonging to the family Sooglossidae. It can be found in the Western Ghats in India. Names in English that have been used for this species are purple frog, Indian purple frog, or pignose frog. **It is listed as endangered by IUCN**.

Kashmir stag: Also known as hangul, is a subspecies of elk native to India. It is found in dense riverine forests in the high valleys and mountains of the Kashmir Valley and northern Chamba district in Himachal Pradesh. **It is listed as critically endangered by IUCN**.

Chinkara: Also known as the Indian gazelle, is a gazelle species native to Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. **It is listed as Least concern by IUCN.**

Q.14) Exp) Option (a) is the correct answer.

Distance from Great Nicobar to Sri Lanka is 1,437 km.
Distance from Great Nicobar to Sumatra is 1,192 km

Q.15) Exp) Option (b) is the correct answer.

Statement 1 is incorrect. The Climate Action Network (CAN) is a worldwide network of over 1300 **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)** in over 120 countries.

Statement 2 is correct. It is working to promote government and **individual action to limit human-induced** climate change to ecologically sustainable levels. CAN members work to achieve this goal through information exchange and the coordinated development of NGO strategy on international, regional, and national climate issues.

Q.16) Exp) Option (c) is the correct answer.

Kaziranga National Park was formed in 1908. The park is located on the edge of the Eastern Himalayan biodiversity hotspots in the Golaghat and Nagaon districts of Assam. Kaziranga is criss-crossed by four major rivers, Diphlu, Mora Diphlu, Dhansari and Brahmaputra. It has the world's major stronghold of the

Indian one-horned rhino, having the single largest population of this species, currently estimated at over 2,000 animals (approximately 2/3rd of their total world population). Other animals that can be seen in Kaziranga are Hoolock Gibbon, Tiger, Leopard, Indian Elephant, Sloth Bear, Wild water buffalo, swamp deer, etc. With increase in tiger population every year, Kaziranga was declared as a Tiger Reserve in the year 2006. In the year 1985, the park was declared as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Recently, the Supreme Court has banned all mining activities along the Kaziranga National Park.

Orang National Park has the highest tiger population density in India.

Q.17) Exp) Option (a) is the correct answer.

Statement 1 is correct. It is prescribed under rules that conservation and management would be based on the principle of wise use, which is to be determined by the Wetlands Authority.

Statement 2 is incorrect. The new rules have replaced the Central Wetlands Regulatory Authority (CWRA) with the National Wetland Committee, which has a merely advisory role.

Statement 3 is incorrect. The State or UT Wetlands Authority will have to prepare a list of all wetlands and also will develop a comprehensive list of activities to be regulated and permitted within notified wetlands and their zone of influence.

Q.18) Exp) Option (b) is the correct answer.

Greenhouse Gases (GHGs): Atmospheric gases like carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide (N2O), water vapour, etc are capable of trapping the out-going infrared radiation from the earth 's surface thereby causing the greenhouse effect. Hence these gases are known as greenhouse gases and the heating effect is known as the greenhouse effect. Global warming potential.

Global warming potential (GWP) is a measure of how much heat a greenhouse gas traps in the atmosphere up to a specific time horizon, relative to carbon dioxide.

- Carbon dioxide (CO2) -----------------------1
- Methane (CH4) -------------------------------56
- Nitrous Oxide(N2O) -----------------------280
- Sulphur hexafluoride (SF6) --------------- 16300

Q.19) Exp) Option (d) is the correct answer.

Biodiversity coldspot is a region that does not have as high species richness as found in biological hotspots. It is important to conserve them, as they may be the only location where a rare species is found.

KB) More and more scientists and advocates are warning that directing conservation funds nearly exclusively to hotspots is "bad investment advice" and "may be a recipe for major losses in the future."

Targeting conservation towards the 1.4% of the Earth's land which holds nearly half of the World's vascular plant species has become highly in vogue in recent years. Groups as diverse as the World Bank and Conservation International have championed the approach.

According to some scientists, conservation in the broad sense is not well-served by focusing too exclusively on biodiversity to the detriment of ecosystem functionality and other measures of ecological importance. What is to happen to the other 98.6% of the Earth's land mass? These non-hotspot areas are referred to as "Biodiversity Coldspots" in the article. Many biodiversity coldspots provide crucial global and local ecosystem processes, contain unique evolutionary lineages and rare species, encompass the last major wilderness landscapes, provide habitat for wide-ranging animal species, and may have national policy environments more conducive to conservation success. And all coldspots would benefit from higher levels of protection, conservation management and restoration.

