

MONTHLY

FACTLY

EXCLUSIVE CURRENT AFFAIRS FOR

PRELIMS

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ForumIAS

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*Polity***1. MUSLIM WOMEN (PROTECTION OF RIGHTS ON MARRIAGE) ACT, 2019**

News: Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2019, also known as the Triple 'talaq' bill received the Presidential Assent on 31st July 2019.

Facts:

Salient Feature of the Bill:

- The bill declares the **practice of triple talaq (in any form including written or electronic form) as void and illegal.**
- **Offence and penalty:** The Bill makes declaration of talaq as **cognizable offence** and prescribes a punishment of up to **three years' imprisonment with a fine.** The offence will be cognizable only if information relating to the offence is given by:
 - the married woman (against whom talaq has been declared), or
 - any person related to her by blood or marriage.
- The Bill provides that the Magistrate may grant bail to the accused.
- **Compounding-** The offence may be compounded by the Magistrate upon the request of the woman (against whom talaq has been declared). Compounding refers to the procedure where the two sides agree to stop legal proceedings, and settle the dispute. The terms and conditions of the compounding of the offence will be prescribed by the Magistrate.
- **Allowance:** The bill provides for a Muslim woman against whom talaq has been declared, to seek subsistence allowance from her husband for herself and for her dependent children.
- **Custody:** A Muslim woman against whom talaq has been declared, is entitled to seek custody of her minor children.

Additional Facts:

- **Talaq-E-Biddat** (Triple talaq) refers to the practice under Muslim personal laws where pronouncement of the word 'talaq' thrice in one sitting (oral, writing and any medium) by a Muslim man to his wife results in an instant and irrevocable divorce.
- The Supreme Court's judgment in the **Shayara Bano v. Union of India & Others** case held that the practice of talaq-e-biddat (triple talaq) to be unconstitutional as it was violative of **Article 14[equality before law], 15[protection against discrimination] and 21[protection of life and personal liberty]** of the Indian Constitution.
- **Nikah halala** is a practice in which a woman, after being divorced by triple talaq, marries another man, consummates the marriage, and gets divorced again in order to be able to remarry her former husband.

2. ANTI-DEFECTION LAW

News: Karnataka Assembly Speaker disqualified 14 MLAs under the tenth schedule of the Constitution (anti-defection law).

Facts:

- **Defection** refers to a situation when a member of particular party abandons his loyalty towards that party and provides his support to another party.
- To fight the evil of defection the Parliament passed **52nd Constitutional Amendment Act in 1985**, which is commonly referred to as Anti-Defection Law.

- It added the **Tenth Schedule** to the Indian Constitution and amended four articles in the Constitution. (It amended Article 101, 102, 190 and 191 which are related to the vacating of seats and disqualification of MPs and MLAs.)
- The main intent of the law was to combat the evil of political defections and the problem of 'aaya ram-gaya ram'.
- The law applies to both Parliament and state legislative assemblies.

Salient Feature of 52nd Constitutional Amendment Act

- **Disqualification:**
 - **Members of Political Parties:** A member of a house belonging to a political party becomes disqualified from being a member if he voluntarily gives up the membership of his political party, or votes, or does not vote in the house, contrary to the direction of his political party. However, if the member has taken prior permission, or is condoned by the party within 15 days from such voting or abstention, the member shall not be disqualified.
 - **Independent Member:** An independent member (Member not belonging to any political party) of the house becomes disqualified if he joins a political party after the elections.
 - **Nominated member:** A nominated member of the house becomes disqualified if he joins any political party six months after his nomination to the house.
- **Exceptions:**
 - 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 legislators of the party have agreed to such a merger. Thus, if a member leaves the party due to the merger, he cannot be disqualified under the anti-defection law.
 - **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. This exception is provided to ensure impartiality in the office of the presiding officer of a house.
- The 91st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003 brought split of political parties within the purview of anti-defection law.
- **Deciding Authority:** The presiding officer of the house is the deciding authority in matters related to disqualifications due to defections. Supreme Court in Kihoto Hollohan Vs Zachillhu and Others (1992) case has observed that the decision of the presiding officer is under judicial review.
- **Rule-making Power:** The presiding officer of the house has the power to make rules to give effect to the Tenth Schedule. However, it must be placed before the house for 30 days. The House can modify or disapprove the rules.

3. REGISTER OF INDIGENOUS INHABITANTS OF NAGALAND (RIIN)

News: The Nagaland government has constituted a commission to frame the modalities of creating the Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN).

Facts:

- The Commission would be headed by retired Chief Secretary Banuo Z. Jamir as chairman. The panel would submit its report within three months.
- The commission would recommend (a) the eligibility criteria to be an indigenous inhabitant (b) the documents to be acceptable as proof for being an indigenous inhabitant (c) the manner in which the exercise is to be carried out and (d) any other issue relating to implementation of the RIIN.

- **RIIN**
 - The RIIN is aimed at **preparing a master list of all indigenous peoples**.
 - The RIIN list will be based on an extensive survey.
 - It is being prepared to **stop the issuance of fake indigenous inhabitant certificates**.
 - All existing indigenous inhabitant certificates would become invalid once the process of compiling RIIN is completed and fresh certificates are issued. Once the RIIN is finalised, no fresh indigenous inhabitant certificates will be issued except to new-born babies born to the indigenous inhabitants of Nagaland.
 - All indigenous inhabitants of the state would be issued a barcoded and numbered Indigenous Inhabitant Certificate.
 - The RIIN will also be integrated with the online system for **Inner-Line Permit**.
- Though the official notification on RIIN has not mentioned a cut-off date to compile the proposed register, the authorities in Nagaland have till date issued indigenous inhabitant certificates using December 1, 1963 as the cut-off date (Nagaland was inaugurated as India's 16th State on this date).
- Since 1977, a person, in order to be eligible to obtain a certificate of indigenous inhabitants of Nagaland, has to fulfil either of these three conditions: a) the person settled permanently in Nagaland prior to December 1, 1963; b) his or her parents or legal guardians were paying house tax prior to this cut-off date; and c) the applicant, or his/her parents or legitimate guardians, acquired property and a patta (land certificate) prior to this cut-off date.

Additional Facts:

- **Inner Line Permit (ILP)**
 - It is an **official travel document** required by Indian citizens residing outside certain "protected" states while entering them.
 - It is issued by Government of India to regulate movement to certain areas located near the International border of India. It can be issued for travel purpose only.
 - At present, Inner Line Permit is operational in **Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland**.
- **Restricted/Protected Area Permit (RAP)**
 - It is an **official travel document** required by foreign nationals to enter "protected areas".

4. RIGHT TO INFORMATION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019

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

Facts:

- **Changes brought around by the amendment bill:**
 - **Term of Information Commissioner:** The Bill states that the central government will notify the term of office for the CIC and the ICs (at the central and state level) bringing change from previous provision under Act of 2005, which mandated them to hold office for a fixed term of five years.
 - **Determination of Salary:** The Bill states that the salaries, allowances, and other terms and conditions of service of the central and state CIC and ICs will be determined by the central government. The Act of 2005, had CIC and ICs at central salary equivalent to Chief Election Commissioner and CIC and ICs at state level salary to be equivalent to that of Chief Secretary.
- According to the government, the rationale behind the amendment is that the mandate of Election Commission of India and Central and State Information Commissions are different. Hence, their

status and service conditions should be rationalised. Central Information Commission was a statutory body and it was an anomaly to equate it to a constitutional body like Election Commission

- However, opposition parties have criticised the amendment bill on the grounds that it would dilute the Act and curtail the independence of the CIC and other information officers. They have opined that the amendment would also allow Centre to simply transfer any authority be it the CIC or any of the SICs in the event a case is directed against the interests of the government.

Additional Information

- **Central Information Commission:**
 - It is a **statutory body** established under RTI Act, 2005. It is constituted by central government. 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 parliament.
- **State Information Commission:**
 - It is a statutory body established under RTI Act, 2005. It is constituted by state government. It consists of the Central Information Commissioner and not more than ten Information commissioners. The Governor of State appoints the State Information commissioner and the information commissioners on the recommendation of the committee consisting of the Chief Minister as chairperson, the leader of the opposition in the state Legislative Assembly and one state cabinet ministers nominated by the Prime Minister.

5. INTER-STATE RIVER WATER DISPUTES (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019

News: Lok Sabha has passed the Inter-State River Water Disputes (Amendment) Bill, 2019.

Facts:

- The bill seeks to amend the **Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956**. The Act provides for the adjudication of disputes relating to waters of inter-state rivers and river valleys.
- **Main features of the Bill are :**
 - **2- tier resolution mechanism** - The Bill provides for the establishment of a 2-tier resolution mechanism
 - Disputes Resolution Committee (DRC)
 - Inter-State River Water Disputes Tribunal.
 - The Bill mandates the centre to establish a Disputes Resolution Committee (DRC) to resolve the dispute through negotiations within 1 year (extendable by 6 months). If a dispute cannot be settled by the DRC, the central government will refer it to the Inter-State River Water Disputes Tribunal. Such referral must be made within three months from the receipt of the report from the DRC.
 - **Single Tribunal with multiple benches** - To adjudicate the water disputes, the bill mandates the central government to set up an Inter-State River Water Disputes Tribunal. This Tribunal can have multiple benches. All existing Tribunals will be dissolved, and the water disputes pending adjudication before such existing Tribunals will be transferred to the new Tribunal.

