

MONTHLY

FACTLY

EXCLUSIVE CURRENT AFFAIRS FOR

PRELIMS

JANUARY 2019

ForumIAS

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POLITICAL AND NATIONAL ISSUES**Questions/Notes****1. EVM Controversy:**

News: There have been rising controversies around the EVMs regarding their safety features, as a means to ensure free and fair elections.

Facts:

- Security features of EVMs:
 - One-time programmable chip
 - They are standalone machines with no external connection
 - Indigenous machines developed by the engineers of Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and Electronics Corporation of India Limited (ECIL).
 - It allows the voter to cast their votes only once
 - It is installed with a real time clock, recording the time at which every key of the machine is pressed
 - These machines shut down automatically in case of tampering

Other facts:

- Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) is an innovative mechanism to audit the election results and detect fraud/malfunction if any.
- VVPAT machines will be adjoined to the EVMs, further it will generate a paper slip consisting of:
 - Candidate's serial number
 - Name of the Candidate
 - And his corresponding symbol
- This slip will be visible to the voter for 7 seconds in the display unit, thereby will get detached and fall in a box for later audit.
- SC in the Subramanian Swamy v/s ECI 2014 said that VVPAT is necessary for transparency and must be implemented by ECI.
- VVPAT will be used in all the constituencies for the 2019 General Elections.
- The EVMs have two parts: Control unit with the polling officer and the Ballot unit kept in the compartment for voting.
- The machine runs on a single alkaline battery, fitted in the control unit and hence can function even in areas with no electricity.
- EVM was first used in 1982 Kerala assembly by-elections.
- The Representation of People's Act was amended in 1988 to allow the usage of EVMs.
- In 1999 they were used for the 1st time for Goa legislative assembly elections.
- In 2004, EVMs for the first time were used for the general elections of the country.

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2. Reservation for the Economically Weaker Sections:

News: President has given assent to the 124th constitutional Amendment Bill (which is now Constitution 103rd amendment Act) providing 10 per cent reservation for economically weaker sections.

Facts:

- Eligibility Criteria:
 - People who have an annual income of less than Rs.8 lakhs
 - People who own less than five acres of farmland
 - People who have a house less than 1,000 square feet in a town or 100 square yard in a notified municipal area.
- The Bill amends Article 15 and 16 of the Constitution:
- It enables the government to take special measures for the advancement of the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS), under Article 15.
- It adds article 16(6) to permit the government to reserve 10% of all posts for the Economically Weaker Sections.
- 10% reservation will be over and above the 50% reservation for ST, SC and OBCs.
- It is for the first time that economic class has been constitutionally recognized as the basis for reservations.
- Other facts:
- Gujarat has become the first state to implement the 10% quota reserved for people from economically weaker sections proposed under the 103rd constitutional amendment Act.

3. Citizenship Amendment Bill 2016:

News: The Citizenship Amendment Bill 2016 lapsed.

Facts:

- The Bill amends the Citizenship Act 1955.
- The bill is facing opposition on the ground of violating article 14 (Right to Equality) and on the pretext that violation of law as a ground to cancel OICs registration is too wide and vague condition.

Bill provisions:

- The Bill amends the Act to provide that the following minority groups will not be treated as illegal migrants: Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, however, to get this benefit, they must have also been exempted from the Foreigners Act, 1946 and the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920 by the central government.
- For people belonging to the same six religions and three countries, the Bill relaxes the aggregate period of residential qualification required for acquiring

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citizenship by naturalization from 11 years to 6 years out of the 14 years preceding the immediate 12 months.

- The Bill provides that the registration of Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders may be cancelled if they violate any law.

Other facts:

- The bill is also seen as a violation of the Assam accord 1985.
- It was signed between the GoI and the Leaders of the Assam movement.
- According to the accord all those who have entered Assam after 1971 were to be deported, irrespective of their religion.

4. Autonomous Councils-Schedule VI:

News: The 125th Amendment Bill 2019 was introduced in Rajya Sabha to increase to increase the financial and executive powers of 10 autonomous councils under VIth Schedule.

Facts:

- The VIth schedule deals with the administration of the tribal areas of four states- Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya and Mizoram.
- Tribal areas in these states are demarcated as autonomous districts with autonomous district councils.
- Governors of four states viz. Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram are empowered to declare some tribal dominated districts / areas of these states as Autonomous districts by order.
- Currently there are 10 such councils in total.
- The District Councils and Regional Councils are consisting of maximum 30 members, of whom the Governor shall nominate maximum 4 members and the rest are elected.
- Bodoland Territorial Council is an exception where out of 46 members, 40 are elected on the basis of adult suffrage and remaining 6 are nominated by the governor amongst the underrepresented community of Bodoland Territorial Areas District.
- Current councils:

Assam	Meghalaya	Mizoram	Tripura	Questions/Notes
Bodoland Territorial Council	Garo Hills Autonomous District Council	Chakma Autonomous District Council	Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council	
Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council	Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council	Lai Autonomous District Council		
Dima Hasao Autonomous District Council	Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council	Mara Autonomous District Council		
<p>5. Amendment to the Trade Union Act 1926:</p> <p>News: Government approved an amendment to the Trade Union Act 1926 to recognize trade unions at central and state level.</p> <p>Facts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The current Act has provision only for the registration of the trade unions and not for their recognition. The addition of Section 10(a) to the current statute will empower governments at center and state to recognize trade unions. This will provide trade unions with bargaining and negotiating rights with the employer. <p>Other facts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Trade Union Act 1926 provides for the constitution and registration of trade unions in India. The Act applies to the whole of India except Jammu and Kashmir. Government Servants are not permitted to form trade unions under this Act. <p>6. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas:</p> <p>News: 15th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas was celebrated on the 21-23 January 2019, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.</p> <p>Facts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The theme for the year was “Role of Indian Diaspora in building New India”. The chief guest for this year’s Pravasi Bhartiya Divas was Pravind Jugnauth, Prime Minister of Mauritius. 				

Questions/Notes

- This year the dates have been shifted to 21-23 January to accommodate Republic Day and Kumbh Mela celebrations.
- Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana was launched in PBD 2019 to take Overseas Indians of age 45-60 on a nationwide tour of religious places, where first preference will be given to Girmitiya countries.

Other Facts:

- Girmitiya or Jahajis are the descendants of indentured Indian laborers taken to Fiji, Mauritius etc. by the Europeans.
- This event is organized every 2 years.
- During PBD overseas Indians are honored with Pravasi Bharatiya Samman for their contributions.
- The PBD commemorates return of Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa on 9 January 1915.

7. Raisina Dialogue:

News: The 4th edition of the Raisina Dialogue was held at New Delhi.

Facts:

- The conference is themed "A World Reorder: New Geometrics: Fluid Partnerships: Uncertain Outcomes".
- The Global Innovation Policy Center (GIPC) of the United States Chamber of Commerce has launched a new innovation initiative Fair Value for Innovation.

Other facts:

- It is India's flagship annual conference on geopolitics and geo-economics.
- The Dialogue was first held in 2015.
- It was designed on the lines of Singapore's Shangri-La Dialogue.
- The dialogue is named after Raisina Hill, which is the seat of the Government of India and Rashtrapati Bhawan.
- Observer Research Foundation hosts the conference in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs.

8. National Health Authority:

News: Government approved the restructuring of existing National Health Agency as "National Health Authority" for better implementation of Pradhan Mantri - Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY).

Facts:

- The existing multi-tier decision making structure has been replaced with the Governing Board chaired by the Minister of Health & Family Welfare,

Questions/Notes

Government of India which will enable the decision making at a faster pace, required for smooth implementation of the scheme.

- It is envisaged that the National Health Authority shall have full accountability, authority and mandate to implement PM-JAY through an efficient, effective and transparent decision-making process.
- The composition of the Governing Board is broad based with due representations from the Government, domain experts, etc.
- States shall also be represented in the Governing Board on a rotational basis.
- No new funds have been approved.

Note: refer to the provision of PM-JAY in the September Factly

9. National Statistical Commission:

News: The chairman and members of the National Statistical Commission resigned due to differences with the government over various issues.

Facts:

- The commission was established in 2005 based on the recommendations of the Rangarajan Commission.
- It was established through an executive order and works under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
- The Commission consists of a part-time Chairperson, four part-time Members, an ex-officio Member and a secretary.
- Chief Executive Officer of the NITI Aayog is the ex-officio Member of the commission.
- The Chief Statistician of India who is the Head of the National Statistical Office is the Secretary of the Commission.

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

Questions/Notes

1. Gilgit Baltistan Issue:

News: India summoned a Pakistani diplomat and protested against recent order of Pakistani SC.



Map of the State of Jammu and Kashmir

Facts:

- Pakistan's SC ordered that its jurisdiction and power extends up to the Gilgit Baltistan region of the Pakistan occupied Kashmir.
- Other facts:
- It is located in the northern Pakistan. It borders China in the North, Afghanistan in the west, Tajikistan in the northwest and Kashmir in the southeast.
- It shares a geographical boundary with Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, and India considers it as part of the undivided Jammu and Kashmir, while Pakistan sees it as a separate from PoK.
- The region came under Pakistan's control since November 1947.
- The region was renamed as the Northern Areas of Pakistan and put under the direct control of Islamabad. It has an elected assembly and a council headed by the Pakistani PM.
- Pakistan government in 2018 passed orders towards incorporating this disputed territory as their 5th province besides Balochistan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Sindh.
- The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) also passes through this region.