Q.20) Exp) Option (a) is the correct answer.

After the success of the Chandigarh leg, Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju and former India football captain Baichung Bhutia recently flagged off the Delhi leg of Op-Blue Freedom. **Op-Blue Freedom is a nation-wide adaptive scuba diving programme for people with disabilities as well as the able bodied.** This is an initiative in which a group of armed forces veterans train adventure enthusiasts in Special Forces skills like survival techniques, emergency first response skills, unarmed combat, endurance and fitness.

PROBLUE is a new Umbrella Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF), housed at the World Bank that supports healthy and productive oceans. PROBLUE supports implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14) and is fully aligned with the World Bank's twin

goals of ending extreme poverty and increasing the income and welfare of the poor in a sustainable way. PROBLUE is part of the World Bank's overall Blue Economy program, which takes a multi-pronged, coordinated approach to ensuring the protection and sustainable use of marine and coastal resources.

Q.21) Exp) Option (b) is the correct answer.
Statement 1 is incorrect: It is, however, to be noted that in one crucial respect the British officials clearly differentiated between the positions of the two. The landlord in Britain was the owner of land not only in relation to the tenant but also in relation to the state. But in Bengal while the zamindar was landlord over the tenant, he was himself subordinated to the state. In fact, he was reduced virtually to the status of a tenant of the East India Company.
Statement 2 is correct. In the permanent settlement, the company recognized Zamidar as owners of soil. They were given permanent hereditary rights to collect revenue.

Q.22) Exp) Option (b) is the correct answer.

1.	Mirat-ul-akbar	**A.**	Rammohan Roy
2.	Jnanavesan	**B.**	Vivian derozio
3.	Indian mirror	**C.**	Keshub Chandra sen
4.	Tahzib-al-akhlaq	**D.**	Sir syed Ahmed

Q.23) Exp) Option (b) is the correct answer.
Statement 1 is incorrect. It asked the government of India to assume responsibility for the education of the masses.
Statement 2 is correct. As per the Wood's dispatch, the medium of instruction at the primary level was to be vernacular while at the higher levels it would be English.
Statement 3 is correct. It highlighted female education, vocational education and teachers training
KB) Other recommendations:

- It systematised the hierarchy from vernacular primary schools in villages at bottom, followed by Anglo-Vernacular High Schools and an affiliated college at the district level, and affiliating universities in the presidency towns of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras.

- It laid down that the education imparted in government institutions should be secular.
- It recommended a system of grants-in-aid to encourage private enterprise.

Q.24) Exp) Option (c) is the correct answer.
Statement 1 is correct. Also, this wetland is one of the 25 international wetlands under the Ramsar convention in November 2002. It is located between Krishna and Godavari deltas and serves as a natural flood-balancing reservoir for these two rivers. The lake is fed directly by water from the seasonal Budameru and Tammileru streams and is connected to the Krishna and Godavari systems by over 68 inflowing drains and channels.
Statement 2 is correct. In Kolleru Lake, Atapaka and surrounding patches witness the migratory birds. The Atapaka breeding ground witnesses nearly 10,000 migratory birds, mostly Pelicans, Painted Stork and Whistling Teels in the winter.
Statement 3 is correct. The lake was notified as a wildlife sanctuary in November 1999 under India's WildLife (Protection) Act, 1972. The present water level in Kolleru Lake, including Atapaka Sanctuary, is posing a slight challenge for the birds to hunt their prey in the deep waters. Grey Pelican and Painted Stork both are near threatened species under IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

Q.25) Exp) Option (d) is the correct answer
In 1906, the progressive state of Baroda introduced compulsory primary education throughout its territories. **KB)** Consequently, National leaders urged the government to do so for British India (Gokhale made a powerful advocacy for it in the Legislative Assembly). In its 1913 Resolution on Education Policy, the government refused to take up the responsibility of compulsory education, but accepted the policy of removal of illiteracy and urged provincial governments to take early steps to provide free elementary education to the poorer and more backward sections. Private efforts were to be encouraged for this and the quality of secondary schools was to be improved. A university, it was decided, was to be established in each province and teaching activities of universities were to be encouraged.

