MONTHLY

FACTLY

EXCLUSIVE CURRENT AFFAIRS FOR

PRELIMS

NOVEMBER 2019

Forum IAS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ForumIAS

Polity

1. 250ᵗʰ SESSION OF RAJYA SABHA

News: The Rajya Sabha chairman released the first-ever analysis of its legislative work, 'Rajya Sabha: The Journey since 1952' on the occasion of the 250th session of Rajya Sabha.

Facts:

Key takeaways from the analysis:

- The first sitting of the Rajya Sabha was held on 13th May,1952. The first bill passed by Rajya Sabha was the Indian Tariff (Second Amendment) Bill,1952.
- The first constitutional amendment bill passed by the Rajya Sabha was the Constitution (Second Amendment) Bill,1953 for readjustment of representation in Lok Sabha by increasing the size of population per constituency.
- The representation of women in Rajya Sabha had increased from 15 (6.94%) in 1952 to 31(12.76%) in 2014 but decreased to 26 (10.83%) in 2019.
- The first and the only time when a Presiding Officer of Rajya Sabha cast his vote was for the Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Ordinance,1991.
- The President Rule approved only by Rajya Sabha has happened twice in respect of extension of President Rule in Tamil Nadu and Nagaland in 1977 and in case of Haryana in 1991 when Lok Sabha was dissolved.
- The bill passed by Rajya Sabha but rejected by Lok Sabha happened during the Constitution (Sixty-fourth Amendment) Bill,1990 which had sought to amend Article 356 relating to extension of President's Rule in Punjab.

Additional Facts:

RAJYA SABHA

- Article 80 of the Constitution lays down the maximum strength of Rajya Sabha as 250 out of which 12 members are nominated by the President and 238 are representatives of the States and of the two Union Territories.
- However, the present strength of Rajya Sabha is 245, out of which 233 are representatives of the States and Union territories of Delhi and Puducherry and 12 are nominated by the President.
- The members nominated by the President are persons having special knowledge or practical experience in respect of such matters as literature, science, art and social service.
- The Fourth Schedule to the Constitution provides for allocation of seats to the States and Union Territories in Rajya Sabha. The allocation of seats is made on the basis of the population of each State.

2. JUSTICE SHARAD ARVIND BOBDE TAKES OATH AS NEXT CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA (CJI)

News: Justice Sharad Arvind Bobde took oath as the 47th CJI by the President.

Facts:

Appointment - The CJI is appointed by the president after consultation with such judges of the Supreme Court and high courts as he deems necessary. The other judges are appointed by president after consultation with the chief justice and such other judges of the Supreme Court and the high courts as he deems necessary.

- In the Second Judges Case (1993), the Supreme Court ruled that the senior most judge of the Supreme Court should alone be appointed to the office of the chief justice of India.
- Once appointed, the chief justice remains in the office until the age of 65 years.

Function - As head of the supreme court, the chief justice is responsible for the allocation of cases and appointment of constitutional benches which deal with important matters of law. As the administrative head, the chief justice carries out the following functions *(a)* maintenance of the roster *(b)* appointment of court officials and *(c)* general and miscellaneous matters relating to the supervision and functioning of the Supreme Court.

Qualifications needed to be appointed as Judges - A person to be appointed as a judge of the Supreme Court should have the following qualifications:

1. He should be a citizen of India.
2. (a) He should have been a judge of a High Court (or high courts in succession) for five years
   (b) He should have been an advocate of a High Court (or High Courts in succession) for ten years;
   (c) He should be a distinguished jurist in the opinion of the president.

Oath of office - The President or some person appointed by him for this purpose administers the oath to SC judge. A judge of the Supreme Court swears:

1. to bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India;
2. to uphold the sovereignty and integrity of India;
3. to duly and faithfully and to the best of his ability, knowledge and judgement perform the duties of the Office without fear or favour, affection or ill-will; and
4. to uphold the Constitution and the laws.

Tenure of Judges - The Constitution has not fixed the tenure of a judge of the Supreme Court. However, it makes the following three provisions in this regard:

1. He holds office until he attains the age of 65 years.
2. He can resign his office by writing to the president.
3. He can be removed from his office by the President on the recommendation of the Parliament.

Removal of Judges - A judge of the Supreme Court can be removed from his Office by an order of the president on 2 grounds- proved misbehaviour or incapacity. The President can issue the removal order only after an address by Parliament has been presented to him in the same session for such removal. The address must be supported by a special majority of each House of Parliament (ie, a majority of the total membership of that House and a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of that House present and voting).

3. OVERSEAS CITIZENS OF INDIA CAN SUBSCRIBE TO NATIONAL PENSION SYSTEM

News: Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) permitted Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) to enrol in the National Pension System (NPS) at par with Non-Resident Indians.

Facts:

- National Pension System (NPS) is a government-sponsored pension scheme. It was launched in 2004 for government employees. However, in 2009, it was opened to all sections. NPS is being implemented and regulated by Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority in the country.

ForumIAS

- PFRDA is a statutory body established under the Pension Fund Regulatory Development Authority (PFRDA) Act,2013 under the Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance. Its objective is to be a model regulator for promotion and development of an organized pension system to serve the old age income needs of people on a sustainable basis.

Additional Facts:

Overseas Citizenship of India

- The Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) is an immigration status permitting a foreign citizen of Indian origin to live and work in India indefinitely.
- The OCI was introduced in response to demands for dual citizenship by the Indian diaspora particularly in developed countries.
- An OCI is entitled to some benefits such as a multiple-entry, multipurpose life-long visa to visit India. However, OCI is not actual citizenship of India as it has many limitations such as no right to vote, no right to hold constitutional offices and no right to buy agricultural properties.

4. SUPREME COURT UPHOLDS DISQUALIFICATION OF 17 REBEL MLAS, CAN CONTEST BYPOLLS

News: The Supreme Court (SC) upheld an order by former Karnataka Assembly Speaker disqualifying 17 Karnataka MLAs. However, the court has allowed all the disqualified MLAs to contest in the upcoming by polls.

Facts:

Background:

- Karnataka Assembly Speaker had disqualified 17 MLAs under the tenth schedule of the Constitution (anti-defection law). The disqualification had barred the legislators from contesting Assembly polls for the term of the current Assembly which ends in 2023.
- However, the Supreme Court upheld the disqualification of the dissident legislators, but it also held that their ouster does not put any bar upon them from contesting by-polls. The court has reasoned that the speaker in the exercise of powers does not have the power to indicate the period for which a person is barred from contesting an election.
- It said that even the 91st Amendment Act, 2003 which did not allow a disqualified member to be appointed as a minister, did not give Speaker the power to put a ban upon them to contest elections till the end of the term.
- The court said that the speaker acts as a quasi-judicial authority and that the scope of the assembly speaker's inquiry is limited to examine whether the resignation of MLAs was voluntary or not.

Additional Facts:

Anti-Defection law:

52nd Constitution Amendment Act, 1985 inserted the 10th Schedule of the Constitution which contains anti-defection law. It lays down the process by which legislators may be disqualified on grounds of defection by the Presiding Officer of a legislature based on a petition by any other member of the House.

Grounds for Disqualification: Following are the grounds on which a member of a legislature can be disqualified:

- if he/she voluntarily gives up the membership of his/her party on whose ticket he/she was elected;
- if a legislator votes in the House against the direction of his/her party and his/her actions are not condoned by his party.

- If an independent candidate joins a political party after the election.
- If a nominated member joins a party six months after he becomes a member of the legislature.

Exception: The provisions of the anti-defection law doesn't apply in the following situations:

- **Merger**: A merger of a political party with another takes place when two-thirds of the members of the party have agreed to such a merger. The condition of two-thirds of the party members agreeing to a defection was added through 91st Constitution Amendment Act, 2003.
- **Presiding Officer**: A member can give up the membership of a political party after being elected as the presiding officer of the house. He can later re-join the party after his term as the presiding officer of the house ends.

Judicial Review: In Kihoto Hollohan vs Zachillhu and Others (1991), the Supreme Court Constitution Bench had declared that the Speaker's decision was subject to judicial review.

5. CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA'S OFFICE COMES UNDER RIGHT TO INFORMATION (RTI) AMBIT

News: A five-judge bench of the Supreme Court has ruled that the office of Chief Justice of India (CJI) comes under the purview of the Right to Information (RTI) Act.

Facts:

- The verdict comes in the matter of a plea filed by Supreme Court Secretary-General challenging Delhi High Court's 2010 order holding that the CJI's office is a "public authority" and falls under the ambit of the RTI Act.

Key takeaways from SC Verdict:

- The Supreme Court of India and the office of the CJI are not two different public authorities. The SC would necessarily include the office of CJI and other judges in view of Article 124 of the Constitution.
- Right to Information and Right to Privacy are two sides of the same coin. They have to be balanced while deciding to give out information from the office of the Chief Justice.
- Judicial independence and accountability go hand in hand, but transparency does not undermine judicial independence.
- The Court has asked the information commissioner to apply test of proportionality while entertaining applications seeking information from CJI's office, keeping in mind the right to privacy and independence of the judiciary.

Additional Facts:

Right to Information Act, 2005:

RTI Act provides for timely disclosure of information by citizens from both central and State Public Authorities. It seeks to empower citizens and promote accountability and transparency.

According to Section 2(h) of the RTI Act, "public authority" means any authority or body or institution of self- government established or constituted—

- by or under the Constitution;
- by any other law made by Parliament;
- by any other law made by state legislature

- by notification issued or order made by the appropriate Government.

Central Information Commission: It is a statutory body established under RTI Act, 2005.
- It consists of the Central Information Commissioner and not more than ten Information commissioners.
- The President of India appoints the Chief Information Commissioner and the information commissioners on the recommendation of the committee consisting of the Prime Minister as chairperson, the leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha and one union cabinet ministers nominated by the Prime Minister.
- The Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) and an information commissioner holds office for five years or until they attain the age of 65 years. CIC is not eligible for reappointment.
- CIC submits its report to the government who then places it to the parliament.

6. LOGO, MOTTO INTRODUCED FOR LOKPAL

News: Lokpal Chairman Justice (retired) Pinaki Chandra Ghose has launched the new logo for the Lokpal. A new motto, "Ma Gridhah Kasyasvidhanam (Do not be greedy for anyone's wealth)", was also adopted.

Facts:

Lokpal: Lokpal is a statutory anti-corruption body established under the Lokpal and Lokayukta Act, 2013. The Lokpal became functional after the appointment of its Chairman and members in March 2019.

Composition of Lokpal: It is a multi-member body with one chairperson and a maximum of 8 members.
- The chairperson and at least half of the members have to be current or former judges of the Supreme Court or chief justices of the high courts
- 50% of the members of the Lokpal is from amongst the SCs, STs, OBCs, minorities and women.

Selection of Lokpal: The selection of the Chairperson and members of Lokpal is through a Selection Committee consisting of:
- the Prime Minister,
- the Speaker of the Lok Sabha,
- the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha,
- the Chief Justice of India or a sitting Supreme Court Judge nominated by CJI
- an eminent jurist to be nominated by the President of India

1 Logo of Lokpal

Powers of Lokpal: The jurisdiction of Lokpal includes the Prime Minister, Ministers, Members of Parliament and Groups A, B, C and D officers and officials of the Central Government.
- Lokpal has the power of superintendence and direction over any investigating agency, including the CBI, for cases referred to them by the Lokpal.
- Further, any officer of the CBI investigating a case referred to it by the Lokpal, shall not be transferred without the approval of the Lokpal.
- Lokpal and Lokayukta Act, 2013 also incorporates provisions for attachment and confiscation of property acquired by corrupt means, even while the prosecution is pending.

7. REVIEW PETITIONS IN SUPREME COURT

News: Constitution under Article 137 gives the Supreme Court the power to review any of its judgments or orders.

Facts:

Grounds for Review: In a 2013 ruling, the Supreme Court itself had laid down three grounds for seeking a review of a verdict it has delivered:

- The discovery of new and important matter or evidence which after the exercise of due diligence was not within the knowledge of the petitioner or could not be produced by him.
- Mistake or error apparent on the face of the record or
- Any other sufficient reason. Any sufficient reason means a reason that is analogous to the other two grounds.

In Roopa Hurra v Ashok Hurra (2002), the court itself evolved the concept of a curative petition which can be heard after a review is dismissed to prevent abuse of its process.

8. RULE 12 OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA (TRANSACTION OF BUSINESS) RULES, 1961

News: Rule 12 of the Government of India (Transaction of Business) Rules, 1961 allows the Prime Minister to depart from laid down norms at his discretion.

Facts:

- The rule says that the Prime Minister may in cases or classes of cases permit or condone a departure from these rules to the extent he deems necessary. The Cabinet can subsequently give post-facto approval for any decision taken under Rule 12.
- Rule 12 was invoked to revoke the President's Rule in Maharashtra and for re-organisation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir into the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.

9. NATIONAL YOUTH PARLIAMENT SCHEME

News: President of India launched the Web-Portal of "National Youth Parliament Scheme".

Facts:

National Youth Parliament Scheme:

- It was launched in 1966 in Schools under the Directorate of Education, Government of NCT of Delhi and NDMC, Kendriya Vidyalayas, Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas and Universities/ Colleges.
- The scheme is implemented by the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs.
- The scheme encompasses conducting National Youth Parliament Competition every year.

Objectives:

- Familiarize the students with the practice and procedures of Parliament, techniques of discussion and debate
- Develop leadership qualities, spirit of self-discipline and tolerance of diverse opinions and healthy competition
- Inculcate among younger generations the art and skill of effective oratory, righteous expression of views and other virtues of a democratic way of life.

10. CONSTITUTION DAY

News: Constitution Day was celebrated on 26th November 2019. 2019 marks the 70th year of the adoption of the Indian Constitution.

Facts:

- The Indian Government declared 26 November as Constitution Day by a gazette notification in 2015. Earlier, 26th November was celebrated as National Law Day. The day also offers tribute to B.R. Ambedkar, the Father of Indian Constitution, who had played a pivotal role in drafting of the Indian Constitution.

Aim of the Day:

- To publicize the glorious and rich composite culture and diversity of our nation.
- To create awareness of Fundamental Duties as enshrined in the Indian Constitution
- **Nagrik Kartavya Palan Abhiyan:** launched on Constitution Day, 2019. It will run from 26th November 2019 to 26th November 2020. It seeks to create mass awareness about the Fundamental Duties as enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

ForumIAS

Economics

---

1. RBI REVISES FRAMEWORK ON CURRENCY SWAP ARRANGEMENT FOR SAARC COUNTRIES

News: The SAARC currency swap facility framework came into operation on November 15, 2012.

Facts:
- Under the revised framework for 2019-22, the Reserve Bank of India will continue to offer swap arrangement within the overall corpus of $2 billion.
- The currency swap facility will be available to all SAARC member countries subject to their signing the bilateral swap agreements.
- The drawls can be made in US dollar, euro or Indian rupee. The framework also provides certain concessions for swap drawls in Indian Rupee.
- Currency Swap Arrangement:
- A currency swap between countries is an agreement to exchange currencies with predetermined terms and conditions.
- The countries engage in currency swaps with foreign counterparts to meet short term foreign exchange liquidity requirements or to ensure adequate foreign currency to avoid Balance of Payments (BOP) crisis till longer arrangements can be made.

2. PURCHASING MANAGERS INDEX (PMI) FOR MANUFACTURING SLIPPED TO TWO YEARS LOW

News: The Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) fell to a two-year low of 50.6 in October,2019 from 51.4 in September,2019.

Facts:
- The purchasing managers index has fallen as weakening demand had an effect in the manufacturing industry bringing down the rates of increase in production, employment and business sentiment.

Additional Facts:

PMI: PMI or Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) is an indicator of business activity both in the manufacturing and services sectors. It is usually released at the start of a month.
- PMI was originally developed in 1948 by the US-based non-profit group namely Institute of Supply Management (ISM). For India, the PMI Data is published by Japanese firm Nikkei but compiled and constructed by Markit Economics.
- It is a survey-based measures that asks the respondents about changes in their perception of some key business variables from the month before.
- The indices vary between 0 and 100 with a reading above 50 indicating an overall increase compared to the previous month and below 50 an overall decrease.

3. TAXATION LAWS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019 INTRODUCED IN LOK SABHA

Key features of the bill:
- Currently, domestic companies with an annual turnover of up to Rs 400 crore pay income tax at the rate of 25%. For other domestic companies, the tax rate is 30%.

- The Bill provides new domestic manufacturing companies with an option to pay income tax at the rate of 15%, provided they do not claim certain deductions. These new domestic manufacturing companies must be set up and registered after September 30, 2019 and start manufacturing before April 1, 2023.
- However, a company which does not opt for the concessional tax regime and avails the tax exemption/incentive shall continue to pay tax at the pre-amended rate.
- The Ordinance reduces the MAT rate (applicable for companies not opting for the new tax rates) from 18.5% to 15% with effect from the financial year 2019-20. The Bill amends this provision by making it effective from the financial year 2020-21.

Additional Facts:

MAT: MAT stands for Minimum Alternative Tax.

- It was effectively introduced in India by the Finance Act of 1987, vide Section 115J of the Income Tax Act, 1961 (IT Act). Later on, it was withdrawn and then reintroduced in 1996.
- The objective of introduction of MAT is to bring into the tax net zero tax companies who in spite of having earned substantial book profits (the profit shown in the profit and loss account) do not pay tax due to various tax concessions and incentives provided under the Income-tax Law.

4. COMPANY LAW COMMITTEE-2019 SUBMITS ITS REPORT TO FINANCE MINISTER*

News: Government of India has constituted a company law committee chaired by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) secretary Injeti Srinivas.

Facts:

- The committee was to look at recategorization of certain offences under the Companies Act as civil offences and review other provisions of the Companies Act and the Limited Liability Partnerships Act 2008.

Key recommendations of the committee:

- Recommended changes in the 46 penal provisions so as to remove criminality or to restrict punishment to only fine or to allow rectification of defaults through alternative methods.
- Re-categorised 23 offences out of the 66 remaining compoundable offences under the Companies Act. These offences will be dealt with in the in-house adjudication framework wherein these defaults would be subject to a penalty levied by the adjudicating officer.
- Retention of the status-quo in case of the non-compoundable offences.
- Extending applicability of Section 446B (lower penalties for small companies and one person companies) to all provisions which attract monetary penalties and extending the benefit to producer companies and start-ups.
- Proposing new benches of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT)
- Providing for appeal against the orders of the Regional Directors before the NCLT after due examination.

5. INTEGRATED SKILL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME IN THE TEXTILE SECTOR

News: Samarth-Scheme for Capacity Building in Textiles sector (SCBTS):

Facts:

- Samarth is a skill development scheme under the Union Ministry of Textiles.

- The scheme aims to provide skill development to the youth for gainful and sustainable employment in the textile sector covering entire value chain of textiles excluding spinning and weaving.

Target: The Scheme targets to train 10 lakh persons (9 lakhs in organised & 1 lakh in traditional sector).

Implementation: The skilling programmes would be implemented through following Implementing Agencies:

- Textile Industry.
- Institutions/Organization of the Ministry of Textile/State Governments having training infrastructure and placement tie-ups with textile industry.
- Reputed training institutions/ NGOs/ Societies/ Trusts/ Organizations/ Companies /Start-ups / Entrepreneurs active in textile sector having placement tie-ups with textile industry.

6. PUDUCHERRY: 29TH RCP MEETING OF ASIA PACIFIC CUSTOMS BEGINS

News: India hosted the World Customs Organization (WCO) Asia Pacific Regional Contact Points (RCP) conference in Puducherry.

Facts:

- The conference discussed the key focus areas of the Asia Pacific Region. It includes security, enforcement, facilitation and capacity building.
- The conference has also taken stock of the progress being made in carrying forward the programmes of WCO to promote, facilitate and secure the cross-border trade in the region and the capacity building and technical assistance required to achieve this goal.

Additional Facts:

About WCO: The World Customs Organization (WCO) is an inter-governmental organization headquartered in Brussels, Belgium. It was founded in 1952.

- It administers the technical aspects of WTO, agreements on customs valuation and rules of origin.
- The WCO has divided its Membership into six Regions. Each of the six Regions is represented by a regionally elected Vice-Chairperson to the WCO Council.
- The six regions are:
  - North Africa, Near and Middle East.
  - West and Central Africa.
  - East and Southern Africa (Somalia and South Sudan joined in 2012)
  - South America, North America, Central America and Caribbean.
  - Europe
  - The Far East, South and South-East Asia, Australasia and Pacific islands
- India is a member of the Asia Pacific region of WCO and is also currently the Vice Chair since July 2018. The four strategic guiding principles which India adheres to while working as the Vice Chair of the A/P region, are:
  - Greater communication and connectivity within the region
  - Harness technology advancements
  - Inclusive approach
  - Consensus on core issues

7. CABINET APPROVES STRATEGIC DISINVESTMENT OF BPCL & 4 OTHER PSUS

News: The government kicked off a blockbuster disinvestment plan, lining up the sale of five public sector units (PSUs).

Facts:

The Public Sector Units approved for strategic disinvestment are

- Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) (The Numaligarh Refinery Limited operating under BPCL is excluded)
- Shipping Corporation of India (SCI)
- Container Corporation of India (CONCOR)
- Tehri Hydro Development Corporation India Limited (THDCIL)
- North Eastern Electric Power Corporation Limited (NEEPCO)

Additional Facts:

Disinvestment - Disinvestment is the sale or liquidation of an asset or subsidiary by government. According to DIPAM, "Strategic disinvestment would imply the sale of substantial portion of the Government shareholding of a central public sector enterprise (CPSE) of upto 50%, or such higher percentage as the competent authority may determine, along with transfer of management control."

- Disinvestment is carried out as a budgetary exercise under which the government announces yearly targets for disinvestment for selected PSUs. Government has set the disinvestment target of 1.05 lakh crore for the current financial year 2019-20.
- Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) under the Ministry of Finance is the nodal department for the strategic disinvestment sale.

8. NCDEX TIES UP WITH NSE INDICES TO LAUNCH AGRIDEX

News: The National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX) tied up with National Stock Exchange (NSE) to launch India's first agri index 'NCDEX Agridex'.

Facts:

Agridex: The index represents a basket of ten commodities that are selected based on both liquidity and its importance in Indian and global commodities market.

- The index will be made tradable after being approved from the SEBI
- The index has tied up with NSE Indices which will maintain and disseminate real time NCDEX Agridex values.

Significance of Agridex:

- It would serve as a benchmark for agricultural ecosystems.
- As index represents a diverse basket of commodities, it is less risky and more predictable compared to individual commodity.
- Futures trading on Agridex will also enhance overall liquidity on the exchange platform.

Additional Facts:

- **NSE: The National Stock Exchange of India Limited (NSE)** is the leading stock exchange of India, located in Mumbai. The NSE was established in 1992 as the first dematerialized electronic exchange in the country.

- **NCDEX: National Commodity & Derivatives Exchange Limited (NCDEX)** is an online commodity exchange based in India. It is a public limited company incorporated in 2003 under the Companies Act,1956. It has an independent board of directors and provides a commodity exchange platform for market participants to trade in commodity derivatives.

9. RBI'S PANEL SUGGESTS MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN CORE INVESTMENT COMPANIES

News: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) panel to review the regulatory and Supervisory Framework for Core Investment Companies headed by Tapan Ray submitted its report.

Facts:

- Core Investment Companies (CICs) are Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) having asset size of Rs 100 crore and above. It holds not less than 90% of its net assets in the form of investment in equity shares, preference shares, bonds, debentures, debt or loans in group companies. Further, investment in equity shares in group companies constitute not less than 60% of its net assets.

Key Recommendations of the panel:

- Every conglomerate with a CIC should have a Group Risk Management Committee. This committee should be responsible to monitor group-level leverage.
- One-third of the board should comprise of independent members if the chairperson of the CIC is a non-executive member, otherwise at least half of the board should comprise of independent members.
- Audit committee of the board should be chaired by an independent director who has oversight over the CIC's financial reporting process and policies.
- There is a need for ring fencing boards of CICs by excluding employees or executive directors of group firms from its board.
- The number of layers of CICs in a group should be restricted to two. As such, any CIC within a group shall not make investments through more than a total of two layers of CICs. The word layer means subsidiary or subsidiaries of the holding company.

10. GOVERNMENT APPROVES RS 25,000 CRORE ALTERNATE FUND FOR STALLED HOUSING PROJECTS

News: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday said the government would set up an alternative investment fund (AIF) worth Rs 25,000 crore to provide relief to developers with unfinished projects to ensure delivery of homes to buyers.

Facts:

The fund will be set up as a category-II Alternative Investment Fund which will pool investments from the government and other investors.

- The government will contribute Rs 10,000 crore while the remaining amount will be put up by the State Bank of India and the Life Insurance Corporation of India.
- SBICAP Ventures Limited will be the investment manager for the fund and decide on which projects are eligible for the funding.
- The government expects this fund to revive the real estate sector, generate employment and provide a boost to the economy through demand for materials like cement.

Eligibility for the fund:
- The project's net-worth must be positive.
- Affordable and middle-income housing project.
- On-going projects registered with the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act (RERA).
- Include stressed projects classified as non-performing assets or those stuck in the NCLT.
- The fund will not be available for the projects that have entered liquidation.

Additional Facts:

Alternate investment fund:
- Alternate investment funds (AIFs) are defined under the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Alternative Investment Funds) Regulations, 2012. It refers to any fund established or incorporated in India which is a privately pooled investment vehicle which collects funds from sophisticated investors whether Indian or foreign for investing it in accordance with a defined investment policy for the benefit of its investors.
- **Categories of AIF:**
  - Category I: Mainly invests in start- ups, SMEs or any other sector which Govt. considers economically and socially viable.
  - Category II: These include Alternative Investment Funds such as private equity funds or debt funds for which no specific incentives or concessions are given by the government or any other Regulator.
  - Category III: Alternative Investment Funds such as hedge funds or funds which trade with a view to make short term returns or such other funds which are open ended and for which no specific incentives or concessions are given by the government or any other Regulator.

11. TAMIL NADU BECOMES FIRST STATE TO ENACT LAW ON CONTRACT FARMING

News: Tamil Nadu became the first State in the country to enact a law on contract farming as President gave assent to the Agricultural Produce and Livestock Contract Farming and Services (Promotion and Facilitation) Act.

Facts:

Features of the act:
- The act provides for a six-member body called the Tamil Nadu State Contract Farming and Services Authority.
- The authority would ensure proper implementation of the Act and make suggestions to the State government for promotion and better performance of contract farming.
- The act safeguards the interests of farmers during times of bumper crop or when market prices fluctuate. The farmers would also be paid a predetermined price which had been arrived at the time of signing agreements with buyers.
- The farmers could get support from purchasers for improving productivity by way of inputs, feed and fodder and technology.
- However, any produce banned by the Centre or State government or the Indian Council of Agricultural Research would not be covered under contract farming.

How it benefits farmers
- It ensures buyers to get assured supply at predetermined price
- All contracts will be registered
- Nature of ownership of farm lands will remain intact
- Contracts will cover only purchase of produce. It also allows inclusion of production
- activities such as supply of material inputs
- Tamil Nadu State Contract Farming and Services (Promotion and Facilitation) Authority will be set up to ensure proper implementation
- Dispute Settlement Committees will be formed at the level of revenue sub-division. District Collectors and Authority will function as appellate and review authorities
- Rice, wheat, pulses, oilseeds, vegetables and fruits have been brought under law's ambit

Additional Formation

Contract Farming: Contract farming refers to varied formal and informal agreements between producers and processors or buyers. It may include loose buying arrangements, simple purchase agreements and supervised production with input provision with tied loans and risk coverage. Contract farming usually involves the following basic elements - pre-agreed price, quality, quantity or acreage (minimum /maximum) and time.

12. GLOBAL MICROSCOPE REPORT

News: The 12th edition of the Global Microscope for Financial Inclusion report was released recently by the Economist Intelligence Unit. The report was first published in 2007.

Facts:

- The report is a benchmarking index that assesses the enabling environment for financial access in 55 countries.
- The report assessed countries across five parameters namely (a) Government and Policy Support (b)Stability and Integrity (c)Products and Outlets (d)Consumer Protection and (e)Infrastructure. The 2019 Global Microscope report also features 11 new gender focussed indicators that measure financial inclusion for both women and men.