2. 1st India-Central Asia Dialogue:

News: The 1st India-Central Asia Dialogue was held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

Questions/Notes

Facts:

- The Dialogue was co-chaired by External Affairs Minister (EAM) Sushma Swaraj and the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan, Abdulaziz Kamilov.
- The External Affairs Ministers of Afghanistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan attended the summit.
- India invited the participants to participate in the Chabahar port Initiative of India and Iran.
- India proposed the development of a Regional Development Group for policy and economic coordination.
- India also proposed dialogue on the air corridors with the landlocked Central Asian countries.

3. Space Diplomacy:

News: India has decided to set up five ground stations and more than 500 terminals in the 5 neighboring countries.

Facts:

- These countries include: Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Maldives and Sri Lanka.
- This is an extension of the South Asian Satellite launched in 2017.

Other facts:

- Space Diplomacy is the art of using Space for furthering national interest and international relations.
- Other initiative under space diplomacy:
- Allowing SAARC nation to use the regional positioning system NAVIC.
- India's collaboration with NASA during Chandrayaan Mission.
- Launch of the communication satellite GSAT-9
- ISRO set up the Indo-Myanmar Friendship Centre for Remote sensing 2001
- ISRO Telemetry, Tracking and Command Network (ISTRAC) operate 3 international stations at Brunei, Mauritius and Indonesia.

4. Comprehensive and Progressive Trans Pacific Partnership (CPTPP):

News: The Comprehensive and Progressive Trans Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) has entered into force for 6 countries that ratified it.

Facts:

- On December 30, 2018 the CPTPP entered into force among the first six countries to ratify the agreement – Canada, Australia, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, and Singapore.
- In January 2019, the CPTPP entered into force for Vietnam.
- The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) is a free trade agreement between Canada and 10 other countries in

the Asia-Pacific region: Australia, Brunei, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam.

- It is informally known as the TPP-11.
- The CPTPP includes a broad range of sectors as agriculture, seafood products, forest and industrial products etc.

Questions/Notes

5. Venezuela's Economic Crisis:

News: The South American country Venezuela is facing both political instability and economic crisis.



Geographical location of Venezuela

Questions/Notes

Facts:

- Hyperinflation is one of the serious economic issues of Venezuela.
- The political situation is also polarized with the US supporting the opposition Leader against socialist leader Nicolas Maduro.
- Other facts:
- Hyperinflation: Hyperinflation is very high and typically accelerating inflation. It quickly erodes the real value of the local currency, as the prices of all goods increase.

6. Draft Emigration Bill:

News: The draft Emigration Bill 2019, recently released by the ministry of external affairs (MEA) aims to replace the existing Emigration Act 1983.

Facts:

- It proposes a new legislative framework for matters related to emigration of Indian nationals.
- Features of the bill:
- The central feature of the new act would be establishment of a multi ministry Emigration Management Authority to oversee welfare and protection of the emigrants.
- Establishment of a Bureau of Emigration Policy and Bureau of Emigration Administration to take care of the day to day operational matters.
- The Bill mandates compulsory registration of all the Indian Nationals planning to go abroad for employment and education.
- Registration of recruitment agencies and student enrolment agencies has been made mandatory.
- The Bill proposes penalties for offences against harassment of women and children under the pretext employment or educational recruitment.

Other facts:

- The Emigration Act 1983 was enacted in the light of the increased emigration of Indian workers to the Gulf region in the 1970s and 80s.

7. Asia Reassurance Initiative Act 2018:

News: US president signed Asia Reassurance Initiative Act to counter the threat of China and revive US leadership in Indo-Pacific Region.

Facts:

- The act develops a long-term strategic vision and a comprehensive, multifaceted, and principled United States policy for the Indo-Pacific region.
- The new law aims at countering China's illegal constructions and militarization of artificial islands in the South China Sea.

- ARIA also envisages increased engagement between India and the US to promote peace and security in the Indo Pacific region.
- Authorizes US\$ 1.5 billion annually for 5 years to enhance U.S. presence in the Indo-Pacific.
- Reaffirms U.S. security commitments to our allies in the Indo-Pacific, including Japan, South Korea, and Australia and builds security partnerships with nations in Southeast Asia.
- Establishes a policy goal to peacefully denuclearize North Korea through the campaign of maximum pressure and engagement.

Other facts:

Indo Pacific region:

**Questions/Notes**

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

Questions/Notes

1. UDAN 3.0:

News: Civil Aviation and Commerce announced the results of Ude Desh Ka Aam Naagrik (UDAN) Scheme handed over the letters of award to successful Airlines

Facts:

- The success of UDAN 3 has come on the back of strong performance of UDAN 1 and UDAN 2.

Key features of the scheme:

- It is a key component of National Civil Aviation Policy.
- Ministry of Civil Aviation and Airport Authority of India are its joint implementing agencies.
- It provides regional connectivity to underserved and unserved airports of the country.
- Inclusion of seaplanes for connecting Water Aerodromes.
- Helicopter routes are not considered under the UDAN 3 bidding.
- It will be applicable only to flights that cover minimum distance of 200 km and maximum 800 km with no lower limit for hilly, remote, island and security areas.
- Airlines will have to provide minimum 9 and maximum 40 seats at subsidized rates.
- Government will provide VGF for operators who cap fares on regional flights at 2500 per hour. The VGF will be met through Regional Connectivity Fund.
- The scheme will be operational for a period of 10 years.
- 2 international flights has been started from Guwahati under the International Air Connectivity Scheme (ICAS-Udan).

2. Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS):

News: Regional Conference of Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme was held recently.

Facts:**Objective:**

- To ensure effective implementation of the Rights of Persons with Disability Act 2016.
- To create an enabling environment for persons with disabilities.

Features:

- It is a Central Sector Scheme.
- It is to be implemented by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disability, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- It provides financial assistance to various voluntary organizations.

Questions/Notes

- It encourages voluntary actions to provide rehabilitation services.
- These services include:
 - Early intervention
 - Development of daily living skills
 - Increase the employability of persons with disability
 - Training and awareness generation

3. Atal Jyoti Yojana:

News: The government launched Phase II of Atal Jyoti Yojana.

Facts:

- The aim of the Scheme is to provide solar street lightning system for public use.
- Targeted states under this phase are Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and Assam, hilly states of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, North Eastern states including Sikkim, Islands of Andaman and Nicobar, Lakshadweep island and Aspirational districts of other states.

Salient features:

- The scheme is a sub-scheme under off-grid and decentralized solar application scheme of Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).
- Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) has been entrusted to implement this scheme in a mission mode by March 31, 2018.
- The scheme will cover both rural and urban areas.
- Solar Street Light with LED capacity of 12 Watt will be provided to areas, which do not have adequate coverage of power.
- MNRE will provide 75% of the cost of streetlights and remaining 25% will come from Member of Parliament Local Area Development funds (MPLADS), Panchayat funds or Municipalities and other Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) Funds.
- Training Programme will be conducted for maintenance and protection of the solar technology.

4. One Family, One Job Scheme:

News: One Family, One Job Scheme is a scheme launched by the Sikkim government.

Facts:

- The scheme aims at job to a member of every family which do not have a government job in the state.

5. Yuva Swabhiman Yojana:

News: Launched by the Madhya Pradesh government.

Questions/Notes

Facts:

- The scheme is to ensure 100 days of employment every year to the youth from Economically weaker sections in the urban areas.

6. Jiban Sampark:

News: Jiban Sampark is a scheme launched by the Odisha government in partnership with UNICEF.

Facts:

- The scheme aims to generate awareness about the development and welfare initiatives of the state government among the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) of the state.

Other facts:

- Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) The PVTGs are the marginalized section of the Scheduled tribes of India.
- Out of the 75 PVTGs in India, Odisha has the maximum number of PVTGs.
- These include Birhor, Bondo, Chuktia Bhunjia, Didayi, Dongria Khond, Juang, Kharia, Kutia Khond, Lanjia Saura, Lodha, Mankidia, Paudi Bhuyan, Sauura.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS**Questions/Notes****1. Industrial Outlook Survey and Services and Infrastructure Outlook Survey:**

News: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released two quarterly surveys namely Industrial Outlook Survey (IOS) and Services and Infrastructure Outlook Survey (SIOS).

Facts:

- These surveys are quarterly surveys.
- IOS provides full information including job scenario in the manufacturing sector.
- Hansa Research Group Private Limited will conduct it.
- SIOS will assess business situation in the services and infrastructure sectors.
- Spectrum Planning India Limited will carry it out.

2. Re-weave.in:

News: As part of its Project Re-weave, Microsoft recently announced the launch of new ecommerce platform called re-weave.in.

Facts:

- It will be aimed at bridging the gap between artisans and buyers online.
- The new e-marketplace will also host signature collections created by the weaver communities, showcase traditional designs and products created from natural dyes.
- It will support weavers increase their income and earn a sustainable livelihood while reviving traditional Indian art.

Other facts:

- Project Re-weave: under this, Microsoft is working closely with NGO partner, Chaitanya Bharathi, a Vishakhapatnam based NGO, to provide infrastructure, financing and marketing support to help weaver families keep their weaving traditions alive by sustaining livelihoods.
- It was launched in 2016.

3. Global Solar Council:

News: Solar Man of India Pranav R Mehta became the first Indian to be appointed the chief of Global Solar Council from 1st January 2019.

Facts:

- The Global Solar Council is an international non-profit association of the national, regional and international associations in solar energy and the world's leading corporations.

Questions/Notes

- It has its headquarters in Washington DC.
- It was founded in 2015 Paris climate Conference.
- National Solar Energy Foundation is a founding member of the Global Solar Council.

4. Debenture Redemption Reserve:

News: Ministry of Finance rejected SEBI's request to remove the requirement of Debenture Redemption Reserve (DRR).

Facts:

- DRR is a provision under the Companies Act 2013.
- The DRR is funded by the company's profits every year, until debentures are redeemed.
- Banks and NBFCs are exempted under this provision.
- DRR protects the investor against any default by the company.