- **Composition of Tribunal** - The Tribunal will consist of 8 members (Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, 3 judicial members and 3 expert members). They will be appointed by the central government on the recommendation of a Selection Committee (consisting of the Prime Minister, Chief Justice of India, Law Minister, Jal Shakti minister). Two experts from the Central Water Engineering Service can also be appointed by the central government. They will provide technical advice to the tribunal.
- **Tenure of members** - The bill provides that the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson shall hold office for a period of five years or till the age of 70 years, whichever is earlier. The term of other members will be co-terminus with the adjudication of disputes (with a maximum age limit of a member being 67 years).
- **Time Frames** - Under the Bill, the proposed tribunal must give its decision on the dispute within two years, which may be extended by another year. As per the bill, the total time-frame within which the dispute will be resolved is a maximum of six years (DRC = 1.5 years, Tribunal = 3 years; Reconsideration of the decision by tribunal = 1.5 years, thus, a total of six years).
- **Decision of the Tribunal** - The bill mandates that decision of the tribunal would be final and binding. It removes the requirement of central government to publish the tribunal award in the official gazette. The Bill also makes it mandatory for the central government to make a scheme to execute the tribunal's decision.
- **Data Bank** - The Bill provides that the central government will appoint or authorise an agency to maintain a data bank for each national-level river basin.

Additional Facts:

- **Constitutional Provisions Related with Water:**
 - **Entry 17 of State List** - Water Supplies, irrigations, canals, drainage and embankments, water storage and water power subject to the provision of Entry 56 of Union List.
 - **Entry 56 of Union List** - It provides power to Union Government for the Regulation and development of interstate rivers and river valleys to the extent declared by Parliament by law to be expedient in the public interest.
 - **Art 262** - It deals with adjudication of interstate river water dispute.
 - **Art 262(1)** - It provides that Parliament may by law provide for the adjudication of any dispute or complaint with respect to the use, distribution or control of the waters of, or in, any inter State river or river valley.
 - **Art 262(2)** - Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, Parliament may, by law, provide that neither the Supreme Court nor any other court shall exercise jurisdiction in respect of any such dispute or complaint.
- **Laws enacted under Article 262:**
 - **River Board Act, 1956** - The Act empowers the central government to establish a river board for regulation and development of interstate rivers and river valleys. However, as of now no river board has been constituted under the River Board act, 1956
 - **Inter State Water Dispute act, 1956** - It provides for adjudication of disputes relating to water of inter state rivers and river valleys.

6. SECTION 124-A OF INDIAN PENAL CODE

News: The Union Home Ministry clarified that section 124 A of the Indian Penal Code known as the **sedition law** will not be scrapped as it is needed to effectively combat anti – national, secessionist and terrorist elements.

Facts:

- The Government said that the section was needed to effectively combat anti-national, secessionist and terrorist elements.
- **Section 124-A**
 - It deals with the offence of sedition.
 - The concept of sedition was introduced in the Indian Penal Code in 1870. It was a colonial law directed against strong criticism of the British administration.
 - The term sedition covers speech or writing or any form of visible representation which brings the government into hatred or contempt or excite disaffection towards the government or attempts to do so. It is punishable with three years in prison and/ or fine or a life term and/or fine.
 - Its further states expressing disapproval of government measures or actions with a view to getting them changed by lawful means without promoting hatred or disaffection or contempt towards the government will not come under this section.
- The activists have been demanding the scrapping of Section 124A on the grounds that the provision under the section is overbroad which means it defines the offence in wide terms threatening the liberty of citizens.
- The Supreme Court in **Kedar Nath Singh vs State of Bihar case** has held that for the offence of sedition to be satisfied, there has to be a causal relationship between speech and acts of violence, and mere speech, regardless of how subversive it is, does not amount to sedition.

7. THE NATIONAL INVESTIGATION AGENCY (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019

News: Parliament has passed National Investigation Agency (Amendment) Bill, 2019. The Bill amends the National Investigation Agency (NIA) Act, 2008

Facts:**Salient Feature of the Bill:**

- **Scheduled Offences:** The bill increases the ambit of type of offences that the NIA can investigate and prosecute. Under the existing Act, the NIA can investigate offences under Acts such as the Atomic Energy Act, 1962, and the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, 1967. The provisions of bill will enable the NIA to additionally investigate offences related to human trafficking, counterfeit currency, manufacture or sale of prohibited arms, cyber-terrorism, and offences under the Explosive Substances Act, 1908.
- **Jurisdiction of the NIA:** The NIA Act, 2008 provides for the creation of the NIA to investigate and prosecute offences specified in the schedule. The officers of the NIA have the same powers as other police officers in relation to investigation of such offences, across India. The Bill states that in addition, officers of the NIA will have the power to investigate scheduled offences committed outside India, subject to international treaties and domestic laws of other countries.
- **Special Courts:** The NIA Act, 2008 allows the central government to constitute Special Courts for the trial of scheduled offences. The Bill amends this to state that the central government may designate Sessions Courts as Special Courts for the trial of scheduled offences. The central government is required to consult the Chief Justice of the High Court under which the Sessions Court is functioning, before designating it as a Special Court.

Additional Information

- **National Investigation Agency (NIA)** is a central agency established to combat terror and act as Central Counter terrorism Law Enforcement Agency. It was established after the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks with the enactment of National Investigation Agency Act, 2008.

- It is under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

8. PRIVATE MEMBER BILL

News: A private member bill (Population regulation Bill, 2019) was introduced in Rajya Sabha seeking to enforce two child norm.

Facts:

- **Private Member Bill:**
 - Any bill introduced in Parliament/State Assemblies by Private Member (any MP/MLA who is not a minister) is called private member bill. On the other hand, bill introduced by Ministers are known as Government bills.
 - The objective of Private member's bills is to draw the government's attention to what individual MPs see as issues and gaps in the existing legal framework, which require legislative intervention.
 - Fourteen private member's Bills have become law so far. (Five of them were introduced in Rajya Sabha)
 - The difference between Government Bill and Private Members bill are as follows:

	Government Bill	Private Member's Bill
1	Introduced by Ministers	Introduced by Private member
2	It reflects policies of government	It represents stand of individual MPs on public matter
3	It has greater chance to be approved by Parliament	It has lesser chance to be approved by Parliament
4	Its introduction in house requires seven days' notice	Its introduction in house requires one-month notice
5	It is drafted by concerned department in consultation with Law Ministry	It is drafted by Member concerned
6	Its rejection by house amounts to the expression of want of parliamentary confidence in the government and may lead to its resignation	Its rejection by house has no implication on the government

9. NATIONAL MEDICAL COMMISSION BILL, 2019

News: The Parliament has passed the National Medical Commission Bill, 2019.

Facts:

- The objective of the bill is to repeal the Indian Medical Council Act, 1956 and replace Medical Council of India [MCI] with NMC to regulate medical education and practices in India.
- **Salient Features of the bill:**
 - **National Medical Commission:** The Act sets up a National Medical Commission (NMC). It also mandates the state governments to establish State Medical Commissions within 3 years of passage of the bill. It will consist of 25 members, with a term of maximum four year (**no reappointment**).
 - **The Functions of NMC includes:**
 - framing policies for regulating medical institutions and medical professionals,
 - assessing the requirements of human resources and infrastructure in the health sector

- framing guidelines for determining the fees for up to 50% of the seats in private medical institutions and deemed universities which are regulated as per the Act,
- ensuring compliance by the State Medical Councils of the regulations made under the Bill.
- **Medical Advisory Council:** The central government will constitute a Medical Advisory Council. The Council will act as a platform for the states/union territories to put forward their views and concerns before the NMC.
- **Qualifying Examinations**
 - **NEET** - National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test will be a uniform exam for admission to under-graduate and postgraduate super-speciality medical education in all medical institutions regulated by the Bill.
 - **NEXT** - National Exit Test will be a common final year undergraduate exam for the students graduating from medical institutions. It would be a test to obtain a license for practice. The National Exit Test will also serve as the basis for admission into postgraduate broad-speciality courses at medical institutions. It would also act as a screening test for foreign medical graduates.
- **Community health providers** - The Act empowers the NMC to grant limited license to community health providers [non-medical degree holders connected with the modern medical profession] to practice medicine. They can prescribe specific medicines in primary and preventive healthcare.
- **Professional and Ethical Misconduct** - State Medical Councils will adjudicate on the cases of professional or ethical misconduct against a registered medical practitioner. Appeals against the decision of State Medical Councils can be made to the Ethics and Medical Registration Board. Appeals against the decision of The Ethics and Medical Registration Board can then be made to the NMC.
- **Offences and Penalties** - Medical practitioners enrolled in a State Register or the National Register would be allowed to practice medicine. Any violation of this provision will be punishable with imprisonment of up to one year, or a fine extending to five lakh rupees, or both.
- **Significance of the Bill:**
 - It seeks to regulate medical education and practice in India.
 - The bill focuses on corruption in medical education and shortage of medical professionals.
 - The Bill aims to overhaul the corrupt and inefficient Medical Council of India, which regulates medical education and practice and replace with National medical commission.

*Policy***1. PRADHAN MANTRI LAGHU VYAPARI MAAN-DHAN YOJANA**

News: The Union Labour and Employment Ministry notified the Pradhan Mantri Laghu Vyapari Maan - dhan Yojana 2019.