ForumIAS

CURRENT AFFAIRS

Q.1) Consider the following regarding the **Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (**HELP policy):

1. It is implemented by the Ministry of Coal
2. It provides for seperate licences of conventional and non-conventional hydrocarbons.
3. It provides for Full Marketing & Pricing Freedom to companies.

Which of the following are correct?

A. 1 and 2 only
B. 2 only
C. 1 and 3 only
D. 3 only

Q.2) Consider the following statements about Youth Co:labs ?

1. Youth Co: Lab was co-created in 2017 by WB.
2. The initiative aims to create an enabling ecosystem to promote youth leadership, innovation, and social entrepreneurship.

Which of the following are correct?

A. 1 only
B. 2 only
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.3) Which of the following countries were involved in the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action)

1. Russia
2. China
3. Saudi Arabia
4. Iran
5. Germany

Consider the following options

A. 1, 2 and 3
B. 3, 4 and 5
C. 1, 2,4 and 5
D. All of them

Q.4) Consider the following statements about IndArc

1. IndARC is India's first underwater moored observatory in the Artic region of Sweden.
2. Its research goal is to study the Arctic climate and its influence on the monsoon.

Which of the following is correct?

A. 1 only
B. 2 only
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.5) Ashuganj-Akhaura road project is between India and which of the following neighbor country.

A. Sri Lanka
B. Nepal
C. Bhutan
D. Bangladesh

Q.6) Consider the following regarding ICJ-International court of justice:

1. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) was established in 1945 and is not a principal body of the UN
2. It is composed of 11 judges elected to nine-year terms of office by the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council.
3. It is headquatered in New York,US

Which of the following are correct?

A. 1 and 2 only
B. 2 and 3 only
C. All of the above
D. None of the above

Q.7) Consider the following about the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019

1. It provides for the provision of self-identification as man, woman or transgender
2. The act provides for the reservations of transgenders in government employment.

Which of the following is/are incorrect?

A. 1 only
B. 2 only
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.8) Nagoba Jatara Festival is a tribal festival in which of the following state of India.

A. Orissa
B. Jharkhand
C. Telangana
D. Assam

Q.9) Which of the following statement(s) regarding the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) are correct?

1. NIP will have an equal share of investments by the Central government, the States and the Private sector.
2. The maximum investments under NIP will be made in the energy sector.

Answer:

A. 1 only
B. 2 only
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.10) Consider the following statements regarding PM Laghu Vyapari Man Dhan Yojana.

1. The scheme assures a minimum monthly pension of ₹3000 per month to small shopkeepers, retail traders and self-employed people after attaining the age of 60 years.
2. The beneficiaries of this scheme should have a GST contribution of less than 150 crores
3. Anyone above the age of 18 and having an Aadhar card with a valid GSTN can avail the scheme

Which of the above statement(s) are *incorrect?*

A. 1 only
B. 1 and 2 only
C. 2 and 3 only
D. 1, 2 and 3

Q.11) Which of the following institutions releases the Global Economic Prospects report?

A. World Bank
B. International Monetary Fund
C. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
D. World Economic Forum

Q.12) Consider the following statements about the National Start-Up Advisory Council.

1. The council will be chaired by the Prime Minister
2. The council will consist of non-official members who are eminent personalities running successful Start-Ups

Which of the above statement(s) are correct?

A. 1 only
B. 2 only

C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.13) The Military Exercise Naseem Al Bahr is conducted between which of the following countries?

A. India and UAE
B. India and Myanmar
C. India and Oman
D. India and Indonesia

Q.14) Consider the following statements about the K-4 nuclear capable missile tested by India recently.

1. K-4 is a nuclear-capable Intermediate-range submarine-launched ballistic missile
2. It is based on liquid propulsion technology
3. The missile has a range of 250 kilometres

Which of the above statements are correct?

A. 1, 2 and 3
B. 2 only
C. 1 only
D. 3 only

Q.15) Consider the following statements regarding the recently discovered Yada Yada virus.

1. The virus poses no threat to human beings because it is a part of a group of viruses that only infect mosquitoes
2. The virus has been discovered in Saharan Africa

Which of the above statement(s) are correct?