Other facts:

- A debenture is a type of debt instrument that is not secured by physical assets or collateral. Debentures are backed only by the general creditworthiness and reputation of the issuer.
- Treasury bills issued by the government are a type of debentures.

5. Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code:

News: SC upheld the constitutionality of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code "in its entirety".

Facts:

- This was in the backdrop of companies like Swiss Ribbons, Shivam Water Treaters, and Ganesh Prasad Pandey, an individual petitioner, had challenged various provisions of the IBC, such as Sections 7, 12 and 29.
- SC quashed the petitions and also upheld the ban on promoters bidding for defaulting companies.
- The petitioners against IBC had argued that in the event of liquidation of the company or its sale, the dues of operational creditors rank below those of financial creditors, which was violative of the Article 14 of the constitution.
- However, SC said that if an intelligible differentiation can be established between two classes of creditors, then legislation is not violative of Article 14

Other facts:

- Financial creditors are those whose relationship with the entity is a pure financial contract, such as a loan or debt security.

Questions/Notes

- Operational creditor (unsecured creditors) refers to anyone who has provided goods or services and the payment for same is due from the corporate debtor

6. Insider Trading:

News: SEBI has laid down mechanism to prevent insider trading on the recommendations of TK Viswanathan committee.

Facts:

- It has decided to hold company promoters, irrespective of their shareholding status, responsible for violation of insider trading norms if they possess unpublished price-sensitive information (UPSI) regarding the company without any 'legitimate' purpose.
- The board of directors shall ensure that a structured digital database is maintained containing the names of such persons or entities, as the case may be, with whom the information is shared.
- The mechanism defines an insider as the one comprising of three elements
 - The person should be a natural person or legal entity
 - The person should be connected or deemed to be connected to the company
 - Acquisition of UPSI by virtue of such connection.

Other facts:

It is the buying or selling of a security by someone who has access to substantial non-public information about the security.

In India, SEBI (Insider Trading) Regulation, 1992 framed under SEBI Act, 1992 and Companies Act 2013 prohibits insider trading.

7. National Conclave on Technical Textile:

News: The National Conclave on Technical Textile was held in Mumbai.

Facts:

- Technical Textiles are materials and products manufactured primarily for technical purposes rather than aesthetic and decorative purposes.
- They can be either woven or non-woven, natural or synthetic or both.
- Applications:
 - Agrotech (fishing net), Meditech (Sanitary napkins), Buildtech (floor and wall coverings), Mobiletech (Airbags), Geotech (geonets), Protech (Bullet proof jackets), sportech (swimwear), Indutech (conveyer belt). Packtech (wrapping fabric).
- Of all the sectors Packtech forms the largest share of Technical textiles.

Questions/Notes

Other facts:

- Government launched the Scheme for Growth and Development of Technical Textiles (SGDTT).
- Technology Mission on Technical Textiles (2010-2014) to overcome the problems in the technical textile industry.
- All the machinery of the technical textile industry is covered under the Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme.

8. Recapitalization of EXIM Bank:

News: Cabinet approved the recapitalization of the EXIM bank.

Facts:

- The recapitalization will be funded by the issuance of the recapitalization bonds by the government.
- It will not impact the Fiscal Deficit.

Other facts:

- Exim bank was established in 1982 to finance, facilitate and promote India's international trade.
- The bank primarily lends for exports from India.
- The RBI regulates the bank.
- Grass Roots Initiative and Development (GRID) is another initiative of the EXIM Bank to provide financial support to promote grassroot initiatives particularly the ones with export potential.

9. Minimum Basic Income:

News: Recently, there has been demand for introduction of Minimum Basic Income (MBI) in the country.

Facts:

- The Minimum Basic Income is a social welfare system that guarantees basic income to households, provided they meet certain conditions.
- It is different from the Universal Basic Income (UBI) to the extent that it is conditional transfer of money, whereas UBI is unconditional transfer of cash.

Other facts:

- International examples of MBI:
 - Finland's "Perustulokeilu" (Basic Income Experiment) is an unconditional income support to the selected pool of unemployed people between 25 & 58.

- Brazil has an 'anti-poverty' programme called 'Bolsa Familia', providing a conditional cash grant to families below a certain income level.

Questions/Notes

10. National Agriculture Higher Education Project:

News: ICAR has recently launched an ambitious National Agriculture Higher Education Project (NAHEP) to attract talent and strengthen higher agricultural education in the country.

Facts:

- It will be funded by the World Bank and the Indian Government on a 50:50 basis.
- It aims to support Participating Agricultural Universities (AUs) and ICAR in providing more relevant and higher quality education to Agricultural University students.
- NAHEP will provide Institutional Development Grants, Centre of Advanced Agricultural science & Technology (CAAST) grants, innovation grants to selected participating Agricultural universities.
- The ICAR would establish a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Cell to oversee the progress of activities across all NAHEP components.

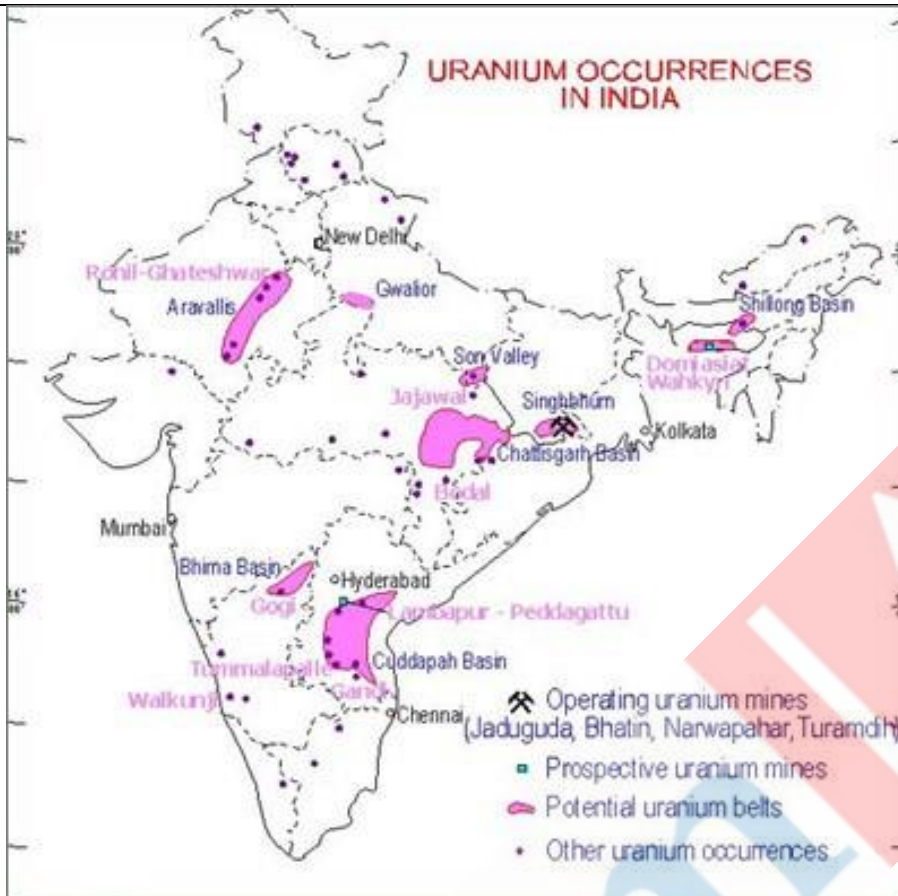
Other facts:

- Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) is an autonomous organization under the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE), Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.

11. India's demand for Uranium:

News: A parliamentary panel has recommended that necessary steps must be taken to open new uranium mines to ensure sufficient amount of uranium in India.

Questions/Notes



Uranium mines in India

Facts:

- A major portion of uranium for domestic production comes from the Jaduguda mines in Jharkhand.
- India imports uranium from Kazakhstan, Canada, France and Russia. Recently India also signed a deal with Uzbekistan to get Uranium supply.
- In India, Uranium Corporation of India Ltd. (UCIL) under the Department of Atomic Energy is the only organization responsible for mining and processing of uranium ore for commercial purposes.

Other facts:

- Uranium mined by the UCIL is used for weapons and civil nuclear programmes both however, the imported uranium is used for civil purposes only.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS**Questions/Notes****1. Institutes of Eminence:**

News: An Empowered Expert Committee (EEC) for selecting Institutions of Eminence (IOEs) has recommended increasing the number of Institutes of Eminence to 30.

Facts:

- The aim of the scheme is to bring higher educational institutions selected as IoEs in top 500 of world ranking in the next 10 years.
- Currently, under the Institute of Eminence, 10 private and 10 public universities are to be selected.
- Each Public Institution selected as IoE will be provided financial assistance up to Rs.1000 Cr over a period of five years.
- The selected institutions have greater autonomy in terms of courses offered, admitting foreign students and recruiting foreign faculty.
- The Centre had bestowed the IoE tag on six institutions, three public — IIT Delhi, IIT Bombay and IISc Bangalore and three private institutions — BITS Pilani, Manipal University, and the yet-to-open Jio University.

2. New Guidelines for Jan Shikshan Sansthan:

News: Government has unveiled new guidelines for Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) in alignment with the National Skills Qualification Framework.

Facts:**Other facts:**

- Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSSs) are established to provide vocational training to non-literate, neo literate, as well as school dropouts by identifying their skills according to the market demand.
- It was earlier under the Ministry of Human Resources Development, but later transferred to the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship in 2018.

3. #www. Wonder Women Campaign:

News: The Ministry of Women and Child Development, has launched an online campaign called '#www: Web- Wonder Women'

Facts:

- The Campaign aims to discover and celebrate the exceptional achievements of women, who have been a positive force to bring about social change via social media.
- Indian-origin women, working or settled anywhere in the world, are eligible for nomination.