Facts:

- **Salient features of Pradhan Mantri Laghu Vyapari Maan-dhan Yojana**
 - It is a pension scheme for retailers and small traders.
 - It assures a minimum monthly pension of ₹3000 per month to small shopkeepers, retail traders and the self-employed people after attaining the age of 60 years.
 - They have to contribute to the scheme every month from the time of enrolment and till age 60 for getting the pension. Further, the Government of India will make matching contribution in the subscribers' account.
 - **Eligibility:**
 - The scheme is available to all small shopkeepers and self-employed persons and retail traders with Goods and Services tax (GST) turnover below Rs. 1.5 crore. The age limit is 18-40 years.
 - Further, to be eligible, the applicants should not be covered under the National Pension Scheme, Employees' State Insurance Scheme and the Employees' Provident Fund or be an Income Tax assessee.
 - The scheme is based on self-declaration. No documents are required except Aadhaar and bank account.
 - Interested persons can enrol themselves through Common Service Centres (CSC) spread across India.
 - **Implementation:**
 - Government will establish a pension fund to implement the scheme. The Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) will be the pension fund manager.
 - LIC will be responsible for managing the pension fund, central record keeping, and responsible for pension pay out.

2. STRIDE

News: The University Grants Commission (UGC) has approved a new initiative called Scheme for Trans-disciplinary Research for India's Developing Economy (STRIDE).

Facts:

- **Salient features of STRIDE:**
 - **Aim:** To support and strengthen trans-disciplinary research in institutes and universities of India. It seeks to fund socially relevant, local need-based, nationally important and globally significant research projects.
 - **Objectives:**
 - To identify young talent, strengthen research culture, build capacity, promote innovation and support trans-disciplinary research.
 - To fund multi institutional, highly impact research projects in humanities and human sciences.

- There are **three major components** of the STRIDE scheme-
 - Identifying motivated young talents and provide research capacity building in diverse disciplines
 - Enhancing problem solving skills with help of social innovation and action research
 - Funding high impact research projects

3. PARAMARSH SCHEME

News: The Ministry of Human Resource and Development has recently launched the Paramarsh scheme

Facts:

- It is a scheme under the University Grant Commission (UGC).
- **Salient features:**
 - Under the scheme, leading institutions will provide mentoring to help NAAC Accreditation aspirant Institutions achieve high quality standards.
- **Implementation:**
 - It will be implemented through a “Hub & Spoke” model.
 - Under this model, the leading mentor institution will be the “Hub” and will be centralised.
 - The Hub will guide the Mentee institutions through the secondary branches, called the “Spoke”. A variety of services will be provided to the mentee for self-improvement.
 - The scheme also proposes to provide financial assistance to the mentoring institutions. Further, the mentor institution will be given the option of appointing an expert, who can be paid a fellowship amount of Rs 31,000 per month.
- **Significance:**
 - It will lead to enhancement of the mentee institutions’ quality of research, teaching and overall education
 - It will lead to sharing of knowledge, best practices, research collaboration and faculty development
 - It will facilitate mentee institutions in getting NAAC Accreditation

Additional Information:

- **National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC):**
 - It is an autonomous body under the University Grant Commission (UGC)
 - It assesses and accredits higher education institutions in India based on seven parameters: Curricular Aspects, Teaching-learning & Evaluation, Research, Innovations & Extension, Infrastructure & Learning Resources, Student Support & Progression, Governance, Leadership & Management and Institutional Values & Best Practices.
- **UGC:**
 - It is a statutory body set up by the central government in accordance to the UGC Act 1956. It functions under Ministry of Human Resource Development.
 - It is responsible for the coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of higher education

4. MP LOCAL AREA DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (MPLADS)

News: Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman wrote to Members of Parliaments (MPs) seeking suggestions on how to address the issues associated with MP Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS).

Facts:

- **About MPLADS**

- MPLADS is a central sector scheme, launched in 1993.
- **AIM:** To provide funds to MPs to execute certain developmental projects to meet the urgent needs of their constituents. The projects include drinking water facilities, education, public health, roads and sanitation etc.
- Under the scheme, an MP is entitled to Rs. 5 crore per annum to identify and fund developmental projects.
- The role of the MP is only recommendatory in nature. The implementation of the project is done by local authorities.
- Elected Members of Rajya Sabha can recommend works in the state from where they have been elected.
- Nominated Members of both the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha can recommend works anywhere in the country.
- Initially, the scheme was administered by Ministry of Rural Development. However, Since October, 1994 The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has been looking into its working.
- The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation formulates the policy and also releases the funds under the scheme. It also puts forward the mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the scheme.
- The Fund is non – lapsable.

5. PRADHAN MANTRI GRAM SADAK YOJANA (PMGSY)

News: The government approved the launch of Phase-3 of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY).

Facts:

- **Salient features of PMGSY**

- PMGSY is a scheme of Ministry of Rural Development. It was launched in 2000. It is a 100% centrally sponsored scheme.
- **Aim:** To ensure rural connectivity. It seeks to provide all weather road connectivity to unconnected habitations. By providing connectivity, the scheme seeks to boost socio-economic development of the areas

- **About Phase-3 of PMGSY**

- It will be implemented from 2019-20 to 2024-25. The phase-3 proposes to consolidate roads measuring 1.25 lakh km in length
- It will also strengthen through routes and major rural links which connect habitations to Gramin Agricultural Markets (GrAMs), higher secondary schools and hospitals.
- Construction of bridges of up to 150m in plain areas and 200 m in Himalayan and north eastern states have also been proposed.
- It will also focus on maintenance of roads already constructed under PMGSY.

Additional Information:

- **Road Connectivity Project for Left Wing Extremism Affected Area:**

- It was launched in 2016. It is implemented under the PMGSY.
- It seeks to improve rural road connectivity to Left Wing Extremism Affected Districts in India. The roads taken under the project are Other District Roads, Village Roads and Major District Roads that are important from the security point of view.

6. STUDY IN INDIA PROGRAMME

News: Union Minister of Human Resource and Development highlighted the Study in India programme at Rajya Sabha.

Facts:

- **About Study in India Programme:**
 - The **Ministry of Human resource and development (MHRD)** launched the programme in 2018. MHRD has collaborated with Ministry of External Affairs for the programme.
 - **Aim:** To facilitate internationalization of higher education in India.
 - **Objectives:**
 - to make India a preferred education destination for foreign students
 - Improve the soft power of India with a focus on the neighbouring countries, South-East Asia, Middle East and Africa. and use it as a tool in diplomacy
 - to increase India's market share of global education exports
 - improvement in overall quality of higher education
 - Increase in global ranking of India as educational destination.
 - **Features:**
 - Participation of select reputed Indian institutes/universities by way of offering seats for the International students at affordable rates.
 - setting up of call centres for support
 - selection of top 100 partner institutions on the basis of National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) grading and National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) ranking
 - branding activities in the target countries
 - close coordination with Indian missions abroad and foreign missions in India
 - centralised admission web-portal (<https://studyinindia.gov.in>) is the single window for the admission of foreign students
 - **Implementing Agency:** EdCIL (India) Limited. It is a Government of India Enterprise under the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD)

7. STAND UP INDIA SCHEME

News: Stand Up India Scheme has been extended upto the year 2025.

Facts:

- **About Stand-up India scheme**
 - It was launched in 2016.
 - **Aim:** To promote entrepreneurship among **women and scheduled castes and tribes**.
 - **Objectives:** To facilitate bank loans between Rs 10 lakh and Rs 1 Crore to at least one SC or ST borrower and at least one-woman borrower per bank branch for setting up a Greenfield enterprise (first time venture of the beneficiary). The enterprise should be in manufacturing, services or the trading sector.
 - **Beneficiaries:**
 - SC/ST and/or woman entrepreneurs, above 18 years of age. In case of non-individual enterprises, 51% of the shareholding and controlling stake should be held by either SC/ST and/or Women Entrepreneur.
 - Borrower should not be in default to any bank/financial institution.
 - **Implementing Agency:** Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance

Note: Start-up India is another scheme by government of India to promote entrepreneurship. Unlike Stand-up India which is especially for SC, ST and Women, Start-up India is a scheme to promote new ventures/ entrepreneurship of all irrespective of caste or gender.

ForumIAS

1. WAGE CODE BILL

News - Parliament has passed Code on Wages bill, 2019.

Facts

- The bill seeks to amend and consolidate the laws relating to bonus and wages payments in all employments where any industry, trade, business, or manufacture is carried out.
- The Code replaces the following four laws: (i) the Payment of Wages Act, 1936, (ii) the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, (iii) the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965, and (iv) the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976.
- **Salient Features of the Bill:**
 - **Coverage** - The provision of the bill will be applicable to all employments covering both organised and unorganised sector. At present, the provisions of both the Minimum Wages Act and Payment of Wages Act apply on workers below a particular wage ceiling working in Scheduled Employments only. Many unorganized sector workers like agricultural workers, painters, persons working in restaurants and dhabas, chowkidars, etc. who were out of the ambit of minimum wages will get legislative protection of minimum wages after the bill becomes an Act. As per the Bill, the central government will make wage-related decisions for employments such as railways, mines, and oil fields, among others. State governments will make decisions for all other employments.
 - **Wages:** Wages include salary, allowance, or any other component expressed in monetary terms. This does not include bonus payable to employees or any travelling allowance, among others.
 - **Floor Wage** - As per Bill, Central govt is empowered to fix floor wage by taking into account the living standards of workers. Central govt may set different floor wages for different geographical areas. The minimum wages decided by the central or state governments must be higher than the floor wage. In case the existing minimum wages fixed by the central or state governments are higher than the floor wage, they cannot reduce the minimum wages.
 - **Fixing the minimum wage:** The Code prohibits employers from paying wages less than the minimum wages. Minimum wages will be notified by the central or state governments. This will be based on time, or number of pieces produced. The minimum wages will be revised and reviewed by the central or state governments at an interval of not more than five years. While fixing minimum wages, the central or state governments may take into account factors such as: (i) skill of workers, and (ii) difficulty of work. It simplifies the methodology to fix minimum wage by doing away with the “type of employment” as one criterion. The minimum wage fixation would primarily be based on geography and skills.
 - **Deductions:** Under the Code, an employee’s wages may be deducted on certain grounds including: (i) fines, (ii) absence from duty, (iii) accommodation given by the employer, or (iv) recovery of advances given to the employee, among others. These deductions should not exceed 50% of the employee’s total wage.
 - **Determination of bonus:** All employees whose wages do not exceed a specific monthly amount, notified by the central or state government, will be entitled to an annual bonus. The bonus will be at least: (i) 8.33% of his wages, or (ii) Rs 100, whichever is higher. In addition, the employer will distribute a part of the gross profits amongst the

employees. This will be distributed in proportion to the annual wages of an employee. An employee can receive a maximum bonus of 20% of his annual wages.