Key takeaways from the report:

- The report has said that the overall environment for financial inclusion has improved globally with India, Colombia, Peru, Uruguay and Mexico having the most favourable conditions for inclusive finance.
- The report has ranked Colombia at the first position followed by Peru, Uruguay and Mexico.
- India has been ranked at the 5th spot. On the other hand, Democratic Republic of Congo was ranked at the 55th position.
- India was placed among top nations due to conducive environment for financial inclusion in terms of allowing non-banks to issue e-money, proportionate customer due diligence and effective consumer protection.

Additional Facts:

Economic Intelligence Unit: The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) was created in 1946.It is the research and analysis division of The Economist Group and the world leader in global business intelligence.

13. CORE SECTOR OUTPUT FALLS 5.2% IN SEPTEMBER

News: The output of eight core infrastructure industries contracted by 5.2% in September,2019. The sharp contraction also showed the severity of the industrial slowdown and recovery may take time.

Facts:

- All sectors in the core index with the exception of fertilisers contracted in September,2019.
- The experts have blamed consumption slowdown, heavy rainfall and flooding in several states as the prime reasons for the contraction.
- To lift growth, government has also taken several measures such as *(a)* slashing corporate tax rates *(b)* infusing capital in banks *(c)* relaxing foreign direct investment limits for select sectors *(d)* supporting real estate and *(e)* providing liquidity for non-banking finance companies.

ForumIAS

Additional Facts:

Core Sector: Core sector can be defined as the main industry which has a multiplier effect on the economy.

- The Eight Core Industries comprise 40.27% of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).
- The eight Core Industries in decreasing order of their weightage are *(a)* Refinery Products *(b)* Electricity *(c)* Steel *(d)* Coal *(e)* Crude Oil *(f)* Natural Gas *(g)* Cement and *(h)* Fertilizers.
- **IIP**: The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) is a composite indicator that measures changes in the volume of production of a basket of industrial products.
- The index is compiled and published monthly by the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme. It is implemented six weeks after the reference month ends, i.e. a lag of six weeks.
- The Base Year of the Index of Eight Core Industries has been revised from the year 2004-05 to 2011-12 from April 2017.

14. FINANCE MINISTER LAUNCHES IT INITIATIVES ICEDASH AND ATITHI

News: Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs unveiled two new IT initiatives – ICEDASH and ATITHI – for improved monitoring and pace of Customs clearance of imported goods and facilitating arriving international passengers by electronic filing of Customs baggage and currency declarations.

Facts:

About ICEDASH:

- ICEDASH is an ease of doing business (EoDB) monitoring dashboard of the Indian Customs helping public see the daily customs clearance times of import cargo at various ports and airports.
- It will be an effective tool that can help businesses compare clearance times across ports and plan their logistics accordingly.
- The dashboard has been developed by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) in collaboration with National Informatics Centre (NIC).

About ATITHI:

- ATITHI is a mobile app for international travelers to file the Customs declaration in advance.
- Passengers can use this app to file declaration of dutiable items and currency with the Indian Customs even before boarding the flight to India.
- The app would in particular create a tech-savvy image of India's customs and would encourage tourism and business travel to India.

Additional Facts:

CBIC: Central board of Indirect taxes (CBIC) was established in 1944. It is the nodal national agency responsible for administering Customs, GST, Central Excise, Service Tax & Narcotics in India.

- It is part of the Department of Revenue under Union Ministry of Finance. It is headquartered in New Delhi.
- 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's Department of Electronics & Information Technology.
- NIC has the mandate to set up, implement and support all the information technology led programs of the central and state governments and other government organizations in India.

15. ECONOMIC OUTLOOK FOR SOUTH EAST ASIA, CHINA AND INDIA REPORT- OECD

News: India's gross domestic product (GDP) could grow 6.6% in 2020-24, lower than its 2013-17 average of 7.4%, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) said

Facts:

Key takeaways from the report:

- India's gross domestic product (GDP) is projected to grow at 6.6% in 2020-24 lower than its 2013-17 average of 7.4%.
- The report said that India's reliance on consumption will continue due to large informal labour share which indicates that there is room to strengthen the consumption base.
- It has also added that India must continue to focus on boosting the health of the banking sector while bridging the disparity in urban and rural infrastructure.
- Further, the report has said that India needs to improve its digital literacy and increase access to digital devices.
- OECD: The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an intergovernmental economic organisation with 36 member countries. It was founded in 1961 to stimulate economic progress and world trade. It is headquartered in Paris, France.
- India is not a member of OECD but has been a key economic partner.

16. 'INDIAN TECH STARTUP ECOSYSTEM - LEADING TECH IN THE 20S' REPORT BY NASSCOM

News: According to the report 'Indian Tech Startup Ecosystem – Leading Tech in the 20s' by Nasscom, India continues to be the third largest startup ecosystem across the world.

Facts:

- India continues to be the third largest start-up ecosystem in the world, having added more than 1,300 tech start-ups in 2019.
- India now hosts 24 unicorns which is the third-highest number of unicorns in a single country in the world. Unicorn is a term to describe to start-ups valued at $1 billion. The report has also predicted that the number of Indian unicorns could increase to 95-105 by 2025.
- The volume of investments in start-ups has also grown touching $4.4 billion by January-September 2019 across 450 start-ups up 5% from the year-ago period.
- Start-ups have also created 60,000 direct jobs in 2019 alone compared with 40,000 jobs in 2018.

Additional Facts:

NASSCOM: The National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) was established in 1988. It is a non-profit organisation of Indian Information Technology (IT) and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry.

17. ASSET LIABILITY MANAGEMENT (ALM) FRAMEWORK FOR NBFC INTRODUCED BY RBI

News: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has introduced 'liquidity management framework' for Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs).

Facts:

- ALM framework is introduced due to liquidity crunch faced by some NBFCs after the collapse of the Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services (IL&FS) group.

About the framework:

- All non-deposit taking NBFCs with an asset size of ₹10,000 crore and above and all deposit taking NBFCs irrespective of their asset size have to maintain LCR at 50% starting from December 2020 which will be gradually increased to 100 per cent by December 2024.
- For all non-deposit taking NBFCs with asset size between ₹5,000¬-10,000 crore, the LCR requirement will start at 30 per cent in December 2020 and reach 100 per cent by December 2024.
- However, these guidelines will not apply to Type 1 NBFC-NDs, non-operating financial holding companies and standalone primary dealers. Type I - NBFC-ND entities are those which do not accept public funds and do not have customer interface and do not intend to engage in such activities.

Additional Facts:

Liquidity Coverage Ratio: LCR refers to the proportion of highly liquid assets held by companies to ensure their ongoing ability to meet short-term obligations.

- It promotes resilience of banks to potential liquidity disruptions by ensuring that they have sufficient High-Quality Liquid Asset (HQLA) to survive any acute liquidity stress scenario lasting for 30 days.
- HQLAs mean liquid assets that can be readily sold or immediately converted into cash at little or no loss of value or used as collateral to obtain funds in a range of stress scenarios

NBFC: NBFCs are companies that perform specialised financial functions (such as-deliver credit, currency exchange, insurance etc). But they do not hold a banking license.

- NBFCs supplement the role of the banking sector in meeting the financial needs of the wholesale and retail traders, unorganized sector and small local borrowers.
- NBFCs are also called as 'shadow banks.' It is a term used to describe any financial activity outside the banking system. The lending activities of NBFCs are called as 'shadow banking' due to the following reasons:
  - o It doesn't have access to liquidity from RBI. They borrow through instruments such as- commercial papers and give loans.
  - o Their deposits are not protected by deposit insurance.

18. CABINET APPROVES THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS CODE BILL, 2019

News: Industrial Relations Code Bill, 2019 has been prepared by combining and simplifying relevant provisions of three Central Labour Acts Viz. Trade Unions Act, 1926, the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946, and the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947.

Facts:

Key Provisions of the Bill:

- **Two-member Tribunal:** The bill provides for setting up of a two-member tribunal (in place of one member). This would enable adjudicating important cases jointly and the rest by a single member thus resulting in speedier disposal of cases.
- Empowering government officers for adjudication of disputes: The bill provides for vesting of powers with the government officers for adjudication of disputes involving penalty as fines thereby lessening the burden on the tribunal.
- Flexibility to the exit provisions relating to retrenchment and others: Employee threshold for seeking government approval for retrenchment, etc. has been retained at 100. However, the bill has added a provision for changing 'such number of employees' through notification (through executive order).
- **Re-skilling fund:** The bill has said that re-skilling fund is to be utilised for crediting to workers in a manner to be prescribed.

- **Fixed Term Employment**: Bill has proposed giving a legal framework for fixed-term employment through which contract workers serving a fixed-tenure will get equal statutory social security benefits as regular workers in the same unit. Fixed-term employment would not lead to any notice period and payment of compensation on retrenchment excluded.

Additional Facts:
Labour Law Reform
The government has decided to codify 44 central labour laws into four broad codes:(a) wages (b) social security (c)industrial safety and welfare and (d) industrial relations.
Code on Wages Bill, 2019:
- It has already been approved by the Parliament. The bill provides that the Central Government will fix minimum wages for certain sectors including railways and mines while the states would be free to set minimum wages for other category of employment.
- The code also provides for setting up of a national minimum wage.

Occupational Safety Health and Working Conditions Code, 2019:
- The Code repeals and replaces 13 labour laws relating to safety, health and working conditions.
- It entails duties for employers which include a) providing a workplace that is free from hazards that may cause injury or diseases, and b) providing free annual health examinations to employees, as prescribed.

Draft social security code, 2019:
- It proposes to amalgamate legislations pertaining to provident fund, pension, medical insurance, maternity benefits, gratuity and compensation.
- It has proposed that the Central Government shall formulate and notify social security schemes for unorganised workers.
- It also proposes the Corporatization of Employment provident fund organisation (EPFO) and Employees State Insurance Corporation (ESIC).

19. PERIODIC LABOUR FORCE SURVEY: QUARTERLY BULLETIN, JANUARY-MARCH 2019

News: The National Statistical Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has released the Quarterly Bulletin for the period January- March 2019. It presents estimates of labour force indicators, for urban areas.

Facts:
Key takeaways:
- Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) (in Current Weekly Status for all ages) is estimated at 36% in the urban areas during January-March 2019. The same was 35.6% during April- June 2018.
- The LFPR for men was estimated to be 56.2%, while for women it was at 15% during the January-March 2019 period.
- Unemployment Rate (UR) (in current weekly status) for all ages is estimated at 9.3% during January-March 2019. It was 9.8% during April- June 2018.

Additional Facts:
Periodic Labour Force Survey - National Statistical Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, launched Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) on April 2017. The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) conducts the survey. The survey seeks to generate quarterly reports for urban areas and an annual report for rural India.

The indicators taken into account are:

- **Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR):**
  - Persons who were either 'working' (or employed) or 'seeking or available for work' (or unemployed) constituted the labour force. LFPR is defined as the percentage of persons in the labour force in the population
  - LFPR according to current weekly status (CWS) is the number of persons either employed or unemployed on an average in a week of 7 days preceding the date of survey.
  - Usual activity status: It relates to the activity status of a person during the reference period of 365 days preceding the date of survey.
- **Worker Population Ratio (WPR):** WPR defined as the percentage of employed persons in the population.
- **Unemployment Rate (UR):** UR is defined as the percentage of persons unemployed among the persons in the labour force.

The periodic labour force survey had replaced the Annual Employment Unemployment Survey in 2017 on the recommendations of the Task Force on Employment chaired by Arvind Panagariya, then Vice-Chairman of NITI Aayog.

20. KHADI GETS SEPARATE HS CODE

News: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry allocated separate HS code for Khadi to boost exports of this signature fabric of India.

Facts:

HS Code: HS stands for Harmonized System and was developed by the World Customs Organization (WCO).

- The code is used by customs officers to clear commodities entering or crossing international borders.
- The code aids countries in the collection of international trade statistics and forms a basis for customs tariffs. This helps in better reach of the product and increases its global popularity.

21. MOODY'S CUTS INDIA'S GDP GROWTH FORECAST TO 5.6% FOR 2019-20 FROM 5.8% PROJECTED EARLIER

News: Moody's cuts India's GDP growth forecast to 5.6% for 2019-20 from 5.8% projected earlier.

Facts:

- The growth forecast has been reduced due to investment-led slowdown that has broadened into consumption, driven by financial stress among rural households and weak job creation.
- But the moody expects the economic activity in India to pick up in 2020 and 2021 to 6.6% and 6.7% respectively.

ForumIAS

International Relations

1. INDIA and JAPAN TO ENGAGE IN 2+2 DIALOGUE
News: India and Japan held ministerial level 2+2 Dialogue on 30th Nov 2019 in Delhi.

Facts:

India-Japan 2+2 Dialogue:
- The 2+2 meeting between India and Japan provides an opportunity for the two sides to review the status of and exchange further views on strengthening defence and security cooperation.
- The two sides also exchanged views on the situation in the Indo-Pacific region and their respective efforts under India's 'Act East Policy' and Japan's 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific Vision' for achieving their shared objectives of peace, prosperity and progress in the region.

Additional Facts:

2+2 Dialogue: The 2+2 is a format of dialogue where the defence and foreign ministers or secretaries meet with their counterparts from another country.
- India and Japan had started the 2+2 dialogue at the level of officials in 2010. But they decided to upgrade it to the ministerial level during their summit in October 2018.
- Currently, India has a 2+2 ministerial mechanism with the US and Japan and 2+2 official level mechanism with Australia. Hence, India have a 2+2 mechanism with all the Quad countries.

The Quad group: Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD) is the strategic dialogue between four countries viz. India, United States, Japan and Australia.
- It was originally initiated in 2007 but later disbanded with the withdrawal of Australia. It was later revived in 2017.
- The Quad is viewed as a group of four democracies with a shared objective to ensure and support a free, open and prosperous Indo-Pacific region.
- The foundation of Quad is also based on collective effort and shared commitment on counterterrorism, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, maritime security cooperation, development finance and cybersecurity.

2. INDIA OFFERS $450 MILLION LINES OF CREDIT TO SRI LANKA
News: Sri Lankan President, Gotabaya Rajapaksa was on his first overseas visit to India after taking over as Sri Lanka President.

Facts:

Key takeaways from the visit:
- India has announced a line of credit of USD 400 million for development projects in Sri Lanka besides granting a separate fund of USD 50 million to help the country deal with challenges of terrorism.
- The two countries have also agreed to work closely on matters related to the economy and security in the backdrop of rising competition between China and the US for influence in the Indian Ocean region.

3. GLOBAL TERRORISM INDEX 2019 PUBLISHED BY THE INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMICS & PEACE

News: The Global Terrorism Index (GTI),2019 has been released

Facts:

- The index provides a comprehensive summary of the key global trends and patterns in terrorism.
- The report ranks 163 countries according to how impacted they are by terrorism.

Key takeaways from the index:

- The deaths from terrorism have decreased by 15.2% in 2018 to 15,952 globally. This is the fourth consecutive year of improvement.
- However,71 countries recorded at least one death from terrorism in 2018 which is the highest second number of countries since 2002.
- Afghanistan was the country most impacted by terrorism in 2018, replacing Iraq which had held that position since 2004.
- The Taliban has overtaken ISIL to become the deadliest terrorist group in the world recording a 71% increase in terrorism deaths. The group was responsible for 38% of all terrorist deaths globally in 2018.

Index on India:

- India has been ranked 7th in the countries suffering the most deaths from terrorism in 2018.
- India is ranked third in the countries with the greatest number of terrorist attacks with nearly 748 recorded terror incidents in 2018.
- However, India has also recorded a slight improvement in the number of terrorist attacks in the country while also recording a slight decrease in the number of deaths.

Additional Facts:

Institute for Economics & Peace- The Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) is the world's leading think tank headquartered in Sydney, Australia.

- It is dedicated to developing metrics to analyse peace and to quantify its economic value.
- It does this by developing global and national indices including the annual Global Peace Index calculating the economic cost of violence and understanding positive peace.

4. 6TH ASEAN DEFENCE MINISTERS' MEETING-PLUS

News: The 6th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) was held in Bangkok, Thailand on 18th Nov. 2019

Facts:

- **ADMM-Plus:** The ADMM-Plus is a platform for ASEAN countries and its eight Dialogue Partners to strengthen security and defence cooperation for peace, stability, and development in the region.
- The eight dialogue partners are Australia, New Zealand, India, China, Russia, the US, Japan and South Korea. It was held for the first time in Hanoi, Vietnam in 2010.
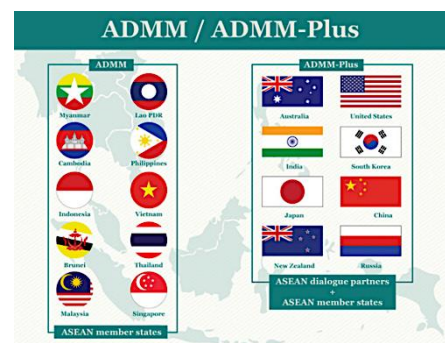
ADMM / ADMM-Plus

- **Objectives of ADMM-plus**:
  - o To benefit ASEAN member countries in building capacity to address shared security challenges, while cognisant of the differing capacities of various ASEAN countries.
  - o To promote mutual trust and confidence between defence establishments through greater dialogue and transparency.
  - o To enhance regional peace and stability through cooperation in defence and security, in view of the transnational security challenges the region faces.
  - o To facilitate the implementation of the Vientiane Action Programme which calls for ASEAN to build a peaceful, secure and prosperous ASEAN.

Additional Facts:

ASEAN: The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN was established in 1967 with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration.

- The 10 members of ASEAN are Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, The Philippines, Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia, Brunei, and Laos.

5. SINGAPORE TO GET ACCESS TO USE INDIA'S CHANDIPUR MISSILE TEST RANGE

News: India and Singapore's Defence minister has co-chaired the 4th Singapore-India Defence Ministers' Dialogue (DMD) in Singapore.

Facts:

- India has offered Singapore to use its Chandipur Integrated Test Range for launching and testing missiles and rockets. Singapore has territorial limitations due to its geographical location. Thus, India has already opened its military training facilities such as air force and artillery firing ranges to the Singapore armed forces.
- They have also reviewed the inaugural edition of the Singapore India Thailand Maritime Exercise (SITMEX) in the Andaman Sea and agreed to conduct the exercise on a yearly basis.

Additional Facts:

CHANDIPUR - Chandipur (Odisha) is also the location of the Indian Strategic Forces Command's Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Abdul Kalam Island, formerly known as Wheeler Island. A number of Indian missiles have been tested and launched from the ITR, including nuclear-capable Prithvi, Agni and Shaurya ballistic missiles, as well as Akash and Barak 8 surface-to-air missiles.

6. BOUGAINVILLE: WILL IT BECOME THE WORLD'S NEXT COUNTRY?

News: An independence referendum is being held in Bougainville between 23 November and 7 December 2019.

Facts:

Bougainville:

- Bougainville is currently an autonomous province of Papua New Guinea- one of the most populous Pacific island states. Bougainville forms part of the Solomon Islands archipelago. When Papua New Guinea was granted independence in 1975, Bougainville became a province.

Why independence?

- The desire of Bougainvillean people for independence is rooted in the historic plunder of the resource-rich island that has large deposits of copper and the unequal distribution of wealth that followed.

- Between 1988-1998, political factions in Bougainville were involved in an armed conflict with the government of Papua New Guinea, in an attempt to force Papua New Guinea to divest control of the resource-rich island.

- In 2001, a peace agreement was signed between Bougainville and Papua New Guinea Government. The referendum was one of the provisions of the Bougainville Peace Agreement.

7. NEPAL OBJECTS THE INCLUSION OF CONTENTIOUS "KALAPANI" AREA IN INDIAN MAP

News: Nepal government has objected to the inclusion of 'Kalapani' under the Indian Territory as per the newly released political map of India after the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir.

Facts:

- Kalapani is a 35 square kilometre area. The Kali River in the Kalapani region demarcates the border between India and Nepal. Both India and Nepal claim Kalapani as an integral part of their territories with India as part of Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district and Nepal as part of the Darchula district.

- **The Treaty of Sugauli** 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.

- However, the discrepancy in locating the source of the river led to boundary disputes between India and Nepal with each country producing maps supporting their own claims.

8. AIIB HAS COMMITTED TO LEND $500 MILLION TO EXPAND MUMBAI'S SUBURBAN RAILWAY NETWORK

News: The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) has committed to lending $500 million to expand Mumbai's suburban railway network.

Facts:

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is an international financial institution formed in 2016.

- The bank was proposed by China in 2013.It is headquartered in Beijing, China.
- The purpose of the bank is to provide finance to infrastructure projects in the Asia-Pacific region.
- Currently, the bank has 74 members as well as 26 prospective members from around the world.
- The capital of the bank is $100 billion equivalent to 2/3rd of the capital of the Asian Development Bank and about half that of the World Bank.
- India is the second largest shareholder in AIIB after China and is also the largest recipient of funds from the multilateral agency.

9. 16TH ASEAN-INDIA SUMMIT

News: Indian Prime minister has attended the 16th India-ASEAN summit and the 14th East Asia Summit held in Bangkok, Thailand.

Facts:

Key takeaways from the summit:

- India has allocated 1 billion USD as line of credit to improve physical and digital connectivity.
- The ASEAN countries has acknowledged India's growing role in the Indo-Pacific for the first time after the bloc came out with an Outlook for the region.
- India also welcomed the decision to review India ASEAN FTA saying it will improve economic partnership between the two countries.
- On the socio-cultural front, the focus was made on enhancing people-to-people connectivity, cultural exchanges, humanitarian aid and tourism.
- Indian PM has also announced that India would be looking at creating an endowment of Rs 50 million for promoting exchanges between faculty as well as students under India-ASEAN network.

Additional Facts:

India and ASEAN: India's focus to strengthen relationship with the ASEAN countries started since 1990's with the country's search for economic space which resulted in the 'Look East Policy' which has been matured to 'Act East Policy'.

ASEAN is India's fourth largest trading partner. India's trade with ASEAN stands at 81.33 billion USD. The FDI inflows from ASEAN between 2000 and 2018 into India have been 68.91 billion USD. The FDI outflows from India to the ASEAN countries have been 38.672 billion USD.

10. INDIAN PRIME MINISTER PROPOSES INDO-PACIFIC OCEANS INITIATIVE

News: Indian Prime Minister has proposed an Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative during his address at the 14th East Asia Summit.

Facts:

About Indo Pacific initiative:

- The Indo-Pacific is an integrated region that combines the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean and the land masses that surround them.
- The main objective of the Indo Pacific initiative will be to achieve safe, secure and a stable maritime domain.
- The initiative aims to achieve this by creating partnerships among interested states by sustainably using marine resources.
- The focus areas of the initiative will be to **(a)** Enhance maritime security **(b)** Sustainable use of marine resources **(c)** Disaster prevention & management **(d)** Capacity-building and **(e)** Cooperation in trade and maritime transport.

Additional Facts:

East Asia Summit

- The East Asia Summit (EAS) was established in 2005. It is a forum of 18 countries. The first summit was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 2005. India is a founding member of the East Asia Summit.

- The EAS comprises the ten member states of the ASEAN countries along with 8 members Australia, China, Japan, India, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Russia and the United States.
- The concept of an East Asia Grouping was first promoted in 1991 by then Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir bin Mohamad.
- The summit has evolved as a forum for strategic dialogue and cooperation on political, security and economic issues of common regional concerns.

East Asia Summit

Leaders' summit in Naypyidaw, Myanmar on November 12-13

■ Members of Association of Southeast Asian Nations
Sources: Asean/Australia DFAT

- There are six priority areas of regional cooperation within the framework of the EAS which are *(a)* Environment and Energy *(b)* Education *(c)* Finance *(d)* Global Health Issues and Pandemic Diseases *(e)* Natural Disaster Management and *(f)* ASEAN Connectivity.

11. EXPLAINED: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FENI RIVER MOU BETWEEN INDIA, BANGLADESH

News: Union Cabinet has approved an MoU between India and Bangladesh on the withdrawal of 1.82 cusecs (cubic feet per second) of water from the Feni river by India

Facts:

Feni River: Feni River is a river in south-eastern Bangladesh. It is a trans-boundary river with an ongoing dispute about water rights. The Feni River originates in South Tripura district and flows through Sabroom town and then enters Bangladesh.

Dispute between India and Bangladesh: The dispute over the sharing of the river water between India and Bangladesh has been long-standing.

- The dispute was first taken up between India and Pakistan (before the independence of Bangladesh) in 1958 during a Secretary-level meeting in New Delhi.
- However, there has been no water-sharing agreement between the countries on the Feni previously.

About the MoU: In August 2019, India and Bangladesh held a water secretary-level meeting, where it was agreed to collect data and prepare water-sharing agreements for seven rivers Manu, Muhuri, Khowai, Gumti, Dharla, Dudhkumar and Feni. The MoU will benefit Sabroom town on the southern tip of Tripura.

BUILDING BRIDGES

India building a bridge over Feni river connecting Sabroom to Ramgarh

Bridge to be completed before 2020, reduce the nearest port from 2,200 km (Haldia) to 70 km (Chittagong)

About 50 km of road in Bangladesh in poor condition
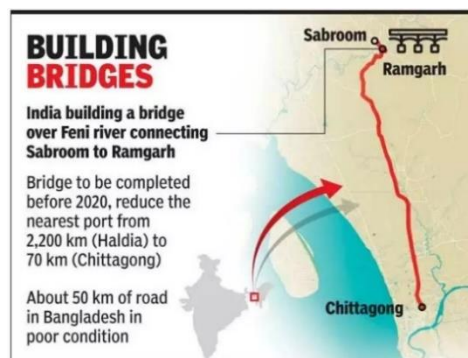
Bridge on Feni River

- A 150-metre long bridge across the Feni river is also being built between India and Bangladesh where the river forms the border between the two countries. The bridge is expected to be completed by March 2020.
- The bridge would connect Tripura with Chittagong port in Bangladesh, which is only 70 km away from the Indo-Bangla border.

12. 8TH INDO GERMAN ENERGY FORUM

News: Recently, the eighth Indo-German Energy Forum was conducted in Delhi to enhance cooperation in the energy sector. Indo-German Solar Partnership that was founded in 2015 was also discussed in the forum.

Facts:

- The Indo-German energy forum was established in 2006 to enhance and deepen the strategic political dialogue on the ongoing energy transition in both the countries.
- The forum is chaired by the respective ministries of environment, renewable energy of both the countries. At the forum, the countries exchange experiences for both the governments to address challenges in the ongoing global energy transition.

13. IORA DISCUSSES WAYS TO ACHIEVE LARGER COOPERATION

News: The 19th Indian Ocean Rim Association COM (Council of Ministers) meeting was held in Abu Dhabi, UAE on November 7,2019.

Facts:

- The theme of the conference was "Promoting a shared destiny and path to prosperity in Indian Ocean".
- India had also hosted the first Indian Ocean Dialogue in 2015.It was held at Kochi, Kerala and Kochi Consensus was released.

Additional Facts:

IORA: The Indian Ocean Rim Association is an inter-governmental organisation which was established in 1997. The Coordinating Secretariat of IORA is located at Ebene, Mauritius.

Member States: The Association comprises of 22 member states and 9 dialogue partners with Indian Ocean Tourism Organisation and the Indian Ocean Research Group having observer status.

- The members of IORA are India, Australia, Iran, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, South Africa, Mozambique, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Bangladesh, Singapore, Mauritius, Madagascar, UAE, Yemen, Seychelles, Somalia, Comoros, Maldives and Oman.

Objectives: The objectives of IORA are as follows:

- To promote sustainable growth and balanced development of the region and member states
- To focus on those areas of economic cooperation which provide maximum opportunities for development, shared interest and mutual benefits
- To promote liberalisation, remove impediments and lower barriers towards a freer and enhanced flow of goods, services, investment, and technology within the Indian Ocean rim.

IORA Special Fund: The mission of a Special Fund would be to contribute to the Association's objectives through the provision of funds and to assist interested members in their fund-raising for the feasibility study as well as the implementation of approved projects and programme.

- India is the largest contributor to IORA Special Fund. Recently, India has contributed 1 million USD to the fund.