Questions/Notes

- The shortlisted entries will be open for public voting on Twitter and a specialized panel of judges will select the finalists.

4. 2nd World Integrated Medicine Forum 2019:

News: Recently, the 2nd World Integrated Medicine Forum 2019 was held in Goa.

Facts:

- It was organised by Central Council for Research in Homoeopathy (CCRH), Ministry of AYUSH, Homoeopathic Pharmacopoeia Convention of the United States (HPCUS), Pharmacopoeia Commission of Indian Medicine and Homoeopathy and Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO).
- The mission of the World Integrated Medicine Forum is to further develop evidence based Traditional and Integrated Systems of Medicine by promoting public private cooperation.

5. ASER Annual Education Report:

News: Recently, 13th Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) by Pratham NGO was published.

Facts:

- It highlighted the status of primary education in rural India.
- The survey shows the prevalence of learning deficit and the poverty of basic reading and arithmetic skills among students in Indian schools.
- The deficit is across government and private school's performance.

Other facts:

- The report covers three major aspects of the status of education
 - School enrollment and attendance among children aged 3-16 years.
 - Basic reading and math abilities among children aged 5-16 years.
 - School infrastructure with sports infrastructure
- In 2017, it conducted the first alternate-year design known as ASER 'Beyond Basics', focusing on youth in the 14 to 18 age group in 28 districts across India, however in 2018, ASER returns once again to the 'basic' model.
- Difference between ASER survey and National Achievement Survey (NAS):

ASER Survey	NAS	Questions/Notes
It is a household survey	It is a school-based survey	
One-on-one oral assessments	It is a pen-paper test	
Aimed at a representative sample of all children (whether in school or out of school)	It takes into account the children enrolled in government schools	
It focuses on foundational skills such as reading and math	It looks at a wider variety of skills	
It is limited to rural areas of the country	It is conducted throughout the country in both rural and urban areas	
It is a citizen-led survey	It is conducted by NCERT under Ministry of Human Resource Development.	

6. Bahartiya Shiksha Board:

News: Ministry Human Resource Development has given its approval for the setting up of the Bhartiya Shiksha Board.

Facts:

- It will be the country's first national school board for Vedic education.
- Its aims at standardizing Vedic education through drafting syllabus, conducting examinations and issuing certificates.
- It will be assigned the responsibility of evolving new kinds of schools that offer a blend of Vedic and modern education apart from affiliating traditional pathshalas.

Other facts:

- The board will be setup as per the model by laws framed by Maharshi Sandipani Rashtriya Veda Vidya Pratishthan.
- It is an autonomous body under the Ministry of Human Resource Development.
- It was set up to propagate oral tradition of vedas, but the organization's certificates are not considered equivalent to mainstream levels of education by several institutions.

7. Consortium for Academic and Research Ethics:

News: University Grants Commission (UGC) has decided to set up Consortium for Academic and Research Ethic (CARE).

Questions/Notes

Facts:

- It is aimed to strengthen the quality of research publications.
- The good quality Research Journals in disciplines under Social Sciences, Humanities, Languages, Arts, Culture, Indian Knowledge Systems etc. will be maintained by CARE and will be referred to as 'CARE Reference List of Quality Journals'.
- The 'CARE Reference List of Quality Journals' will be regularly updated.
- The UGC and the Members of the Consortium at their respective websites will publish it accordingly.

8. Global report on Trafficking in Persons 2018:

News: Recently the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has released 'Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2018'.

Facts:

- Women and girls make up most trafficking victims worldwide.
- Victims from South Asia have been detected in more than 40 countries around the world.
- The main destinations appear to be the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council in the Middle East.
- The main focus of the report is on the impact of armed conflict on trafficking.

Other facts:

- UNODC was established in 1997 through a merger between the United Nations Drug Control Programme and the Centre for International Crime Prevention.

9. Report on Tribal Health:

News: The first ever report on tribal health titled as "Tribal Health in India-Bridging the Gap and a Roadmap for the Future" was released by an expert committee.

Facts:

- The expert Committee on tribal health constituted jointly by Ministry of Family health and Ministry of tribal affairs.
- The performance related to life expectancy, maternal mortality, adolescent health, child morbidity, mortality and under five mortality is below the national average, according to the report.
- The tribals suffer from a unique triple burden of diseases: malnutrition and communicable diseases, Epidemiological transition leading to lifestyle diseases and mental illnesses.

Questions/Notes

Other facts:

- Numerically M.P. has highest tribal population (15mn) followed by Maharashtra (10mn), Odisha and Rajasthan.

10. Eat Right India Movement:

News: Recently organised Swasth Bharat Yatra was a key element of the 'Eat Right India Movement'.

Facts:

- It was organised by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).
- It will collaborate with the three pillars of FSSAI i.e. The Safe and Nutritious Food Campaign, The Eat Healthy Campaign and Food Fortification.
- Under the movement, "Aaj se thoda kam campaign" was launched to encourage citizens to adopt healthy food habits through social media and mass media.

11. Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi:

News: The Minister of Health and Family Welfare has approved a proposal for adding a subcomponent under the umbrella scheme of Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi (RAN).

Facts:

- It provided for one-time financial assistance to those below threshold poverty line for specific rare diseases, which require one-time treatment.
- There is no universally accepted definition of rare diseases and the definitions usually vary across different countries.
- These are also called 'orphan diseases' because drug companies are not interested in adopting them to develop treatments due to low profitability.
- The most common rare diseases include Haemophilia, Thalassemia, Sickle-cell Anaemia, autoimmune diseases, etc.

Other facts:

- The RAN was set up to provide financial assistance to patients, living below the poverty line and who are suffering from major life threatening diseases, to receive medical treatment at any of the super specialty Hospitals/Institutes or other Government hospitals.
- The one-time grant is given to the Medical Superintendent of the Hospital in which the treatment has been/is being received.

12. National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction 2018-23:

News: Recently Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment released National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR).

Questions/Notes**Facts:**

- It aims to employ a multi-pronged strategy such as preventive Education, awareness generation, counseling, de-addiction, treatment and rehabilitation of affected individuals and their families and training and capacity-building of service providers through collaborative efforts of the Centre, state and NGOs.
- The United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances helps in the international fight against drugs.
- Nationally, the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (NDPS Act) establishes the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) empowered to coordinate all activities for administration and enforcement of the Act.

Other facts:

- Opium producing regions of the world:
 - Golden Triangle: It is the region between the borders of Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand.
 - Golden Crescent: It is the second major area of illicit opium production in Asia spanning across three nations; Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan.

SECURITY AND DEFENCE**Questions/Notes****1. Military Exercises:**

Exercise	Participants
IMBEX 2018-19	2 nd Indo-Myanmar bilateral army exercise It was held at Chandigarh
IAFTX-2019	Indian Army and armies of various African countries conducted India-Africa Field Training Exercise. It is to be conducted at Aundh Military Station and College of Military Engineering, Pune

2. Barak 8:

News: India recently tested the Barak 8, long-range missile.

Facts:

- Barak in Hebrew means lightening.
- It is a long-range surface to air missile, LRSAM.
- DRDO, India and Israeli Aerospace Industries jointly develop it.
- It is an all-weather defense shield, designed to defend against any type of airborne threat including aircraft, helicopters, anti-ship missiles, and UAVs as well as missiles, cruise missiles and combat jets.

3. Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace:

News: UNESCO Internet Governance Forum (IGF), President Emmanuel Macron launched the Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace.

Facts:

- This high-level declaration aimed to develop common principles for securing cyberspace.
- Prominent countries like India, US, China, Russia didn't sign the agreement.
- Several major American technologies like Facebook, Microsoft, Google, IBM, HP etc. have endorsed the agreement

Other facts:

- Internet Governance Forum (IGF) is a public policy dialogue group to address issues related to Internet such as sustainability, robustness, security, stability and development.

Questions/Notes

- Budapest convention on cybercrime of the Council of Europe is the only binding international instrument on the issue of cyber security. India is not a member to this convention.

4. INS Kohasa:

News: To enhance the operational capability of Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC), Naval Air Station (NAS) Shibpur will be commissioned as INS Kohassa.