- **Gender discrimination:** The Code prohibits gender discrimination in matters related to wages and recruitment of employees for the same work or work of similar nature. Work of similar nature is defined as work for which the skill, effort, experience, and responsibility required are the same.

Additional Information:

Wage

- It means any economic compensation paid to the employee by employer to his works for the services rendered by them
- **Different Types of Wages**

1	Floor Wage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a concept introduced by Code of wages bill, 2019 • The central government will fix a floor wage, taking into account living standards of workers. Further, it may set different floor wages for different geographical areas.
2	Minimum Wage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As per ILO, it is the minimum amount of remuneration that an employer is required to pay to wage earners for the work performed during a given period, which cannot be reduced by collective agreement or an individual contract. It should be paid by an employer to his workers irrespective of his ability to pay. • It must provide not merely for the bare sustenance of life but for the preservation of the efficiency of the worker. For this purpose, the minimum wage must also provide for some measure of education medical requirements and amenities. • It is higher than the floor wage
3	Fair Wage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is above the minimum wage but below the living wage. The lower limit of the fair wage is the minimum wage; the upper limit is set by the capacity of the industry to pay.
4	Living Wage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It represents a higher level of wage. • A living wage is one which should enable the earner to provide for himself and his family not only the bare essentials of food, clothing and shelter but a measure of frugal comfort including education for his children, protection against ill-health, requirement of essential social' needs and a measure of insurance against the more important misfortunes, including old-age. • Thus, a living wage represents a standard of living. A living wage is fixed considering the general economic conditions of the country.

- **Labour Law Reforms**
 - The Second National Commission on Labour had recommended that the existing set of labour laws should be broadly amalgamated into 4 groups.
 - Accordingly, the Central govt has taken steps to rationalize 44 central labour laws into 4 codes
 - Code on Wages
 - Code on Industrial Relations

- Code on Social Security & welfare
- Code on Occupation Safety, Health and Working Conditions

2. COMPANIES (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019

News - Parliament passed the Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2019. It amends the Companies Act, 2013

Facts:

- **Salient Feature of Amendment Bill**

- **Tightening the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) compliance:** Under the Companies Act, 2013, if companies which have to provide for CSR, do not fully spent the funds, they must disclose the reasons for non-spending in their annual report. The Amendment bill provides that any unspent annual CSR funds must be transferred to one of the funds under Schedule 7 of the Act (e.g., PM Relief Fund) within six months of the financial year.
- **Debarring Auditors by NFRA:** Under the Act, the National Financial Reporting Authority debar a member or firm from practising as a Chartered Accountant for a period between six months to 10 years, for proven misconduct. The Bill amends the punishment to provide for debarment from appointment as an auditor or internal auditor of a company, or performing a company's valuation, for a period between six months to 10 years.
- **Re-categorisation of certain Offences:** The 2013 Act contains 81 compoundable offences punishable with fine or fine or imprisonment, or both. These offences are heard by courts. The Bill re-categorizes 16 of these offences as civil defaults, where adjudicating officers (appointed by the central government) may now levy penalties instead. These offences include: (i) issuance of shares at a discount, and (ii) failure to file annual return. Further, the Bill amends the penalties for some other offences.
- **Issuance of dematerialised shares:** Under the Act, certain classes of public companies are required to issue shares in dematerialised form only. The Bill states this may be prescribed for other classes of unlisted companies as well.
- **Powers pertaining to change in Financial Year-** The Central Govt will decide (earlier NCLT decides) cases for adopting a **different financial year** by a company or body corporate, which is a holding company, or a subsidiary or associate company of a company incorporated outside India and is required to follow a different financial year for consolidation of its accounts outside India.
- Conversion of a public company into a private company shall not be valid unless it is approved by an order of the Central Government (earlier it was approved by NCLT)
- Pecuniary limits on compoundable offences has been increased to Rs. 25 lakhs (earlier it was Rs. 5 lakhs)

Additional Information:

- The Companies Act, 2013 was enacted with a view to consolidate and amend the law relating to companies.
- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) -**
 - CSR is a way of conducting business, by which corporate entities visibly contribute to the social good.
 - As per Companies Act, 2003, companies registered under the companies act having net worth of Rs 500 crore or more, or turnover of Rs 1000 crore or more or a net profit of Rs 5 crore or more during any financial year will have to spend 2% of the average of net profits

of the company made during three immediately preceding financial years, in pursuance of its Corporate Social Responsibility Policy.

- India has become the first country to make CSR spending mandatory through a law.
- **NFRA (National Financial Regulating Authority)**
 - It is a statutory body constituted under section 132 of the Companies Act 2013.
 - **Functions:** - It is for the establishment and enforcement of accounting and auditing standards and oversight of the work of auditors.
 - **Composition**
 - It shall consist of a chairperson, who shall be a person of eminence and having expertise in accountancy, auditing, finance or law to be appointed by the Central Government and such other members not exceeding fifteen consisting of part-time and full-time members
 - It shall have the power to investigate, either suo motu or on a reference made to it by the Central Government, for such class of bodies corporate or persons, into the matters of professional or other misconduct committed by any member or firm of chartered accountants, registered under the Chartered Accountants Act, 1949.
 - It shall have the same powers as are vested in a civil court

3. THE BANNING OF UNREGULATED DEPOSIT SCHEME BILL, 2019

News: The Parliament has passed The Banning of Unregulated Deposit Scheme Bill, 2019. It will replace the banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Ordinance, 2019. It also seeks to amend three laws, i.e., the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, the Securities and Exchange Board of India Act, 1992 and the Multi-State Co-operative Societies Act, 2002.

Facts:

- The bill aims to provide for a comprehensive mechanism to ban the unregulated deposit schemes and protect the interest of depositors:
- **Salient Feature of the Bill:**
 - The bill defines 'deposit' and 'deposit taker' comprehensively
 - The Bill bans unregulated deposit taking activities altogether, by making them an offence ex-ante rather than the existing legislative-cum-regulatory framework which only comes into effect ex-post with considerable time lags.
 - A deposit-taking scheme is defined as unregulated if it is taken for a business purpose and is not registered with the regulators listed in the Bill. At present, 9 regulators oversee and regulate various deposit taking scheme. For eg - RBI regulates deposits accepted by non-banking financial companies, SEBI regulates mutual funds, state and union territory governments regulate chit funds, among others.
 - The bill defines three different types of offences:
 - running unregulated deposit schemes,
 - fraudulently defaulting on regulated deposit schemes,
 - wrongfully inducing depositors to invest in unregulated deposit schemes by willingly falsifying facts
 - The bill provides for severe punishment and heavy pecuniary fines for different types of offences to act as deterrent
 - Provisions for disgorgement or repayment of deposits in cases where such schemes nonetheless manage to raise deposits illegally.

- Attachment of properties/assets by the Competent Authority, and subsequent realization of assets for repayment to depositors.
- Clear-cut time lines have been provided for attachment of property and restitution to depositors.
- The Bill provides for the central government to designate an authority to create an online central database for information on deposit takers. All deposit takers will be required to inform the database authority about their business.
- **Significance of Bill:**
 - The Bill will help tackle the menace of illicit deposit taking activities in the country

4. ARBITRATION AND CONCILIATION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019

News: The parliament has passed Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, 2019.

Facts

- The Bill seeks to amend the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996
- The Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 contained provision for domestic arbitration, international commercial arbitration and defines law for conducting conciliation proceedings
- **Salient Features of the Bill:**
 - **Arbitration Council of India (ACI)** - The bill aims to establish an independent body called Arbitration Council of India (ACI) for promotion of arbitration, mediation, conciliation and other alternative dispute redressal mechanisms.
 - The functions of ACI include: (i) framing policies for grading arbitral institutions and accrediting arbitrators, (ii) making policies for the establishment, operation and maintenance of uniform professional standards for all alternate dispute redressal matters, and (iii) maintaining a depository of arbitral awards (judgments) made in India and abroad.
 - **Composition:** It comprises of chairperson and other members. The chairperson of the ACI will be appointed by Central govt in consultation of Chief Justice of India. The chairperson can be a judge of the Supreme Court or Chief Justice of a high court or a judge of a high court or an eminent person, having special knowledge and experience in the conduct or administration of arbitration. Other members will include an eminent arbitration practitioner, an academician with experience in arbitration, and government appointees.
 - **Appointment of Arbitrators:** The Amendment Bill empowers the Supreme Court (in the case of an international commercial arbitration) and the High Court (in cases other than international commercial arbitration) to designate arbitral institutions for the purpose of appointment of arbitrators. (Under the 1996 Act, parties were free to appoint arbitrators.)
 - Timelines under the Amendment Act
 - **Completion of pleadings:** the statement of claim and defence must be completed within a period of six months
 - **Arbitral award:** In cases other than international commercial arbitration, the award will be made by the arbitral tribunal within a period of twelve months from the date of completion of pleadings. In the case of international commercial arbitrations, the award may be made as expeditiously as possible and endeavour may be made to dispose of the matter within a period of twelve months from the date of completion of pleadings.