A. 1 only
B. 2 only
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.16) Vyom Mitra - a term recently seen in the news corresponds to which of the following?

A. It is a surveillance system designed by DRDO for the Indian Air Force
B. It is a joint project by NASA and ISRO to develop airborne telescopes
C. It is the humanoid robot developed by ISRO for the Gaganyan project
D. None of the above

Q.17) Consider the following statements about Bru refugees:

1. In Tripura, the Bru community has been targeted by groups that do not consider them indigenous to the state.
2. They are indigenous to the North-East India living mostly across Assam, Mizoram and Tripura.
3. The Centre, the governments of Tripura and Mizoram and representatives of Bru tribe have signed a new agreement to settle the Bru refugees in Mizoram.

Which of the above statements are correct?

A. Only 3
B. Only 2
C. Only 1 and 2
D. Only 2 and 3

Q.18) Consider the following statements:

1. The Ministry of Law and Justice has issued an order declaring the United Arab Emirates to be a reciprocating territory under Section 44A of the Civil Procedure Code,1908.
2. Bangladesh, United Kingdom and New Zealand are the only other three countries which have been conferred with the reciprocating territory status.

Which of the above statements are correct?

A. Only a.
B. Only b.
C. Both a and b.
D. None of the above.

Q.19) Which of the following statements regarding 'Right to property' is correct?

1. The Constitution of India 1949 contained Article 19(1)(f) as well as Article 31, which provided the right of private ownership of property, and freedom to acquire, enjoy and dispose of it off by lawful means.
2. The 42nd Amendment of 1978 deleted the right to property from the list of fundamental rights.
3. It was made a Constitutional right under Article 300A.

Choose the correct option:

A. Only 1
B. Only 3
C. Only 1 and 3

D. Only 2 and 3

Q.20) Consider the following statements about the languages in the Eighth Schedule of the constitution:

1. The Eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India lists the official languages of the Republic of India.
2. Tulu language is the latest to be added in the schedule.
3. The 8th Schedule now consists of 23 languages recognized as official languages in total.
4. Bodo, Santhali, Maithili are also a part of the eighth schedule.

Which of the above statements are incorrect?

A. 1 and 2
B. 2 and 3
C. 3 and 4
D. 2 and 4

Q.21) Consider the following statements:

1. It is found in a few isolated pockets in Assam and Bihar in India and PrekToal in Cambodia.
2. The Assam State Zoo and wildlife NGO Aranyak has jointly bred a pair of the species in an artificial platform within the zoo enclosure.
3. It is listed under schedule IV of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and is considered Endangered under the IUCN status.

Identify the species:

A. Hargilla
B. Mycteria
C. African Openbill
D. Black necked stork

Q.22) A new molecular test, 'TrueNat' has been endorsed for which of the following disease?

a. AIDS
b. TB
c. Diabetes
d. Anaemia

Q.23) Consider the following statements about 'Project Great Indian Bustard':

1. It was initiated by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in 2015.

2. It envisages constituting enclosures and securing inviolate areas to ensure successful breeding of birds in the Desert National Park.

Which of the above statements are correct?

A. Only 1
B. Only 2
C. Both 1 and 2
D. None of the above

Q.24) Consider the following statements about It.org initiative:

1. It is a UNCCD initiative, designed to support the trillion-tree community.
2. It aims to support the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030, led by UNEP and WMO.
3. It offers a platform for leading governments, businesses, civil society and ecopreneurs committed to serving the global trillion trees community.

Which of the above statements are correct?

A. Only 1.
B. Only 2.
C. Only 3.
D. Only 2 and 3.

Q.25) Consider the following statements about '**Swachh Survekshan League 2020**':

1. Swachh Survekshan 2020 League was launched by the Jal Shakti Ministry in 2019.
2. The aim of the survey is to sustain the on-ground performance of cities along with continuous monitoring of service level performance in cleanliness.

Which of the above statements are incorrect?