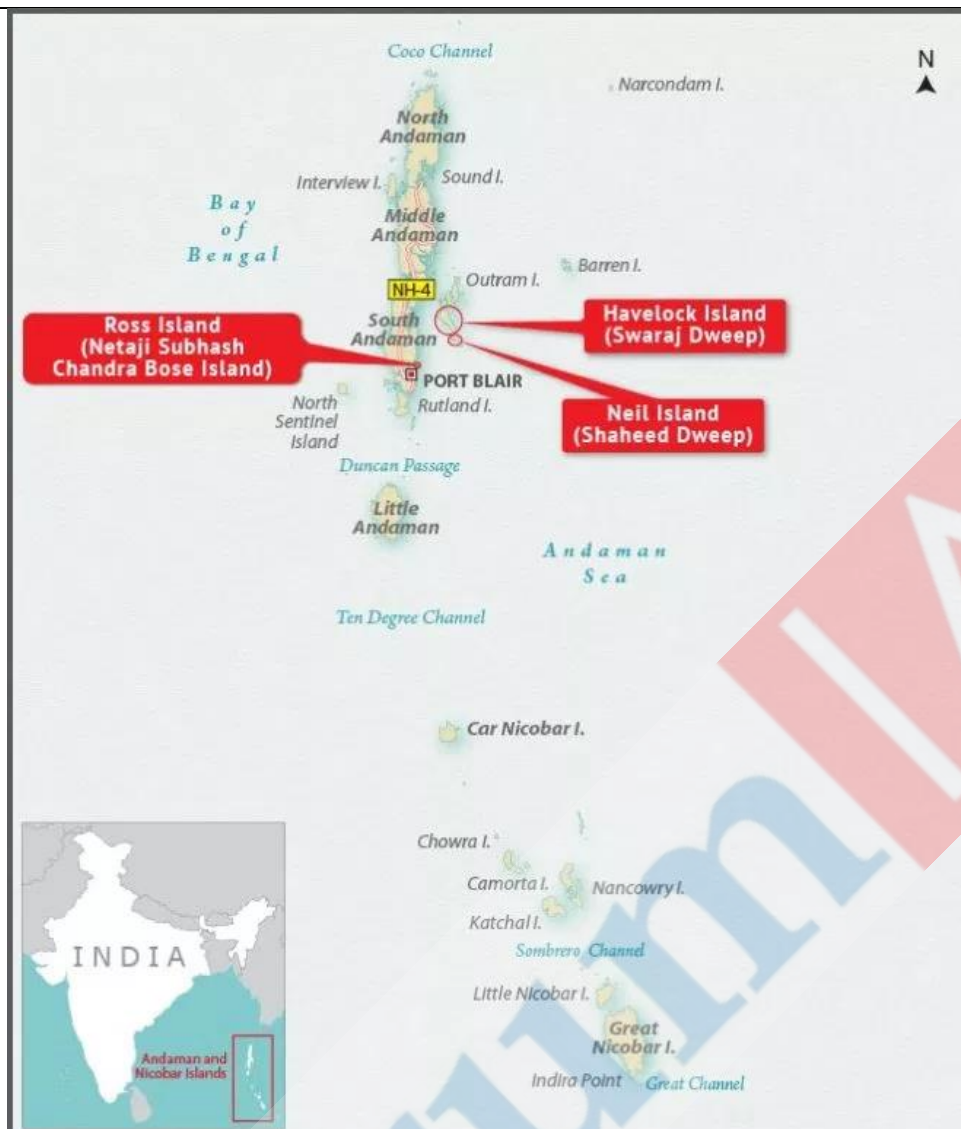
Facts:

- The base has been readied for operations of helicopters and small transport aircraft and gives an optional landing and operating base to military pilots while operating in the island territories.
- INS Kohassa will become the third Naval Air Base in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands after INS Utkrosh at Port Blair and INS Baaz at Campbell Bay.

Other facts:

- INS Kohassa has been named after a White-Bellied Sea Eagle, which is a large bird of prey endemic to Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- Government announced renaming of three islands of Andaman and Nicobar archipelago as a tribute to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

Questions/Notes



Locations of the Renamed Islands on the Map of Andaman and Nicobar

- The Ross Island was renamed as Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Dweep, the Neil Island as Shaheed Dweep and Havelock Island as Swaraj Dweep.

5. Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF):

News: A Standing committee on Home Affairs submitted its report on Working Conditions in Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF).

Facts:

- Central Armed Police Force is under the Administrative control of the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- Key recommendations:
- The post of Director-General and other senior positions in Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) should not be reserved for Indian Police Service officers.
- Modernization of the forces

- To deploy issue specific plan rather than the one size fits all planning
- Setting up a dedicated research and development wing

Questions/Notes

Other facts:

- The forces under CAPF:

Border Guarding Forces	Non-Border Guarding Forces
Assam Rifles (on Indo-Myanmar Border)	Central Industrial Security Force (CISF): provides security to key installations.
Border Security Force (on Indo-Pakistan and Indo-Bangladesh borders)	Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF): maintains internal security.
Indo Tibetan Border Police (on Indo-China Border)	National Security Guard (NSG): deployed against anti-terrorist activities.
Sashastra Seema Bal (on Indo-Nepal and Indo-Bhutan Border)	

6. Women in Combat Role:

News: Government has taken a decision to induct women for the first time in Personnel Below Officer Rank (PBOR) in the corps of Military Police in a graded manner.

Facts:

- It plans to meet the target of 20% women in the total corps.
- The Indian Air force is the only force in India to put women in combat roles.
- Recently, the Ministry of Defence has decided to induct women as sailors in the Indian Navy.

Other facts:

- Corps of Military Police is a military police of Indian Army.

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY**Questions/Notes****1. Smart Food Executive Council:**

News: Smart Food Executive Council was formed under the Smart Food Initiative founded by the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid-Tropics (ICRISAT).

Facts:

- A major objective under the initiative is to diversify staples, which can have the strongest impact on nutrition, the environment and farmer welfare.

Other facts:

- ICRISAT is a non-profit, non-political organization that conducts agricultural research for development in the dry lands of Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.
- It has its headquarters in Hyderabad, Telangana, with two regional hubs at Nairobi, Kenya and Bamako, Mali.

2. SALSA:

News: An international team of scientists began a research named SALSA (SUBGLACIAL ANTARCTIC LAKES SCIENTIFIC ACCESS).

Facts:

- It was conducted for the study of microbes and living specimens in a subglacial Lake Mercer of Antarctica.
- This project will add to understanding of the evolution of life in extreme environments.
- A subglacial lake is a body of liquid water located in between an ice sheet and the continental land mass.

3. Asian Waterbird Census 2019:

News: The Asian Waterbird Census (AWC), 2019 was held recently in various parts of India.

Facts:

- In India, the Bombay Natural History Society and Wetlands International jointly coordinate the AWC.

Other facts:

- Wetlands International is a non-profit organization established in 1937, headquartered in the Netherlands.
- Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) is a non-governmental organization in India engaged in conservation research.

Questions/Notes

4. Lake Urmia:

News: Iran has planned to revive its endangered salt water lake Urmia.



Shrinking lake Urmia

Facts:

- It is the largest lake in Iran.
- It is the second largest lake in the Middle East and the sixth largest saltwater lake on earth.
- It has been designated as a site of international importance under the Ramsar Convention on wetlands 1971.
- UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) designated Lake Urmia, a biosphere reserve in 1976.

Other facts:

- The Convention on Wetlands, called the Ramsar Convention, is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.
- Ramsar is a city in Iran on the shores of the Caspian Sea.

5. Community driven Conservation:

News: Idu Mishmi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh is protesting against the declaration of Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary (DWS) as Tiger Reserve.

Facts:

- The move comes in the backdrop of preventing illegal poaching and tourist footfall in the fragile tiger habitat.
- Thus the National Tiger Conservation Authority is thus considering declaring the area as tiger reserve.
- It will prohibit many types of work like cutting trees, collecting wood for fuel and agricultural and tourism activities for the indigenous Idu Mishmi people.
- The Idu Mishmi people traditionally follow an animist and shamanistic faith and believe that tigers are their elder siblings. Thus, Idu Mishmi are protesting

against the creation of Tiger Reserve and instead asking for a Cultural Model of Conservation.

Questions/Notes

Other facts:

- The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) was established in December 2005 following a recommendation of the Tiger Task Force, constituted by the Prime Minister of India for reorganized management of Project Tiger and the many Tiger Reserves in India.
- PM is the chairman of the NTCA.

Tribes following the Cultural mode of preservation:

- Bishnoi Tribe of Rajasthan: Bishnois consider trees as sacred and protect the entire ecosystem including animals and birds that exists in their villages.
- Chenchu Tribe of Andhra Pradesh: They are involved in tiger conservation at Nagarjunasagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve (NSTR).
- Maldhari Tribe in Junagadh(Gujarat): The success of lion conservation in Gir forest area is due to peaceful coexistence of tribe with lions.
- Bugun Tribe of Arunachal Pradesh: The tribe using Community-led conservation initiatives and traditional knowledge helped to protect the critically endangered bird Bugun Liocichla.
- Nyishi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh in conserving hornbills in the Pakke/Pakhui Tiger Reserve, Arunachal Pradesh.

6. Sarus Crane:

News: There has been 5.2% increase in population of Sarus Crane in Uttar Pradesh, according to the State Forest and Wildlife department's latest 2018 census.

Facts:

- The sarus crane (*Antigone Antigone*) is a large non-migratory crane found in parts of the Indian Subcontinent, Southeast Asia and Australia.
- It generally inhabits natural wetlands, and is an omnivorous bird.
- The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has marked it as 'vulnerable' in its list of threatened species.
- It is the tallest (average 5 feet) flying bird in the world.
- It is India's only resident breeding crane.

Other facts:

- Sarus Crane Conservation Project has been running across 10 districts of Eastern Uttar Pradesh by Wildlife Trust of India in collaboration with Tata Trusts and the U.P. Forest Department.
- The project involves local volunteers called Sarus Mitra or Friends of the Sarus, Tata Trust partner NGOs and Sarus Protection Committees.

Questions/Notes

7. North Indian Rosewood:

News: India has proposed to remove rosewood (*Dalbergia sissoo*) from Appendix II of CITES.

Facts:

- The North Indian Rosewood has been wrongly classified in the appendix based on the lookalike criteria and not based on the level of threat to the species.

Other facts:

- It is a deciduous tree found in tropical to subtropical climates and is economically important.
- CITES is an inter-governmental agreement which aims to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.
- It has three appendices.
- It is legally binding on the Parties and it provides a framework to be respected by each party.
- UN World Wildlife Day: 3 March, the day of signature of the CITES.

8. Mugger Crocodile:

News: Government of Gujarat relocated the Mugger crocodile (*Crocodylus palustris*) from Sardar Sarovar dam to facilitate a seaplane service at the Statue of Unity.

Facts:

- It is a reptilian species also called marsh crocodile or broad-snouted crocodile and is one of the three crocodile species (Saltwater Crocodile and Gharial) found in India.
- Vadodara is the only city in India where crocodiles live in their natural habitat amidst human population.
- It has been listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Appendix I, categorized as 'vulnerable' in the IUCN Red List and protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

Other facts:

- Statute of Unity: It is an iconic 182 mts. Landmark statute of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Iron man of India.
- The statue is the world's tallest statue.
- Renowned sculptor Ram V. Sutar has designed it.