14. PRIME MINISTER ATTENDED THE 11TH BRICS SUMMIT HELD IN BRASILIA, BRAZIL

News: Indian Prime Minister will be attending the 11th BRICS summit to be held on November 13 and 14 in Brasilia, Brazil.

Facts:

- The theme of the 2019 BRICS Summit is 'Economic Growth for an Innovative Future'.
- During the summit, BRICS countries discussed the formation of BRICS Bond Fund which would help member countries conduct intra-BRICS trade in national currencies avoiding the U.S. dollar.
- The summit launched the Innovation BRICS Network. It includes a networking of research institutes like science parks, incubators and accelerators.
- **On terrorism**: Terrorism caused $1 trillion loss to world economy: PM Modi at BRICS summit.
- The summit discussed the Afghanistan situation. Both China and Russia have maintained dialogue with the Taliban even after the U.S. ended peace talks with the outfit. However, India has always maintained that peace process in Afghanistan should be Afghan led and Afghan owned, and that India would not engage with the Taliban directly and would rather pursue bilateral ties through investing in development projects.
- BRICS countries have adopted the Brasilia Declaration.

Additional Facts:

Brasilia Declaration 2019:

- The declaration has urged for concerted efforts to fight against terrorism under United Nations (UN) in accordance with international law.
- They have also called for an expeditious conclusion and adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) within the UN framework
- They have said that the trade war between China and the U.S. and rising protectionism is hurting the global economy. Hence, multilateralism is crucial for emerging countries to protect their own interests.
- There is an urgent need to reform the United Nations including the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to address the significant challenges being faced by the developing countries.

BRICS: BRICS is the acronym coined for an association of five major emerging national economies that have similar economic development. The five countries are Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Brazil is the current chair of BRICS. The BRIC grouping's first formal summit was held in Yekaterinburg, Russia in 2009.

- Originally the first four were grouped as "BRIC". The acronym was first used in 2001 by economist Jim O'Neill. In 2010, South Africa was officially admitted as a BRIC nation following an invitation from China and the other BRIC nations, making the current acronym BRICS.

CCIT: The Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) was proposed by India at United Nations in 1996. The convention provides a legal framework which makes it binding on all signatories to deny funds and safe havens to terrorist groups.

Objectives of CCIT:

- To have a universal definition of terrorism that all 193-members of the UNGA will adopt into their own criminal law
- To ban all terror groups and shut down terror camps
- To prosecute all terrorists under special laws
- To make cross-border terrorism an extraditable offence worldwide.

15. ICC JUDGES APPROVE AN INVESTIGATION INTO CRIMES AGAINST MYANMAR'S ROHINGYA

News: International Criminal Court (ICC) have approved to open an investigation into crimes committed against Myanmar's Rohingya Muslim minority.

Facts:

International Criminal Court (ICC): is an intergovernmental international tribunal. It is located in the Hague, Netherlands. It is governed by an international treaty called the Rome Statute. India is not a party to the Rome Statute.

- ICC has the jurisdiction to prosecute individuals for *(a)* international crimes of genocide *(b)* crimes against humanity *(c)* crime of aggression and *(d)* war crimes.

Rohingya: Rohingya are an ethnic group, largely comprising Muslims, who predominantly live in the Western Myanmar province of Rakhine. In Myanmar, they are 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. This has led to a historic migration crisis and a large humanitarian crisis.

Difference between ICJ and ICC:

	International court of justice- ICJ	*International Criminal Court-ICC*
Establishment	1946	2002
Relationship with UN	Official court of un, aka "world court"	Independent; can receive referrals from UNSC
Headquarters	Hague	Hague
Jurisdiction	UN member states, can give advice, cannot try individuals	Individuals accused of international crime
Type of cases	Sovereignty, boundary disputes, trade, treaty violations etc	Genocide, war crimes, crime against humanity etc.
Authority from	UN charter	Rome statute
Appeals	ICJ decisions are binding, UNSC can review if states do not comply.	Appeals chamber, according to Rome Statute

Environment

1. THE TRADITIONAL ASSAMESE GAMOSA WAS USED TO PROMOTE AWARENESS ABOUT TURTLE CONSERVATION

News: Recently, multipurpose Assamese gamosa which is a white cotton towel, has been assigned a function of conservation of Assam freshwater turtles.

Facts:

- The Assamese Gamosa is generally a white rectangular piece of cloth with primarily a red border on three sides and red woven motifs on the fourth. It is valued as a gift for visitors, used as a scarf, anti-dust mask and wrapped around the head as a turban.
- Conservationists are now banking on this cultural icon to carry forward the message of turtle conservation with gamosa woven with turtle images.

Additional Facts:

Assam Roofed Turtle:

- The Assam roofed turtle (Pangshura sylhetensis) also known as Sylhet roofed turtle is a species of the turtle family Geoemydidae. The species is primarily found in Bangladesh, Assam (India) and possibly in Bhutan.
- It is found in terrestrial and freshwater habitats in areas with upland tropical moist forest, and fast-flowing streams and perhaps also small rivers.
- It is listed as Endangered in the IUCN red list. Further, it has been listed on Schedule – I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act,1972.
- The species is exploited for its *(a)* meat and eggs for local consumption and may also enter the pet trade *(b)* Habitat destruction by logging and *(c)* incidental capture in fishing gear.

2. UNESCO CREATIVE CITIES NETWORK (UCCN)

News: Mumbai and Hyderabad have been included in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN).

Facts:

- Mumbai has been designated as Creative City of Films and Hyderabad a Creative City of Gastronomy.
- Earlier, Chennai and Varanasi were included as UNESCO cities of music while Jaipur was included as the City of Crafts and Folk Arts.

Additional Facts:

UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN):

- The UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) is a project of UNESCO launched in 2004 to promote cooperation among cities which recognized creativity as a major factor in their urban development.
- Currently, 180 cities are part of this network which aims towards a common objective of placing creativity and cultural industries at the heart of their development plans at the local level and cooperating actively at the international level.
- The network covers seven creative fields namely *(a)* crafts and folk arts, *(b)* media arts *(c)* film *(d)* design *(e)* gastronomy *(f)* literature and *(g)* music.

- By joining the Network, cities commit to sharing their best practices and developing partnerships involving the public and private sectors as well as civil society.

3. THE INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY RELEASED ITS REPORT ON WORLD ENERGY OUTLOOK, 2019

News: The International Energy Agency has released its report on World Energy Outlook, 2019.

Facts:

- The World Energy Outlook is a leading source of strategic insight on the future of energy and energy-related emissions, providing detailed scenarios that map out the consequences of different energy policy and investment choices.

Key takeaways from the outlook:

- The agency says that at present the energy demand in the world is growing at a rate of 2% per year.
- The oil demand will slow down after 2025 and the world will transit towards electric vehicles. However, the oil demand for the next decade will keep increasing with 85% of the increase coming from the US.
- The outlook has projected that the installed solar power in the world will increase by 3,142 GW by 2040. Currently, the world uses 495GW of installed solar power.
- In African states, the gas and renewable sources will power the future energy. However, the demand for coal in these countries is still increasing.

Climate Scenarios: There are three climate scenarios predicted by the report for the future.

- **Current Policy Scenario**: The world will continue to function with the old regulations with energy demand rising at the rate of 1.3% by 2040.
- **The New Policy Scenario**: Under this, the report says that with the new policies that have been introduced by the governments, the energy demand will increase by 1% per year.
- **Sustainable Policy Scenario**: It is the most ambitious of all the scenarios. Under this, the report says that by aligning with Paris Agreement the global temperature will reduce by 1.5 degree Celsius.

Additional Facts:

IEA: The International Energy Agency (IEA) was founded in 1974. It is an autonomous intergovernmental organization established under the OECD framework. It is headquartered in Paris, France.

- It works to ensure reliable, affordable and clean energy to its 30 member countries, 8 association countries and beyond.
- It has four main areas of focus namely *(a)* Energy security *(b)* Economic development *(c)* Environmental awareness and *(d)* Engagement worldwide.
- India became an associate member of the International Energy Agency in 2017.

4. CYCLONE MAHA

News: A meeting of the National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC), chaired by the Cabinet Secretary was held to review the preparations for the cyclone Maha.

Facts:

Cyclone Maha: The depression over Arabian Sea intensified into a cyclonic storm named Maha. The name is given by Oman.

- The cyclone was centred over Lakshadweep and the adjoining southeast Arabian Sea and the Maldives area.
- The cyclone Maha will be the fourth Cyclone in Arabian Sea to form after Vayu, Hikaa and Kyaar.

Additional Facts:

How are the cyclones named?

- There are five tropical cyclone regional bodies, i.e. ESCAP/WMO Typhoon Committee, WMO/ESCAP Panel on Tropical Cyclones, RA-I Tropical Cyclone Committee, RA-IV Hurricane Committee, and RA-V Tropical Cyclone Committee.
- In general, tropical cyclones are named according to the rules at a regional level.
- The WMO/ESCAP Panel on Tropical Cyclones at its twenty-seventh Session held in 2000 in Muscat, Oman agreed in principal to assign names to the tropical cyclones in the Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea.
- Eight countries — India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Maldives, Myanmar, Oman, Sri Lanka and Thailand participated in the panel and came up with a list of 64 names.
- If public wants to suggest the name of a cyclone to be included in the list, the proposed name must meet some fundamental criteria.
- The name should be short and readily understood when broadcast. Further, the names must not be culturally sensitive and should not convey any unintended and potentially inflammatory meaning.

5. CYCLONE BULBUL LIKELY TO BRING HEAVY RAIN TO ODISHA

News: Cyclone Bulbul intensified into a very severe cyclonic storm causing heavy rain in the coastal districts of Odisha and West Bengal as well as Bangladesh causing storm surge, heavy rains, and flash floods across the areas.

Facts:

- The cyclone made land fall near Sagar Islands (West Bengal) and went towards Khepupara (Bangladesh).
- After crossing the Indochinese Peninsula, Severe Tropical Storm Matmo's remnants entered the Andaman Sea. It slowly intensified into a cyclonic storm as it moved north. It is only the fourth tropical cyclone ever recorded to regenerate over the Andaman Sea, having crossed Southeast Asia overland.
- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has also issued an orange alert in Indian states of West Bengal and Odisha over Cyclone Bulbul in the Bay of Bengal.

Additional Facts:

IMD - The India Meteorological Department (IMD) is an agency of the Ministry of Earth Sciences.

Stage of warning	Colour code
Cyclone Alert	Yellow.
Cyclone Warning	Orange.
Post landfall out look	Red.

- It is the principal agency responsible for meteorological observations, weather forecasting and seismology.
- IMD is mandated to issue warning to people about severe weather phenomenon like cyclones, dust storms, heavy rain and snow, heatwaves among others.

6. DELHI GOVERNMENT IMPLEMENTED ODD-EVEN SCHEME FROM NOVEMBER 4TH TO NOVEMBER 15TH, 2019

News: Delhi government has issued notification for the implementation of odd-even scheme from November 4th to November 15th,2019.

Facts:

The odd-even scheme is a car-rationing scheme to be implemented by the Delhi Government. Under the scheme, Private vehicles will be allowed to run across the city based on their registration numbers. For example, if a vehicle's registration number ends with an odd digit, it will be allowed on the road on odd days while that ending with an even number can be driven on even days.

Idea behind the scheme:

- The scheme is modelled on the scheme that the Chinese government had implemented in Beijing in 2008 just before the summer Olympics.
- While the rule was supposed to be temporary it eventually turned out to be quite effective and was permanently implemented by the government in China.
- The odd even rule has also been implemented elsewhere in the world such as in Paris and Mexico as well as Brazil and Norway.

Why is this scheme needed?

- The scheme was implemented as pollution levels in parts of Delhi reached the severe plus category after the Air Quality index crossed 500.
- According to the graded response action plan (GRAP), the odd-even scheme for private vehicles is implemented when the pollution level at 'severe plus' category persists for 48 hours or more.
- The Environment Pollution (Prevention & Control) Authority (EPCA) also declared a public health emergency across Delhi.

Additional Facts:

Air Quality Index: Air Quality Index (AQI) was launched for monitoring the quality of air in major urban centres across the country on a real-time basis and enhancing public awareness for taking mitigative action. The AQI classifies air quality of a day considering criteria pollutants through colour codes and air quality descriptor.

- The index measures eight major pollutants, namely, particulate matter (PM 10 and PM 2.5), nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide, ozone, carbon monoxide, ammonia and lead.
- An Air Quality Index (AQI) between (a)0 and 50 is considered 'good' (b) 51 and 100 'satisfactory' (c)101 and 200 'moderate' (d)201 and 300 'poor' (e)301 and 400 'very poor' and (f)401 and 500 'severe'.

EPCA: Environment Pollution (Prevention & Control) Authority (EPCA) is a Supreme Court mandated body tasked with taking various measures to tackle air pollution in Delhi NCR. It was constituted in 1998 under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP): In pursuant with Supreme Court's order in the M. C. Mehta vs. Union of India (2016) regarding air quality in National Capital Region of Delhi, the Graded Response Action Plan was notified by MoEFCC in 2017.

- Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) is a set of stratified actions that are taken once the pollution level reaches a certain specified limit. It works only as an emergency measure.
- Under GRAP, there are 4 stages of pollution – Moderate to Poor, Very Poor, Severe and Severe+ or Emergency and actions are listed that are to be undertaken as the levels are breached. The categories have been made on the basis of PM 2.5 and PM 10 in the atmosphere.

- The GRAP is implemented by the Environment Pollution Control Authority (EPCA).

7. SOUTH ASIA CO-OPERATIVE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (SACEP)

News: Union Minister of Environment and Forest and Climate Change attended the 15th meeting of the Governing Council of South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Facts:

SACEP: South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) is an intergovernmental organization. It is headquartered in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

- It was established in 1982 by the governments of South Asia to promote and support protection, management and enhancement of the environment in the region.
- The members of SACEP include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
- SACEP also acts as the Secretariat for the South Asian Seas Programme which comes under the purview of UNEP's Regional Seas Programme.

Objectives of SACEP:

- Recognition of environmental degradation caused by factors like poverty, overpopulation, over consumption and wasteful production threatening economic development and human survival,
- Integration of environment and development as essential prerequisites to Sustainable Development, and
- Importance of co-operative action in the South Asian region where many ecological and development problems transcend national and administrative boundaries.

Additional Facts:

South Asian Seas Programme (SASP): The South Asian Seas Programme (SASP) is a regional agreement which was formally adopted in 1995 among the five maritime countries of South Asia sharing the Indian Ocean.

- The five maritime countries are Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka
- It aims to protect and manage the marine environment and related coastal ecosystems of the region in an environmentally sound and sustainable manner.
- SASP is part of the global Regional Seas Programme established under the auspices of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).

8. STUDENTS CLEAN UP BEACHES AS PART OF 'NIRMAL TAT ABHIYAAN'

News: The Ministry of Environment organized a mass cleanliness drive in 50 identified beaches under the Swachh – Nirmal Tat Abhiyaan.

Facts:

- The objective of the Abhiyaan is to make beaches clean and create awareness amongst people about the importance of coastal ecosystems.
- The identified beaches are in 10 coastal States/Union Territories (UTs) namely Gujarat, Daman & Diu, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.
- The cleaning drives in all beaches are being undertaken involving school students of Eco-clubs, district administration, institutions, volunteers, local communities and other stakeholders.
- The collected waste will be processed as per Waste Management Rules, 2016.

- The Environment Education Division under the Society of Integrated Coastal Management (SICOM) of Environment Ministry will be responsible for the overall coordination for the drive in 50 beaches.

9. UNION MINISTER OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, EARTH SCIENCES, HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE INAUGURATED MISSION INNOVATION (MI) FACE-TO-FACE MEETING OF INNOVATION CHALLENGES

News: Union Minister of Science & Technology, Earth Sciences, Health and Family Welfare has inaugurated the Mission Innovation (MI) Face to Face meeting of Innovation Challenges (IC).

Facts:

Mission Innovation (MI) is a global initiative of 24 countries and the European Commission (on behalf of the European Union). The mission aims to accelerate public and private clean energy innovation to address climate change, make clean energy affordable to consumers and create green jobs and commercial opportunities.

- The mission was announced at the COP21 on November 30,2015 as world leaders came together in Paris, France to commit to ambitious efforts to combat climate change.
- India is a founding member of the Mission Innovation.

Goal of the mission: At the 3rd MI Ministerial in 2018, the countries endorsed a number of key initiatives and activities to deliver the Action Plan by 2021. The initiatives are:

- Substantial boost in public sector investment
- Increased private sector engagement and investment
- Increasing international collaboration
- Raising awareness.

10. GEOCHEMICAL BASELINE ATLAS OF INDIA RELEASED

News: CSIR- National Geophysical Research Institute released the Geochemical Baseline Atlas of India for environment management purpose.

Facts:

About the Atlas: The atlas aims to document the concentration and distribution of the chemical elements in the soils of India.

- The work of atlas was started in 2007. It consists of 45 maps of metals, oxides and elements present in top and bottom soils across India.
- The atlas traces elements from topsoil i.e. top 25 cm depth and bottom soil at 100 cm depth from the year 2006 to 2011. Across India, over 545 samples were collected.

Significance of Atlas: Soil is a vulnerable geological medium which sustains the human activities. Hence, it is important to determine the present abundance and spatial distribution of the chemical elements across the earth's surface. It will help in resource management, controlling pollution as well as planning agriculture.

Additional Facts:

CSIR-NGRI: The National Geophysical Research Institute (NGRI) is a geoscientific research organization established in 1961 under the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) located in Hyderabad.

11. INDAIR- CSIR-NEERI

News: The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (CSIR-NEERI) launched the country's first interactive online repository called Indian Air quality Interactive Repository (IndAIR).

Facts:

- The IndAIR aims to make air quality research and studies in an easily accessible web format for the public, media, researchers and academics.
- The repository has archived scanned materials from pre-internet era, research articles, reports and case studies to provide the history of air pollution research and legislation in the country.
- It is the first comprehensive effort to enlist existing Indian research and analysis on air pollution, its causes and effects.
- The repository reveals that air pollution was recognised as a subject in India even in 1905 when a study was carried out for Bengal Smoking Nuisance Act.

WHAT YOU CAN FIND IN WEB REPOSITORY
Photo: ANI
700 scanned materials from pre-internet era (1950-1999)
170 reports and case studies
1,215 research articles
2,000+ statutes

TRACKING AIR POLLUTION STUDIES IN INDIA
- First air pollution study in India was done for Bengal Smoking Nuisance Act in 1905
- Studies by SC Roy from Meteorological Office examined cloud seeding for dealing with famine-ridden areas in 1954
- In 1970, Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Central
- Public Health Engineering Research Institute (now NEERI) and National Productivity Council were assigned task of fabricating air pollution monitoring equipment
- Prior to that, dust and Ringelmann's charts were used to study plume from stack and decide on pollution levels
- Seminars and events to discuss ills of air pollution began wholeheartedly in 1970s...
- ..But studies were done as early as 1950s by key researchers in India
- Delhi-NCR has most number of studies — 262 — on air pollution

Additional Facts:

CSIR-NEERI: The CSIR-National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (CSIR-NEERI) is a research institute created and funded by the Government of India. It was established in Nagpur in 1958 with focus on water supply, sewage disposal, communicable diseases and to some extent on industrial pollution and occupational diseases found common in post-independent India.

12. SEED TREATY

News: Union Agriculture Minister attended the eight session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) aka SEED treaty, at Rome, Italy.

Facts:

- It was adopted by the Thirty-First Session of the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 2001. It entered into force in 2004
- The Treaty aims at:
  - recognizing the enormous contribution of farmers to the diversity of crops that feed the world;
  - establishing a global system to provide farmers, plant breeders and scientists with access to plant genetic materials;

o Ensuring that recipients share benefits they derive from the use of these genetic materials with the countries where they have been originated.

Additional Facts:

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) - FAO is a specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger. It was established in 1945 and is headquartered in Rome, Italy.

13. UN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (UNEP) RELEASED ITS ANNUAL EMISSIONS GAP REPORT 2019

News: UN Environment Programme (UNEP) has released its annual emissions gap report 2019

Facts:

Emission gap is the difference between the emissions level countries have pledged to achieve under international agreements and the level consistent with limiting warming to well below 2oC. The first emission gap report was released in 2011.

- The Emissions Gap Report measures and projects three key trendlines:
    o The amount of greenhouse gas emissions every year up to 2030.
    o The commitments countries are making to reduce their emissions and the impact these commitments are likely to have on overall emission reduction.
    o The pace at which emissions must be reduced to reach an emission low that would limit temperature increase to 1.5 degree C, affordably.

Key takeaways from Emission Gap Report 2019

- At the current pace, the world is heading for a 3.2°C temperature rise.
- Greenhouse gas emissions had risen 1.5% per year over the last decade.
- Emissions in 2018 hit a new high of 55.3 giga tonnes of CO2 equivalent. Fossil carbon-dioxide emissions from energy use and industry dominate total GHG emissions and it grew 2.0% in 2018.
- To stay under 2°C, by the year 2030, emissions would need to be 25% lower than in 2018. For a 1.5°C-consistent pathway, the reduction needed is 55% below 2018 levels.
- India is the third-largest emitter behind the United States and China respectively. However, India's per capita emissions are significantly below the United States, China, Russia, Japan and many other countries.

Additional Facts:

UNEP: is the leading environmental authority in the United Nations system. It was founded as a result of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Conference) on 5th June 1972. It is headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya.

Nationally Determined Contributions- As a commitment to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (2015), nations have to put forward national climate actions they intend to take to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. These are called Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs).

- **India's INDCs include:**
    o Reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by 33% to 35% by 2030 from 2005 levels.
    o Increase total cumulative electricity generation from fossil free energy sources to 40% by 2030.
    o Create additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tons through additional forest and tree cover.

14. MINISTRY OF STEEL ISSUED THE STEEL SCRAP RECYCLING POLICY

News: Ministry of steel announced steel scrap recycling policy to promote circular economy in the steel sector and to promote a formal and scientific collection, dismantling and processing activities for end of life products that are sources of recyclable (ferrous, non- ferrous and other non-metallic) scraps. It promotes 6Rs principles of Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Recover, Redesign and Remanufacture.

Facts:

- A hub and spoke model have been promulgated to structure the informal ELV (End of Life Vehicles) recycling sector and generate scrap.
- An Inter-Ministerial Coordination Committee has been set up for policy changes required for creating an organized steel scrapping ecosystem and to monitor the operationalization and enforcement of relevant laws and regulations in this regard.

Additional Facts:

National Steel Policy 2017

Vision: To create a self-sufficient steel industry that is technologically advanced, globally competitive and promotes inclusive growth. It seeks to-

- Build a globally competitive industry with a crude steel capacity of 300 MT by 2030-31
- Increase per Capita Steel Consumption to 160 Kgs by 2030-31
- To domestically meet entire demand of high-grade automotive steel, electrical steel, special steels and alloys for strategic applications by 2030-31
- Increase domestic availability of washed coking coal so as to reduce import dependence on coking coal to 50% by 2030-31
- To be a net exporter of steel by 2025-26.

Policy

1. CREATION/EXPANSION OF FOOD PROCESSING & PRESERVATION CAPACITIES (CEFPPC) SCHEME

News: An Inter-Ministerial Approval Committee (IMAC) under the chairmanship of Minister of Food Processing Industries has approved projects worth Rs 271 crore under the Creation/Expansion of Food Processing & Preservation Capacities (CEFPPC) scheme.

Facts:

Creation/Expansion of Food Processing & Preservation Capacities (CEFPPC) scheme

- CEFPPC scheme was launched by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries in 2017. It is a sub-scheme of Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY).
- The main objective of the Scheme is the creation of processing and preservation capacities and modernization/expansion of existing food processing units. It seeks to do so to increase the level of processing, value addition and reduce wastage.
- The scheme envisages financial assistance to food processing units in the form of grant-in-aid (maximum Rs. 5 crores) as under:
    - o 35% of the eligible project cost in General Areas
    - o 50% of the eligible project cost in the NE States, hilly areas, State Notified Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP) areas
    - o 50% of the eligible project cost for projects promoted by SC-ST entrepreneurs.

Additional Facts:

Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana (Scheme for Agro-Marine Processing and Development of Agro-Processing Clusters)

- The scheme was launched in 2017. It is implemented by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries.
- It is an umbrella scheme that aims to create modern infrastructure with effective backward and forward linkages (linking farmers, processors and markets) and efficient supply chain management from farm gate to retail outlet.

Sub-Schemes:

- **Mega Food Park**: It seeks to provide modern infrastructure for food processing units in India. Established in 2012, Srini Food Park in Andhra Pradesh is the first Mega Food Park in India. The latest Mega Food Park has been established in Nizamabad district, Telangana.
- **Integrated Cold Chain and Value Addition Infrastructure**: It seeks to address post-harvest losses of horticulture & non-horticulture produce by providing financial assistance in setting up the integrated cold chain, preservation and value addition infrastructure facilities.
- **Infrastructure for Agro-processing Clusters**: It seeks to create modern infrastructure for food processing closer to production areas and provide preservation infrastructure facilities from the farm gate to the consumer.
- **Creation of Backward and Forward Linkage**: It seeks to create effective backward & forward linkages for perishable Agri-Horti produce through setting up of primary processing centers at farm gate, distribution hub, and retail outlets at the front end.
- **Food Safety and Quality Assurance Infrastructure**: It seeks to establish a surveillance system for monitoring the quality and composition of the food.

- **Human Resources and Institutions**: The objective of the scheme is that end product/ outcome/ findings of R&D work should benefit the food processing industry.
- Creation/ Expansion of Food Processing/ Preservation Capacities (Unit Scheme)

2. KALABURAGI AIRPORT INAUGURATED IN KARNATAKA UNDER UDAN / RCS

News: The Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS)-Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik (UDAN) scheme was launched in 2017 by the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

Facts:

UDAN scheme is a component of the National Civil Aviation Policy (NCAP), 2016. The scheme would be in operation for a period of 10 years.

UDAN - It has a market-based model to develop regional connectivity. It functions as follows:

- Interested airline and helicopter operators can start operations on un-connected routes by submitting proposals to the Airport Authority of India, which is the implementing agency of the scheme.
- The operators could seek a Viability Gap Funding (VGF) apart from getting various concessions.
- State governments are mandated to lower the VAT on aviation turbine fuel (ATF) to 1% or less, besides providing security and fire services free of cost and electricity, water and other utilities at substantially concessional rates.
- All such route proposals are then offered for competitive bidding through a reverse bidding mechanism and the route is awarded to the participant quoting the lowest VGF per Seat.
- The successful bidder is then given exclusive rights to operate the route for a period of three years. The support from the government would be withdrawn after a three-year period, as by that time, the route is expected to become self-sustainable.
- The airlines have to cap airfares for 50% of the total seats at Rs. 2,500 per hour of flight.

3. SWACHH SURVEKSHAN GRAMIN AWARDS, 2019 - DEPARTMENT OF DRINKING WATER AND SANITATION (DDWS), MINISTRY OF JAL SHAKTI

News: Swachh Survekshan Grameen 2019 awards have been conferred upon top ranked states, union territories, and districts in the various categories on the occasion of World Toilet Day (19th November)

Facts:

Swachh Survekshan Gramin provides national ranking of all districts and states of India on the basis of quantitative and qualitative sanitation (Swachhata) parameters. It assesses rural areas for their levels of cleanliness and active implementation of Swachh Bharat Mission.

Weightage: The weights to different criteria of the SSG are as follows:

- Direct Observation of sanitation in public places (30%).
- Citizen's Feedback including feedback from common citizens, key influencers at the village level and citizens online using the App (35%)
- Service Level Progress on sanitation related parameters (35%).

Key takeaways from the survey:

- Top 3 States – 1) Tamil Nadu, 2) Haryana, Gujarat
- Top 3 Districts – 1) Peddapalli, Telangana, 2) Faridabad, Haryana, 3) Rewari, Haryana
- State with maximum citizen participation –Uttar Pradesh

Note: Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs takes up the Swachh Survekshan in urban areas

Additional Facts:

World Toilet Day- World Toilet Day is celebrated on 19th November every year. The United Nations General Assembly designated 19 November as World Toilet Day through a resolution in 2013.