- **Extension of time:** Where an application for extension of time is pending, the mandate of the arbitrator will continue till the disposal of the said application.
- **Significance of the Bill:**
 - to make India an international arbitration hub by providing facilities for settlement of commercial disputes
 - It will reduce the burden on the courts- Presently, in case of any dispute with respect to appointment of Arbitrators, parties have to approach the Supreme Court or the High Court for appointment of Arbitrators or to resolve their dispute. With the huge backlog of cases, the courts are already overburdened. An effective ACI will share this burden of the court and even facilitate speedy appointment of arbitrators. This would further aid quick resolution of disputes outside the court.

5. CODE ON OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY, HEALTH AND WORKING CONDITIONS BILL

News - The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2019 was introduced in Lok Sabha by Minister of Labour and Employment

Facts:

- The Code repeals and replaces 13 labour laws relating to safety, health and working conditions. These include the Factories Act, 1948, the Mines Act, 1952, and the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970.
- **Salient Feature of the Bill:**
 - The Code applies to all establishments employing at least 10 workers. In case of mines and dock, the code will be applicable even with one worker.
 - The Bill proposes one registration for an establishment instead of multiple registrations
 - All establishments covered by the Code must be registered with registering officers.
 - **Advisory Bodies:** The central and state governments will set up **Occupational Safety and Health Advisory Boards** at the national and state level, respectively. These Boards will advise the central and state governments on the standards, rules, and regulations to be framed under the Code.
 - **Working Hours:** Work hours for different classes of establishment and employees will be provided as per the rules prescribed by the central or state government. For overtime work, the worker must be paid twice the rate of daily wages. Female workers, with their consent, may work past 7pm and before 6am, if approved by the central or state government.
 - **Leave:** No employee may work for more than six days a week. However, exceptions may be provided for motor transport workers. Workers must receive paid annual leave for at least one in 20 days of the period spent on duty. During medical leave, the worker must be paid half his daily wages.
 - **Working conditions and welfare facilities:** The employer is required to provide a hygienic work environment with ventilation, comfortable temperature and humidity, sufficient space, clean drinking water, and latrine and urinal accommodations.
 - **The Code specifies several duties of employers.** These include: (i) providing a workplace that is free from hazards that may cause injury or diseases, and (ii) providing free annual health examinations to employees, as prescribed.
 - **Duties of employees under the Code include:** (i) taking care of their own health and safety, (ii) complying with the specified safety and health standards, and (iii) reporting unsafe situations to the inspector.

- **Offences and penalties:** Under the Code, an offence that leads to the death of an employee will be punishable with imprisonment of up to two years, or a fine up to five lakh rupees, or both.
- **Significance**
 - The Draft Code promotes health, safety, welfare and better working conditions of workforce by enhancing the ambit of a dynamic legislation as compared to the existing sectoral approach limited to few sectors.

6. CONSUMER PROTECTION BILL, 2019

News: Parliament has passed Consumer Protection Bill, 2019. The Bill replaces the Consumer Protection Act 1986

Facts:

- The objective of the bill is to protect the rights of consumers by timely settlement of consumer disputes.
- **Salient Features of the Consumer Protection Bill, 2019**
 - The bill defines consumer as a person who buys any goods or avails a service for a consideration.
 - It covers transactions through all modes [offline, and online through electronic means, teleshopping, multi-level marketing or direct selling].
 - **Consumer Rights--** Six consumer rights have been defined in the Bill. Some of these rights are :
 - be protected against the marketing of goods and services which are hazardous to life and property;
 - be informed of the quality, quantity, potency, purity, standard and price of goods or services;
 - be assured of access to a variety of goods or services at competitive prices; and
 - seek redressal against unfair or restrictive trade practices
 - **Consumer Protection Council (or Central Council)** -- The Bill has mandated the central government to establish Consumer Protection Councils known as Central Council. It has also mandated the state government to establish Consumer Protection Councils in states and districts as State Council and District Council respectively. These are advisory bodies which will advise on promotion and protection of consumer rights. It will be headed by the respective ministers of consumer affairs at the central and state levels. It will be headed by the District Collector at district levels
 - **Central Consumer Protection Authority** - The bill establishes the Central Consumer Protection Authority [CCPA] to protect and enforce the rights of consumers. It will regulate matters related to:
 - violation of consumer rights,
 - unfair trade practices, and
 - misleading advertisements.
 - It can also file cases before the Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission.
 - It will have a separate investigation wing to investigate cases under the Act.
 - It will also have the power to issue directions and penalties against false or misleading advertisements.
 - The Authority can issue safety notices to alert consumers against dangerous or hazardous goods or services;

- **Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission** - The bill sets up a 3-tier consumer disputes redressal commissions/consumer courts at district, state and national levels. Complaints to consumer courts can be filed electronically and from the place where the complainant resides. **Complaints against unfair contracts can be made only at the centre and state consumer disputes redressal commissions.** The final appeal against the order of the national commission shall be made in the Supreme Court.
- **Mediation** - The bill provides for an Alternate Dispute Resolution Mechanism through mediation. A grievance can be referred for mediation by consumer forum if it is satisfied that scope for early settlement by mediation exists.
- **Product Liability** - A manufacturer/service provider/product seller will be held responsible to provide compensation for any damage caused by a defective product or deficient services.
- **Penalties** - A penalty can be imposed by the CCPA on a manufacturer or an endorser of up to Rs 10 lakh and imprisonment for up to two years for a false or misleading advertisement. In case of a subsequent offence, the fine may extend to Rs 50 lakhs and imprisonment of up to five years
- **Significance of the Bill**
 - The consumer Protection Act, 2019 have provisions for - product liability, unfair contracts, mediation, and e-commerce, which were not present in Consumer Protection Act 1986.

7. THE AIRPORTS ECONOMIC REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF INDIA (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019

News: The parliament has passed The Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India (Amendment) Bill, 2019. It amends the Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India Act, 2008.

Facts

- **Definition of major airports:** At present, The Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India Act, 2008 defines a major airport as one with annual passenger traffic over 15 lakh, or any other airports as notified by the central government. The Bill increases the threshold of annual passenger traffic for major airports to over 35 lakh.
- The Bill adds that the AERA will not determine tariff, tariff structures, or development fees, in certain cases. These cases include those where such tariff amounts were a part of the bid document on the basis of which the airport operations were awarded.

Additional Information:

- **AERA (Airport Economic Regulatory Authority of India):**
 - AERA is a statutory body setup by the Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India Act, 2008.
 - The AERA regulates tariffs and other charges for aeronautical services of major airports (civilian airports with annual traffic above 15 lakh passengers). It also monitors the performance standard of services across these airports. Airports below the limit of 15 lakh passengers come under the purview of AAI.
 - Currently, there are 32 major airports (annual traffic above 15 lakh), and AERA regulates tariffs at 27 of these. As per the Bill, AERA will regulate 16 major airports (annual traffic above 35 lakh). The remaining 16 airports will be regulated by AAI.

8. MODEL TENANCY ACT, 2019

News - The Central Govt has come out with Model Tenancy Act, 2019

Facts:

- The Tenancy law is a 'model act', because land is a state subject and states will have the option to adopt or reject it.
- The Model Act lays down the obligations of tenants and landlords, and provides for an adjudication mechanism for disputes.
- **Salient Feature of Model Tenancy Act, 2019**
 - MTA stipulates a robust grievance redressal mechanism comprising of Rent Authority, Rent Court and Rent Tribunal.
 - It has been proposed to cap the security deposit equal to a maximum of two month's rent in case of residential properties and, minimum of one month's rent in case of non-residential property.
 - After coming into force of this Act, no person shall let or take on rent any premises except by an agreement in writing.
 - Within two months of executing rental agreement both landowner and tenant are required to intimate to the Rent Authority about the agreement and within seven days a unique identification number will be issued by the Rent Authority to the both the parties.
 - The Model Act is applicable to the whole of the State i.e. urban as well as rural areas in the State.
 - A digital platform will be set up in the local vernacular language of the State for submitting tenancy agreement and other documents.
 - The Act seeks to penalize recalcitrant tenants for refusing to move out of their rental properties after the agreed-upon rental period expires. The landlord will be able to claim double of the monthly rent for two months and four times of the monthly rent after that as compensation. This will put to rest one of the biggest fears of property owners who do not want to risk letting out their properties in India.
 - The Act stipulates that a landlord cannot refuse to provide essential utilities and access to common facilities.
 - The landlord will also not be able to increase the rent without giving at least three months' notice to the tenant, and cannot increase rent in the middle of a rental term.
 - After the commencement of this Model Act, a tenant – without the prior consent in writing of the landowner – won't be able to sublet whole or part of the premises held by him, or transfer or assign his rights in the tenancy agreement or any part thereof.
 - The terms of agreement executed between a landlord and his tenant will be binding upon their successors in the event of the death of the landowner or tenant. In such a case, their successors will have the same rights and obligations, as agreed in the tenancy agreement, for the remaining period of tenancy.
 - It should be noted that the existing tenancies will not get impacted as the Draft Model Tenancy Act will be applicable prospectively.
 - The Central government has shared a copy of the Model Act with the States and Union Territories (UTs) for their views and comments. The Act, once finalized, will be shared with the States and UTs for adoption.
- **Significance**
 - Promote growth of rental housing segment
 - Creation of adequate rental housing stock for various income sections of the societies.

1. AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA (AfCFTA)

News – 12th African Union (AU) summit was held in Niamey (capital of Niger Republic). In the Summit, AU members have signed the African Continental Free Trade Agreement for goods and services.

Facts:

- **AfCFTA**
 - AfCFTA aims to **create a single continental market for goods and services**. It seeks to pave the way for accelerating the establishment of the Continental Customs Union and the African customs union.
 - The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) will cover a market of 1.2 billion people and a gross domestic product (GDP) of \$3 trillion, across all 55 member States of the African Union.
 - AfCFTA is the 2nd largest free trade area in the world after World Trade Organisation
- **Challenges:**
 - There are three main challenges that question the viability of the AfCFTA.
 - Various internal problem of African Continent such as decolonisation, under development, Islamic Terrorism and Arab Spring.
 - Africa has Low Manufacturing Base
 - Global protectionist tendencies as seen in Brexit, US China Trade War etc

Additional Information:

- **African Union (AU)**
 - The African Union (AU) is a continental body consisting of the 55 member states that make up the countries of the African Continent.
 - The AU was founded on 26 May 2001 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and launched on 9 July 2002 in South Africa. It's secretariat is located at Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)
 - It is successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU, 1963-1999).
 - Vision - An Integrated, Prosperous and Peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena.

2. KARTARPUR CORRIDOR

News: Indian and Pakistani officials will meet at Wagah border to hold discussions on the Kartarpur corridor.

Facts:

- The discussion would happen on the modalities for movement of pilgrims and resolve outstanding technical issues related to alignment and infrastructure along the corridor.
- India will raise concerns such as (a) the numbers of pilgrims to be allowed daily (b) the paper-work required and (c) building of a bridge over a flood-prone creek.
- Further, India's objections to inclusion of a Khalistani separatist in a committee set up by Pakistan on the project will also be raised at the meeting.
- **Kartarpur Corridor**
 - The Kartarpur Corridor was first proposed in early 1999 by the prime ministers of India and Pakistan, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif, respectively, as part of the Delhi-Lahore Bus diplomacy.

- The Kartarpur Corridor is a 4km long proposed corridor comprising border gates, road and a bridge to link Dera Baba Nanak gurdwara in Gurdaspur district in India to Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur in Pakistan.
- Kartarpur Sahib Gurudwara in Pakistan is located 3 to 4 km from International border.
- It is aimed at allowing the easy movement (visa free travel) of Sikh pilgrims from India to the Kartarpur gurdwara in Pakistan.
- The gurdwara in Kartarpur stands on the bank of River Ravi, about 120 km northeast of Lahore. It is revered as Guru Nanak's final resting place.
- India wants the corridor to be ready in time for pilgrims to visit Kartarpur to celebrate Guru Nanak's 550th birth anniversary in November, 2019.



3. INDIA – NEPAL LOGISTIC SUMMIT

News: India-Nepal Logistics Summit was organised in Kathmandu, Nepal. It was inaugurated by Prime Minister of Nepal KP Sharma Oli.

Facts

- The Theme of the Summit was ‘Transforming Logistics Landscape’
- The summit focused on discussing the transport delays of import cargo from **Kolkata Port to Kathmandu**, delays in rail transport and additional costs in handling cargo.
- They also discussed on need for reducing transit time between Nepal and Indian ports and the need to develop **better warehousing facilities** in Nepal.
- It also included issues related to tariffs charged by logistics service providers and the need for automation of customs and border clearance.

4. BASE EROSION AND PROFIT SHIFTING

News: India has ratified the Multilateral Convention to Implement Tax Treaty Related Measures to Prevent Base Erosion and Profit Shifting.

Facts:

- The Multilateral Convention is an outcome of OECD/G-20 project to tackle BEPS.
- It will modify India's tax treaties to curb revenue loss through treaty abuse and base erosion and profit shifting strategies by ensuring that profits are taxed where substantive economic activities generating the profits are carried out.
- It will be applied alongside existing tax treaties.

Additional Facts

- **Base Erosion Profit Sharing (BEPS)**
 - It is a tax planning strategies that exploit gaps and mismatches in tax rules to artificially shift profits to low or no-tax locations where there is little or no economic activity, resulting in little or no overall corporate tax being paid in locations where substantive economic activities generating the profits are carried out.

- BEPS is of major significance for developing countries due to their heavy reliance on corporate income tax, particularly from multinational enterprises.
- **Tax Avoidance:** It is the legal use of tax laws to reduce one's tax burden.
- **Tax Evasion:** Tax evasion is the illegal non-payment or underpayment of taxes by individuals, corporations, and trusts.

5. US SENATE CLEARS PROPOSAL TO BRING INDIA AT PAR WITH NATO ALLIES

News: The US Senate has passed a legislative provision (i.e. The National Defence Authorization Act or NDAA for fiscal 2020) that brings India on par with Washington's North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies and countries such as Israel and South Korea for increasing defence cooperation.

Facts:

- The legislative provision provides for increased US-India defence cooperation in the Indian Ocean in areas of humanitarian assistance, counterterrorism, counter-piracy, and maritime security.
- The legislation will also smoothen the passage of sales to India of high-end US military hardware with India signing foundational compatibility, logistical and security and secrecy agreements required by US for such transactions.
- The US has already recognized India as a "major defence partner" in 2016. This allows India to buy more advanced and sensitive technologies from America on par with that of the closest allies and partners of the US, and ensures enduring cooperation in this sphere. The passage of the NDAA clarifies in greater detail what the closer defence cooperation actually means and entails.
- In July 2018, US President Donald Trump-led administration granted India status of Strategic Trade Authorization-1 (STA-1) country. This made India the only South Asian nation to be given the said designation along with US' NATO allies. This move would ease export controls for high technology product sales to India.

Additional Information:

- **NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation)**
 - It is an intergovernmental political and military alliance. It is based on North Atlantic Treaty signed on April 4, 1949. It is also known as Washington Treaty.
 - NATO's headquarter is located at Brussels, Belgium. Also, Headquarter of Allied Command Operations is located at Mons, Belgium.
 - It constitutes a system of collective defence whereby its independent member states agree to mutual defence in response to an attack by any external party.
- **Objectives:**
 - **Political** – NATO promotes democratic values and enables members to consult and cooperate on defence and security-related issues to solve problems, build trust and, in the long run, prevent conflict.
 - **Military** – NATO is committed to the peaceful resolution of disputes. If diplomatic efforts fail, it has the military power to undertake crisis-management operations. These are carried out under the collective defence clause of NATO's founding treaty – Article 5 of the Washington Treaty or under a United Nations mandate, alone or in cooperation with other countries and international organisations.

Environment

1. BLUE FLAG CHALLENGE

News: Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate change has selected 12 beaches in India to compete for the 'Blue Flag' certification.

Facts:

- The 12 beaches include: (a) *Shivrajpur (Gujarat)*, (b) *Bhogave (Maharashtra)*, (c) *Ghoghla (Diu)*, (d) *Miramar (Goa)*, (e) *Kasarkod and Padubidri (Karnataka)*, (f) *Kappad (Kerala)*, (g) *Eden (Puducherry)*, (h) *Mahabalipuram (Tamil Nadu)*, (i) *Rushikonda (Andhra Pradesh)*, (j) *Golden (Odisha)*, and (k) *Radhanagar (Andaman & Nicobar Islands)*.
- The Blue Flag certification is given to environmental- friendly, clean beaches, marinas and sustainable boating tourism operators.
- The certification is provided by **FEE (the Foundation for Environmental Education)** – a Copenhagen based international, non-governmental organisation. The program was first started in 1985 in France.
- There are 33 environment and tourism-related conditions for Blue Flag Certification. Few of them include, having proper waste disposal system, availability of clean water for tourists, disabled friendly etc.
- **Spain** has the highest number of Blue Flag beaches, followed by, **Greece** and **France**.
- **Japan and South Korea** are the **only countries in East Asia** to have Blue Flag beaches.
- **UAE** is the only Gulf Country which have Blue Flag certified beaches.

Additional Information:

- **Beach Environment & Aesthetic Management System (BEAMS) programme:**
 - It is implemented by Society of Integrated Coastal Management (SICOM) - a body under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate change.
 - It is a programme for sustainable tourism and integrated coastal management.
 - The programme seeks to achieve high standards in the areas of:
 - environmental management
 - environmental education
 - bathing water quality and
 - Safety & security services.

2. FIRST SURVEY ON ORCHIDS

News: The Botanical Survey of India published Orchids of India: A Pictorial Guide

Facts:

- It is the first comprehensive census of orchids of India.
- **According to the publication:**
 - The total number of orchid species endemic to India is 388.
 - 757 (60%) of all orchids found in India are epiphytic, 447 are terrestrial and 43 are mycoheterotrophic.
 - The Himalayas, North-East parts of India and Western Ghats are the hot-spots of orchids.
 - The highest number of orchid species is recorded from Arunachal Pradesh followed by Sikkim and West Bengal.