Questions/Notes

9. Large Forest Fire Monitoring Programme:

News: Forest Survey of India (FSI) launched beta version of the Large Forest Fire Monitoring Programme.

Facts:

- It aims to improve tactical as well as a strategic response to large forest fire.
- It will disseminate specific Large Fire alerts with the objective to identify, track and report serious forest fire incidents.
- It is part of the Fire Alert System (FAST) Version 3.0, where the FSI will monitor forest fire events using real time data from the satellite sensors.

10. Humpback dolphins:

News: Humpback dolphins were spotted near the Mumbai coast.

Facts:

- Indian Ocean Humpback Dolphin is known to occur within the Indian Ocean from South Africa to India.
- It is one of the most adaptive species.
- It has an endangered status in the IUCN Red list and is classified under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972.

11. Land Degradation Neutrality:

News: Recently at a session United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) reviewed the first global assessment of land degradation.

Facts:

- It seeks to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) by 2030.
- Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) has been defined by the Parties to the Convention as: A state whereby the amount and quality of land resources, necessary to support ecosystem functions and services and enhance food security, remains stable or increases within specified temporal and spatial scales and ecosystems.
- The three principles of LDN includes:
 - Avoiding land degradation
 - Reducing or mitigating land degradation
 - Reversing the process of land degradation and move towards land recovery

Other facts:

- UNCCD was established in 1994, it is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management.

Questions/Notes

12. Access and Benefit Sharing:

News: Uttarakhand High Court has directed Divya Pharmacy, to share its profits with local and indigenous communities under the Fair and Equitable Benefit Sharing objectives of the Biodiversity Act, 2002.

Facts:

- Company was seeking exemption under Section 7 of BDA of prior approval or intimation for local people and communities.
- The judgment has said that both Indian and foreign companies are liable to pay indigenous and local communities for using the biological resources under the BDA 2002, as the latter kept the traditional knowledge of biological resources alive over the years.
- Access and benefit-sharing (ABS) refers to the way in which genetic resources may be accessed, and how the benefits that result from their use can be shared between the people or countries using the resources and the ones providing them.

Other facts:

- India enacted the Biodiversity Act (BDA), 2002, on the lines of the Convention on Biological Diversity and its protocols the Nagoya and the Cartagena protocol.
- The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB), the first international regulatory framework for safe transfer, handling and use of Living Modified Organisms (LMOs).
- Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD): It aims at sharing the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources in a fair and equitable way.

13. National Clean Air Programme:

News: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) recently launched national Clean Air Programme (NCAP).

Facts:

- It is a pollution control initiative to cut the concentration of particles (PM10 & PM2.5) by 20-30% by 2024 with 2017 as its base year.
- It will be a mid-term, five-year action plan with 2019 as the first year.
- It is to be implemented in 102 Non-Attainment cities, chosen on the basis of Ambient Air Quality India (2011-2015) and WHO report.
- The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) shall execute the NCAP on a nation-wide level for the prevention, control, and abatement of air pollution.
- The program will partner with multilateral and bilateral international organizations to achieve its outcomes.

- The Apex Committee in the MoEFCC will annually review the progress.
- NCAP has three main components: Mitigation Actions, Knowledge and Database Augmentation, Strengthening Institutional.

Other facts:

- Cities are considered as Non-attainment cities, if they were consistently showing poorer air quality than the National Ambient Air Quality Standards.

15. The Global Syndemic of Obesity, Undernutrition and Climate Change:

News: A new report by the Lancet Commission on the Global Syndemic of Obesity, Undernutrition, and Climate Change delivers a powerful, incisive analysis of the drivers of those overlapping worldwide problems.

Facts:

- Global Syndemic refers to the climate change, obesity and undernutrition as three synergistic epidemics.
- These three co-occur in time and place, interact with each other to produce complex pathological conditions and share common societal drivers.

Questions/Notes

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Questions/Notes

1. X-Calibur:

News: X-Calibur is a recently launched telescope from Antarctica.

Facts:

- The telescope aims at analyzing X-rays arriving from distant neutron stars, black holes and other exotic celestial bodies.
- The telescope was launched by Washington University in the US from the McMurdo Station in Antarctica.
- It was carried on a helium balloon intended to reach an altitude of 130,000 feet.
- Its prime observation target will be Vela X-1, a neutron star in binary orbit with a supergiant star.
- The telescope will test two most important theories of modern physics: Quantum Electrodynamics and General Relativity.

Other facts:

- Neutron stars are objects of very small radius (typically 30 km) and very high density, composed predominantly of closely packed neutrons.
- It is formed by the gravitational collapse of the remnant of a massive star after a supernova explosion.

2. PSLV-C44:

News: India's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C44) successfully injected Microsat-R and Kalamsat-V2 satellites into their designated orbits.

Facts:

- It was lifted off on January 24, 2019 from the First Launch Pad at Satish Dhawan Space Centre SHAR, Sriharikota.
- It was PSLV's 46th flight.
- Microsat-R, a military imaging satellite, whereas Kalamsat is a payload developed by students and Chennai based Space Kidz India for the first time.
- PS4, the fourth stage of this vehicle would be moved to higher circular orbit so as to establish an orbital platform for carrying out experiments.
- The Kalamsat will be the first to use the rocket's fourth stage as an orbital platform.

Other facts:

- Kalamsat-V2 will be the world's lightest satellite.
- PSLV is a four-stage launch vehicle with alternating solid and liquid stages.

- Last year, ISRO successfully injected India's earth observation satellite HysIS onboard PSLV C43 into its designated orbit.

Questions/Notes

3. Ultima Thule:

News: NASA's New Horizons spacecraft recently flew past a distant object Ultima Thule.

Facts:

- It is a Kuiper Belt object and the farthest object ever explored.
- The object is officially named 2014 MU69.
- It is contact binary that is single object with two lobes attached gently.
- NASA dubbed the larger lobe as Ultima and three times smaller lobe as Thule.
- It gives the scientists an unprecedented opportunity to investigate the surface, as well as the origin and evolution.

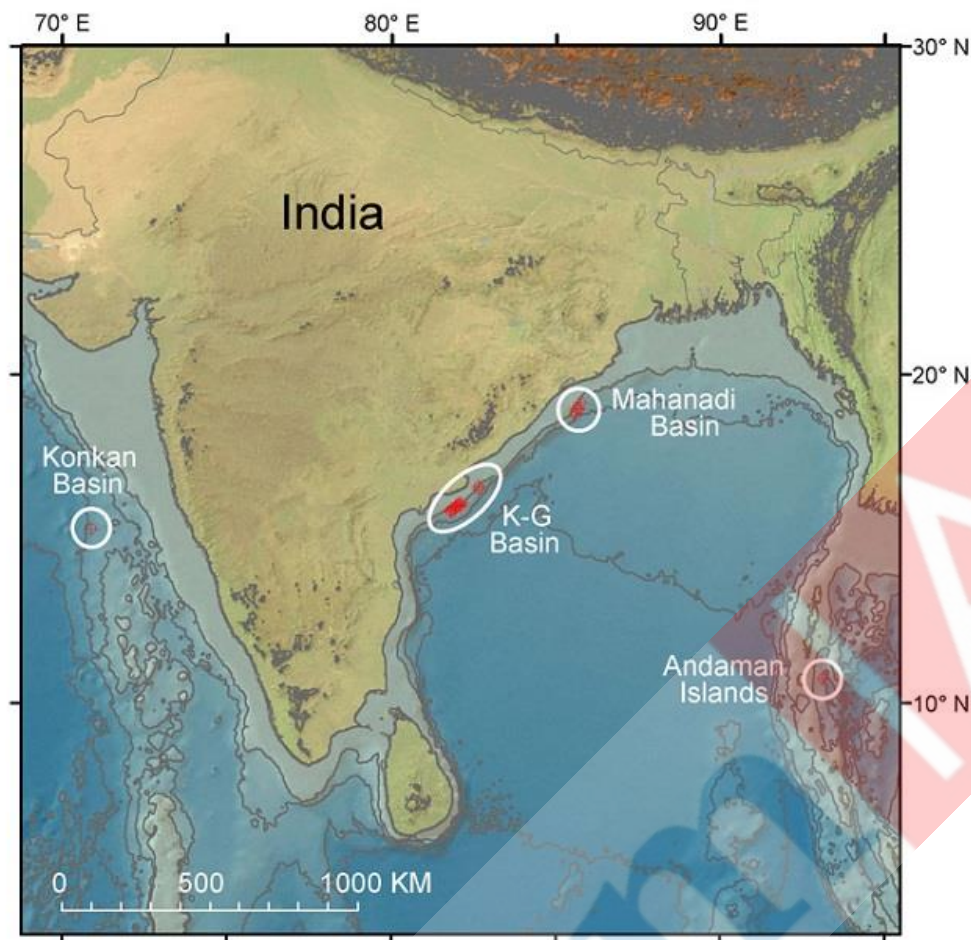
Other facts:

- 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 is the first mission to explore the Kuiper belt.

4. Gas Hydrates:

News: Researchers at IIT Madras has shown that methane and carbon dioxide can exist as gas hydrates.

Questions/Notes



Locations of Gas Hydrates in India

Facts:

- The carbon dioxide hydrate produced in the lab by the IIT team raises the possibility of sequestering or storing carbon dioxide as hydrates under the sea bed.