- It seeks to inspire action to tackle the global sanitation crisis and help achieve Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6), which promises sanitation for all by 2030.
- **2019 Theme:** Leaving No One Behind

4. A FIVE-POINT ACTION PLAN TO MAKE INDIA NUTRITION SECURE: M. S. SWAMINATHAN

News: At the launch programme of Bharatiya Poshan Krishi Kosh (BPKK), eminent agricultural scientist, M. S. Swaminathan has put forward a Five-point action plan to make India nutrition secure.

Facts:

Five-point Action Plan:

- Ensure a calorie-rich diet for women, expectant mothers, and children
- Ensure intake of proteins in the form of pulses to eradicate protein hunger in women and children
- Eradicate hidden hunger due to deficiency of micronutrients like vitamin A, vitamin B, Iron and Zinc
- Ensure clean drinking water supply
- Spreading nutrition literacy in every village particularly in mothers with children less than 100 days' old

Additional Facts:

Bharatiya Poshan Krishi Kosh (BPKK): It has been launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. The BPKK will be a repository of diverse crops across 128 agro-climatic zones in India for better nutritional outcomes.

5. INTENSIFIED MISSION INDRADHANUSH (IMI) 2.0

News: Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 2.0 will be rolled out on 2nd December 2019 and it will continue till March 2020

Facts:

Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) - It was launched in 2017. It aimed to reach each and every child under two years of age and all those pregnant women who have been left uncovered under the routine immunization programme. The special drive has focussed in selected districts and cities to ensure full immunization to more than 90% by December 2018.

Indradhanush (IMI) 2.0

Aim: To escalate efforts to achieve the goal of attaining a 90% national immunization coverage across India

Coverage: The program will be delivered in 272 districts of 27 states and 652 blocks of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar among hard-to-reach and tribal populations.

Salient Features of IMI 2.0:

- Immunization activity will be in 4 rounds
- Enhanced immunization session with flexible timing, mobile session & mobilization by other departments
- Enhanced focus on left outs, dropouts, and resistant families & hard to reach areas
- Focus on urban, underserved population and tribal areas.

Additional Facts:

Mission Indradhanush - It was launched to strengthen the universal immunization programme of 1985. It was launched in 2014 by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. It aims to cover by 2020, all those children up to 2 years of age and pregnant women who are either unvaccinated or partially vaccinated against vaccine-preventable diseases.

- Diseases Covered: Tuberculosis, Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus, Polio, Hepatitis B, Pneumonia and Meningitis due to Haemophilus Influenzae type b (Hib), Measles, Rubella, Japanese Encephalitis (JE) and Rotavirus diarrhoea.

6. UNDP LAUNCHES ACCELERATOR LAB IN INDIA TO WORK ON TACKLING POLLUTION

News: The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has launched its Accelerator Lab in India.

Facts:

UNDP's Accelerator lab: The Accelerator Lab is an innovative initiative by the UNDP, Qatar Government and the Federal Republic of Germany to find 21st century solutions to today's complex new challenges.

- These labs seek to identify grassroots solutions together with local actors and validate their potential to accelerate development.

Key approaches of Accelerator Lab: The four key approaches sit at the core of the Labs' work are:

- Building on locally sourced solutions, finding things that work and expanding on them
- Rapid testing and iteration to implement what works and go beyond the obvious solutions
- Combining the best understanding, ideas and expertise to generate collective knowledge
- Accelerating progress by bringing expertise, creativity and collective intelligence to bear.

Accelerator Lab in India:

- The lab has been launched by UNDP in collaboration with Atal Innovation Mission and will look to solve issues through innovative solutions.
- It will seek to address some of the most pressing issues facing India, such as air pollution, sustainable water management and client-resilient livelihoods through innovation.
- The vision is also to make faster progress in meeting the ambitious Sustainable
- Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN) by 2030.

7. CLAP PORTAL

News: Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs has launched Credit-linked Subsidy Services Awas Portal (CLAP) for Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban).

Facts:

- The portal provides a transparent and robust real-time web-based monitoring system for credit-linked Subsidy Services (CLSS) beneficiaries.
- Using the portal, a beneficiary can track his application status in real-time.

Global Housing Technology Challenge (GHTC-India): Global Housing Technology Challenge-India was launched in January 2019.

- It aims to transform the ecosystem of housing construction sector in the country through lighthouse projects built using advanced proven technologies.
- It will foster the development of domestic technological research and building platforms for knowledge sharing and networking across the sector.
- The challenge is an initiative under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Urban (PMAY-U).

Additional Facts:

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban): Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) - Housing for All Mission was launched on 25th June 2015. The objective of the Mission is to provide Central assistance to implementing agencies through States/Union Territories (UTs) for providing houses to all eligible families/beneficiaries by 2022.

Components of the scheme:
- Slum rehabilitation of Slum Dwellers with participation of private developers using land as a resource
- Promotion of Affordable Housing for weaker section through credit linked subsidy scheme (CLSS)
- Affordable Housing in Partnership with Public & Private sector
- Subsidy for beneficiary-led individual house construction/enhancement.

Features of the scheme:
- The scheme is being implemented as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) except for the component of credit linked subsidy which will be implemented as a Central Sector Scheme.
- Through the Credit linked subsidy, the Government of India aims at increasing the credit flow in institutions to meet the housing needs of the urban poor population in our country.
- Credit Linked Subsidy will be implemented by two central nodal agencies in India, namely Housing Urban Development Corp and National Housing Bank.

National Housing Bank (NHB) - NHB was set up in 1988 under the National Housing Bank Act, 1987. It is an apex financial institution for housing.
- Its objective is to operate as a principal agency to promote housing finance institutions both at local and regional levels and to provide financial and other support incidental to such institutions and for matters connected therewith.
- Recently, RBI had divested its stake in National Housing Bank (NHB) and National Bank for Agriculture & Rural Development (NABARD) by making them fully government owned.

Housing and Urban Development Corporation Ltd (HUDCO) - It is the premier techno-financing public sector enterprise, in the field of housing and infrastructure development in our country. The corporation is headquartered in New Delhi and operates through a strong and multi-disciplinary work force placed over its nationwide network of regional and development offices.

8. PRADHAN MANTRI KAUSHAL VIKAS YOJANA (PMKVY)

News: Minister of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has informed Lok Sabha that there are certain incentives to encourage participation of Persons with Disabilities (PwD) under Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY).

Facts:

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) is the flagship scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) launched in the year 2015.It is implemented by National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC).
- The scheme aims to cover 10 million youth during the period 2016 -2020 to take up industry-relevant skill training that will help them in securing a better livelihood.
- There are certain incentives to encourage participation of Persons with Disabilities (PwD) under Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY).

Components of the scheme:
- Short Term Training: Training as per National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) is provided to those who are either school/college dropouts or unemployed.

ForumIAS

- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL): An individual with a certain set of skills or with prior learning experience is assessed and certified under RPL with grade according to the NSQF.
- Special Projects: This component ensures training in special areas and premises of government bodies and corporate. It aims to encourage training in vulnerable and marginalized groups of society.
- Training Partners (TPs): They are mandated to organize Kaushal and Rozgar Melas every six months, thus providing placement assistance to certified ones.
- Monitoring: To ensure that high standards of quality are maintained by training centres, NSDC and empanelled inspection agencies shall use various methodologies such as self-audit reporting, call validations among others.

Additional Facts:

NSDC: National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) is a not-for-profit public limited company incorporated in 2008 under section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956.

- The Government of India through Ministry of Skills Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) holds 49% of the share capital of NSDC while the private sector has the balance 51% of the share capital.
- The overall objective of NSDC is to create training capacity in the country, fund vocational training initiatives and create a market ecosystem for skill development.

NSQF: The National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) is a competency-based framework that organizes all qualifications according to a series of levels of knowledge, skills and aptitude.

9. KHELO INDIA – NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SPORTS

News: Khelo India Programme was introduced by the Ministry of Sports and Youth affairs to revive sports culture in India at grass-root level.

Facts:

- 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).
- Under the programme, talented players are identified in priority sports disciplines at various levels by High-Powered Committed and each will be provided annual financial assistance of Rs. 5 lakhs for 8 years.
- Further, Khelo India School Games are also conducted as a part of the Khelo India programme.
- The first edition of Khelo India was held in Delhi and second edition (Khelo India 2.0) held in Pune.

Components of the programme: To accomplish the above objectives, Khelo India programme has been divided into 12 verticals, as shown in the figure.

10. TO ENSURE POST-MARKETING SAFETY OF VACCINES, GOVERNMENT TO EXPAND THE REACH OF 3S PROJECT

News: The central government has decided to expand the reach of the Smart Safety Surveillance or 3S programme to optimize post-marketing surveillance of priority drugs and vaccines.

Facts:

Smart Safety Surveillance (3S) Programme: The programme was introduced by the World Health Organization (WHO) in India considering limited safety data on vaccines in the country.

- The programme is implemented with the support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to strengthen pharmacovigilance (the practice of monitoring the effects of medical drugs after they have been licensed for use) systems in developing nations.
- Under the programme, the Government of India is trying to strengthen the collaboration among key stakeholders such as the Ministry of Health and Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) to ensure high levels of vigilance.
- Currently, under the programme India is evaluating the safety of recently introduced rotavirus vaccines.

Significance of the programme: According to the ministry of health and family welfare, new medical products often enter the market with limited safety data from clinical trials, which evaluate small controlled populations. Therefore, for immunization programmes, post-marketing safety and surveillance is essential to monitor the risk-benefit profile of a product in the wider population.

Additional Facts:

Rotavirus: Rotavirus is the most common cause of severe diarrhoea among infants and children throughout the world. Rotavirus is transmitted by the faecal-oral route via contact with contaminated hands, surfaces and objects and possibly by the respiratory route.

Rotavac: It is a live attenuated, monovalent vaccine containing a G9P [11] human strain isolated from an Indian child manufactured by Bharat Biotech International Limited. t is given by mouth in a three-dose series, 4 weeks apart, beginning at 6 weeks of age up until 8 months of age.

CDSCO: The Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) is the national regulatory body for Indian pharmaceuticals and medical device.

- CDSCO functions under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act 1940. It comes under the Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
- CDSCO is responsible for (a) approval of New Drugs (b) Conduct of Clinical Trials, (c) laying down the standards for Drugs (d) control over the quality of imported drugs in the country and (e) coordination of the activities of State Drug Control Organizations by providing expert advice with a view to bring about uniformity in the enforcement of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.

11. TARGET OLYMPIC PODIUM SCHEME

News: The Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports is implementing Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS).

Facts:

The Target Olympic Podium Scheme is a flagship program of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports launched in 2014. The scheme has been formulated under the ambit of the National Sports Development Fund (NSDF).

- The scheme aims at identifying and supporting potential medal prospects for the upcoming Olympic Games and provide selected sportspersons customized training at institutes having world class facilities and also other necessary support is being provided to the elite athletes.
- It will also provide a benchmark for selection of athletes on par with international standards.
- Under it, Sports Authority of India (SAI) and federations which are members of Mission Olympic Cell (MOC) will be the nodal agencies for disbursal for fund. They will make payments directly to beneficiary person and institution concerned on behalf of athletes.

ForumIAS

TOPS SPORTS: High-Priority' sports (Archery, Badminton, Boxing Hockey, Shooting and Wrestling).

Additional Facts:

National Sports Development Fund (NSDF): The National Sports Development Fund (NSDF) was established in November 1998 under Charitable Endowments Act,1890 with the aim of promotion of sports and games in the Country.

- The Fund is managed by a Council constituted by the Central Government. Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports is the Chairperson of the council.
- The Joint Secretary to the Government of India in the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports is the ex-officio Member Secretary of the Council.
- NSDF aims to mobilize resources from Government as well as non-government organizations and individuals to provide required support for promotion of specific sports disciplines and improving performance of Indian sports in the major international events.

12. MISSION RAFTAAR OF INDIAN RAILWAYS

News: Mission Raftaar of Indian Railways was announced in the Railway Budget 2016-17.

Facts:

The mission envisages a target of doubling of the average speed of freight trains and increasing the average speed of all non-suburban passenger trains by 25 kmph in the next 5 years.

- The mission has helped the trains to reduce travel time for passengers, transit time for cargo, reduce operational cost, improve revenues and railway's market share.

Additional Facts:

Other missions of Indian Railways:

- **Mission 25 Tonne**: It aims to increase revenue of Railways by augmenting the carrying capacity. To achieve this 10-20% freight loading will be done through 25-tonne axle-load wagons in 2016-17 and target movement of 70% of freight traffic on high axle load wagons by FY19-20.
- **Mission Zero Accident**: It comprises of two sub missions
  - o **Elimination of unmanned level crossings**: The goal is to eliminate all unmanned level crossings on Broad Gauge in the next 3-4 years through innovative financing mechanisms. It will reduce deaths due to accidents and improve throughput of the network
  - o **TCAS (Train Collision Avoidance System)**: An indigenous technology has been developed to equip 100% of the High-Density Network with TCAS in the next 3 years. This will prevent head on collisions and improve throughput by increasing average sectional speeds.
- **Mission PACE (Procurement and Consumption Efficiency)**: This mission aims to improve our procurement and consumption practices to improve the quality of goods and services.
  - o It will introduce a culture of optimum usage by adopting practices such as Vendor Managed Inventory, new procedures for identification and disposal of scrap among others.
- **Mission Hundred**: This mission will commission at least a hundred sidings in the next 2 years.
  - o The current siding/ PFT policy would be revised to elicit greater private participation. An online portal will be operated for accepting and processing all new applications, alongwith decentralization of powers.
- **Mission beyond book-keeping**: The mission will establish an accounting system where outcomes can be tracked to inputs.

- o This will transform IR as right accounting would determine right costing and hence right pricing and right outcomes.
  - **Mission Capacity Utilisation:** The mission proposes to prepare a blueprint for making full use of the huge new capacity that will be created through two Dedicated Freight Corridors between Delhi-Mumbai and Delhi-Kolkata scheduled to be commissioned by 2019.

13. AMMAKU AKSHARA MALA HAS INCREASED FEMALE LITERACY RATE IN TELANGANA

News: The female literacy rate in Telangana's Sangareddy district has increased drastically as they were home-schooled by their own children.

Facts:

- In 2017, the district administration in Telangana's Sangareddy district has developed 'Ammaku Akshara Mala' (alphabet garland for mother) and involved students in Classes VII to X.
- They were asked to teach their mothers (mostly members of the Self-Help Groups and not literate) to read and write Telugu alphabets at home.

Additional Facts:

Saakshar Bharat Mission (SBM): Saakshar Bharat Programme was formulated in 2009 by the Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MHRD). It is a Centrally sponsored programme.

- The programme aims to achieve 80% literacy level at national level by focusing on adult women literacy. The programme also seeks to reduce the gap between male and female literacy to not more than 10 percentage points.

Objectives of the programme: It has four broader objectives namely

- imparting functional literacy and numeracy to non-literates
- acquiring equivalency to the formal educational system
- imparting relevant skill development programme and
- promote a learning society by providing opportunities for continuing education.

Eligibility criteria for coverage under Saakshar Bharat:

- A district that had adult female literacy rate of 50% or below as per the 2001 census
- All left-wing extremism-affected districts irrespective of their literacy rate.

14. NATIONAL MISSION 'NISHTHA' LAUNCHED IN J&K

News: National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers Holistic Advancement (NISHTHA) was launched in Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

Facts:

NISHTHA stands for National Initiative for School Heads and Teachers Holistic Advancement.

- The objective of the programme is to motivate and equip teachers to encourage and foster critical thinking in students.
- The programme aims to build the capacities of around 42 lakh participants covering **(a)** all teachers and heads of elementary Government schools **(b)** faculty members of State Councils of Educational Research and Training (SCERTs) and District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) and **(c)** Block Resource Coordinators and Cluster Resource Coordinators in all States and UTs.

- Under the programme, the teachers will develop their skills on various aspects related to *(a)* Learning Outcomes *(b)* School Safety and Security *(c)* ICT in teaching and learning including Artificial Intelligence *(d)* Environmental Concerns and *(e)* School Based Assessment.
- The training will be conducted by Key Resource Persons (KRPs) and State Resource Persons (SRP) identified by the State and UTs.

Highlights of NISHTHA
National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement

- KRPs will in turn be trained by 120 National Resource Persons identified from National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT).
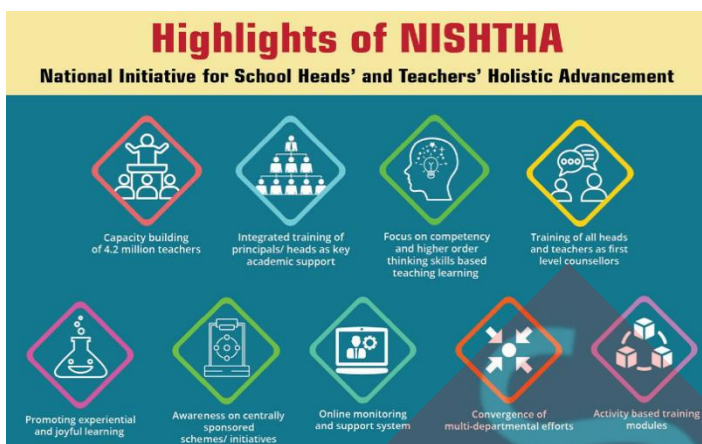
15. SKILLS BUILD PLATFORM

News: The Directorate General of Training (DGT) under the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) announced the launch of the Skills Build platform in collaboration with IBM.

Facts:
- The skill builds platform aims to offer diplomas in IT, networking and cloud computing at Industrial Training Institutes (ITI) and National Skill Training Institutes (NSTI).
- The platform will also be extended to train ITI and NSTI faculty on AI skills for future work.
- The digital platform will provide a personal assessment of the cognitive capabilities and personality via MyInnerGenius to the students.

Additional Facts:
NSTI: National Skill Training Institute (NSTI) is one of the premier institutes run by the Directorate General of Training (DGT), Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Govt.of India.
- It was initially set up by the Directorate General of Employment and Training (DGE&T), Ministry of Employment and Labour, Govt. of India in the year 1963.
- The main objective of NSTI is to impart training to the instructors of ITIs in the country. It also aims to impact Quality training & upgrading skills of the industrial workforce in emerging areas.

16. ATAL TINKERING LAB

News: A group of selected student innovators of the Atal Tinkering Lab Marathon 2018 has called on the President of India.

Facts:
About Atal Tinkering lab: Atal Tinkering labs (ATL) have been established under the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM).
- The objective of this lab is to foster curiosity, creativity and imagination in young minds and inculcate skills such as design mindset, computational thinking, adaptive learning, physical computing among others.

- AIM will provide grant-in-aid that includes a one-time establishment cost of Rs.10 lakh and operational expenses of Rs. 10 lakhs for a maximum period of 5 years to each ATL.
- Schools (minimum Grade VI - X) managed by Government, local body or private trusts/society are eligible to set up ATL.

Additional Facts:

Atal innovation mission (AIM): The Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) was set up by NITI Aayog in 2016. It aims to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship. It seeks to create institutions and programs that enhance innovation in schools, colleges, and entrepreneurs in general.

ForumIAS

Social

1. CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN RISE BY 20 PERCENT: CRY REPORT

News: The Child Rights and You (CRY) has released a report titled "How Vulnerable are Children in India to crime?" The report is based on the analysis of the National Crime Records Bureau for 2016-17.

Facts:

Key takeaways from the report:

- The report says that the states of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh topped the list of states for crimes against children. There were over 19,000 cases in both the states.
- Jharkhand saw the highest increase in crimes against children at 73.9 percent while Manipur had a significant decline of 18.7 percent between 2016 and 2017.
- The Child labour in the country also saw a substantial increase of 126%.
- As far as Child Marriage is concerned there was an increase of 21.17%. The numbers were based on the cases registered under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA),2006.
- However, the report sees this as a positive development as both child marriage and child labour often get social sanction and go unreported. Increased reporting is a sign of changing attitude.

Additional Facts:

NCRB: The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) is an attached office of the Ministry of Home Affairs. The agency is responsible for collecting and analysing crime data as defined by the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Special and Local Laws (SLL).

2. NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR DRUG DEMAND REDUCTION

News: The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment is implementing the National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR) for 2018 - 2025.

Facts:

- The plan aims to create awareness and educate people about the ill-effects of drug abuse on the individual, family, workplace and also the society at large in order to integrate them back into society.
- It seeks to employ a multi-pronged strategy involving education, de-addiction and rehabilitation of affected individuals and their families to address the issue.

3. HOME MINISTRY AND UN WOMEN LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

News: Union Ministry of Home Affairs in collaboration with UN Women has launched an awareness campaign to end violence against women.

Facts:

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is an annual international campaign that kicks off on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and runs until 10

December, Human Rights Day. It was started by activists at the inaugural Women's Global Leadership Institute in 1991 and continues to be coordinated each year by the Centre for Women's Global Leadership.

- The campaign contains 16 days of activism called #Orange. The World global campaign which is being observed ahead of 'International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women' marked annually on 25 November and will continue till International Day of Human Rights on December 10.
- As part of the campaign, people would be made aware about India's single emergency helpline 112. It is an internationally recognised emergency number used in several countries. Currently, the 112 services are available in 27 States/Union Territories of India. The emergency helpline 112 was launched as part of the Emergency Response Support System (ERSS).

Additional Facts:

UNiTE to End Violence against Women - Launched in 2008, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign is a multi-year effort aimed at preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls around the world.

UN Women: UN Women is the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. It was established in July 2010 by the United Nations General Assembly to accelerate the progress on meeting women needs worldwide.

Objectives of UN Women:

- To support inter-governmental bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms.
- To help Member States to implement these standards, standing ready to provide suitable technical and financial support to those countries that request it, and to forge effective partnerships with civil society.
- To hold the UN system accountable for its own commitments on gender equality, including regular monitoring of system-wide progress.

ERSS: The Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) is one of the key projects of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs under the Nirbhaya Fund. The features of ERSS includes (a)computer aided dispatch of field resources to the location of distress and (b)Citizens can send their emergency information through call, SMS through the 112-mobile app.

4. SAANS AIMS TO REDUCE CHILD MORTALITY DUE TO PNEUMONIA

News: Union Ministry for Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) has launched SAANS (Social Awareness and Action to Neutralise Pneumonia Successfully) campaign to reduce child mortality due to pneumonia.

Facts:

- The SAANS campaign aims to create mass awareness about the most effective solutions for pneumonia prevention like breastfeeding, age appropriate complementary feeding, immunization and good quality air.

Objectives of SAANS:

- To reduce child mortality due to pneumonia
- To mobilise people to protect children from pneumonia
- To train health personnel and other stakeholders to provide prioritised treatment to control the disease.

Mandate of campaign: Under the campaign, a child suffering from pneumonia can be treated with:

- Pre-referral dose of antibiotic amoxicillin by Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers

- Health and wellness centres will use Pulse Oximeter (a device to monitor oxygen saturation) to identify low oxygen levels in the blood of a child, and if required, treat him by the use of oxygen cylinders.
- Hence, the government aims to achieve a target of reducing pneumonia deaths among children to less than three per 1,000 live births by 2025.

Additional Facts:

Pneumonia: Pneumonia is an infection that inflames the air sacs in one or both lungs. The air sacs may be filled with fluid or pus causing cough with phlegm or pus, fever, chills, and difficulty breathing. A variety of organisms including bacteria, viruses and fungi can cause pneumonia.

- In 2014, the Government of India had also launched 'Integrated Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Pneumonia and Diarrhoea (IAPPD)' to undertake collaborative efforts towards prevention of diarrhoea and Pneumonia related under-five deaths.

5. ADOLESCENTS, DIETS AND NUTRITION: GROWING WELL IN A CHANGING WORLD REPORT- UNICEF

News: UNICEF has released a report titled "Adolescents, Diets and Nutrition: Growing Well in a Changing World".

Facts:

The report has been released in association with the NITI Aayog. The report is based on the recently released Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey (CNNS).

Key takeaways from the report:

- Over 50% of adolescents (about 63 million girls and 81 million boys) in the age group of 10 to 19 years in India are, short, thin, overweight or obese.
- More than 80% of adolescents in India suffer from hidden hunger a form of undernutrition. Hidden hunger is a deficiency of one or more micronutrients such as iron, folate, zinc, vitamin A, vitamin B12 and vitamin D.
- The report found that adolescent girls especially suffer multiple nutritional deprivations. While more girls suffer from shortness than boys, anaemia affects 40% of adolescent girls compared to 18% of boys and worsens as they get older.
- The report has also revealed that government nutritional schemes are not reaching adolescents.

Recommendations:

- The report has asked the government to focus on adolescent girls before they become mothers to break India's intergenerational cycle of malnutrition.
- It has also asked the government to work with academia to tap into the growing expertise in nutrition, diets and agriculture.
- It has also called for more private sector investment and engagement in adolescent nutrition.
- The report also recommended the movement away from cereal-based mid-day meal in school to more nutrient-rich meal.

Additional Facts:

CNSS- The Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey (CNSS) is the first-ever survey of its kind. The survey has been conducted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to measure malnutrition. It studied 1.2 lakh children between 2016 and 2018 and measured

food consumption, anthropometric data, micronutrients, anaemia, iron deficiency and markers of non-communicable diseases.

Anaemia - The World Health Organization defines anaemia as a condition in which the number of red blood cells or their oxygen-carrying capacity is insufficient to meet physiological needs.

Anaemia Mukt Bharat (AMB): The scheme has been launched in the year 2018 as part of Intensified National Iron Plus Initiative (NIPI) Program for accelerating the annual rate of decline of anaemia from one to three percentage points.

- The target groups for AMB are Children 6-59 months, 5-9 years, Adolescent Girls & Boys of 10-19 years, Women of Reproductive Age (15-49 years), Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers.

6. GOVERNMENT OF INDIA TO SET UP & STRENGTHEN AHTUS & WHDS

News: Government of India has decided to set up & strengthen Women Help Desks (WHDs) and Anti-Human-Trafficking-Units (AHTUs) in states across the country.

Facts:

Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) - It will be set up in all districts of States & UTs for safety and security of women and girl victims of trafficking.

- These units will also provide psycho-social counselling, legal counselling and aid to the beneficiaries.
- It will be funded 100% by the Central Government under Nirbhaya Fund.

Women Help Desks (WHDs) - It will be set up in Police Stations in all States & Union territories (UTs).

- WHDs would be gender sensitive desks for grievance redressal of women through the policing system as well as catalysts for improved community interaction of the police with focus on crime against women and children.
- It will be funded 100% by the Central Government under Nirbhaya Fund.

Additional Facts:

Nirbhaya fund: The Nirbhaya fund scheme seeks to support initiatives by the government and NGOs working towards protecting the dignity and ensuring the safety of women in India. The fund was set up in 2013 in the aftermath of the gruesome gang-rape and murder in Delhi.

- The key schemes under the fund include *(a)* Emergency Response Support System *(b)* Central Victim Compensation Fund *(c)* Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children *(d)* One Stop Scheme *(e)* Mahila Police Volunteer and *(f)* Universalisation of Women Helpline Scheme.
- The Fund is administered by the Department of Economic Affairs of the Finance ministry.

7. GOVERNMENT SURVEY SHOWS 2.2% INDIANS HAVE DISABILITY

News: The National Statistical Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation conducted a Survey of Persons with Disabilities during July 2018 to December 2018 as a part of 76th round of National Sample Survey (NSS).

Facts:

Key takeaways from the Survey:

- Prevalence and Incidence of Disability: The prevalence of disability (percentage of persons with disability in the population) was on average 2.2% with 2.3% in rural and 2.0% in urban areas. The prevalence was higher among males (2.4%) than females (1.9%). The incidence of disability was 86 per 1, 00,000 persons.

- Level of Education: Among persons with disabilities of age 7 years and above, 52.2% were literate. Only 19.3% of PwDs, aged 15years and above, had the highest educational level as secondary and above.
- Receipt of aid/help: 21.8% of persons with disabilities received aid or help from the government and over 1.8% received aid/help from organizations other than the government.
- Labour Force Participation Rate: Among 15 years and above, 23.8% disabled were found to be employed.

Note: All the specified disabilities as stated in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 were considered in the survey.

Additional Facts:

Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 - The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 replaced the PwD Act, 1995.