- Highest orchid species diversity is found in North East India. Highest endemism of Orchids species is found in Western Ghats.
- Among the bio geographic zones of India, the Himalayan zone is the richest in terms of orchid species followed by Northeast, Western Ghats, Deccan plateau and Andaman & Nicobar Islands

Additional Information:

- **Orchids**
 - Orchids are flowering plants. They belong to the family Orchidaceae.
 - They are broadly categorised into three:
 - **Epiphytic:** plants growing on another plants including those growing on rock boulders
 - **Terrestrial:** plants growing on land and climbers
 - **Mycoheterotrophic:** plants which derive nutrients from mycorrhizal fungi that are attached to the roots of a vascular plant
 - The entire orchid family is listed under **Appendix II of CITES** (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora). Any trade of wild orchid is banned globally.
- **Botanical Survey of India:**
 - It is the apex research organization under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change for carrying out taxonomic and floristic studies on wild plant resources of the country.
 - It was established in 1890. It is headquartered in Kolkata, West Bengal

3. WORKING ON A WARMER PLANET

News: The International Labour Organization (ILO) released a report titled 'Working on a Warmer Planet: The Impact of Heat Stress on Labour Productivity and Decent Work'.

Facts:

- **About the report**
 - It highlights how heat stress will impact labour productivity (measured in terms of working hours) and lead to economic losses.
 - The report is based on global temperature rise by 1.5 degree Celsius and labour force trends.
 - *Definition of heat stress:* Heat stress refers to **heat received in excess** of that which the body can tolerate without suffering physiological impairment. It generally **occurs at temperatures above 35°C**, in high humidity.
- **Key takeaways from the report:**
 - **Global**
 - Excess heat will increase worker's occupational health risks and vulnerability. This will lead to a decrease in worker's physical functions and capabilities, work capacity and productivity.
 - The report projects that in 2030, 2.2% of total working hours worldwide will be lost due to high temperatures. This is equivalent to 80 million full-time jobs.
 - The global financial loss due to heat stress is expected to reach USD 2,400 billion by 2030.

- The report notes that the impact of heat stress on labour productivity will be high in Southern Asian countries. Up to 5.3% of total working hours are projected to be lost.
- Agriculture and construction will be the worst affected sectors due to heat stress.
- **India:**
 - The country most affected by heat stress is India. India lost 4.3% of working hours in 1995. It is projected to lose 5.8% of working hours in 2030.
 - In absolute terms, India is expected to lose the equivalent of 34 million full-time jobs in 2030.
 - The report noted that Ahmedabad incorporated a cool roofs initiative into its 2017 Heat Action Plan, notably by providing access to affordable cool roofs for the city's slum residents and urban poor

Additional Information:

- **International Labour Organization (ILO):** ILO is a specialised United Nations agency. It was established in 1919. It is responsible for formulating and overseeing international labour standards.

4. EXTINCTION OF GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD, LESSER FLORICAN: SC FORMS PANEL TO FRAME EMERGENCY PLAN

News: The Supreme Court has constituted a high-powered committee to formulate an emergency response plan for conservation of Great Indian Bustard and Lesser Florican.

Facts:

- The committee has been constituted in response to a plea which alleged that due to various anthropogenic causes, the birds face the threat of extinction.
- The threats include:
 - mortality by collision with infrastructure, particularly power lines and wind turbines,
 - depletion of grasslands and habitat destruction.
 - hunting,
 - development of mines and human habitation in and around their habitats
 - Ingestion of pesticides.

Additional Information:

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

Name	Characteristics	Geographical Extent	IUCN Status
Great Indian Bustard <i>#State Bird of Rajasthan</i>	Can be distinguished by its black crown on the forehead contrasting with the pale neck and head One of the heaviest flying birds (weighing up to 15kgs) # Endemic to Indian subcontinent	Rajasthan (Desert National park), Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh in India and parts of Pakistan	Critically Endangered
Lesser Florican	# Smallest in the bustard family # Endemic to Indian	Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and	Endangered

	subcontinent.	Andhra Pradesh	
Bengal Florican	Mostly black in colour with largely white wings # Endemic to Indian subcontinent	Terai and the Brahmaputra valley (Uttar Pradesh, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.) Considered to be extinct in Bangladesh.	Critically Endangered
MacQueen's Bustard	Pale sandy in colour	Found in desert and steppe regions of Asia Winter migrant to the desert regions of Rajasthan and Gujarat	Vulnerable

- **Conservation Efforts:**
 - **Project Great Indian Bustard:** It is a Rajasthan government project launched in 2018. It envisages constituting enclosures and securing inviolate areas to ensure successful breeding of birds in the Desert National Park.
 - **Bustard Recovery Programme:** Initiated by Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in 2015, it is a programme for Great Indian Bustard, Lesser Florican and Bengal Florican. It recommends:
 - linking local livelihoods with bustard conservation
 - state governments to identify the core breeding areas for bustards and keep them inviolate from human disturbances
 - Restriction on infrastructure development and land use diversion for roads, high tension electric poles, intensive agriculture, wind power generators and construction.

5. SCALY-FOOT SNAIL

News: The Scaly-foot snail (also known as Sea pangolin) became the **first marine species** to be officially recognised as threatened from **deep sea mining**.

Facts:

- The scaly-foot snail is a marine gastropod restricted to hydrothermal vents on deep-ocean ridges in the Indian Ocean, east of Madagascar. Currently, it is known to be found in only 3 locations: Longqi vent field, Kairei vent field and the Solitaire vent.
- The International Union for Conservation of Nature listed it as '**Endangered**' in its updated Red List of Endangered Species.

Additional Information:

- **Hydrothermal vents:**
 - These are fissures in sea floor from which geothermally heated water comes out.
 - They are formed as result of seawater percolating down through fissures in the ocean crust in the vicinity of spreading centers or subduction zones (places on Earth where two tectonic plates move away or towards one another).
- **Deep Sea Mining/ Seabed Mining:**
 - It is the process which involves extracting submerged minerals and resources from the sea floor, either by dredging sand or lifting material in any other manner.

6. ALL INDIA TIGER ESTIMATION REPORT, 2018

News: On the occasion of Global Tiger Day, Indian Prime Minister released the 4th cycle of All India Tiger Estimation Report– 2018. The 4th cycle of the Management Effectiveness Evaluation of Tiger Reserves (MEETR) was also released.

Facts:

- **About Tiger Census**
 - The Tiger Census in India is the **world's most extensive biodiversity mapping exercise**.
 - It is conducted by **National Tiger Conservation Authority** and **Wildlife Institute of India**.
 - The tiger census is **conducted every 4 years**. The first tiger census was conducted in 2006.
 - The All India Tiger Estimation 2018 used **M-STRiPES (Monitoring System for Tigers-Intensive Protection and Ecological Status)**.
- **Key findings of All India Tiger Estimation Report– 2018:**
 - Number of tigers in India, rose to **2967**, in 2018 from 2,226 in 2014
 - **Madhya Pradesh** has highest number of tigers (526), followed by Karnataka (524) and Uttarakhand (442).
 - **Chhattisgarh and Mizoram** saw a **decline** in tiger population. All other states had positive increase.
 - **Pench Tiger Reserve** in Madhya Pradesh recorded the highest number of tigers
 - **Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve** in Tamil Nadu registered the “maximum improvement” in terms of tiger population since 2014
 - India has achieved its commitment to the **St. Petersburg Declaration**, of doubling Tiger population, much in advance to the 2022 deadline.
- **4th cycle of the Management Effectiveness Evaluation of Tiger Reserves (MEETR):**
 - MEETR is the assessment of how well tiger reserves in India are being managed. It assesses the effectiveness of the protected areas in conserving target flora and fauna.
 - It is carried out by National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) in partnership with the Wildlife Institute of India.

Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE)

- It is a global framework to evaluate the performance of protected areas. The framework consists of 6 elements based on which a protected area is assessed. These include: Context, Planning, Inputs, Processes, Output and Outcome.
- India is among the select countries in the world that has institutionalized the MEE process for its network of protected areas

• **Highlights of 4th MEETR:**

- Madhya Pradesh's **Pench sanctuary** and Kerala's **Periyar sanctuary** has been designated as best managed Tiger Reserves in India with a score of 93.75%
- The **Dampa Tiger Reserve in Mizoram** and **Rajaji Tiger Reserve** in Uttarakhand emerged as worst managed tiger reserves in India with scores of 42.97% and 44.53% respectively.

Additional Information:

- Tiger is listed as “**Endangered**” in IUCN Red List. It is listed in **Schedule 1 of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**. It is listed in **Appendix 1 of CITES**.
- **M-STRiPES:** It was launched in 2010 by NTCA and along with the Wildlife Institute of India. It is a **patrol-based wildlife monitoring GIS database**, designed to assist wildlife protection, monitoring, and management of Protected Areas.