Other facts:

- Gas hydrate is a solid ice-like form of water that contains gas molecules in its molecular cavities.
- Natural gas hydrates occur on continental margins and shelves worldwide from Polar Regions to the tropics.
- It is estimated that the total amount of carbon in the form of methane hydrates, far exceeds the carbon content in all the fossil fuel reserves put together and hence these are supposed to be the future potential energy resource.

5. Lymphatic Filariasis:

News: Triple Drug Therapy a lymphatic filariasis drug, was launched in Nagpur.

Questions/Notes

Facts:

- Triple Drug Therapy is a combination of Ivermectin, Diethylcarbamazine Citrate and Albendazole (IDA).
- The World Health Organization (WHO) is recommending an alternative three-drug treatment to accelerate the global elimination of lymphatic filariasis.
- Lymphatic filariasis - a disabling and disfiguring neglected tropical disease.
- Parasitic worms living in the lymphatic system cause it.
- The larval stages of this parasite (microfilaria) circulate in the blood and are transmitted from person to person by mosquitoes.
- The manifestation of the disease takes time and results into abnormal enlargement of the body parts like arms, breasts and genitals leading to severe disability.

6. Young Scientist Programme:

News: ISRO recently launched the Young Scientist Programme for school students.

Facts:

- "YUva Vigyani Karyakram" (YUVIKA) from this year, in tune with the Government's vision "Jai Vigyan, Jai Anusandhan".
- The program is thus aimed at creating awareness amongst the youngsters who are the future building blocks of our Nation.
- The programme will be of around two weeks duration during summer holidays and the schedule will include invited talks, experience sharing by the eminent scientists, facility and lab visits, exclusive sessions for discussions etc.
- It is proposed to select 3 students each from each State/ Union Territory to participate in this programme every year covering CBSE, ICSE and State syllabus.
- Students who have finished 8th standard and currently studying in 9th standard will be eligible for the programme.
- All expenses of travelling and boarding will be funded entirely by ISRO.
- Under the programme 6 incubation centers will be established in the country: North, South, East, West, Center and North East.
- First of these centers has been established in Agartala, Tripura.

7. Leprosy:

News: Initial reports of Leprosy Case Detection Campaign of the National Leprosy Eradication Programme (NLEP) indicated an all-time high of nearly 50,000 new leprosy cases in Bihar.

Facts:

- India was officially declared to have eliminated leprosy in 2005 when new cases fell to less than 1 per 10,000.

Questions/Notes

- In recent years, along with other countries, India in 2016 repealed Lepers Act that discriminates against persons affected by leprosy and in January 2019 Lok Sabha passed a bill seeking to remove leprosy as a ground for divorce.

Other facts:

- Leprosy, also known as Hansen's disease, is a chronic infectious disease caused by *Mycobacterium leprae*.
- The bacteria has a long incubation period. Once a person is infected, it can take 6-10 years or even 20 years for the first symptoms to surface.
- Leprosy is known to occur at all ages ranging from early infancy to very old age.
- The disease mainly affects the skin, the peripheral nerves, the mucosa of the upper respiratory tract and the eyes.
- *Mycobacterium Indicus Pranii* (MIP) is an indigenous vaccine for leprosy developed by the National Institute of Immunology, now being introduced into the National Leprosy Elimination Programme (NLEP).

8. UNNATI:

News: ISRO launched a capacity building programme on Nanosatellite development named UNNATI (UNISpace Nanosatellite Assembly and Training by ISRO).

Facts:

- The programme will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the first UN conference on the exploration and peaceful use of outer space (UNSPACE+50).
- It will enable participating developing countries to strengthen assembling, integrating and testing of Nano satellite.
- The programme is scheduled to be conducted in three batches.

Other facts:

- Nano satellites are satellites in the mass range of 1-10 kg.
- These satellites can reduce the cost of launching satellites.

9. Shifting of North Magnetic Pole:

News: Earth's north magnetic pole has been drifting at about 55 kilometers a year, and is leaving the Canadian Arctic on its way to Siberia.

Facts:

- Scientists periodically update the World Magnetic Model to map this process. The last version was updated in 2015, intended to last till 2020, however the drift is too fast to be on the verge of exceeding the acceptable limit for navigation errors.

Questions/Notes

- This requires the scientist for an early update the magnetic model to help ships, airplanes and submarines navigate.

Other facts:

- Magnetic pole: The North Magnetic Pole is the wandering point on the surface of Earth's Northern Hemisphere at which the planet's magnetic field points vertically downwards.

10. 106th Indian Science Congress:

News: 106th Indian Science Congress will be held at Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Jalandhar, Punjab from 3-7th January, 2019.

Facts:

- Theme: FUTURE INDIA – Science and Technology.
- The Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA), Department of Science and Technology organized it.
- On the 2nd day of ISC, Children's Science Congress was inaugurated targeting 10-17 years of children for carrying forward innovation and research in science to a next level.

Other facts:

- The first ISC session was held at Kolkata in 1914 under the presidency of Ashutosh Mukherjee.
- 107th Indian Science Congress will be held at the University of Agricultural Sciences, GKVK Campus, Bangalore, Karnataka from 3-7th January 2020.
- 105th Indian Science Congress to be hosted by Manipur Central University, Imphal on March 2018.

11. International year of the Periodic Table:

News: The United Nations General Assembly during its 74th Plenary Meeting proclaimed 2019 as the International Year of the Periodic Table of Chemical Elements.

Facts:

- It will commemorate the 150th anniversary since Dmitry Mendeleev discovered the Periodic System. The initiative for IYPT2019 is supported by IUPAC in partnership with the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics (IUPAP), European Association for Chemical and Molecular Science (EuCheMS), the International Council for Science (ICSU), the International Astronomical Union (IAU), and the International Union of History and Philosophy of Science and Technology (IUHPS).
- UNESCO and 1001 Inventions Organization will launch a new educational initiative in 2019 International Year of the Periodic Table of Chemical

Elements, to raise awareness of chemistry and its applications for sustainable development.

- Other facts:
- Dmitry Mendeleev organized all the chemical elements by their atomic mass.
- The modern periodic table managed by the International Union for Pure and Applied University, arranged the elements on the basis of atomic number.

Questions/Notes

MISCELLANEOUS

Questions/Notes

1. Philip Kotler Presidential Award:

News: Prime Minister Narendra Modi became the first-ever recipient of the Philip Kotler Presidential award.

Facts:

- The award aims to honor mastery in the field of marketing and management.
- It will be offered annually to the leader of a nation.

Other facts:

- Philip Kotler, the Father of Modern Marketing is a professor of marketing Northwestern University, Kellogg School of Management.

2. Carnot prize:

News: Railway Minister Piyush Goyal has been recently awarded the Carnot Prize for his contribution towards sustainable energy solutions.

Facts:

- The award is conferred by the University of Pennsylvania's Kleinman Center for Energy Policy, to the people who have revolutionised the understanding of energy policy.

Other facts:

- It is named in memory of French scientist Sadi Carnot.

3. Couple's Grave in Rakhigarhi:

News: Archaeologists have discovered a 'couple's grave' in a cemetery from Rakhigarhi, Haryana.

Facts:

- This is the first anthropologically confirmed 'couple's grave', which was found in the Harappan settlement excavated at Rakhigarhi in Haryana.
- Rakhigarhi is the biggest Harappan site and the cemetery existing there has more than 70 skeletons.

Other facts:

- The Indus Valley Civilization is one of the four earliest civilizations of the world along with Mesopotamia, Egypt and China.
- Dayaram Sahni first discovered Harappa in 1921.
- R. D. Banerjee discovered Mohenjodaro or Mound of the Dead in 1922.

- The name Harappan Civilization was given by John Marshall after the first discovered site, Harappa.

Questions/Notes

Other sites of the civilization:

Name	Specialty
Mohenjodaro	Great bath, great granary, Urn burial, sculpture of bearded priest.
Dholavira	Giant water reservoir, stadium, dams and embankments
Lothal	Dockyard, double burial, rice husk, fire altars, painted jar, modern day chess, terracotta figure of horse and ship,
Kalibangan	Bangle factory
Banawali	Clay toy plough
Surkotada	First actual remains of the horse bones

4. Bharat Ratna:

News: Pranab Mukherjee, Nanaji Deshmukh (posthumously) and Bhupen Hazarika (posthumously) received the Bharat Ratna award.

Facts:

- 'Bharat Ratna' is the highest civilian award of the country and was instituted in the year 1954.
- The number of annual awards is restricted to a maximum of three in a particular year. It is not mandatory for the government to announce the award each year.
- The Award does not carry any monetary grant, the recipient receives a Sanad (certificate) signed by the President and a Peepal leaf-shaped medallion.
- It can be awarded to Indians as well as Non-Indians. Two Non-Indian Bharat Ratna awardees are Khan Abdul Ghaffar (Pakistan National) and Nelson Mandela (former president of South Africa).
- The recommendations for Bharat Ratna are made by the Prime Minister himself to the President, on the basis of his/her exceptional service/performance of the highest order in any field of human endeavor.
- Bharat Ratna is followed by three other civilian awards of India namely Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri respectively.

Other facts:

- Pranab Mukherjee: He is an Indian politician who served as the 13th President of India from 2012-2017.

Questions/Notes

- Nanaji Deshmukh: He was a politician and a social activist from India. He worked in the fields of education, health, and rural self-reliance.
- Bhupen Hazarika: He was an Indian singer, poet, musician and filmmaker from Assam. He was popularly known as the 'Bard of Brahmaputra'.
- India's longest bridge (Dhola-Sadia bridge), which runs over the Lohit river in Assam has been named after him.

5. Celiac Disease:

News: Celiac disease also called sprue or coeliac, is an immune reaction to gluten intake.