Salient Features:
- In the Act, the types of disabilities have been increased from 7 (as in PwD Act, 1995) to 21 and the Central Government has been empowered to add more types of disabilities.
- Speech and Language Disability and Specific Learning Disability have been added for the first time. Acid Attack Victims have been included. Dwarfism, muscular dystrophy has been indicated as a separate class of specified disability. Three blood disorders, Thalassemia, Haemophilia and Sickle Cell disease have also been classified as disabilities.
- Every child with benchmark disability between the age group of 6 and 18 years have been given the right to free education.
- Implementation: The Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities and the State Commissioners act as regulatory bodies and Grievance Redressal agencies and also monitor implementation of the Act.

Accessible India Campaign- Sugamaya Bharat Abhiyan: It is a nation-wide Campaign launched by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) of the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment in 2015. It focuses on developing an accessible physical environment, transportation system, and Information & communication ecosystem.

8. KEY INDICATORS OF HOUSEHOLD SOCIAL CONSUMPTION ON EDUCATION IN INDIA NSS 75TH ROUND (JULY 2017- JUNE 2018)

News: The National Statistical Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation conducted a survey on Household Social Consumption: Education as part of 75th round of National Sample Survey (NSS).

Facts:

Key takeaways from the Survey
- **Literacy Rate**: The literacy rate among persons of age 7 years and above was 77.7%. It was 73.5% in rural and 87.7% in the urban areas.
- **Levels of education**: Among persons of age 15 years and above, in rural areas, 30.6% had completed secondary or above level of education while in urban areas it was 57.5%. Nearly 10.6 % of the persons of age 15 years and above in India had completed level of education graduate and above. This was 5.7% in rural and 21.7% in urban areas.
- **Enrolment**: Among persons of age 3 to 35 years, 13.6% never enrolled, 42.5% ever enrolled but currently not attending while 43.9% were currently attending.

ForumIAS

- **Free education**: Nearly 57.0% of the students in rural and 23.4% in urban areas received free education.
- **Information and Communications Technology (ICT)** - Nearly 4.4% of the rural households and 23.4% of the urban households had a computer. Nearly 14.9% of the rural households and 42.0% of the urban households had internet facility. In rural areas, among persons of age 5 years and above, only 9.9% were able to operate a computer in contrast to 32.4% in urban areas

Additional Facts:

National Sample Survey (NSS) - It is a nation-wide, large-scale, continuous survey operation conducted in the form of successive rounds.

- It was established in 1950 on the basis of a proposal from Professor P.C. Mahalanobis to fill up data gaps for socio-economic planning and policymaking through sample surveys.
- Collection, processing, and publication of survey data is done by the NSSO. NSS is the largest repetitive survey operation in the world.

National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO): The National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) was established in 1970 through a resolution. It is part of the Statistics Wing of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, called the National Statistical Organisation (NSO).

- The NSSO functions under the overall direction of a Steering Committee. The NSSO is headed by the Director General and Chief Executive Officer (DG&CEO), who is also the Member-Secretary of the Steering Committee
- The NSSO carries out socio-economic surveys, undertakes fieldwork for the Annual Survey of Industries and follow-up surveys of Economic Census and sample checks on area enumeration and crop estimation surveys.
- Schedule of NSSO Surveys in Ten Years Cycle:
    - Consumer Expenditure and Employment & Unemployment: Twice
    - Social Consumption (health, education etc.): Twice
    - Unorganized Manufacturing: Twice
    - Services Sector: Twice
    - Land & Livestock holdings and Debt & Investment: Once

9. 2ND EDITION OF SOUTH ASIA SAFETY SUMMIT HELD IN NEW DELHI

News: Union Minister of Women and Child Development has addressed the 2nd edition of South Asia Safety Summit held in New Delhi.

Facts:

The South Asia Safety Summit is organised by Facebook, in partnership with the Ministry of Women and Child Development. It hosts critical conversations pertaining to digital safety and security.

Key Takeaways from 2nd Edition of South Asia Safety Summit:

- **Formation of Ideal Internet Consortium**: It is a working group of child safety practitioners that will deliberate on safety issues and give recommendations to civil society, industry and government
- **Launch of We Think Digital**: It is a global digital literacy program and will partner with agencies from both government and civil society. The program will make use of learning modules to equip people with skills such as the ability to think critically about what they see online, communicate respectfully, and engage in digital discourse.

- **#Create Care Connect comic series**: It is a digital literacy campaign around women and child safety online. Facebook has partnered with the Ministry of Women and Child Development for the campaign.

10. INDIA IS HOME TO 77 MILLION DIABETICS, SECOND HIGHEST IN THE WORLD

News: International Diabetes Federation (IDF) launched the latest edition of the IDF Diabetes Atlas to mark World Diabetes Day.

Facts:

Key Takeaways from IDF Diabetes Atlas

- Worldwide prevalence of diabetes estimated at 463 million adults in 20-79 age group. The number of people with diabetes is predicted to rise to 578 million by 2030 and to 700 million by 2045.
- China has the highest number of adults with diabetes in 20-79 age group.
- India has the second-largest number of adults with diabetes worldwide- 77 million in the 20-79 years age group.

Additional Facts

Diabetes and its Types: Diabetes is a chronic disease caused when either the pancreas does not produce enough insulin or the cells in the body do not respond properly to insulin.

- It is a non-communicable disease-non-infectious or non-transmissible.
- There are three types of diabetes –
    - Type 1 when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin
    - Type 2 -cells in the body do not respond to insulin properly, and
    - Gestational Diabetes – formed during pregnancy.

Indian Government Initiatives to Control Diabetes: In line with WHO's Global action plan for the prevention and control of NCDs 2013-2020, India aims to reduce number of premature deaths by 25% and control NCDs by 2025.

National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancers, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS) in 2010: The objectives of the programme are:

- Health promotion, Awareness generation and promotion of healthy lifestyle
- Management of chronic Non-Communicable diseases, especially Cancer, Diabetes, CVDs and Stroke through early diagnosis, treatment and follow up through setting up of NCD clinics
- Provide support for diagnosis and cost-effective treatment at various levels of health care
- Capacity Building at various levels of health care for prevention, early diagnosis, treatment.

World Diabetes Day: World Diabetes Day is held on 14 November each year. It seeks to raise awareness on diabetes. The awareness campaign is led by International Diabetes Federation. The theme for diabetes awareness month and World Diabetes Day 2019 is Family and Diabetes.

11. ROAD ACCIDENTS IN INDIA 2018 REPORT- MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS

News: The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has released annual report 'Road Accidents in India, 2018'

Facts:

- A total of 1.47 lakh people was killed in road crashes in 2017. The number of people killed on Indian roads recorded a rise of 2.37% to 1.51 lakh in 2018.

- Road accidents have increased marginally by 0.46% during 2018 with the year seeing 4.67 lakh road accidents as against 4.64 lakh in 2017.
- Out of total people killed in road crash deaths in 2018, 48% were between 18 years and 35 years old. Minors involved in road crash deaths were at 6.6% of the total deaths.

12. NCRB RELEASED ACCIDENTAL DEATH AND SUICIDE REPORT FOR 2016

News: The National Crime Records Bureau has released the Accidental Death and Suicide report for 2016

Facts:

- **Suicides in India**: In 2016, a decline was observed in the all-India rate of suicide (per lakh of population) from 10.6 in 2015 to 10.3 in 2016. The suicide rate in cities in 2016 was 13.0 as compared to the all-India suicide rate of 10.3 (per lakh of population).
- **Farmer Suicides**: The number of farmer suicides in the country increased to 11,379 in 2016 from 12,360 in 2014 and 12,602 in 2015.
- **Accidental Deaths in India**: A total of 8,684 deaths in the country occurred due to causes attributable to forces of nature during the year 2016.

13. MATERNAL MORTALITY RATE IN THE STATES

News: According to the data by Sample Registration System on Maternal Mortality in India, maternal mortality ratio (MMR) has declined from 130 during 2014-2016 to 122 during 2015-17.

Facts:

Key takeaways from the data:

- The data has revealed that 68% of deaths due to maternal mortality among women in the age group of 20-29.
- Assam recorded the highest MMR with 229 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births but there was an improvement from the 2014-16 MMR of 237.
- Kerala has the lowest MMR at 42.

Additional Facts:

Maternal Mortality: Maternal mortality is the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy.

Science and Technology

1. SPYWARE PEGASUS USED TO SNOOP WHATSAPP

News: Recently, it has been reported that WhatsApp was used to spy on journalists and human rights activists in India earlier this year. The surveillance was carried out using a spyware tool called Pegasus.

Facts:

Spyware Pegasus: Pegasus is a spyware that can hack any iOS or Android device and steal a variety of data from the infected device.

- Pegasus works by sending an exploit link and if the target user clicks on the link, the malware or the code that allows the surveillance is installed on the user's phone. Once Pegasus is installed, the attacker has complete access to the target user's phone.
- The spyware was created by NSO Group, an Israeli cybersecurity firm founded in 2010.

Additional Facts:

Malware: Malware is a malicious 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.

Spyware: Spyware is classified as a type of malware designed to gain access to or damage your computer, often without your knowledge. Spyware gathers your personal information and relay it to advertisers, data firms or external users.

2. INDIAN BRAIN ATLAS - IBA100

News: International Institute of Information Technology (IIIT) Hyderabad has built the first-ever Indian brain atlas named IBA100.

Facts:

- A brain atlas is a brain map or a template which becomes the 'standard' against which brain abnormalities can be measured.
- The first digital human brain atlas was created by the Montreal Neurological Institute (MNI). This brain atlas was based on the Caucasian brain template.

Indian Brain Atlas:

- The India-specific brain atlas was created by using the Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scans of 100 individuals of different genders. It has been named as IBA100.
- The study about Indian Brain Atlas has revealed that the Indian brain is smaller compared to others. It is smaller in height, width, and volume compared to the western and eastern populations.

Significance of Brain Atlas: The brain atlas helps researchers compare findings from different brain imaging methods like Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and functional MRI (fMRI) or between healthy and diseased brain states or across individuals. This study will also help in the early diagnosis of brain diseases like Alzheimer's.

3. 'LUMPY SKIN' DISEASE IN CATTLE IN PARTS OF ODISHA PROMPTS CHINA TO BAN IMPORTS

News: The Chinese Government has issued warnings against import of cattle from India after India submitted lumpy skin disease virus in cattle to the World Organization of Animal Health (OIE).

Facts:

Lumpy Skin disease: It is an infectious disease in cattle that reduces milk production, causes infertility, poor growth and chronic debility.

- It is caused by the virus Poxviridae. The virus is also called the Neethling virus.
- The disease causes permanent damage to the skin of the animals.

Additional Facts:

OIE: The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) is an intergovernmental organisation responsible for improving animal health worldwide. It is headquartered in Paris, France.

- It was created by the International Agreement of 25 January 1924 signed by 28 countries. In 2018, the OIE consists of 182 Member Countries and Territories.
- It is also recognised as a reference organisation by the World Trade Organization (WTO).

4. GOLDEN RICE

News: Bangladesh could be on the verge of becoming the first country to approve plantation of Golden Rice.

Facts:

Golden Rice: Golden rice is a variety of rice (Oryza sativa) produced through genetic engineering to biosynthesize beta-carotene, a precursor of vitamin A in the edible parts of rice.

- It is intended to produce a fortified food to be grown and consumed in areas with a shortage of dietary vitamin A.
- But presently, it has a low shelf life of not more than 3 months as it may lose its nutrients after that.

Additional Facts:

Vitamin A: Vitamin A is a fat-soluble vitamin that is good for healthy vision, skin, bones and other tissues in the body.

- Vitamin A deficiency can lead to a variety of problems which includes: **(a)** night blindness **(b)** a higher risk of infections **(c)** follicular hyperkeratosis leading to dry skin **(d)** fertility issues and **(e)** delayed growth in children.

5. FIFTH INDIA INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE FESTIVAL

News: The 5th edition of India International Science Festival (IISF) 2019 was held at Kolkata from 5th to 8th November 2019.

Facts:

- **India International Science Festival** - It is an annual event organised Ministry of Science and Technology and Ministry of Earth Sciences in association with Vijnana Bharati (VIBHA). The first IISF was held in 2015 in New Delhi.
- **Aim of IISF:** It aims to build a strategy for inclusive advancement of Science and Technology. It seeks to instil scientific temper among the masses, showcase India's contribution in the field of S&T over the years and encourage translation of its benefits to people.
- **2019 IISF** - Theme of 2019 IISF: RISEN India – Research, Innovation, and Science Empowering the Nation. Vigyan Prasar is the nodal agency to coordinate the IISF 2019.

Additional Facts:

Vigyan Prasar: It is an autonomous organisation of the Department of Science and Technology, Ministry of Science and Technology. It was set up in 1989 to take on large-scale science and technology popularisation programmes.

- **Mandate:** To promote and propagate a scientific and rational outlook in society.
- **Objectives:** Undertaking, promoting and co-ordinating science popularization programmes and inculcation of scientific temper among the people.

Vijnana Bharati - Vijnana Bharati or VIBHA, previously known as 'Swadeshi Science Movement' is a non-profit organisation. It works towards popularization of science & implementation of modern technology & ancient sciences in India.

- It was founded in 1991 by the eminent scientists of Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru led by Prof. K.I. Vasu.

6. NASA RENAMES ULTIMA THULE AS 'ARROKOTH'

News: NASA renamed Ultima Thule as 'Arrokoth, meaning 'sky' in the Native American Powhatan language.

Facts:

- Ultima Thule is a Kuiper Belt object and the farthest object ever explored by any spacecraft. The object is officially named 2014 MU69.
- It is a contact binary that is single object with two lobes attached gently. NASA dubbed the larger lobe as Ultima and three time's smaller lobe as Thule.

Additional Facts:

- **Kuiper Belt:** The Kuiper belt occasionally called the Edgeworth–Kuiper belt, is a circumstellar disc in the outer Solar System, extending from the orbit of Neptune (at 30 AU) to approximately 50 AU from the Sun. It consists of icy objects, which are remnants from the formation of the solar system. Pluto is also a part of the Kuiper Belt.
- **New Horizons:** The New Horizons spacecraft was launched in 2006 by NASA. It is the first mission to explore the Kuiper belt.

7. AVIAN BOTULISM REASON FOR BIRD DEATHS NEAR SAMBHAR LAKE

News: The Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), Bareilly, confirmed that avian botulism as the reason for mass mortality of birds, at Sambhar Lake in Rajasthan.

Facts:

Avian botulism: It is a neuro-muscular illness caused by ingestion of toxin produced by the bacterium Clostridium botulinum.

- The bacteria is anaerobic in nature and is commonly found in the soil, rivers, lakes and sea water. It multiplies in decaying plant or animal materials. The bacteria produce the toxin when it starts reproducing. It is often found in lakes in periods of anoxic conditions and poor water quality.

- Botulinum affects both humans and animals, but the type of the toxin varies. Botulinum C affects birds and A, B and E affects humans.

Additional Facts

Sambhar Lake - Sambhar Lake is India's largest (230 sq.km) inland saltwater lake.

- It spreads across Jaipur and Nagaur districts and also a part of Ajmer district in Rajasthan.
- The lake receives water from five rivers Medtha, Samaod, Mantha, Rupangarh, Khari and Khandela.
- Sambhar Lake was designated as a Ramsar site in 1990.
- It is famous for salt production and is also an Important Bird Area (IBA).
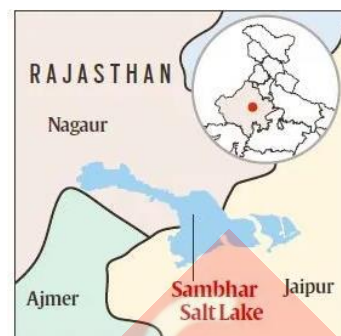
8. WORLD ANTIBIOTIC AWARENESS WEEK

News: World Antibiotic Awareness Week was celebrated between 18 and 24 November 2019

Facts:

- It aims to increase global awareness of antibiotic resistance and to encourage best practices among the general public, health workers and policymakers to avoid the further emergence and spread of antibiotic resistance.
- The focus of WAAW in 2019 is to aware people about the prevention of infections by simple methods such as handwashing, vaccination, and safe sex.

Additional Facts:

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR):

- It is the ability of a microorganism like bacteria, fungi, viruses, and parasites to stop an antimicrobial such as antibiotics, antifungals, antivirals and antimalarial from working against it. The term antibiotic resistance specifically covers resistance to antibiotics.
- As a result, the medicines become ineffective and infections persist in the body, increasing the risk of spread to others.

Indian Government Initiatives to Combat AMR:

- **Chennai Declaration**: Signed in 2013, it called for urgent initiatives to formulate an effective national policy to control the rising antimicrobial resistance. It also proposed a ban on over-the-counter sale of antibiotics.

- **National Programme on Containment of Antimicrobial Resistance**: To meet the obligations of the declaration, the National Programme on Containment of Antimicrobial Resistance was launched under the 12th Five-year Plan (2012-2017). The main objectives were:
  - To establish a laboratory-based surveillance system by strengthening laboratories for AMR in the country
  - To generate awareness among healthcare providers and in the community regarding the rational use of antibiotics.
  - To strengthen infection control guidelines and practices and promote rational use of antibiotics.
- **National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (Delhi Declaration)** – It calls for coordinated efforts by government agencies involving health, education, environment, and livestock to change

prescription practices and consumer behavior and to scale up infection control and antimicrobial surveillance.

- **Red Line Campaign on Antibiotics 2016:** The campaign was launched to:
  - o Raising awareness about how to identify a drug that should be dispensed only with a prescription from a licensed doctor
  - o Limiting the practice of self-medication
- **State-level Initiatives:** Kerala became the first state to adopt a comprehensive policy on AMR in 2016. Madhya Pradesh has also come up with an action plan on AMR.

Global Efforts:

- **Global Action Plan on AMR:** In May 2015, World Health Assembly of WHO adopted a global action plan on antimicrobial resistance, which outlines five objectives:
  - o to improve awareness and understanding of antimicrobial resistance through effective communication, education, and training;
  - o to strengthen the knowledge and evidence base through surveillance and research;
  - o to reduce the incidence of infection through effective sanitation, hygiene and infection prevention measures;
  - o to optimize the use of antimicrobial medicines in human and animal health;
  - o to develop the economic case for sustainable investment that takes account of the needs of all countries and
  - o to increase investment in new medicines, diagnostic tools, vaccines and other interventions.
- **AWaRe tool** - It has been launched by WHO in 2019. It classifies antibiotics into three groups – Access, Watch and Reserve.
  - o It specifies which antibiotics to use for the most common and serious infections (Access), which ones should be available at all times in the healthcare system (Reserve), and those that must be used only as a last resort (Watch).

9. INDIA'S CARTOSAT-3 PLUS 13 NANO SATELLITES PUT IN ORBIT

News: Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) launched Cartosat-3 along with 13 commercial nano satellites from the US, on November 25, 2019 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) SHAR at Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh. It was launched by Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle, PSLV-C47

Facts:

- The 13 nano satellites from USA were launched under a commercial arrangement with New Space India Limited (NSIL).

Cartosat-3 satellite is a third-generation agile advanced earth imaging satellite. It has been developed by Indian Space Research Organization. It will replace the Indian Remote Sensing Satellite (IRS) series

- Cartosat-3 has a panchromatic resolution of 0.25 metres making it the imaging satellite with highest resolution. Cartosat 3 weighs 1625kgs.
- Cartosat-3 aims to address the increased demands for large scale urban planning, rural resource and infrastructure development, coastal land use and land cover
- Other potential uses of the Cartosat-3 satellite include weather mapping, cartography or army defence, and strategic applications.
- The mission life of CARTOSAT-3 would be for five years.

Additional Facts:

New Space India Limited (NSIL): It was set up in March 2019. It is a Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE), under the administrative control of Department of Space (DOS).

The main functions of NSIL are:

- Manufacture of Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) in collaboration with the Private Sector
- Production of Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) through Indian Industry,
- Production and marketing of Space based products and services, including launch and application,
- Transfer of technology developed by ISRO Centres and constituent units of DOS and
- Marketing spin-off technologies and products/services, both in India and abroad.

Antrix: Antrix Corporation Limited (ACL), Bengaluru is one of the commercial arms of ISRO. The other commercial arm of ISRO is the recently established New Space India Ltd.

- It was incorporated as a private limited company owned by Government of India in 1992 under the administrative control of the Department of Space, Ministry of Science and Technology as a Marketing arm of ISRO.
- The objective of Antrix is promotion and commercial exploitation of space products, technical consultancy services and transfer of technologies developed by ISRO. Another major objective is to facilitate development of space related industrial capabilities in India.

10. INDIAN REGIONAL NAVIGATION SATELLITE SYSTEM (IRNSS): NAVIC

News: Antrix has recently put forward two separate tenders to identify industries that can develop dedicated NavIC-based hardware and systems.

Facts:

RNSS (NavIC) is an independent regional navigation satellite system being developed by Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO).

- The space segment consists of the IRNSS constellation of eight satellites known as NavIC (Navigation in Indian Constellation). Three satellites are located in suitable orbital slots in the geostationary orbit and the remaining four are located in geosynchronous orbits with the required inclination and equatorial crossings in two different planes.
- It is designed to provide accurate position information service to users in India as well as the region extending up to 1500 km from its boundary, which is its primary service area. An Extended Service Area lies between primary service area and area enclosed by the rectangle from Latitude 30°South to 50° North, Longitude 30°East to 130°East.

Types of Services:

- **Standard Positioning Service (SPS):** It will be provided to all the users.
- **Restricted Service (RS):** It is an encrypted service which will be provided only to the authorised users (military and security agencies).

Some applications of IRNSS are:

- Terrestrial,
- Aerial and Marine Navigation
- Disaster Management
- Vehicle tracking and fleet management
- Visual and voice navigation for drivers.
- Integration with mobile phones
- Precise Timing
- Mapping and Geodetic data capture

ForumIAS

- Terrestrial navigation aid for hikers and travellers

11. VOYAGER 2 BECOMES THE SECOND SPACECRAFT TO ENTER INTERSTELLAR SPACE

News: According to the researchers at the University of Iowa in the US, Voyager 2 has entered the interstellar medium (ISM). This has made Voyager 2 the second human-made object to journey out of the Sun's influence. The first spacecraft to do so was Voyager 1 in 2012.

Facts:

Voyager 2: Voyager 2 was launched by NASA in 1977, to study the outer planets. Voyager 2 targeted Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune.

Key achievements:

- Voyager 2 is the only spacecraft to study all four of the solar system's giant planets at close range.
- Voyager 2 discovered a 14th moon at Jupiter.
- Voyager 2 was the first human-made object to fly past Uranus. At Uranus, Voyager 2 discovered 10 new moons, two new rings.
- Voyager 2 was the first human-made object to fly by Neptune. At Neptune, Voyager 2 discovered five moons, four rings, and a "Great Dark Spot. - a huge spinning storm in the southern atmosphere of Neptune which was about the size of the entire Earth.

Additional Facts:

Interstellar medium (ISM): It is the matter and radiation that exists in the space between the star systems in a galaxy. This matter includes gas in ionic, atomic, and molecular form, as well as dust and cosmic rays.

12. STAR LINK PROJECT

News: SpaceX launched its second batch of 60 Starlink satellites into space. The company had launched its first batch of 60 satellites in May 2019.

Facts:

- The project seeks to build a low-cost, satellite based broadband network capable of delivering internet access to the entire globe. Starlink network will eventually have 42,000 satellites.
- The Starlink satellites will be deployed in the altitude band of 350 km to 1,200 km in the Low Earth Orbit (LEO). The LEO extends up to 2,000 km above the Earth's surface.
- The main advantage of putting satellites in LEO for space-based Internet is that it will reduce the latency between a user seeking data, and the server sending that data.
- However, owing to their lower height, their signals cover a relatively small area. As a result, many more satellites are needed in order to reach signals to every part of the earth.
- Starlink aims to start service in the northern United States and Canada in 2020 and expand to cover the whole world by 2021.

Additional Facts:

Loon: It is a project by Loon LLC, a subsidiary of Alphabet Inc. (the parent company of Google). It seeks to provide Internet access to rural and remote areas.

- It uses high-altitude balloons placed in the stratosphere (a layer of atmosphere that lies above the troposphere) at an altitude of 18 km to 25 km to create an aerial wireless network with up to 4G-LTE speeds.

ForumIAS

Whitespace Internet: Microsoft is providing whitespace internet to unserved areas of Jamaica, Namibia, Tanzania, Philippines etc. White Space Internet uses a part of the radio spectrum known as White spaces. White Space refers to the unused broadcasting frequencies in the wireless spectrum. These spaces can provide broadband internet access that is similar to that of 4G mobile.

13. PATENT PROSECUTION HIGHWAY PROGRAMME

News: The Union Cabinet approved the proposal for adoption of Patent Prosecution Highway (PPH) programme by the Indian Patent Office (IPO) with patent offices of various other countries or regions.

Facts:

Patent Prosecution Highway Programme: The programme will initially commence between the Japan Patent Office (JPO) and the Indian Patent Office on a pilot basis for a period of three years. It is aimed at streamlining patent applications at IPO.

- Under this pilot programme, IPO may receive patent applications in certain specified technical fields such as Electrical, Electronics, Computer Science, Information Technology, Physics, Civil, Mechanical, Textiles, Automobiles and Metallurgy. On the other hand, the JPO may receive patent applications in all fields of technology.
- JPO and IPO will frame their own guidelines for the implementation of the programme.

Benefits of PPH Programme:

- Reduction in time to dispose of patent applications.
- Reduction in pendency of patent applications.
- Improvement in quality of search and examination of patent applications.
- An opportunity for Indian inventors including MSMEs and Start-ups of India to get an accelerated examination of their patent applications in Japan.

Patent: A patent is a form of intellectual property rights. A patent gives its owner the right to exclude others from making, selling and importing an invention for a limited period of time. The term of every patent in India is twenty years.

Indian Patent System: The patents are governed by the Patents Act, 1970. The Act was amended in 2005 wherein product patent was extended to all fields of technology including food, drugs, chemicals and microorganisms.

- The Patents Act is implemented and administered by the Office of the Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trademarks (CGPDTM). The CGPDTM reports to the Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

National Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Policy 2016 - It is a vision document that aims to create and exploit synergies between all forms of intellectual property, concerned legislations and agencies. The objectives of IPR policy are:

- To create public awareness about the economic, social and cultural benefits of IPRs among all sections of society
- To stimulate the generation of IPRs
- To have robust IPR laws
- To modernize and strengthen service oriented IPR administration.
- Get value for IPRs through commercialization.
- To strengthen the enforcement and adjudicatory mechanisms for combating IPR infringements.
- To strengthen and expand human resources, institutions and capacities for teaching, training, research and skill building in IPRs.

ForumIAS

Internal Security

1. EXERCISE MITRA SHAKTI -INDIA AND SRILANKA

News: The Sri Lankan Army participated in the annual joint military exercise Mitra Shakti between the Indian and Sri Lanka Army.

Facts:

- It is being conducted between both the countries since the year 2012.
- The exercise also involve training in tactical level operations during international Counter Insurgency and Counter Terrorist environment under United Nations mandate.

Additional Facts:

SLINEX - It is a bilateral naval exercise between Indian and Sri Lankan Navy. The exercise was started in 2005. It was previously held once in two years and now it has been converted into an annual event.

2. NAG MISSILES

News: Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has said that state-of-the-art indigenous Anti-Tank Guided Missile (ATGM) Nag is in advanced stages of development.

Facts:

Nag missile: It is a third-generation, fire-and-forget, anti-tank guided missile developed by DRDO.

- It is an all-weather, top attack missile with a minimum range of 500 metres and maximum range of 4 km.
- It uses an imaging infrared seeker in lock-on-before-launch mode. It can seek and destroy all known enemy tanks during day and night or under any adverse weather conditions.
- It can be launched from both the land and air-based platforms.

IGMDP - The Integrated Guided-Missile Development Programme (IGMDP) was conceived by Dr. APJ. Abdul Kalam to enable India attain self-sufficiency in the field of missile technology.

Missiles under IGMDP: The missiles developed under this IGMDP programme includes:

- **Prithvi**: Short range surface to surface ballistic missile.
- **Agni**: Intermediate Range surface to surface ballistic Missile
- **Trishul**: Short-range low-level surface to air missile.
- **Nag**: 3rd generation anti-tank missile.
- **Akash**: Medium range surface to air missile.

Additional Facts:

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO): It was established in 1958 by the Government of India. It is under the administrative control of the Union Ministry of Defence.