A. Only 1
B. Only 2
C. Both 1 and 2
D. None of the above

CURRENT AFFAIRS – ANSWER KEY

1	D	11	A	21	A
2	B	12	B	22	B
3	C	13	C	23	B
4	B	14	C	24	C
5	D	15	A	25	A
6	D	16	C		
7	B	17	B		
8	C	18	A		
9	B	19	C		
10	C	20	B		

CURRENT AFFAIRS – EXPLANATION

Q.1) Exp: Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP):

● Single License for both conventional and unconventional Hydrocarbons
● Full Marketing & Pricing Freedom
● Low regulatory burden
● Fiscal incentives provided to investors

Implementing Agency: Directorate General of Hydrocarbons (DGH), Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas

Source: http://factly.forumias.com/open-acreage-licensing-programme-oalp/

Q.2) Exp: About Youth Co: Lab:

● Youth Co: Lab was co-created in 2017 by UNDP and the Citi Foundation and is operational in 25 countries across the Asia Pacific region.
● The initiative aims to create an enabling ecosystem to promote youth leadership, innovation, and social entrepreneurship.

About Youth Co: Lab India: Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), NITI Aayog and the UNDP India has launched 'Youth Co:Lab' which aims at accelerating social entrepreneurship and innovation in India.

Source:http://factly.forumias.com/atal-innovation-mission-undp-hosts-3-day-youth-colab-national-innovation-challenge/

Q.3) Exp: About Iran Nuclear Deal:

- The Iran nuclear deal also called as Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was signed between Iran and the P5 (US, China, France, Russia, and UK) plus Germany and the EU in 2015.

Source:http://factly.forumias.com/iran-will-no-longer-abide-by-nuclear-deal-limits/

Q.4) Exp: About IndARC:

- IndARC is India's first underwater moored observatory in the Arctic region.
- It was deployed in 2014 at Kongsfjorden fjord, Svalbard, Norway which is midway between Norway and the North Pole.
- Its research goal is to study the Arctic climate and its influence on the monsoon.

Source: http://factly.forumias.com/1st-session-of-india-norway-dialogue-on-trade-investment/

Q.5) Exp: self-explanatory

Source: http://factly.forumias.com/ashuganj-akhaura-road-project/

Q.6) Exp: About ICJ:

- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) was established in 1945 by the United Nations charter.
- It is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations situated at the Peace Palace in The Hague (Netherlands).
- The ICJ has two primary functions a) to settle legal disputes submitted by States in accordance with established international laws and b) to act as an advisory board on issues submitted to it by authorized international organizations.

Structure of ICJ:

- It is composed of 15 judges elected to nine-year terms of office by the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council.
- In order to be elected, a candidate must receive an absolute majority of the votes in both UN bodies.

Source: http://factly.forumias.com/icj-orders-myanmar-to-prevent-rohingya-genocide/

Q.7) Exp: Key Provisions Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019

1. **Right to Self-Identification**: Person would have the right to choose to be identified as a man, woman or transgender, irrespective of sex reassignment surgery and hormonal therapy.

Source:http://factly.forumias.com/transgender-persons-act-comes-into-effect/

Q.8) Exp: self-explanatory
Source: http://factly.forumias.com/nagoba-jatara-festival/

Q.9) Exp: B is the correct answer
About NIP:

- The Central Government had constituted a task force to draw up a National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) from 2019-20 to 2024-25
- The *private companies will account for 22%* of the investments and the *balance will come from the Centre and the states in equal proportions* (i.e 39% each). **Statement 1 is incorrect**
- The projects have been classified under two broad categories namely economic infrastructure and social infrastructure for both ease of doing business and ease of living.
- Under the projects,*energy sectors make up the lion's share of 24%,* followed by roads(19%), urban development(16%) and the railways (13%) - **statement 2 is correct**

Source: http://factly.forumias.com/finance-minister-unveils-%e2%82%b9102-lakh-crore-national-infrastructure-plan/

Q.10) Exp: C is the correct answer
About PM Laghu Vyapari Man Dhan Yojana

- The National Pension Scheme for Traders and Self-Employed Persons Yojana (Pradhan Mantri Laghu Vyapari Maan-dhan Yojana) is a pension scheme for shopkeepers launched in July,2019.
- *Statement 1 is correct:*The scheme assures a minimum monthly pension of ₹3000 per month to

small shopkeepers, retail traders and self-employed people after attaining the age of 60 years.
- The Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) is the pension fund manager for the scheme.
- The scheme is available to all small shopkeepers, self-employed persons and retail traders with Goods and Services tax *(GST) turnover below Rs.1.5 crore*. The age limit is *18-40 years*. - **statement 2 and 3 are incorrect.**