Facts:

- It is an autoimmune disorder occurring in genetically predisposed people.
- In celiac patient, eating gluten triggers an immune response in the small intestine, it damages the inner lining and prevents absorption of some nutrients (malabsorption).
- Celiac disease is incurable.

Other facts:

- Gluten is a protein found in wheat, barley and rye.
- Locally grown Jowar, Bajra, Makki, Ragi, Kuttu are gluten-free grains.

6. Gandhi Circuit:

News: Bihar sanctions the project for "Development of Gandhi Circuit: Bhitiharwa-Chandraiah-Turkaulia".

Facts:

- The project is sanctioned under "Rural Circuit theme of Swadesh Darshan Scheme" with central financial assistance.
- It is a part of the centenary celebrations of the Champaran Satyagraha.
- Champaran Satyagraha (1917) was Gandhi Ji's first satyagraha in India as well as India's First Civil Disobedience Movement.
- The movement was against the forceful Tinkathia system of growing indigo on 3/20 of their lands. Rajkumar Shukla invited Gandhi ji to lead the movement.
- Gandhiji forced the government to appoint inquiry committee that awarded 25% refund.

Other facts:

- Swadesh Darshan is a Central Sector Scheme, under Ministry of Tourism (MoT) launched in
- 2014-15.

Questions/Notes

- It was launched for integrated development of theme based tourist circuits in the country.
- Under the Swadesh Darshan scheme, thirteen thematic circuits have been identified, for development namely: North-East India Circuit, Buddhist Circuit, Himalayan Circuit, Coastal Circuit, Krishna Circuit, Desert Circuit, Tribal Circuit, Eco Circuit, Wildlife Circuit, Rural Circuit, Spiritual Circuit, Ramayana Circuit and Heritage Circuit.

7. Republic Day Parade:

News: India celebrated its 70th Republic Day Anniversary on 26th of January 2019.

Facts:

- The theme of this year's celebration was the 150th year of birth Mahatma Gandhi.
- South African President Ramaphosa was the chief guest of the ceremony.
- The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) was awarded the first prize for its Tableau-Kisan Gandhi.
- The all-women Assam Rifles contingent created history this year by participating for the first time in a Republic Day parade

Cultural celebrations:

- Sankhnaad (martial tune) played for the first time
- Karakattam, folk dance of Tamil Nadu was performed; it is a dance form to praise the rain goddess Mariamman.
- Traditionally, this dance is categorized into two types- Aatta Karakam, mainly performed to entertain the audience and Sakthi Karakam, performed only in temples as a spiritual offering.
- Taakala Folk Dance of Maharashtra was performed.
- Misra Raas of Gujarat, popularly known as dandiya raas is one of the most popular folk dances of Gujarat. Both men and women perform the dance.

North Eastern state folk dances presented:

- Monpa of Arunachal Pradesh: It is a traditional dance form of the Monpa tribe, this dance is performed during the Losar Festival, which marks the tribe's New Year.
- Mamita of Tripura: It is performed on the occasion of Mamita festival, which is harvest festival of Tripuri people.
- Satoiya Nitya of Assam
- Tamang Seto of Sikkim

8. Sanskriti kumbh:

News: The Ministry of Culture organized Sanskriti Kumbh, a 29 days' cultural extravaganza at Kumbh Mela area, Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh.

Questions/Notes

Facts:

- Kumbh Mela is one of the oldest and largest congregations in the world.
- UNESCO has inscribed Kumbh Mela on the list of Intangible Cultural heritage for humanity in 2017.
- The Kumbh Mela is held four times over the course of 12 years, in rotation between four Hindu pilgrimage places on four sacred rivers:
 - Haridwar (banks of Ganga),
 - Prayagraj/Allahabad (Confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati),
 - Nashik (banks of Godavari)
 - Ujjain (banks of Shipra)
- At Prayagraj, Kumbh Mela held at every 6 years and Maha Kumbh every 12 years. Earlier they were known as Ardh Kumbh and Kumbh respectively. But this year the government has announced the Ardh Kumbh will be known as Kumbh and Kumbh as Maha Kumbh.

Other facts:

- Other 12 UNESCO Intangible Cultural heritage for humanity sites:
 - Koodiyattam: Sanskrit Theatre, Kerala
 - Mudiattu: a ritual theatre of Kerala
 - The Tradition of Vedic Chanting
 - Ramlila: The Traditional Performance of the Ramayana
 - Ramman: religious festival and ritual theatre of the Garhwal Himalayas
 - Kalbelia: folk songs and dances of Rajasthan
 - Chhau dance: 3 distinct styles from the regions of Seraikella, Purulia and Mayurbhanj
 - Buddhist chanting of Ladakh: recitation of sacred Buddhist texts in the trans-Himalayan Ladakh region, Jammu and Kashmir
 - Sankirtana: ritual singing, drumming and dancing of Manipur
 - Traditional brass and copper craft of utensil making among the Thatheras of Jandiala Guru, Punjab
 - Yoga
 - Nowruz (Parsi New Year)

9. World Capital of Architecture:

News: UNESCO has named the Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro as the World Capital of Architecture for 2020.

Facts:

- Rio has a mix of modern and colonial architecture; with world-renowned sites like the statue of Christ the Redeemer and contemporary constructions like the Museum of Tomorrow.

Questions/Notes

- As the first World Capital of Architecture, Rio de Janeiro will hold a series of events under the theme “All the worlds. Just one world”, and promote Sustainable Development’s 11th Goal: “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.”

Other facts:

- World Capital of Architecture initiative: It is a joint initiative of UNESCO and the International Union of Architects (UIA) launched in 2018.
- World Capital of Architecture is intended to become "an international forum for debates about pressing global challenges of culture, cultural heritage, urban planning and architecture".
- International Union of Architects (UIA) is a non-governmental organization recognized by UNESCO as the only architectural union operating at an international level.
- It was founded in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1948.

10. International Gandhi Peace Prize:

News: Government announced the winners of Gandhi Peace Prize for four years beginning 2015 to 2018.

Facts:

The awardees are:

- Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari (2015): for their contribution to rural development, education, and development of natural resources.
- Akshaya Patra Foundation (2016): for contributions towards mid-day meals to children
- Sulabh International (2016): for improving the condition of sanitation and emancipation of manual scavengers.
- Ekal Abhiyan Trust (2017): for contributing in education for rural and tribal children in remote areas, rural empowerment, gender, and social equality.
- Yohei Sasakawa (2018): Goodwill Ambassador of the World Health Organization for Leprosy Elimination.

Other facts:

- This annual award was instituted in 1995 on 125th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.
- It is given to individuals and institutions for their contribution to social, economic and political transformation through non-violence and other Gandhian methods.
- Posthumous award cannot be given except in the case when death occurred subsequent to a proposal submission to the jury.

Questions/Notes

- Only achievements within 10 years immediately preceding the nomination are considered for the award.
- Jury includes Prime minister of India as Chairman, Chief Justice of India, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, and two other eminent persons.
- If it is considered that none of the proposals merit recognition, the jury is free to withhold the award for that year.

11. Monuments of National Importance:

News: ASI declared 6 monuments as monuments of national importance in 2018.

Facts:

- The 6 monuments are:
 - The 125-year-old Old High Court Building in Nagpur, Maharashtra,
 - Two Mughal-era monuments in Agra (U.P.):
 - Haveli of Agha Khan
 - Hathi Khana
 - The ancient Neemrana Baori in Alwar, Rajasthan
 - The Group of Temples at Bolangir, Odisha
 - The Vishnu Temple, Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand
- ASI takes up the protection and maintenance of monuments, declared as of national importance.

Other facts:

- Under Section 4 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 only
- ancient monuments or archaeological sites which are of historical, archaeological or artistic interest
- ancient monuments or archaeological sites in existence for not less than 100 years may be declared as of national importance
- The ASI under the Ministry of Culture is the premier organization for the archaeological researches and protection of the cultural heritage of the nation.

JANUARY POINTLY

Questions/Notes

1. Beirut Declaration: The countries taking part in the Arab Economic and Social Development Summit adopted the Beirut Declaration to establish an Arab Free Trade Area.

2. UK Sinha Committee: This committee was set up by the RBI to suggest long-term solutions for the economic sustainability of the MSME sector.

3. GAFA Tax: France imposed tax on large technology companies with large annual global revenue called the GAFA tax (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon) from the 1st of January 2019.

4. Howitzer: A howitzer is a type of artillery piece characterized by a relatively short barrel and the use of comparatively small propellant charges to propel projectiles over relatively high trajectories, with a steep angle of descent.

5. Atal Setu: It is a 5.1 km long cable stayed four-lane bridge inaugurated on the Mandovi River, Goa.

6. "Digital Peace" campaign : Microsoft launched this campaign along with a Cybersecurity Tech Accord aimed at getting internet & technology industry to better protect their customers' privacy & security against cyber-attacks.

7. Difo bridge: it is a 426 mtr long prestressed concrete box girder type bridge over Difo river on Roing-Koron-Paya road in Arunachal Pradesh, it has been constructed by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) and will provide uninterrupted access between Dibang Valley and Lohit valley region.

8. Renuka Multipurpose Dam: The Renuka dam project has been conceived as a storage project on the Giri river (a tributary of the Yamuna) in Sirmaur district of Himachal Pradesh.

9. Share Pledging: Pledging of shares is one of the options that the promoters of companies use to secure loans to meet working capital requirements, personal needs and fund other ventures or acquisitions.

10. Rail MADAD App: The Ministry of Railways has released the mobile app "Rail MADAD (Mobile Application for Desired Assistance During travel)" to expedite and streamline passenger grievance redressal.

11. Samvad with Students: It is part of the enhanced outreach programme of Indian Space Research Organisation launched in Bengaluru on January 1, 2019.