- It aims to enhance India's self-reliance in Defence Systems. It undertakes design & development leading to the production of a world-class weapon system.

3. INDIAN ARMY INDUCTS ISRAEL MADE ANTI TANK GUIDED MISSILES SPIKE ALONG LOC IN J&K

News: The Indian Army has inducted Israel made Anti-Tank Guided Missiles Spike along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir.

Facts:

Spike missile: It is an Israeli fire-and-forget anti-tank guided missile and anti-personnel missile.

- The missiles have been manufactured by Rafael Advanced Defense Systems Ltd.
- The missile is known for their precision targeting with an ability to pierce even bunkers.
- The Spike missile can hit targets at a range of 4 kilometers. It can be deployed in both mountains and plains.
- The missiles have automatic self-guidance system. It also possesses imaging infrared system.

Additional Facts:

Other Defence Technologies imported by India from Israel:

- **Heron**: It is the Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE) unmanned aerial system used for intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance purposes.
- **Searcher**: It is a multi-mission tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) for surveillance, reconnaissance, target acquisition, artillery adjustment and damage assessment.
- **SPYDER**: It is a Low-Level Quick Reaction Missile (LLQRM) system developed by Rafael Advanced Defence Systems, an Israeli defence-technology company. It is used to protect critical infrastructure in ground-to-air missions from wide-spectrum of incoming air-borne threats ranging from aircrafts, helicopters, UAVs, precision-guided munitions (PGMs).
- **Python-5**: It is a fifth-generation air-to-air missile (AAM) manufactured by Rafael Advanced Defence Systems. It can engage enemy aircraft from very short ranges and near beyond visual range.
- **Barak-8**: It is an Indian Israeli Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM). It is designed to defend against any type of airborne threats including aircraft, helicopters, anti-ship missiles, and UAVs as well as cruise missiles and combat jets.
  - o It was jointly developed by Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), India's Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO), Israel's Administration for the Development of Weapons and Technological Infrastructure, Elta Systems, Rafael and other companies.

4. MINE COUNTERMEASURE EXERCISE - MINEX -FIRST TIME BETWEEN INDIA AND JAPAN

News: The Indian Naval Forces and the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) has conducted the first Mine Countermeasure Exercise (MINEX) at Kochi, Kerala.

Facts:

- This is the first time an explosive ordnance disposal and mine countermeasure exercise was held by Indian and Japanese forces.

Additional Facts:

Other exercises between India and Japan:

- **JIMEX** - It is a bilateral maritime exercise between India and Japan.
- **Exercise Malabar**– It is a trilateral naval exercise involving the United States, Japan and India as permanent partners.
- **Sahayog-Kaijin** – It is a joint bilateral exercise between Indian Coast Guard and the Japan Coast Guard.
- **Exercise DHARMA GUARDIAN** - It is an annual joint military exercise between Indian and Japan since 2018.

ForumIAS

5. SCO JOINT EXERCISE ON URBAN EARTHQUAKE SEARCH & RESCUE (SCOJTEX-2019)

News: Indian Home Minister inaugurated the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Joint Exercise on Urban Earthquake Search and Rescue in New Delhi.

Facts:

Exercise SCOJtEx-2019: It was hosted by the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) at New Delhi.

- The aim of the exercise is to rehearse the disaster response mechanism, share knowledge, experience and technology for mutual coordination.
- The participants of all eight member countries namely China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan will be participating in this exercise.

Additional Facts:

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO): It is also known as the Shanghai Pact. It is a Eurasian political, economic, and military organisation.

- It was founded in 2001 in Shanghai. The Secretariat of SCO is based in Beijing, China.
- The members of the SCO are China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

6. 'RED ATLAS MAP' UNVEILED FOR FLOOD MITIGATION IN CHENNAI

News: Vice President has unveiled the Red Atlas Action Plan Map and Coastal Flood Warning System App (CFLOWS-Chennai).

Facts:

Red Atlas Action Plan Map: It has been prepared by the Ministry of Earth Sciences to aid Tamil Nadu government in effective flood mitigation in Chennai.

- The atlas was prepared with the help of India Meteorological Department (IMD), National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR) and National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF) in association with TN State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) and Greater Chennai Corporation.
- The atlas, with probable scenarios for different rainfall periods, is aimed at flood mitigation, preparedness, operations and management aspects.
- The manual provides information including on corporation wards that are likely to be affected due to flooding and the areas that may need evacuation in Chennai taking into account all historical datasets.

Additional Facts:

Coastal Flood Warning System App (CFLOWS-Chennai): CFLOWS is a complete webGIS-based decision support system that can be used both for mitigation planning operations before flooding and in real time to for aspects like relief work.

- It is an integrated system that involves coupling models of regional weather forecasts, storm surges and captures about 796 flood scenarios.
- The app was launched by the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT).
- The app can simulate the scenario and predict what will happen in a particular area.

NIOT: It was established in November 1993 as an autonomous society under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India.

- Its aim is to develop reliable indigenous technologies to solve various engineering problems associated with harvesting of non-living and living resources in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) which is about two-thirds of the land area of India.

7. NIA TO HOST COUNTER-TERRORISM EXERCISE FOR QUAD COUNTRIES

News: The National Investigation Agency is hosting the first counter-terrorism exercise for the Quad countries named 'CT-TTX' (counter-terrorism table-top exercise) in New Delhi.

Facts:

- CT-TTX exercise is aimed at enabling the Quad countries to understand much better the response systems to terror incidents that exist in other member countries.
- The exercise is also aimed to improve the inter-agency cooperation between different counter-terrorism mechanisms and other agencies of Quad countries.

Additional Facts:

NIA: It is a statutory body under the National Investigation Agency (NIA) Act, 2008. It came into existence with the enactment of the Act after the Mumbai terror attacks.

- National Investigation Agency (NIA) is a central agency established by the Indian Government to combat terror in India. It acts as the Central Counter Terrorism Law Enforcement Agency.
- The agency is empowered to deal with terror related crimes across states without special permission from the states.

8. INDIA COMPLETES AGNI II TEST FIRE SUCCESSFULLY

News: India successfully conducted the first night trial of 'Agni-II' from Dr Abdul Kalam Island off Odisha coast.

Facts:

Agni-II: It is an intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM) that has already been inducted into the armed forces. This was the first time that this missile was test-fired at night.

- The missile was developed by DRDO (Defence Research and Development Organization).
- The missile is a surface-to-surface medium-range nuclear-capable missile that can carry a nuclear payload of 1000kgs.
- The missile has a strike range of 2000 km. The range of the 21-metre long missile weighing 17 tonnes can also be increased to three thousand kilometres by reducing the payload.

9. EXERCISE ZA'IR-AL-BAHR-JOINT EXERCISE BETWEEN THE QATAR AND INDIAN NAVY

News: The maiden bilateral maritime exercise between the Qatari Naval Forces and Indian Navy named Za'ir-Al-Bahr (Roar of the sea) was conducted.

Facts:

- The exercise included a Harbour Phase and Sea Phase.
- The exercise was attended by Indian Navy Guided Missile Stealth Frigate INS Trikand and Patrol Aircraft P8-I.

Additional Facts:
- **About INS Trikand:** It is one of the frontline frigates of the Indian Navy. It is equipped with a versatile range of weapons and sensors. The ship is part of the Indian Navy's Western Fleet and is under the Western Naval Command based in Mumbai.
- **About P8-I:** It is a long-range anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface warfare, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance aircraft capable of broad-area, maritime and littoral operations.
  - It is a variant of the P-8A Poseidon that Boeing had developed for the U.S. Navy. The Indian Navy is the first international customer for the P-8.

10. ON GLOBAL CYBERCRIME, INDIA VOTES IN FAVOUR OF RUSSIA-LED RESOLUTION

News: A UN committee has passed a Russian-led resolution entitled "Countering the use of information and communications technologies for criminal purposes". India has voted in favour of the resolution.

Facts:
- The resolution is aimed at promoting a global consensus and working out concrete and practical approaches to countering cybercrime in the absence of effective international legal instruments.

Additional Facts:

Budapest Convention: The Convention on Cybercrime of the Council of Europe, also known as the Budapest Convention, is the only binding international instrument on cybercrime.
- It was signed in 2001 and came into force from 2004. India and Russia are not a party to the Convention.
- **The objectives of the Convention are:**
  - Harmonising the domestic criminal substantive law elements of offences and connected provisions in the area of cyber-crime
  - Providing for domestic criminal procedural law powers necessary for the investigation and prosecution of cybercrime
  - Set up a robust regime of international cooperation on issues of cybercrime.

Christchurch Call to Action: It was launched by French President Emmanuel Macron and New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern in May 2019.
- The initiative is aimed at curbing extremism online. It comes in the backdrop of attack on mosques in Christchurch in New Zealand where a gunman had killed people while live-streaming the massacre on Facebook.
- India is a signatory to the "Christchurch Call" initiative.

Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace: It is a declaration which seeks to develop common principles for securing cyberspace. It was launched by France in 2018 at the UNESCO Internet Governance Forum (IGF) meeting. India has not signed the declaration.

11. INDIA SUCCESSFULLY CONDUCTS NIGHT TEST FIRE OF TWO PRITHVI BALLISTIC MISSILES AT CHANDIPUR

News: India has successfully test fired variants of Prithvi-2 missile from the Interim Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur on the night of 20th November.

Facts:

Prithvi missile is a tactical surface-to-surface short-range ballistic missile (SRBM) developed by DRDO of India under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Program (IGMDP).

- The Prithvi-I is a short-range, road-mobile, liquid propellant ballistic missile It has a range of 150 km.
- The Prithvi-II is a short-range, road-mobile, liquid-propellant ballistic missile. It has range of 250-350 km.
- The Prithvi-III is a short-range, road-mobile, ballistic missile. This model is a departure from the liquid propulsion system of the Prithvi-I and II, as it employs a two-stage, solid propellant motor. It has a range of 350-600 km.

12. INDIAN ARMY TO HAVE FIRST DHANUSH REGIMENT BY MARCH 2020

News: The Indian Army will have the first regiment, using Dhanush artillery guns, in place by March 2020

Facts:

Dhanush Artillery Guns- Dhanush is the first indigenous long-range artillery gun.

- It has been developed by Ordnance Factory Board (OFB), Kolkata and manufactured by the Jabalpur-based Gun Carriage Factory.
- The design of Dhanush is based on the Swedish Bofors Haubits FH77 which India imported in the 1980s.

Additional Facts:

Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) - It is an industrial organisation, functioning under the Department of Defence Production of the Ministry of Defence. It came into existence in 1979 and is headquartered in Kolkata.

- 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.
- OFB comprises 41 ordnance factories, 9 Training Institutes, 3 Regional Marketing Centres and 4 Regional Controller of Safety.

13. DEFENCE MINISTER INAUGURATES SISSERI RIVER BRIDGE IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

News: Defence Minister has inaugurated the Sisseri River Bridge at Lower Dibang Valley in Arunachal Pradesh.

Facts:

Sisseri River Bridge is a 200-metre long bridge between Jonai Pasighat Ranaghat Roing road.

- The river bridge provides better connectivity between Siang and Dibang Valley. It was constructed under Project Brahmank of Border Roads Organisation (BRO).
- The government has built this bridge under Border Area Development Programme (BADP).

Additional Facts:

BADP: It was started in 1987 in India along the India-Pakistan borders. The programme was extended to North-Eastern region in 1993-1994.

- It aims to meet the special development needs of the people living in remote and inaccessible areas situated near the international border.
- It is administered by the Department of Border Management of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
- It is a core centrally sponsored scheme. The funding pattern of BADP in respect of 8 North Eastern is in the ratio 90:10 and in respect of other States is in the ratio 60:40.

- At present it is being implemented in 17 states which share international borders of India with other countries.

BRO: It was formed in 1960 to secure India's borders and develop infrastructure in remote areas of the north and north-east states of the country. It functions under the control of the Ministry of Defence since 2015.

14. INDIAN NAVY – INDONESIAN NAVY BILATERAL EXERCISE 'SAMUDRA SHAKTI'

News: The 2nd edition of Samudra Shakti bilateral exercise took place in the Bay of Bengal.

Facts:

- It is an annual naval exercise between Indian and Indonesian Navy. The first edition of the exercise took place in 2018 in the Java Sea.

Additional Facts:

Other India-Indonesia Bilateral Exercises:

- **Garuda Shakti**: It is an annual military exercise between Indian and Indonesian Army. It is conducted alternatively in India and Indonesia and its first edition was conducted in the year 2012 in India.
- **IND-INDO CORPAT**: It is a bi-annual coordinated patrol exercise along the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) naval exercise conducted by Indian and Indonesian Navy.
- **Exercise KOMODO**: Ex- KOMODO is a multilateral Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) exercise. The exercise participants include India, Indonesia, USA, China, Russia, New Zealand, South Korea, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei, Thailand, Vietnam, Philippines and Laos.

15. HADR EXERCISE TIGER TRIUMPH

News: Exercise 'TIGER TRIUMPH' took place on the Eastern seaboard from 13 to 21 Nov 19.

Facts:

- It is the first India US joint Tri services Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Exercise.
- The tri service drill is being organised under the aegis of the headquarters of the Integrated Defence Staff.

Additional Facts:

Integrated Defence Staff (IDS): It is an organisation responsible for fostering coordination and enabling prioritisation across the different branches of the Indian Armed Forces.

- It is composed of representatives from the Indian Army, Indian Navy, Indian Air Force, Ministry of External Affairs, Defence Research and Development Organisation, Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Finance.
- The organisation is headed by the chief of integrated Defence Staff to the Chairman COSC (CISC) who enjoys a status equivalent to that of Vice Chief of a Service.
- IDS advises and assists the chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee.
- It was established in 2001 after the recommendations of the Kargil Review Committee and is located at New Delhi. It functions under the aegis of Ministry of Defence.

ForumIAS

Miscellaneous

1. CHAVANG KUT FESTIVAL	• One of the most celebrated festivals of Manipur. It is also celebrated in Mizoram and Assam. • The festival is celebrated by the tribes of Kuki-Chin-Mizo communities. • Chavang stands for 'autumn' and Kut mean 'harvest'. The festival is observed to mark the end of the harvesting season and also to thank deities for a good harvest season. • A beauty pageant competition is also organized during the festival. Further, folk dances and music are also performed to celebrate the festival.
2. TAWANG FESTIVAL	• Tawang Festival is an annual festival of Arunachal Pradesh. • It celebrates the state's rich cultural heritage and includes attractions like Buddhist religious functions, indigenous sports, traditional dances among others. • The festival starts with the religious tradition known as Sebang which is the process of monks of Tawang town moving to the festival spot in rallies from the Tawang monastery. • The major attractions of the festival are the Dance of Yak and the Aji-lhamu Dance.
3. PUSHKARAM FESTIVAL	• The Assam government is celebrating Brahmaputra Pushkaram from November 5 to November 16, 2019. • Pushkaram is an Indian festival dedicated to worshiping of rivers. • The festival is also known as Pushkaralu (in Telugu), Pushkara (in Kannada) or Pushkar. • It is celebrated at shrines along the banks of 12 major sacred rivers which are Ganga, Yamuna, Narmada, Chambal, Kaveri, Beas, Tapti, Godavari, Chenab, Krishna, Saraswati and Brahmaputra. • The festival is celebrated in the form of ancestor worship, spiritual discourses, devotional music and cultural programmes. • The festival happens annually once in 12 years along each river. • Each river is associated with a zodiac sign and the river for each year's festival is based on which sign Jupiter is in at the time. In 2019, it is happening at Brahmaputra river.
4. SANGAI FESTIVAL	• Sangai festival is an annual cultural festival organised by Manipur Tourism Department every year from November 21 to 30. • The State's classical dance form, 'Ras Leela' forms an important part of the dance performances during the festival. • Other folk-dance performances like the Kabui Naga dance, Bamboo dance, Maibi dance, Lai Haraoba dance, Khamba Thoibi dance are showcased at the festival.

	• The festival brings to light an array of Manipur's best indigenous handlooms and handicrafts products which are otherwise not widely available in the market. • Further, Manipur's famous martial arts namely **(a)** Thang Ta (a combination Spear & Sword skills) **(b)** Yubi-Lakpi (a game played with greased coconut like rugby) **(c)** Mukna Kangjei (a game that combines hockey and wrestling) and **(d)** Sagol Kangjei- Modern Polo (believed to have evolved in Manipur) all formed part of the festival.
5. NATIONAL TRIBAL FESTIVAL 'AADI MAHOTSAV'	• Union Minister for Home Affairs has inaugurated the National Tribal Festival 'Aadi Mahotsav' in New Delhi. • Aadi Mahotsav is a National Tribal Festival. It is a joint initiative of Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs and Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED). • The objective of the festival is to celebrate, cherish and promote the spirit of tribal craft, culture, cuisine and commerce. • The theme of this year's festival is "A celebration of the spirit of Tribal Craft, Culture and Commerce".

6. TAWANG MONASTERY: Tawang monastery is located in Tawang city of Tawang district in Arunachal Pradesh. It is the largest monastery in India and second largest in the world after the Potala Palace in Lhasa, Tibet.

- The monastery belongs to the Gelug school of Mahayana Buddhism. The Monastery is also known in Tibetan as Gaden Namgyal Lhatse, which translates to celestial paradise in a clear night.

7. SANGAI DEER
- The sangai is an endemic and endangered subspecies of brow-antlered deer found only in Manipur,India. The species is listed as Endangered (EN) in IUCN Red list and schedule 1 of WPA 1972.
- The species is found only at Keibul Lamjao National Park over the floating biomass locally called phumdi in the south eastern part of Loktak Lake.
- **Keibul Lamjao National Park**: Keibul Lamjao National Park, Manipur is the only floating National Park in the world. It is located on the Loktak Lake. The park is located on phumdis. Phumdis are the floating mass of entangled vegetation formed by the accumulation of organic debris and biomass with soil.
- **Loktak Lake** - Loktak Lake is the largest freshwater lake in Northeast India. It is famous for the phumdis floating over it.

8. THE FREEDOM OF NET REPORT 2019 TITLED "THE CRISIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA" WAS RELEASED BY THE FREEDOM HOUSE

News: Freedom on the Net is a comprehensive study of internet freedom in 65 nations across the globe. The report covers 87% of the world's total internet users.

- The report assessed 65 countries and 33 among them showed an overall decline in internet freedom since June 2018. Only 16 countries showed improvements in their internet freedom status.
- India was given an overall score of 55 in the report and the internet freedom status in the country was reported to be 'partly free'.

- Iceland ranked the highest with an overall score of 95 as it had no civil or criminal cases registered against users for online expression during the coverage period.
- China with an overall score of 10 was adjudged 'not free' and as the world's worst abuser of internet freedom for the fourth consecutive year.

9. CABINET APPROVES ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF SOWA RIGPA (NISR) AT LEH

News: The National Institute for Sowa-Rigpa will be an autonomous National Institute under Ministry of AYUSH. The objective of the institute is to bring a synergy between Traditional Wisdom of Sowa-Rigpa and modern science, tools and technology.

- Sowa-rigpa: Sowa-Rigpa is a Traditional Medical system of the Himalayan belt in India.
- It has been popularly practiced in Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Darjeeling (West Bengal), Himachal Pradesh, Union Territory of Ladakh and now all over India.
- In 2015, Ministry of Ayush included Sowa Rigpa into the AYUSH system.
- AYUSH: AYUSH stands for Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy.
  - These systems are based on traditional medicinal philosophies and represent a way of healthy living with established concepts on prevention of diseases and promotion of health.

10. SURANGA BAWADI ON WORLD MONUMENT WATCH LIST

News: Suranga Bawadi has been included in the World Monument Watch list for 2020 along with 24 other monuments from across the world.

- **Suranga Bawadi**: Suranga Bawadi is an integral part of the ancient Karez system of supplying water through subterranean tunnels built during the Adil Shahi era in Vijayapura, Karnataka.
  - Suranga Bawadi has been selected under the 'Ancient Water System of the Deccan Plateau' by World Monuments Fund.
  - The inclusion will help Suranga Bawadi to get funds for restoration within the next two years.
  - The World Monuments Fund would also coordinate with the authorities concerned for restoration and create public awareness on its importance.
- **World Monuments Fund**: World Monuments Fund (WMF) is a private, international, non-profit organization founded in 1965. It is headquartered in New York, USA.
  - It is dedicated to the preservation of historic architecture and cultural heritage sites around the world through fieldwork, advocacy, grant making, education, and training.
- **World Monuments Watch**: The World Monuments Watch is a global program launched in 1995 by World Monuments Fund. It aims to identify imperiled cultural heritage sites and provide direct financial and technical support for their preservation.
- **Karez System**: Karez is a water harnessing technology in which groundwater is brought to the surface by a tunnel. In this system, no mechanical pump or lift is used. Gravity alone brings the water from the underground source.
  - The Karez is found in 38 countries worldwide and most of these are concentrated in the Middle East region. Persia is known for the earliest known and documented Karez system.

11. 6TH WORLD CONGRESS ON RURAL AND AGRICULTURAL FINANCE

News: The 6th World Congress on Rural and Agricultural Finance (WCRAF) began in New Delhi on November 12, 2019.

- The World Congress is held every 3 years at regular intervals. The first Congress was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 2005.
- It aims at bringing together stakeholders of rural and agricultural finance all over the world.
- The 6th WCRAF is being held in New Delhi. The Congress is co-hosted by NABARD, Asia Pacific Rural and Agricultural Credit Association (APRACA) and Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
- **The theme of the conference** is "Rural and Agricultural Finance: Critical Input to achieve Inclusive and Sustainable Development".
- **NABARD: The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development** (NABARD) is an apex indirect development financial institution in India. NABARD was established in 1982 to implement the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development Act, 1981.
  - NABARD was entrusted with matters concerning policy, planning and operations in the field of credit for agriculture and other economic activities in rural areas in India.
  - Recently, the Reserve Bank had divested its stake in National Housing Bank (NHB) and NABARD, by making them fully government owned.

12. TOBACCO BOARD RECEIVES 2019 GOLDEN LEAF AWARD

News: Tobacco Board of India has been awarded the Golden Leaf Award in the Most Impressive Public Service Initiative category for the year 2019.

- The Golden Leaf Awards were created to recognize professional excellence and dedication in the tobacco industry by Tobacco Reporter, an international magazine in the year 2006.
- The awards are granted on an annual basis to companies that have achieved outstanding performance in five categories (a) impressive public service initiative (b) promising new product introduction (c) exciting newcomer to the industry (d) outstanding service to the industry and (e) committed to quality award.
- Tobacco Board of India: Tobacco Board is a statutory body established under the Tobacco Board Act, 1975. It comes under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The Tobacco Board is headquartered in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh.
- The main functions of the Board include (a) regulating the production and curing of Virginia tobacco in India (b) improving the yields and quality of tobacco, (c) facilitating the sale of tobacco through e-auctions (d) undertaking various grower welfare measures and (e) export promotion of tobacco.

13. INDIA FARES BETTER THAN CHINA IN GLOBAL BRIBERY RISK MATRIX

News: The Trace Bribery Matrix,2019 has been released by TRACE, a US based organisation.

- New Zealand was ranked 1st followed by Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Finland.
- India has been placed in a better position than neighbouring China. India is ranked 78th place with a total risk score of 48.
- **Trace Bribery Matrix**: TRACE is a US based organisation which provides ranking to various countries in terms of the risk of bribery companies face in doing business in those countries.
  - The Matrix evaluates 200 countries countries under four parameters which are *(a)* business interaction with the government *(b)* anti-bribery deterrence *(c)* transparency and *(d)* civil society oversight.

14. BANGALORE, DELHI, MUMBAI AMONG 113 CITIES IN WORLD ON NEW GLOBAL PROSPERITY INDEX

News: The first-ever Prosperity & Inclusion City Seal and Awards (PICSA) Index has been released by the Basque institutions and compiled by D&L Partners. The index measures factors such as the affordability of housing and access to education and healthcare, besides GDP per capita.

- The index has been topped by Zurich in Switzerland. It is followed by Vienna and Copenhagen in the second and third place respectively.
- Bangalore has emerged as India's highest-ranked city at No. 83 in the index. Delhi at 101 and Mumbai at 107 are the other Indian cities to make at the index.

15. IAEA APPOINTS RAFAEL GROSSI AS DIRECTOR GENERAL

News: Argentina's Rafael Grossi has been appointed as the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

IAEA: The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is widely known as the world's Atoms for Peace and Development. It was established as an autonomous organization in 1957.

- It aims is to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons.
- It is headquartered in Vienna, Austria. It has 171 member states with one vote per member.
- Though established as an autonomous organisation, the IAEA reports to both the United Nations General Assembly and the UN Security Council.
- The IAEA and its former Director General, Mohamed ElBaradei were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005.

16. ARUNDHATI SCHEME: ASSAM GOVT TO GIFT 10 GM OF GOLD TO EVERY BRIDE

- The scheme is aimed to strengthen women empowerment and reduce child marriage.
- Under this scheme, state government will give each beneficiary bride fixed amount to buy 10 grams (one tola) of gold during her marriage if the marriage is registered.
- The state government will not give the gold directly to beneficiary bride but will provide Rs.30,000 to purchase 10 grams of gold. The scheme will commence from January 1,2020.
- **Eligibility for the scheme**:
    - The annual income of the bride's family must be less than Rs. 5 lakhs.
    - Minimum age should be 18 years and 21 years for the bride and bridegroom respectively.
    - Bride should have minimum education of 10th standard. However, this requirement of minimum educational qualification criteria is not required for tribes and workers of tea gardens.
    - Family has to register their marriage under the Special Marriage (Assam) Rules, 1954.

17. THIRUVALLUVAR

Thiruvalluvar also known as Valluvar is a celebrated Tamil poet and philosopher. He is believed to have lived between 3rd-4th century or 8th-9th century.

- He is best known as the author of Thirukkuṛaḷ, a collection of couplets on ethics, political and economic matters and love.
- The text is considered an exceptional and widely cherished work of the Tamil literature.
- Further,the Tamil poet Mamulanar of the Sangam period has also mentioned that Thiruvalluvar was the greatest Tamil scholar of that time.

18. CBI FORMS UNIT TO CHECK ONLINE CHILD ABUSE CASES

News: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has set up an Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (OCSAE) Prevention/Investigation Unit.

- The unit will probe offences covered under various provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and the Information Technology (IT) Act and other relevant laws.
- It will also collect and disseminate information on online child sexual abuse and exploitation.
- It will function under the CBI's Special Crime Zone. The unit's territorial jurisdiction would be throughout the country.

19. INDIA HYPERTENSION CONTROL INITIATIVE (IHCI) YIELDS RESULTS

News: The India Hypertension Control Initiative (IHCI) launched in four districts of Kerala has been able to control hypertension in about 35% of the people covered under the initiative.

- The IHCI was launched in Kerala in 2018 as a multi-partner five-year initiative with the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Indian Council of Medical Research, State government and WHO India.
- The initiative was also launched in Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, and Punjab.
- But the results from Kerala had been the most impressive because of the infrastructure strength of non-communicable disease clinics across the State.

20. AT 17.5 MILLION, INDIAN DIASPORA LARGEST IN THE WORLD: UN REPORT

News: Global Migration Report is International Organisation for Migration's (IOM) flagship publication. It features trends in international migration, discusses emerging policy issues and provides regional recent developments in Africa, America, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Oceania.

Key takeaways from the report:

- The number of international migrants globally in 2019 were around 272 million which is 3.5% of the world's population.
- India had the largest number of migrants living abroad (17.5 million), followed by Mexico and China (11.8 million and 10.7 million respectively).
- The top destination country remained the United States with 50.7 million international migrants.
- The top 3 remittance recipients were India (USD 78.6 billion), China (USD 67.4 billion) and Mexico (USD 35.7 billion).
- The United States remained the top remittance-sending country (USD 68.0 billion) followed by the United Arab Emirates (USD 44.4 billion) and Saudi Arabia (USD 36.1 billion).
- The number of internally displaced persons due to violence and conflict has reached 41.3 million.
- Syria had the highest number of people displaced, followed by Colombia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
- Bangladesh had the largest number of stateless persons followed by Côte d'Ivoire and Myanmar.

International Organisation for Migration (IOM): International Organisation for Migration (IOM) is an intergovernmental organization established in 1951.It is headquartered at Geneva, Switzerland.