Source: http://factly.forumias.com/pradhan-mantri-laghu-vyapari-maan-dhan-yojana/

Q.11) Exp: A is the correct answer
Self-explanatory
Source: http://factly.forumias.com/world-bankglobal-economic-prospects-report/

Q.12) Exp: B is the correct answer
About the National Start-Up Advisory Council
- The Government of India has set up the National Startup Advisory Council to advise the government on nurturing the culture of innovation among the citizens.
- The Council will be chaired by the *commerce and industry minister*. - **Statement 1 is incorrect**
- Joint secretary of Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade will be the convener of the body.
- It will also consist of *non-official members to be nominated by the government from various categories such as founders of successful startups*, veterans who have grown and scaled companies.

Statement 2 is correct
Source:http://factly.forumias.com/govt-sets-up-national-startup-advisory-council/

Q.13) Exp: C is the correct answer
Self-explanatory
Source:http://factly.forumias.com/royal-navy-of-oman-ships-arrive-in-goa-for-naval-exercise-naseem-al-bahr/

Q.14) Exp: C is the correct answer
About the K-4 missile

- K-4 is a nuclear-capable *Intermediate-range submarine-launched ballistic missile* - **Statement 1 is correct**.
- The missile has been developed by India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- The missile has a *maximum range of about 3500 km*. - **Statement 3 is incorrect**
- It is powered by *solid rocket propellants*. **Statement 2 is incorrect**
- The missile is to be fitted into the indigenously built Arihant-class nuclear-powered submarines of the Indian Navy.
- Only the US, Russia and China have submarine-launched ballistic missiles of 3,500-kilometre range.

Source:http://factly.forumias.com/india-successfully-test-fires-k-4-nuclear-capable-missile/

Q.15) Exp: A is the correct answer
About the Yada Yada virus:
- Recently, a virus detected in Australian mosquitoes has been provisionally named the Yada Yada virus (YYV) - **statement 2 is incorrect**
- Yada Yada Virus belongs to the group alphavirus. The virus poses *no threat to human beings* because it is a part of a group of viruses that only infect mosquitoes. - **Statement 1 is correct**
- The other viruses which are part of the group alphaviruses include Tai forest alphavirus and the Agua Salud alphavirus.

Source: http://factly.forumias.com/explained-why-a-virus-detected-in-australian-mosquitoes-has-been-named-yada-yada/

Q.16) Exp: C is the correct answer
About Vyom MItra:
- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) unveiled a human-robot, named Vyommitra, that will be sent to space as part of the Gaganyaan mission. - **C is correct**
- Vyommitra is a half-humanoid who can mimic human actions

- Prior to the Gaganyaan mission, the Vyommitra will go on unmanned journeys for testing

Source: http://factly.forumias.com/vyommitra-the-humanoid-for-gaganyaan/

Q.17) Exp: The Centre, the governments of Tripura and Mizoram and representatives of Bru tribe have signed a new agreement to settle the Bru refugees in Tripura.

About Bru (Reang) Refugees:
- Regions: indigenous to Northeast India living mostly across Assam, Mizoram and Tripura.
- Status: Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group in Tripura.
- Language: Reang dialect of Bru language which is Tibeto Burmese origin and is locally referred to as Kau Bru.
- Folk culture: Hojagiri folk dance,Buisu festival.

Q.18) Exp: The Ministry of Law and Justice has issued an order declaring the United Arab Emirates to be a reciprocating territory under Section 44A of the Civil Procedure Code,1908.

About Reciprocating territory:
- Reciprocating territory means that decrees passed by courts in the UAE can now be executed in India as if they were passed by Indian civil courts.
- The mechanism for conferring such a status to foreign civil decrees has been outlined in Section 44A of the CPC.
- Apart from Dubai,the other countries that have been declared to be reciprocating territories are: United Kingdom, Singapore, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Trinidad & Tobago, New Zealand, the Cook Islands (including Niue) and the Trust Territories of Western Samoa, Hong Kong, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Aden.

About Section 44 of the CPC:
Section 44A Civil Procedure Code,1908 provides the law on the subject of execution of decrees of Courts in India by foreign Courts and vice versa.