- It provides services and advice concerning migration to governments and migrants including internally displaced persons, refugees, and migrant workers.
- It was initially established as the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM) to help resettle people displaced by World War II.
- In September 2016, IOM became a related organization of the United Nations.

21. CHAR DHAM PROGRAMME

The Char Dham programme is an initiative to improve connectivity to the Char Dham pilgrimage centres in the Himalayas namely Gangotri, Yamunotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath.

- The works under Char Dham Pariyojna are being implemented on Engineering Procurement and Construction (EPC) mode of contract.
- These projects are being implemented by executing agencies of **(a)** Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, **(b)** Uttarakhand State PWD, **(c)** Border Road Organization (BRO) and **(d)** National Highway & Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL).
- The project proposes the widening of single lane roads into double lanes by up to 10 metres, developing highways in Uttarakhand and thereby improving access to the Char Dham.
- The projects also include mitigation measures/ stabilisation of chronic landslide & sinking spots/zones as a standalone project or part of road widening projects to avoid landslide and safety of road users.
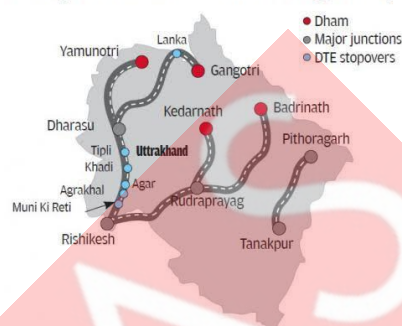
22. ANDHRA PRADESH CM LAUNCHES NADU-NEDU PROGRAMME

News: Andhra Pradesh CM has launched the 'Nadu-Nedu' programme. He has also announced that the government will introduce another scheme called 'Amma Vodi'

- **Nadu-Nedu Programme**: It aims to transform government schools into vibrant and competitive institutions.
- **Objectives**:
  - Introduce English medium from classes 1 to 6 in state-run schools from next academic year
  - Transform all government schools with the required infrastructure and up-gradation of skills
  - Provide basic amenities like clean environs, furniture, toilets, running water, compound wall, blackboard, renovation and involve parent committee.
  - In the first phase, the Nadu-Nedu programme will be implemented in 15,715 schools. It will cover all schools in three years under a budget of Rs 12,000 cores.
- **Amma Vodi**: The scheme will be launched in January 2020. It seeks to provide incentives to mothers who send their children to school and continue their education till class 12.

23. WORLD HERITAGE WEEK

News: Muziris Heritage Week was celebrated from November 19-25 in connection with UNESCO World Heritage Week.

- **Muziris**: Muziris was a port city on the Malabar Coast. Muziris was also known as Murachipattanam.
  - The exact location of Muziris is unknown and is generally speculated to be situated around present day Kodungallur, Kerala.
  - In Ramayana, Murachipattanam is the place where Sugreeva's (one of the Monkey King) sleuths passed through while looking for the abducted Sita.
  - Sangam literature describes Roman ships coming to Muziris laden with gold to be exchanged for pepper.

- According to historians, in 1341AD, when the profile of the water bodies in the Periyar River basin on the Malabar Coast underwent a major transformation, Muziris got destroyed due to flood and earthquake.
- The Government of Kerala has initiated the Muziris Heritage Project to reinstate the historical and cultural significance of the legendary port of Muziris.

- **World heritage Week**: UNESCO celebrates the annual World Heritage Week from November 19 to 25 across countries. The objective of celebrating the World Heritage Week is to aware and encourage the people about the preservation and safety of the cultural heritages, and monuments.
- **World Heritage Site**: These are sites inscribed on the World Heritage List of the UNESCO. These sites are considered to have "Outstanding Universal Value" i.e. high cultural and/or natural heritage which transcends national boundaries and are important to future generations.
   - UNESCO seeks to protect and preserve these sites through the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972).
- **World Heritage Sites in India**: The total number of heritage sites across India that are on the UNESCO World Heritage list is 38. This includes 30 cultural sites, seven natural sites and one mixed site (Kanchenjunga National Park in Sikkim). In 2017, Ahmedabad became the first Indian city to get World Heritage Site status.

Note: China and Italy have the highest number of World Heritage Sites- both have 55 sites.

- **UNESCO**: It is a UN specialized agency based in Paris. It was established in 1945. It seeks to build peace through international cooperation in Education, the Sciences and Culture.

24. PLIOSAUR

News: Recently, people discovered the bones of Pliosaur in a cornfield in the Polish village of Krzyzanowice.

- Pliosaurs were aquatic carnivorous reptiles that lived between 220 and 70 million years ago. They are classified in the order Plesiosauria along with their long-necked relatives, the plesiosaurs. They were the largest aquatic carnivorous reptiles that have ever lived and are often dubbed sea monsters.
- They were characterized by massive heads, short necks, and streamlined tear-shaped bodies. They measured over 10 metres in length and can weigh up to several dozen tons. They had powerful, large skulls and massive jaws with large sharp teeth. They had modified paddle-like limbs (like those of a penguin) which they used to swim through the water.

25. NEW SIGNAL FISH NAMED PTEROPSARON INDICUM DISCOVERED OFF KERALA COAST

- This is the first species of the genus signal fish to be discovered in the Indian waters. Pteropsaron indicum is one of the distinctly larger species of signal fish.
- The species has a unique colour pattern and an interesting behaviour that allows it to communicate with others of the same species by flipping its highly specialised dorsal fins.
- The species sports three distinct bright yellow bands on a pale greyish pink background. The body and head are criss-crossed with dark margins of large-scale pockets.
- It is also characterized by three extended dorsal fin spines, a high number of vertebrae and a relatively large body size.
- **Signal fish**: Signal fish are tiny and fragile and are often found in waters below 50 metres. The signal fishes are poorly studied group of benthic species found in deep sandy habitats usually close to coral reefs. They are known to flip up their extended dorsal fins to signal each other.
- The discovery of this new signal species indicates the presence of patchy corals off the Kerala coast and therefore with a lot of conservation value.

ForumIAS

Pointly

1. QUESTION HOUR and ZERO HOUR

Question Hour - The first hour of every sitting of parliament is devoted to questions asked by MPs to either ministers or private members. It is mentioned in the Rules of Procedure of the House. There are 3 types of questions-

Starred Question	Distinguished with an Asterix*, oral answer is provided and hence supplementary question can be asked.
Unstarred Question	Written answer is provided; hence no supplementary question follows.
Short Notice Questions	Notice of less than 10 days is given for answer; oral answer provided.

Zero Hour- It is an informal tool not mentioned in the rules of procedure to raise matters without prior notice.

- It starts at around 12 noon (hence the name) and members can with prior notice to the Speaker raise issues of importance during this time.
- It starts immediately after the question hour and lasts until the agenda for the day is taken up ie. time between question hour and daily agenda is zero hour.
- It is an Indian innovation in parliamentary procedures.

2. COMMONWEALTH OF NATIONS:

- Commonwealth of Nations is an international intergovernmental organization of countries that were mostly former territories of the British Empire and dependencies established by the London Declaration in 1949. Queen Elizabeth II is the head of the Commonwealth.
- The current membership includes 53 Countries. The membership is based on free and equal voluntary cooperation.
- The member states of the commonwealth are united by language, history, culture, likeness of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

3. GOVERNMENT TABLES BILL IN PARLIAMENT TO AMEND CHIT FUNDS ACT

- The Chit Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2019 seeks to amend the Chit Funds Act,1982. The 1982 Act regulates chit funds and prohibits a fund from being created without the prior sanction of the state government.
- Under a chit fund, people agree to pay a certain amount from time to time into a fund. Periodically, one of the subscribers is chosen by drawing a chit to receive the prize amount from the fund.

4. GUJARAT ANTI-TERROR LAW GETS PRESIDENT ASSENT

President gave his assent to the Gujarat Control of Terrorism and Organised Crime (GCTOC) Bill, 2015.

5. INAUGURATION OF KIMBERLEY PROCESS CERTIFICATION SCHEME (KPCS) 2019

The Plenary meeting of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) was hosted by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in New Delhi.

- During the meeting three special forums are to be held which includes (a) adapting to changes in the diamond industry (b)financial inclusion and women empowerment in the diamond industry and (c)origin and identification of diamonds.

- **Kimberley Process**: The Kimberley Process is an international certification scheme that regulates trade in rough diamonds. It aims to prevent the flow of conflict diamonds while helping to protect legitimate trade in rough diamonds.
- The KP is not an international organisation as it has no permanent offices or permanent staff. It relies on the contributions under the principle of burden sharing of participants supported by industry and civil society observers.

6. HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION FOR SAFE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND RECYCLING OF SHIPS

- It was adopted at a diplomatic conference held in Hong Kong, China, in 2009.
- The Convention is aimed at ensuring that ships, when being recycled after reaching the end of their operational lives, do not pose any unnecessary risk to human health and safety or to the environment.
- The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal for enactment of Recycling of Ships Bill, 2019 and accession to the Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships, 2009.

7. U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT APPROVES $1 BILLION ARMS SALE TO INDIA

- United States has approved sale of 13 MK 45 naval guns to India and related equipment worth an estimated cost of $1 billion.
- **MK 45 naval guns**: It is a naval artillery gun designed for use against surface warships, anti-aircraft and shore bombardment to support amphibious operations. The MK 45 is manufactured by BAE Systems Land and Armaments. The gun features an automatic loader with a capacity of 20 rounds that can be fired under fully automatic control taking a little over a minute to exhaust those rounds at maximum fire rate.

8. INDIA PLEDGES TO CONTRIBUTE $5 MILLION IN 2020 TO UN PALESTINE REFUGEE AGENCY

- India has pledged to contribute USD 5 million in 2020 to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).
- United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) was established by the United Nations in 1949 to carry out direct relief and works programmes for Palestine refugees. It is headquartered in Amman, Jordan

9. NO MORE WAIVER, BHUTAN TO LEVY CHARGES ON INDIAN TOURISTS

- The Bhutan's new draft tourism policy plans to levy charges on tourists from regional countries including India, Bangladesh and the Maldives who at present are exempted from any charges.
- These new charges have been necessitated by the sharp increase in tourists from the region mainly from India who crosses over the land boundaries.
- Further, Bhutan Pay Commission has also recommended that the government should levy a minimal Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) on regional tourists.

10. EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER S JAISHANKAR ATTENDED 2ND EDITION OF PARIS PEACE FORUM

- The Paris Peace Forum is an international event on global governance issues and multilateralism, held annually in Paris, France.

- It puts a specific focus on governance solutions in six major themes: (a) Peace & Security (b) Development (c) Environment (d) New technologies (e) Inclusive economy (f) Culture & Education.
- The creation of Paris Peace Forum was announced by French President Emmanuel Macron in 2018. The first edition of the Paris Peace Forum was held in November 2018.

11. GERMANY'S CLIMATE PROTECTION ACT

- The bill aims to cut Germany's greenhouse gas emissions to 55% of the 1990 levels by 2030.
- It consists of emissions targets for different sectors of the economy such as transport, energy and housing. The bill also imposes a price on carbon emissions in the transport and heating sectors along with some other measures to combat climate change.
- From 2021, companies that market diesel and petrol, heating oil and natural gas in the country will need to obtain pollution rights for the amount of greenhouse gases they emit. This will be regulated through a national emissions trading mechanism.

12. QUACQUARELLI SYMONDS (QS) WORLD UNIVERSITY ASIA RANKINGS 2020

- The universities are assessed based on academic reputation, employer reputation, student-faculty ratio, international faculty and students, staff with PhD, papers per faculty and citations per paper among other parameters.
- The National University of Singapore is ranked Asia's best for the second consecutive year.
- India has 96 universities in the QS Asia University Ranking, 8 India universities in top 100. But India does not yet have a university among the top 30. The Indian Institute of Technology Bombay leads at overall 34th place and is followed by IIT Delhi in the 43rd place and by IIT Madras in the 50th position.

13. HIMAYAT MISSION IN J&K

- Himayat is a placement linked skill training programme for unemployed youth of Jammu and Kashmir. The programme has been under implementation in the state since 2011.
- The programme has been developed and initiated by the Union Ministry of Rural Development and is being implemented by Himayat Mission Management Unit, J&K State Rural Livelihoods Mission.
- Under the programme, the youth are provided free skill training for a duration of 3 to 12 months, in a range of skills for which there is good market demand. At the end of the training, the youth are assured of a job and there is one-year post-placement tracking to see how they are faring. The Programme is 100% funded by the Government of India.
- Further, the programme covers both urban and rural population irrespective of levels of poverty.

14. MICROSOFT LAUNCHES FRAMEWORK TO FACILITATE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF SCHOOLS

- Microsoft has launched its 'K-12 Education Transformation Framework' to facilitate comprehensive digital transformation of schools in India.
- The framework is a flexible platform based on the latest research and input from hundreds of academics, experts, and policymakers.
- It comprises of four pillars namely (a)leadership and policy, (b)modern teaching and learning (c)intelligent environments and (d)technology blueprint.
- This framework model has already been adopted by education leaders in more than 50 countries to help plan their learning strategies.

ForumIAS

15. AFRICAN SWINE FEVER (ASF) AND CHINA
- China is witnessing rise in pork prices because of the rampant spread of African Swine Fever (ASF).
- African swine fever (ASF) is a highly contagious hemorrhagic viral disease of domestic and wild pigs which is responsible for serious economic and production losses.
- It is caused by a large DNA virus of the Asfarviridae

16. SCIENTISTS IDENTIFY A PROTEIN INCREASES ACTION OF INSULIN, HELPS REGULATE BLOOD SUGAR LEVELS
- Recently, Scientists have identified a protein called secretagon (SCGN) that can help regulate blood sugar levels in the body.
- **What were the findings?**
  - Scientists have found that SCGN has a functional insulin-binding protein with therapeutic potential against diabetes.
  - They show that SCGN binds to insulin and protects it from various stresses, increases its stability as well as adds to its action.
  - They have also shown that injection of SCGN (found at lower levels in diabetic patients) in obese diabetic mice clears excess insulin from circulation and reduces fat mass.

17. DUSTLIK 2019: INDIA UZBEKISTAN MILITARY EXERCISE
- India conducted its first ever military exercise with Uzbekistan named Dustlik held at the Chirchiq Training Area in Uzbekistan.

18. NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE GRID (NATGRID):
- NATGRID project was initially started in 2009.It is an online database for collating scattered pieces of information and putting them together on one platform.
- The project is a counter-terrorism measure that will enable multiple security and intelligence agencies to access a database related to immigration entry and exit, banking and telephone details among others from a common platform.
- The combined data from NATGRID will be made available to 10 Central Intelligence Agencies on a secured platform.

19. INDIA-SKILLS:
- It is a biennial national skill competition initiative organized by National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) under Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.

20. WORLDSKILLS:
- WorldSkills International is the largest skills competition in the world.It is organised once every two years in one of the member countries.
- The objective of the competition is to demonstrate the advantages of learning a vocational skill and encouraging 'parity of esteem' between vocational and academic qualifications.

21. RAAH:
- RAAH is a mobile application that can be downloaded on Android and iOS platforms.
- It provides free information to the public on mental health care professionals and mental healthcare centres.

22. CHAGOS ISLAND: Mauritius has called the UK an illegal colonial occupier after it ignored a UN-mandated deadline to return the Chagos Islands. The Chagos Archipelago is an island group in the central Indian Ocean. It is located about 1,000 miles (1,600 km) south of the southern tip of the Indian subcontinent.

23. SUMATRAN RHINO: The Sumatran rhino has become extinct in Malaysia following the death of its last captive individual. At present, it can only be found in Indonesia. It is listed as Critically Endangered in the IUCN Red List.

24. LIVING ROOT BRIDGES: Living root bridges are Ficus elastica based suspension bridges within dense tropical rainforests in Khasi and Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya state. They are locally known as "jing kieng jri".

25. PLAGUE: It is an infectious disease caused by the bacteria Yersinia pestis, a zoonotic bacterium usually found in small mammals and their fleas.
- Bubonic plague: It is the plague which affects the lymphatic system.
- Pneumonic plague: It is a plague infection of the lungs. When bubonic plague advances and spread to the lungs it leads to Pneumonic plague.

26. DANAKIL DEPRESSION: The Danakil Depression is the northern part of the Afar Triangle or Afar Triple Junction in Ethiopia. A recent study has concluded that active and naturally occurring life cannot survive here.

27. BROWN BLOTCHED BENGAL TREE FROG: It is new species of tree frog recently discovered in West Bengal. It belongs to the genus Polypedates- a genus of tree frog found throughout South and Southeast Asia.

28. WASTELANDS ATLAS – 2019: It has been prepared by the Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development in collaboration with National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC), Department of Space. The spatial extent of wastelands in India, for the year 2015-16, is 16.96% of the total geographical area of India

29. 'ZERO CARBON' LAW: New Zealand has passed a 'zero carbon' law which aims to tackle climate change by setting a net-zero target for almost all greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

30. GLOBAL COOLING PRIZE: Ministry of Science & Technology in partnership with BEE & MoEF&CC launched GCP jointly with Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI), USA in 2018. It is an international competition to incentivize the development of a residential cooling technology that will have at least five times (5x) less climate impact than the standard Room Air Conditioning (RAC) units sold today.

31. E-GANNA: Uttar Pradesh government launched a dedicated web portal and a mobile application, e-Ganna App, for sugarcane farmers of the state.

32. ICMR: The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), New Delhi is the apex body in India for the formulation, coordination and promotion of biomedical research. It is funded by the Government of India through the Department of Health Research, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.

ForumIAS

33. BIRAC: Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) is a not-for-profit Public Sector Enterprise. It was set up by Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science and Technology Government of India. It aims to empower the emerging biotech industry to undertake strategic research and innovation.

34. TRIFED: Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) was established in 1987.It functions under the administrative control of Ministry of Tribal affairs. The objective of TRIFED is socio-economic development of tribal people in the country by way of marketing development of the tribal products. It acts as a facilitator and service provider.

35. NATIONAL ORGAN & TISSUE TRANSPLANT ORGANISATION (NOTTO): NOTTO is a National level organization set up under Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India. It functions as an apex centre for All India activities of coordination and networking for procurement and distribution of Organs and Tissues and registry of Organs and Tissues Donation and Transplantation in the country.

ForumIAS

MCQs – CA

Q.1) Which of the following statements are correct in respect of the Anti-Defection law:

1. It is contained in the 10th Schedule of the Constitution.

2. The President has the final authority to decide on the disqualification of members on the ground of defection.

3. The law provides for a time period of 3 months to decide on disqualification of a member.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

a) 1 and 3 only

b) 2 only

c) 1 only

d) 2 and 3 only

Ans) c

Exp)

- The Anti-defection law is contained in the **10th Schedule** of the Constitution. It was enacted by Parliament in 1985.

- The purpose of the anti-defection law is to curb political defection by the legislators. The law applies to both Parliament and state assemblies.

- It lays down the process by which legislators may be disqualified on grounds of defection by the **Presiding Officer of a legislature** based on a petition by any other member of the House.

- However, the law **does not specify a timeframe** for Speakers to decide on defection proceedings.

Q.2) Recently, the India Justice Report 2019 was released. Which of the following statements are correct with reference to the report?

1. It was released by the Law Ministry.

2. It is India's first-ever ranking of states on justice delivery.

3. Kerala topped the list of states in delivering justice to people.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

a) 1 and 2 only

b) 2 only

c) 1 and 3 only

d) 3 only

Ans) b

Exp)

- It has been **prepared by Tata Trusts** in collaboration with the Centre for Social Justice, Common Cause, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, Daksh, TISS-Prayas and Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy.

- It is **India's first-ever ranking of states on justice delivery**.

- The report looks into the 'four pillars' – of Judiciary, Legal Aid, Police and Prisons, and analyses the budgets, human resources, personnel workload, diversity, infrastructure and trends against the government's declared standards and benchmarks.

- **Maharashtra has topped** the list of states in delivering justice to people followed by Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Haryana.

Uttar Pradesh and Bihar ranked at the bottom.

- Among the small states (where the population is less than one crore each), Goa has topped the list followed by Sikkim and Himachal Pradesh. Tripura ranked at the bottom.

Q.3) In which of the following cases did the Supreme Court laid down the law that the only way to determine support enjoyed by a particular state government would be by means of a floor test.

a) Keshavananda Bharati case, 1973

b) Indra Sawhney Case, 1992

c) ADM Jabalpur case, 1976

d) S.R Bommai case, 1994

Ans) d

Exp)

- In the **S.R Bommai case**, the Supreme Court has laid down a number of guidelines to curb the Centre's capacity to dismiss a state government, and upheld the federal structure enshrined in the Constitution.

- The ruling laid down the law that the only way to determine support enjoyed by a particular state government would be by means of a floor test.

- The court also ruled that the validity of a proclamation of President's Rule is subject to judicial review.

- Further, it said that the only time the President shall have unconditional powers to dissolve a state government is

when there is a complete breakdown of constitutional machinery.

Q.4) Which among the following states come under the sixth schedule of the Indian Constitution?

1. Assam
2. Meghalaya
3. Tripura
4. Nagaland

Select the correct answer using the code below:

a) 1 and 2 only

b) 2 and 4 only

c) 1, 2 and 3 only

d) 1, 3 and 4 only

Ans) c

Exp) About Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution:

- The Constitution of India makes special provisions for the administration of the tribal dominated areas in **four states** namely **Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.**

- As per article 244 and 6th Schedule, these areas are called "Tribal Areas",which are technically different from the Scheduled Areas under fifth schedule.

- The Governors of these four states are empowered to declare some tribal dominated districts / areas of these states as autonomous districts and autonomous regions.

- It provides for the creation of autonomous District and Regional Councils in these tribal areas and they enjoy a certain degree of administrative,

legislative, judicial and financial autonomy.

Q.5) Consider the following statements regarding the appointment of the Chief Justice of India (CJI).

1. The Constitution has laid down elaborate provisions for the appointment of the CJI.
2. It mentions that the senior most judges in the Supreme Court become the CJI.
3. The President administers the oath of office to the new CJI.

Which of the above statements are **incorrect**?

a) 1 and 2 only
b) 2 and 3 only
c) 1 and 3 only
d) All of the above

Ans) a

Exp)

- The Constitution of India **does not have any provision** for criteria and procedure for appointing the CJI.
- Article 124(1) of the Indian Constitution says there shall be a Supreme Court of India consisting of a Chief Justice of India.
- The closest mention is in Article 126 which deals with the appointment of an acting CJI. In the absence of a constitutional provision, the procedure relies on custom and convention.
- **According to convention**, when the incumbent CJI retires (all Supreme Court judges retire at the age of 65), **the senior most judge in the SC becomes the CJI**.

- However, this convention has been broken twice. In 1973, Justice A. N. Ray was appointed superseding 3 senior judges.
- **The President administers the oath of office to the new CJI.**

Q.6) Consider the following statements regarding the Global Prosperity Index.

1. This was the second edition of the index which ranks countries on factors such as the affordability of housing and access to education and healthcare, besides GDP per capita.
2. Mumbai has emerged as India's highest-ranked city at No. 83 in the index.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

Select the correct answer using the code below

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans) d

Exp)

- The **first-ever** Prosperity & Inclusion City Seal and Awards (PICSA) Index has been released by the Basque institutions and compiled by D&L Partners.
- The index has ranked 113 cities across the globe in terms of their inclusive prosperity. It measures factors such as the affordability of housing and access to education and healthcare, besides GDP per capita.
- The index has been topped by Zurich in Switzerland. It is followed by Vienna and

Copenhagen in the second and third place respectively.

- The Zurich was ranked first as it scores strongly across all measures, particularly on quality of life, work, housing, leisure, safety, and education with the Swiss higher education system attaining an especially high score.
- **Bangalore has emerged as India's highest-ranked city at No. 83 in** the index. Delhi at 101 and Mumbai at 107 are the other Indian cities to make at the index.

Q.7) Which of the following statements regarding the Convention on Cybercrime of the Council of Europe are correct:

1. It is also known as the Budapest Convention.
2. It is the only international binding treaty on cybercrime.
3. Russia and China are the only countries that are not a party to the convention.

Select the correct answer using the code below :

a) 1 only
b) 1 and 2 only
c) 2 and 3 only
d) 1, 2 and 3 only

Ans) b

Exp)

- The Convention on Cybercrime of the Council of Europe, also known as the **Budapest Convention**, is the **only binding international instrument on cybercrime.**

- It was signed in 2001 and came into force from 2004. **India and Russia are not a party to the Convention**.
- The objectives of the Convention are:
  o Harmonising the domestic criminal substantive law elements of offences and connected provisions in the area of cyber-crime.
  o Providing for domestic criminal procedural law powers necessary for the investigation and prosecution of cybercrime.
  o Set up a robust regime of international cooperation on issues of cybercrime.

Q.8) Which of the following statements are correct regarding the Kimberley process:

1. It is an international organisation that regulates trade in rough diamonds.
2. India is one of the founding members.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans) b

Exp)

- The Kimberley Process **is an international certification scheme** that regulates trade in rough diamonds.
- It aims to prevent the flow of conflict diamonds while helping to protect legitimate trade in rough diamonds.

ForumIAS

- The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) outlines the rules that govern the trade in rough diamonds. **India is one of the founding members of the KPCS.**

- The KP is **not an international organisation** as it has no permanent offices or permanent staff.

- It relies on the contributions under the principle of burden sharing of participants supported by industry and civil society observers.

Q.9) Which among the following became the first state in India to enact a law on contract farming?

a) Kerala

b) Karnataka

c) Tamil Nadu

d) West Bengal

Ans) c

Exp)

- Contract farming refers to varied **formal and informal agreements** between producers and processors or buyers.

- **Tamil Nadu** has become the first State in the country to enact a law on contract farming with President giving assent to the Agricultural Produce and Livestock Contract Farming and Services (Promotion and Facilitation) Act.

- The act provides for a six-member body called the Tamil Nadu State Contract Farming and Services Authority to ensure proper implementation of the Act and make suggestions to the State

government for promotion and better performance of contract farming.

- The act safeguards the interests of farmers during times of bumper crop or when market prices fluctuate. The farmers would also be paid a predetermined price which had been arrived at the time of signing agreements with buyers.

- The farmers could get support from purchasers for improving productivity by way of inputs, feed and fodder and technology.

- However, any produce banned by the Centre or State government or the Indian Council of Agricultural Research would not be covered under contract farming.

Q.10) Which of the following statements are correct regarding Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)?

1. It was initiated through the Companies Act, 2013.

2. The Act encourages companies to spend 3% of their average net profit in the previous three years on CSR activities.

3. The provisions of CSR are only applicable to Indian companies.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

a) 1 only

b) 1 and 2 only

c) 2 and 3 only

d) 1, 2 and 3 only

ForumIAS

Ans) a

Exp)

- Corporate social responsibility (CSR) was initiated through the **Companies Act, 2013.**

- The act mandates companies and government organisations with (a)turnover of Rs1,000 crore or more(b)net worth exceeding Rs 500crore or (c)having more than Rs 5 crore in net profits to spend **2% of average net profit** of the preceding three years on CSR.

- The provisions of CSR are not only applicable to Indian companies but **also applicable to branch and project offices of a foreign company in India.**

- The CSR amount can be spent on initiatives that would have social, economic and environmental impact or a way to give back to the society.

- Government has also widened the scope of CSR activities and companies can now contribute towards research across various fields such as science, technology and medicine.

- Besides, CSR funds can also be spent on incubators funded by the Centre or state or any state-owned companies.

Q.11) The Injeti Srinivas Committee was formed to give recommendations about which of the following?

a) Core investment companies

b) Corporate Social Responsibility

c) Non-Banking Financial Companies

d) Insolvency and Bankruptcy

Ans) b

Exp)

- Government had formed a High-Level Committee on **Corporate social responsibility (CSR)** under the Chairmanship of Corporate Affairs Secretary Injeti Srinivas.

- The committee has recommended that CSR expenditure should be eligible for tax deduction under the income tax law. Currently, income tax law does not allow CSR spends as tax deductible amount.

- It has suggested to align Schedule 7 of the Companies Act which outlines the kinds of activities that qualify as CSR with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

- It has also recommended a provision to carry forward of unspent CSR balance for a period of three to five years.

- The violation of CSR compliance may be made a civil offence and shifted to the penalty regime.

Q.12) Which among the following products recently got a HS code?

a) Darjeeling Green tea

b) Palani Panchamirtham

c) Mizo Puanchei

d) Khadi

Ans) d

Exp) The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has allocated separate **HS (Harmonized System) code for Khadi** to boost exports of this signature fabric of India.

About HS Code:

ForumIAS

- HS stands for Harmonized System and was developed by the World Customs Organization (WCO).

- The code is used by customs officers to clear commodities entering or crossing international borders.

- The code aids countries in the collection of international trade statistics and forms a basis for customs tariffs. This helps in better reach of the product and increases its global popularity.

About Khadi:

- Khadi refers to hand-spun and hand-woven cloth. The raw materials may be cotton, silk, or wool, which are spun into threads on a charkha.

- Khadi was launched in 1920 as a political weapon in the Swadeshi movement of Mahatma Gandhi

Darjeeling Green tea, Palani Panchamirtham (a 'prasadam' or religious offering in temples) from Tamil Nadu, Mizo Puanchei (a colorful shawl) from Mizoram recently received the GI tag.

Q.13) Which of the following statements are correct regarding the Periodic Labour Force Survey?

1. It was launched in 2017 by the National Statistical Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

2. The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) conducts the survey.

3. It has replaced the Annual Employment Unemployment Survey in 2017 on the recommendations of the Task Force on

Employment chaired by Dr. Arvind Panagariya.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

a) 1 only

b) 1 and 2 only

c) 2 and 3 only

d) All of the above

Ans) d

Exp)

- National Statistical Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, launched Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) on April 2017.

- The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) conducts the survey.

- The survey seeks to generate quarterly reports on Labour Force Indicators such as Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR), Worker Population Ratio (WPR) and Unemployment Rate (UR) in urban areas and an annual report for rural India.

- The periodic labour force survey had replaced the Annual Employment Unemployment Survey in 2017 on the recommendations of the Task Force on Employment chaired by Dr. Arvind Panagariya, then Vice-Chairman of NITI Aayog.

Q.14) Which of the following statements about the Fall Armyworm (FAW) are correct?

1. It is an invasive agricultural pest.

2. It is native to the Americas and was first reported in West Africa in 2016.

3. It is known to attack only the maize crop.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

a) 1 and 2 only

b) 2 and 3 only

c) 1 and 3 only

d) All of the above.

Ans) a

Exp)

- The Fall Armyworm (FAW) or Spodoptera frugiperda is an **invasive agricultural pest. It was first reported in West Africa in 2016.**

- FAW was spotted for the first time in India in Karnataka in June 2018 and then spread to ten other states including Odisha.

- The pest attacks the crop within 45 days of sowing, chewing away the unopened green leaves in the growth stage. If not monitored effectively, the damage can be massive even up to 100%.

- The pest **can attack at least 80 types of crops** including bajra, jawar, ragi, paddy, wheat and vegetables. However, in Odisha the attack has been confined to maize.

Q.15) The Manipur Sangai festival is organised every year from november 21 to 30. Consider the following statements regarding the Sangai deer.

1. The sangai is an endemic and endangered subspecies of brow-antlered deer found in the northeastern states of India.

2. The species is listed as Endangered (EN) in IUCN Red list.

3. It is also the state animal of Manipur.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

Select the correct answer using the code below:

a) 1 only

b) 1 and 3 only

c) 2 only

d) 2 and 3 only

Ans) d

Exp)

- The Sangai is an endemic and endangered subspecies of brow-antlered deer found **only in Manipur,** India.

- The species is listed as **Endangered (EN)** in IUCN Red list.

- The species is found only at Keibul Lamjao National Park over the floating biomass locally called phumdi in the south eastern part of Loktak Lake.

- It is the state animal of Manipur.

Q.16) WAYU and HEPA recently seen is news are:

a) Tropical cyclones

b) Air purifiers

c) Renewable energy projects

d) Local winds in the Indian subcontinent

Ans) b

Exp) WAYU and HEPA are roadside air purifiers.

About WAYU:

- WAYU stands for Wind Augmentation Purifying Unit. The device has the capacity to purify air in an area of 500-meter square.

- It has been developed by the CSIR–National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (CSIR-NEERI) as a part of Technology Development Project

being funded by the Department of Science and Technology.

- The device works on two principles mainly wind generation for dilution of air pollutants and Active Pollutants removal.

- It has filters for particulate matter (PM) removal and activated carbon (charcoal) and UV lamps for poisonous gases removal such as Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and Carbon Monoxide.

- The device also has one fan and filter for sucking and removing PM. There are two UV lamps and half kg of activated carbon charcoal coated with special chemical Titanium Dioxide.

About HEPA Filters:

- HEPA stands for High-Efficiency Particulate Air filter (HEPA) filter.

- The HEPA filter sucks airborne contaminants and pushes out clean, fresh air.

- The filters can trap nearly 99.97% of particles that are 0.3 microns.

Q.17) Consider the following statements about Sambhar Lake.

1. It is India's largest inland freshwater lake.

2. It was designated as a Ramsar site in 1990.

3. It spreads across Jaipur and Nagaur districts and also a part of Ajmer district in Rajasthan.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

Select the correct answer using the code below

a) 1 only

b) 1 and 2 only

c) 2 and 3 only

d) 1 and 3 only

Ans) c

Exp)

- Sambhar Lake is India's largest (230 sq.km) inland saltwater lake.

- It spreads across Jaipur and Nagaur districts and also a part of Ajmer district in Rajasthan.

- The lake receives water from five rivers Medtha, Samaod, Mantha, Rupangarh, Khari and Khandela.

- Sambhar Lake was designated as a Ramsar site in 1990.

- It is famous for salt production and is also an Important Bird Area (IBA).

Q.18) Which of the following statements are correct about the Kuiper belt.

1. It is a circumstellar disc in the outer Solar System, extending from the orbit of Jupiter to approximately 50 AU from the Sun.

2. Ultima Thule is a Kuiper Belt object and the farthest object ever explored by any spacecraft.

3. The New Horizons spacecraft was the first mission to explore the Kuiper Belt.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

a) 1 and 2 only

b) 1 and 3 only

c) 2 and 3 only

d) All of the above

Ans) c

Exp) Kuiper Belt:

- The Kuiper belt occasionally called the Edgeworth–Kuiper belt, is a circumstellar disc in the outer Solar System, extending

from the **orbit of Neptune** (at 30 AU) to approximately 50 AU from the Sun.

- It consists of icy objects, which are remnants from the formation of the solar system. Pluto is also a part of the Kuiper Belt.

- The **New Horizons spacecraft** was launched in 2006 by NASA. It is the **first mission to explore the Kuiper belt**.

Ultima Thule:

- Ultima Thule is a **Kuiper Belt object** and the **farthest object** ever explored by any spacecraft. The object is officially named **2014 MU69** 9renamed as Arrokoth, meaning 'sky').

- It is a contact binary that is single object with two lobes attached gently. NASA dubbed the larger lobe as Ultima and three time's smaller lobe as Thule.

- In colour, Ultima Thule has a reddish hue which is believed to be caused by modification of the organic materials on its surface.

- NASA has found evidence for a unique mixture of methanol, water ice, and organic molecules on Ultima Thule's surface.

Q.19) Which of the following statements about Cloud Seeding are correct?

1. It is a weather modification technology to create artificial rains.

2. It works only when there is enough pre-existing clouds in the atmosphere.

3. The catalysts used are the iodides of silver or potassium, dry ice (solid carbon dioxide) or liquid propane.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

a) 1 only

b) 2 and 3 only

c) 1 and 3 only

d) 1, 2 and 3 only

Ans) d

Exp)

- Cloud seeding is a kind of weather modification technology to **create artificial rainfall.** It works only when there is enough **pre-existing clouds** in the atmosphere.

- Rain happens when moisture in the air reaches levels at which it can no longer be held and cloud seeding aims to facilitate and accelerate that process by making available chemical 'nuclei' around which the condensation can take place.

- These seeds of rain can be the **iodides of silver or potassium, dry ice (solid carbon dioxide) or liquid propane.** The seeds can be delivered by plane or simply by spraying from the ground.

Q.20) Recently in the news, the Mine Countermeasure Exercise (MINEX) is an annual exercise between which of the following countries?

a) India and Russia

b) India and Japan

c) India and Thailand

d) India and Singapore

Ans) b

Exp)

- The Mine Countermeasure Exercise (MINEX) is an annual exercise between India (Indian Naval Forces) and Japan (Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force).
- This is the **first time** an explosive ordnance disposal and mine countermeasure exercise was held by Indian and Japanese forces.

Additional information:

- Other exercises between India and Japan:
  - JIMEX- It is a bilateral maritime exercise between India and Japan.
  - Exercise Malabar– It is a trilateral naval exercise involving the United States, Japan and India as permanent partners.
  - Sahayog-Kaijin – It is a joint bilateral exercise between Indian Coast Guard and the Japan Coast Guard.
  - Exercise DHARMA GUARDIAN- It is an annual joint military exercise between Indian and Japan since 2018.

Q.21) Match the following exercises india has with the countries.

Exercise	Country
1. Dustlik	a. Indonesia
2. Samudra Shakti	b. Qatar
3. Za'ir-Al-Bahr	c. Uzbekistan

Select the correct answer using the code below:

a) 1- b, 2-a, 3-c

b) 1-c, 2-a, 3-b

c) 1-a, 2-c, 3-b

d) 1-c, 2-a, 3-b

Ans) b

Exp)

- The exercise Dustlik is the first ever military exercise between India and Uzbekistan. The aim of the exercise is to focus on counterinsurgency and counter-terrorism operations in mountainous, rural and urban scenarios under the United Nations mandate.
- Samudra Shakti is an annual naval exercise between Indian and Indonesian Navy. The first edition of the exercise took place in 2018 in the Java Sea.
- Za'ir-Al-Bahr (Roar of the sea) is a bilateral maritime exercise between the Qatari Naval Forces and Indian Navy.

Q.22) The Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN Yojana is associated with which of the following:

a) Insurance

b) Biofuels

c) Forest resources

d) Animal protection

Ans) b

Exp) Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN (Jaiv Indhan-Vatavaran Anukool Fasal Awashesh Nivaran) Yojana

- The scheme was launched in 2019. It is implemented by Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.
- The scheme envisages providing financial support to Integrated Bio-Ethanol Projects using lignocellulosic biomass & other renewable feedstock

Q.23) The K-12 Education Transformation framework was recently launched in India to facilitate digital transformation of schools in India. It was launched by which of the following:

a) World Bank

b) World Economic Forum

c) Microsoft

d) UNDP

Ans) c

Exp)

- Microsoft has launched its 'K-12 Education Transformation Framework' to facilitate comprehensive digital transformation of schools in India.

- The framework is aimed at facilitating comprehensive digital transformation of schools in India.

- It will provide efficient tools to achieve the ambitious change many schools seek and to thoughtfully integrate technology in powerful and productive ways.

- The framework is a flexible platform based on the latest research and input from hundreds of academics, experts, and policymakers.

- It comprises of four pillars namely (a)leadership and policy, (b)modern teaching and learning (c)intelligent environments and (d)technology blueprint.

Q.24) Which of the following statements are **incorrect** with respect to the Danakil Depression:

1. The Depression overlaps the borders of Eritrea, Djibouti and the entire Afar Region of

Ethiopia. It is part of the great East African Rift Valley.

2. It is home to a number of active and naturally occurring microbes.

3. In 1974, Donald Johanson and colleagues found the celebrated Australopithecus fossil known as "Lucy" in the region.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

a) 1 and 2 only

b) 3 only

c) 2 only

d) 1 and 3 only

Ans) c

Exp)

- The Danakil Depression is the northern part of the Afar Triangle or Afar Triple Junction in Ethiopia. It lies between the Danakil Alps (east) and the Ethiopian Plateau (west).

- The Depression overlaps the borders of Eritrea, Djibouti and the entire Afar Region of Ethiopia. It is part of the great East African Rift Valley.

- It is one of the lowest (125 m below sea level) and hottest place on Earth.

- Due to its extreme climatic conditions, all the water entering Danakil evaporates, and no streams flow out of it. It is covered with more than 10 lakh tonnes of salt.

- In 1974, Donald Johanson and colleagues found the celebrated Australopithecus fossil known as "Lucy" in the region.

- The hot springs in the Danakil Depression are home to microorganisms called extremophiles (which live in extreme conditions). Active and

ForumIAS

naturally occurring organisms cannot survive here.

Q.25) The legendary port of Muziris was located in which of the following states?

a) Tamil nadu

b) Karnataka

c) Andhra Pradesh

d) Kerala

Ans) d

Exp)

- Muziris was a port city on the **Malabar Coast**. Muziris was also known as Murachipattanam.

- The exact location of Muziris is unknown and is generally speculated to be situated around present day **Kodungallur, Kerala.**

- In Ramayana, Murachipattanam is the place where Sugreeva's (one of the Monkey King) sleuths passed through while looking for the abducted Sita.

- Sangam literature describes Roman ships coming to Muziris laden with gold to be exchanged for pepper.

- According to historians, in 1341, when the profile of the water bodies in the Periyar River basin on the Malabar Coast underwent a major transformation, Muziris got destroyed due to flood and earthquake.

- The Government of Kerala has initiated the Muziris Heritage Project to reinstate the historical and cultural significance of the legendary port of Muziris

ForumIAS

MCQs – STATIC SYLLABUS

Q.1) Which among the following are the major features of parliamentary government in India?

1. Collective responsibility of the executive to the legislature
2. Leadership of the prime minister
3. Absolute separation of the legislature and the executive organs
4. Legal responsibility of the Minister

Select the correct answer using the codes below.

a) 1 and 2 only
b) 2 and 3 only
c) 3 and 4 only
d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans) a

Exp) The parliamentary system is based on the principle of coordination between the legislative and executive organs while the presidential system is based on the doctrine of separation of powers between the two organs. Other features of Indian parliamentary system include:

Collective responsibility, majority party rule, nominal and real executive, PM leadership.

There is no legal responsibility of ministers in Indian Parliamentary system, however, it is present in Britain system.

Q.2) Which of these provisions of the Constitution explains the secular character of India?

1. Preamble
2. Directive Principles of State Policy
3. Fundamental Rights

Select the correct answer using the codes below.

a) 1 and 2 only
b) 1 and 3 only
c) 2 and 3 only
d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans) d

Exp) The term 'secular' was added to the Preamble of the Constitution by the 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1976.

Preamble mentions the liberty of worship,

DPSP- Art 44

FR- Art. 25 to 30

Q.3) Which one of the following North-eastern States is not mentioned in Article 371 of the Constitution of India?

a) Sikkim
b) Assam
c) Meghalaya
d) Arunachal Pradesh

Ans) c

Exp) Article 371 – Maharashtra and Gujarat

Article 371A – Nagaland

Article 371B – Assam

Article 371C – Manipur

Article 371D & E – Andhra Pradesh

Article 371F – Sikkim.

Article 371G – Mizoram

Article 371H – Arunachal Pradesh

Article 371I – Goa

Article 371J grants special status to six backward districts of Hyderabad-Karnataka region.

Q.4) Consider the following statements.

1. As per Article 142 of the Constitution, it is the duty of the president to facilitate the

enforcement of the decrees of the supreme court.

2. The Supreme Court may, with the approval of the President, make rules for regulating generally the practice and procedure of the court.

Which of the above is/are correct?

a) 1 only

b) 2 only

c) Both 1 and 2

d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans) c

Exp) Statement 1: A142 (1): 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 any decree so passed or order so made shall be enforceable throughout the

Statement 2: Subject to the provisions of any law made by Parliament, the Supreme Court may from time to time, with the approval of the President, make rules for regulating generally the practice and procedure of the Court.

Q.5) Biodiversity hotspots are regions that have

a) Highest density of flora and fauna populations

b) unique flora and fauna population

c) Very rich and endemic biodiversity that is also threatened due to various factors

d) Association with Mediterranean vegetation

Ans) c

Exp) A biodiversity hotspot is a biogeographic region that is both a significant reservoir of biodiversity and is threatened with destruction. The term biodiversity hotspot specifically refers to 25 biologically rich areas around the world that

have lost at least 70 percent of their original habitat.

The remaining natural habitat in these biodiversity hotspots amounts to just 1.4 percent of the land surface of the planet, yet supports nearly 60 percent of the world's plant, bird, mammal, reptile, and amphibian species.

Q.6) Coral reefs are found in:

1. Gulf of Kutch

2. Andaman and Nicobar Islands

3. Gulf of Mannar biosphere reserve

4. Lakshadweep Island

Select the correct answer using the codes below.

a) 1 and 3 only

b) 1 and 4 only

c) 3 and 4 only

d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Ans) d

Exp) The major reef formations in India are restricted to the: Gulf of Mannar, Palk bay,

Gulf of Kutch, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep islands.

Q.7) Consider the following factors which results in an increase in salinity of ocean water

1. High temperature

2. High humidity

3. Pressure of winds

4. Presence of river mouths

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

a) 1 and 3 only

b) 1 and 4 only

c) 1, 2 and 3

d) All of these

ForumIAS

Ans) a

Exp) The question explores the concept of evaporation, precipitation, humidity and salinity. In general, an increase in temperature results in increased evaporation. But if the humidity is high, an increase in temperature does not result in higher evaporation. Thus, in equatorial regions, with higher temperature and higher humidity, do not have high salinity.

Q.8) Consider the following statements related to Ozone layer.

1. At the stratosphere, the ozone layer's average thickness is about 3 kilometres.
2. The ozone hole over Antarctica is seasonal in nature.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans) b

Exp) The thickness of the ozone in a column of air from the ground to the top

of the atmosphere is measured in terms of Dobson units (DU). Over the Earth's surface, the ozone layer's average thickness is about 300 Dobson Units or a layer that is 3 millimetres thick.

The ozone hole occurs during the Antarctic spring, from September to early

December, as strong westerly winds start to circulate around the continent and create an

atmospheric container. Within this polar vortex, over 50 percent of the lower stratospheric ozone is destroyed during the Antarctic spring.

Q.9) Consider the following about Eco-sensitive zones.

1. Eco-sensitive Zones is defined in The Environment Protection Act (EPA), 1986.
2. As per EPA, 1986, the Central Government can restrict areas in which any industrial operations

subject to certain safeguards.

Select the correct answer using the codes below.

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans) b

Exp) The Environment Protection Act, 1986 does not mention the word "Eco-sensitive Zones". The section 3(2)(v) of the Act, says that the Central Government can restrict areas in which any

industries, operations or processes or class of industries, shall not be

carried out or shall be carried out subject to certain safeguards

Q.10) Consider the following statement about the North-East Monsoon in India

1. It is also called as retreating monsoon.
2. It is responsible for rainfall along the Coromandel coast of India.
3. It picks up moisture from the Bay of Bengal.

Which of the above statements are correct?

a) 1 and 3 only
b) 2 and 3 only
c) 1, 2 and 3
d) 1 and 2 only

Ans) c

Exp) The North-East monsoon is also called retreating monsoons in India. They move from land towards the ocean, they pick up moisture while traversing over the bay of bengal and then cause precipitation in South-eastern India. They cause rainfall along the coromandel coast.

Q.11) India has recently announced 'Act Far East Policy' to boost economic relations with which of the following country?

a) Russia

b) China

c) Japan

d) North Korea

Ans) a

Exp) PM Modi unveiled the "Act Far East" policy to boost India's engagement with Russia's Far East region

Q.12) Recently 'Good Friday Agreement (1998)' was in news, Among the following which country was involved in the peace agreement

a) Germany

b) Ireland

c) Spain

d) The USA

Ans) b

Exp) The Belfast Agreement is also known as the Good Friday Agreement, because it was reached on Good Friday, 10 April 1998. It was a peace agreement between the British and Irish governments, and most of the political parties in Northern Ireland, on how Northern Ireland should be governed.

Q.13) Consider the following statements regarding 'Exercise Tiger Triumph'

1. It is a proposed Tri-service exercise between India and China, to be held in 2019

2. At present, India conducts Tri-service only exercise with Russia.

Which of the above statements are correct?

a) 1 only

b) 2 only

c) Both 1 and 2

d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans) b

Exp) Statement 2 is correct.

Statement 1 is false. Exercise Tiger triumph is the proposed Tri-services exercise between India and the USA, to be held in 2019

Q.14) The 13th amendment has been a point of contention between India and Sri Lanka. The 13th amendment provided for

1. establishment of provincial councils.

2. taking action against the human rights violators

3. creation of a second chamber in central legislature.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below.

a) 1 only

b) 1 and 2 only

c) 2 and 3 only

d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans) a

Exp)

Statement 1: The Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka created Provincial Councils in Sri Lanka. This also made Sinhala and

Tamil as the official language of the country and English as the link language.

Statement 2 is false. There are talks about the creation of a second chamber in the central legislature. This is deemed as 13 plus. It was not there in the original 13th amendment

Q.15) Recently, CLOUD Act or 'The Clarifying Lawful Overseas Use of Data Act' was in the news, Which country has promulgated the law?

a) The European Union

b) The United Kingdom

c) India

d) The USA

Ans) d

Exp) The United States government enacted the "Clarifying Lawful Overseas Use of Data Act" also known as the CLOUD Act which allows U.S. law enforcement agencies to access data stored abroad without requiring the specific cooperation of foreign governments.

Under this law, U.S. law enforcement agencies can seek or issue orders that compel companies to provide data regardless of where the data is located as long as the data is under their "possession, custody or control".

It further allows the US communication service providers to intercept or provide the content of communications in response to orders from foreign governments if the foreign government has entered into an executive agreement with the US upon approval by the Attorney General and concurrence with the Secretary of State.

The Act also absolves companies from criminal and civil liability when disclosing information in good faith pursuant to an executive agreement

between the US and a foreign country. Such access would be reciprocal, with the US government having similar access rights to data stored in the foreign country.

Q.16) Which of the following harmful emissions are regulated by Bharat Stage (BS)

1. Carbon dioxide (CO2)

2. Methane

3. Particulate Matter

4. Unburnt hydrocarbons (HC)

5. Nitrogen Oxides (NOx)

Select the correct answer using the codes below.

a) 1, 2 and 3 only

b) 3, 4 and 5 only

c) 1, 2 and 5 only

d) All of them

Ans) b

Exp) The government has set a target of ushering in BS-VI fuel by April 2020 by skipping BS-V fuel. The BS-IV compliant vehicles release less pollutants Carbon Mono-oxide (CO), Hydrocarbon

(HC), Oxides of Nitrogen (NOx), Sulphur (SOx) and particulate matter (PM) compared to BS III compliant vehicles.

Q.17) Lorenz Curve is associated with the determination of

a) Economic Inequality in the economy

b) Relationship between Tax revenue and tax bases

c) Relationship between Unemployment and rates of inflation

d) Changes in market prices in situations of boom and recession

Ans) a

Exp) Learning: The Laffer Curve is associated with tax revenues.

The Lorenz curve represents wealth distribution. The Lorenz curve can be used to show what percentage of a nation's residents possess what percentage of that nation's wealth. For example, it might show that the country's poorest 10% possess 2% of the country's wealth.

Q.18) Consider the following statements about the Bharat 22 Exchange Traded Fund (ETF).

1. The fund has been launched to attract Foreign Direct Investment in the better performing PSUs.

2. The fund will be managed by the Reserve Bank of India.

Which of the above is/are correct?

a) 1 only

b) 2 only

c) Both 1 and 2

d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans) d

Exp) The government has announced the first Further Fund Offer (FFO) of Bharat 22 Exchange Traded Fund (ETF). This is in pursuance of its disinvestment policy.

Bharat 22 consists of 22 stocks of CPSE's, PSB's & strategic holding of SUUTI. Bharat 22 is a well Diversified portfolio with 6 sectors (Basic Materials, Energy, Finance, FMCG, Industrials & Utilities).

ICICI Prudential AMC will be the ETF Manager and Asia Index Private Limited (JV BSE and S& P Global) will be the Index Provider.

Q.19) Consider the following about the Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill.

1. The Bill will give the right to the government to confiscate the property of such economic offenders in India and abroad.

2. The Bill will also be applicable on the proxy-owned properties of the economic offenders.

3. The Bill will only be used for economic offences over Rs 10 crores.

Select the correct answer using the codes below.

a) 1 only

b) 1 and 3 only

c) 2 and 3 only

d) 1 and 2 only

Ans) d

Exp) It aims to deter fugitive economic offenders from evading the legal process by fleeing the country and remaining outside the jurisdiction of the courts.

Highlights of the Bill

The Bill defines the economic offenders as those against whom a legal warrant has been issued, but they refuse to adhere to the summons of the legal authorities.

The Bill keeps the banks and other financial institutions at the centre and seeks to help them recover the amount. The Bill will only be used for economic offences over Rs 100 crores.

Q.20) Which of the following is the core function of The Atal Innovation Mission?

1. Promote entrepreneurship through Self-Employment and Talent Utilization (SETU)

2. Promoting Higher education Universities as the centre of research and innovation

3. Sponsor international networks and agencies that support innovation

Select the correct answer using the codes below.

a) 1 only

b) 1 and 2 only

c) 1, 2 and 3

d) 2 and 3 only

Ans) a

Exp) The Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) is the Government of India's flagship initiative to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in the country.

The two core functions of AIM are:

Entrepreneurship promotion through Self-Employment and Talent Utilization, wherein innovators would be supported and mentored to become successful entrepreneurs.

Innovation promotion: to provide a platform where innovative ideas are generated

Q.21) Which of the following is the objective of the ACROSS scheme, launched by the government,

a) Increase the penetration of insurance in rural India

b) Provide reliable weather and climate forecast

c) Improve the infrastructure of Post Offices in India

d) Enhance the export competitiveness of Indian merchants

Ans) b

Exp) The Cabinet Committee has approved the continuation of the nine sub-schemes of the umbrella scheme "Atmosphere & Climate Research-Modelling Observing Systems & Services

(ACROSS)" during 2017-2020.

ACROSS scheme comes under the Ministry of Earth Sciences

(MoES).

Q.22) Consider the following about Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PKVY).

1. It will help secure Green Cards to families of Indian workforce living abroad and keen on overseas employment.

2. It will provide employment to overseas citizen of India and Non-resident Indians who plan for a permanent residence back in India.

Which of the above is/are correct?

a) 1 only

b) 2 only

c) Both 1 and 2

d) None

Ans) d

Exp) The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) are jointly going to implement the Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PKVY).

It is aimed at training and certification of Indian workforce keen on overseas employment in select sectors and job roles, in line with international standards, to facilitate overseas employment opportunities.

Q.23) The Roaring Forties are

a) Strong westerly winds found in the Southern Hemisphere

b) Weak easterly winds found in the Northern Hemisphere

c) Thunderstorms near the equator

d) Equatorial counter-currents that move near the eastern coastal shores in lower latitudes

Ans) a

Exp) They are generally found between the latitudes of 40 and 50 degrees.

The strong west-to-east air currents are caused by the combination of air being displaced

from the Equator towards the South Pole, the Earth's rotation, and the scarcity of landmasses to serve as windbreaks.

The Roaring Forties were a major aid to ships sailing the Brouwer Route from Europe to the

East Indies or Australasia during the Age of Sail, and in modern usage are favored by

yachtsmen on round-the-world voyages and competitions.

Q.24) What do you understand by the term Dual nature of light?

a) Light is both a wave and a particle.

b) Light cannot travel on two paths at the same time.

c) Light travels refract while traveling through a transparent medium.

d) Light has wavelengths from both ends of the electromagnetic spectrum.

Ans) a

Exp) Light has a dual nature. Sometimes it behaves like a particle (called a photon), which explains how light travels in straight lines Sometimes it behaves like a wave, which explains how light bends (or diffracts) around an Object.

Q.25) Consider the statements with respect to GSAT-11

1. It is the heaviest satellite ever built by ISRO

2. GSAT-11 is part of ISRO's new family of high-throughput communication satellite (HTS) fleet.

Which of the above statements are correct?

a) 1 only

b) 2 only

c) Both 1 and 2

d) None

Ans) c

Exp) GSAT-11 is ISRO's heaviest satellite ever built and weighs about 5854 kilograms.

It was launched onboard Ariane-5 launch vehicle from French Guiana.

ISRO has revealed that the satellite will be initially placed in the Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit

and will be later raised to Geostationary Orbit.