Q.19) Exp: About Right to property:
- The Constitution of India 1949 contained Article 19(1)(f) as well as Article 31, which provided right of private ownership of property, and freedom to acquire, enjoy and dispose of it off by lawful means.

- However, the 44th Amendment of 1978 deleted the right to property from the list of fundamental rights. It was made a Constitutional right under Article 300A.
- Article 300A requires the state to follow due procedure and authority of law to deprive a person of his or her private property.

Right to Adverse possession:
- The right to Adverse possession is a legal doctrine that allows a person who possesses or resides on someone else's land for an extended period of time to claim legal title to that land.
- In India, the person who is not the original owner of the land becomes the owner because of the fact that he has been in possession of the property for a minimum of 12-years within which the real owner did not seek legal recourse to oust him.

Q.20) Exp: About Eighth Schedule: The Eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India lists the official languages of the Republic of India. It consists of the following 22 languages:-(1) Assamese, (2) Bengali, (3) Gujarati, (4) Hindi, (5) Kannada, (6) Kashmiri, (7) Konkani, (8) Malayalam, (9) Manipuri, (10) Marathi, (11) Nepali, (12) Oriya, (13) Punjabi, (14) Sanskrit, (15) Sindhi, (16) Tamil, (17) Telugu, (18) Urdu (19) Bodo, (20) Santhali, (21) Maithili and (22) Dogri.

About Tulu Language: Recently, activists have demanded to include Tulu in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. Tulu is a Dravidian language whose speakers are concentrated in two coastal districts of Karnataka and Kasaragod district of Kerala. Kasaragod district is called as the 'Sapta bhasha Samgama Bhumi (the confluence of seven languages)' and Tulu is one among the seven.
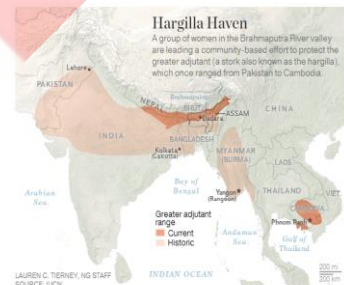
Q.21) Exp: Assam state zoo first to breed endangered Hargila

News: The Assam State Zoo and wildlife NGO Aranyak has jointly bred a pair of Greater Adjutant (Hargila) chicks in an artificial platform within the zoo enclosure. About Greater Adjutant Stork (Hargila):

- It is found in a few isolated pockets in Assam and Bihar in India and PrekToal in Cambodia.
- IUCN status: Endangered
- It is listed under schedule IV of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

Q.22) Exp: The World Health Organisation (WHO) has endorsed TrueNat which is an indigenous molecular diagnostic tool for tuberculosis (TB) diagnosis.

About TrueNat:

The TrueNat is a new molecular test that can diagnose TB in one hour as well as testing for resistance to the drug rifampicin.

The test has been developed by the Indian firm MolBio Diagnostics Pvt Ltd Goa.

The test works by rapid detection of TB bacteria using the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) technique.

Q.23) Exp: Project Great Indian Bustard: It is a Rajasthan government project launched in 2018. It envisages constituting enclosures and securing inviolate areas to ensure successful breeding of birds in the Desert National Park

Q.24) Exp: About 1t.org

- It is a World Economic Forum initiative, designed to support the trillion-tree community.
- It offers a platform for leading governments, businesses, civil society and ecopreneurs committed to serving the global trillion trees community.

Objectives:

- To serve and empower the reforestation community.
- To unlock the conditions needed to re-green Earth.
- To break down the barriers preventing conservation and restoration at scale.
- To support the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030, led by UNEP and FAO

Additional Information:

UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030: It aims to massively scale up the restoration of degraded and destroyed ecosystems to fight the climate crisis and enhance food security, water supply and biodiversity.

Q.25) Exp: About Swachh Survekshan League 2020:

- Swachh Survekshan 2020 League was launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs in 2019.
- The aim of the survey is to sustain the on-ground performance of cities along with continuous monitoring of service level performance in cleanliness.
- The Swachh Survekshan 2020 League is being conducted in 3 quarters namely the April- June, July – September and the October- December 2019.
- The performance of cities in the League 2020 is crucial to their ranking in Swachh Survekshan 2020 due to the 25% weightage of the quarterly assessments to be included in the annual survey in January 2020.