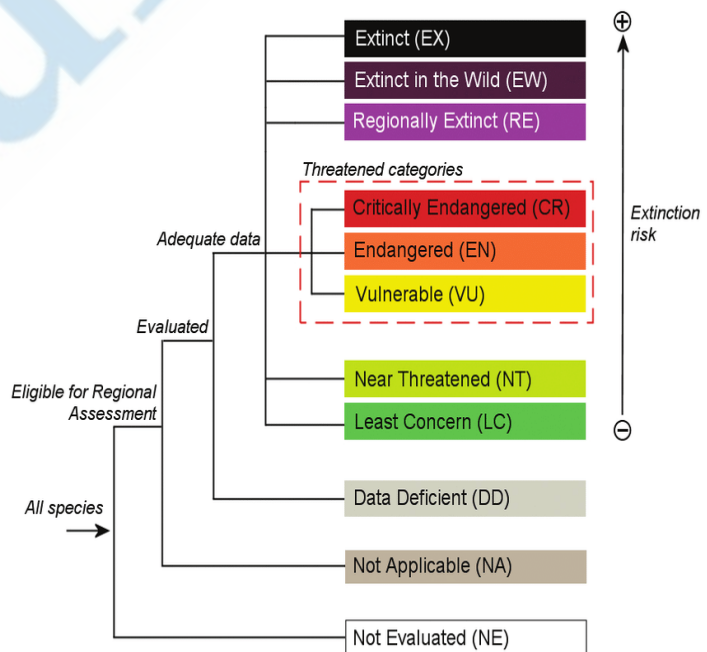
- **Global Tiger Day:**
 - It is celebrated every year on **29th July**. It was established in 2010 at the **Saint Petersburg Tiger Summit**.
 - At the summit goal of **doubling wild tiger populations by the year 2022 (known as Tx2)** was declared and **Global Tiger Recovery plan** was launched by the governments of the world's 13 tiger range countries. The plan outlines how each country could double the number of tiger population in the country.
- **Project Tiger:** India launched Project Tiger in 1973 with an aim to limit factors that leads to reduction of tiger habitats and to mitigate them by suitable management.
- **NTCA:** Established in 2005, NTCA oversees management of Project Tiger and Tiger Reserves in India.
- **Tiger Reserves:**
 - Tiger Reserves are protected area that aim at conserving the habitat to ensure a viable population of the tigers along with their prey base in their habitat.
 - **Jim Corbett** in Uttarakhand is the **first Tiger Reserve** to be established under Project Tiger. At present, there are 50 tiger reserves in India. Orang Tiger Reserve in Assam is the 49th tiger reserve and Kamlang Tiger Reserve in Arunachal Pradesh is the 50th.

7. IUCN RED LIST

News: International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has updated its Red List.

Facts:

- 27% of the total assessed (more than 106,000) species are threatened and at a risk of extinction. More than 7,000 species from around the world were added to the endangered category of the Red List in the latest update.
- **About IUCN Red List**
 - The IUCN Red List (also known as Red List of Threatened Species, Red Data Book) was founded in 1964. It uses a set of criteria to scientifically assess the **extinction risk of species and sub species of animals and plants**.
- **Aim:**
 - The Red List aims to draw attention to the threatened state of the biodiversity and provide information to help formulate actions for biodiversity conservation.



- **Categories:** IUCN Red List classifies species into **9 categories**. Among the categories, Critically Endangered, Endangered and Vulnerable species are considered to be threatened with extinction.
 - **Extinct:** The last individual has died.
 - **Extinct in the Wild:** known only to survive in cultivation, in captivity or as a naturalized population outside its historic range.
 - **Critically Endangered:** Faces an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild
 - **Endangered:** Faces a very high risk of extinction in the wild
 - **Vulnerable:** Faces a high risk of extinction in the wild
 - **Near Threatened:** Likely to be in the threatened category in near future
 - **Least Concern:** They are widespread and abundant
 - **Data Deficient:** inadequate information for assessing the risk of extinction
 - **Not Evaluated**
- **Significance:**
 - It provides an extensive compilation of information on the threats to species, their ecological requirements, and their habitat and conservation actions that can be taken. Thus, it is often referred to as the “**Barometer of Life**”
 - It is a powerful tool for persuading governments to protect threatened species.
 - It is an essential resource for global, regional and thematic reports. Example: Annual UN Sustainable Development Goals reports, Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Global Assessment of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, WWF Living Planet Report, etc.

Additional Information:

- **IUCN:**
 - IUCN is a global environmental organisation.
 - It is the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it.
 - It is composed of both governments and civil society organizations. IUCN has a membership of over 1400 governmental and non-governmental organizations.
 - IUCN has observer and consultative status at the United Nations.
 - It was formed in 1948. It was previously called the International Union for the Protection of Nature and the World Conservation Union

8. GHARIAL

News: Odisha has released five gharials into the Satkosia gorge of Mahanadi- the southernmost limit of gharials' home range in India

Facts:

- **About Gharial:**
 - Gharial is a species of crocodile. It derives its name from “*ghara*”, an Indian word for pot because of a bulbous knob present at the end of their snout.
 - It is listed as “**Critically Endangered**” in the IUCN Red List.
 - Presently, the **wild** populations of gharials can **only** be found in **Bangladesh, India and Nepal**. In India, Gharials are present in **Son River, Girwa River, the Ganges, Mahanadi River and the Chambal River**
- **Major threats to Gharial:**
 - Construction of Dam, barrages, and water abstraction

- Entanglement in fishing nets
- River bed cultivation
- sand mining
- **Conservation Efforts:**
- **Project Crocodile:**
 - The Indian government had initiated Project Crocodile with collaboration with UNDP and FAO in 1975.
 - It included an intensive captive rearing and breeding programme intended to revive dwindling gharial population.
- **Wildlife Sanctuaries:**
 - The National Chambal Sanctuary (Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh) and Ken Gharial Wildlife Sanctuary (Madhya Pradesh) are dedicated to conservation and breeding programs of Gharial.

Additional Information:

- Odisha is the only State in India having all three species of crocodile— gharial, mugger and saltwater crocodile.
- **Mugger:** Muggers are broad-snouted crocodiles. It is listed as **Vulnerable** in the IUCN Red List.
- **Saltwater Crocodile:** It has a wide snout compared to most crocodiles and has longer snout than muggers. It is listed in the Least Concern category of IUCN Red List.

9. EARTH OVERSHOOT DAY

News: In 2019, the Earth Overshoot Day fell on 29 July—the earliest date in last 20 years. This means that humanity is currently using nature 1.75 times faster than earth can regenerate (using resources equivalent to that of 1.75 Earths).

Facts:

About Earth Overshoot Day:

- Earth Overshoot Day is calculated every year by **Global Footprint Network**- an environmental think-tank established in 2003
- It *marks the date when humanity's demand for ecological resources and services in a given year exceeds what Earth can regenerate in that year.*
- **Calculation:** It is calculated by dividing the world biocapacity of that year, by the world ecological footprint of that year, and multiplying by 365 (no. of days in a year)

$$(\text{World Biocapacity} / \text{Ecological Footprint} * 365 \text{ days}) = \text{World Overshoot Day}$$
- **Background:**
 - The concept of Earth Overshoot Day was first conceived by Andrew Simms of the UK think tank New Economics Foundation.
 - New Economics Foundation, which partnered with Global Footprint Network in 2006 to launch the first global Earth Overshoot Day campaign. In 2006, Earth overshoot Day fell in October.

Additional Information:

- **Biocapacity** is the amount of natural resources generated by Earth at a particular period of time.
- **Ecological Footprint** is the measure of humanity's consumption of Earth's natural resources (food, timber, fibers, carbon sequestration, and accommodation of infrastructure) at a particular period of time.

10. COMMERCIAL WHALING

News: Japan has officially resumed commercial whaling from 1st July 2019

Facts:

- Japan, Iceland and Norway are the only nations to allow commercial whaling despite the International Whaling Commission (IWC) moratorium.
- In 1982 the IWC had put a moratorium on commercial whaling of all whale species and populations to conserve whales.

Additional information:

- **International Whaling Commission (IWC):**
 - The IWC was set up in 1946 under the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling.
 - It is headquartered in Impington, United Kingdom
 - It looks into the conservation of whales and the management of whaling
 - India is a member of IWC.
- **Whale Sanctuaries**
 - IWC has currently designated two whale sanctuaries where all forms of commercial whaling are prohibited. These are:
 - **Indian Ocean Sanctuary:** It was established in 1979. It covers the whole of the Indian Ocean south to 55°S.
 - **Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary:** It was established in 1994. It covers the waters of the Southern Ocean around Antarctica

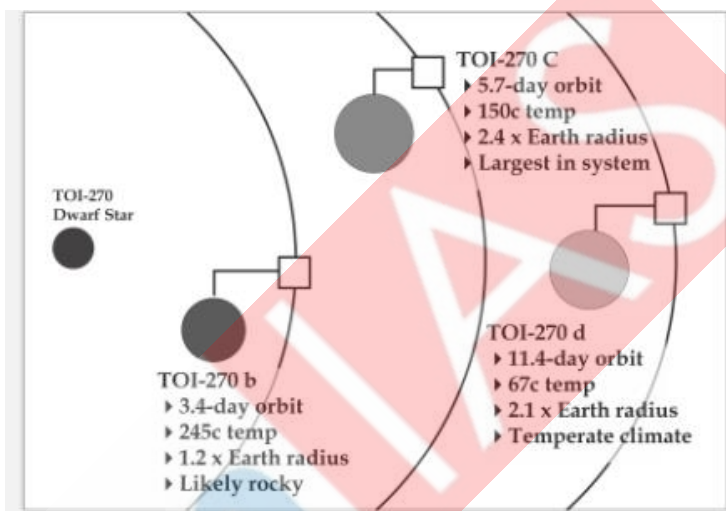
Science and Technology

1. TOI 270 – NASA FINDS A NEW PLANETARY SYSTEM ABOUT 73 LIGHT YEARS AWAY FROM EARTH.

News: NASA's Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) discovered a new planetary system

Facts:

- The newly discovered planetary system has been named **TOI 270**. It is located in the **constellation Pictor**.
- The planetary system includes a dwarf star (TOI 270) and three exoplanets named TOI 270 b, TOI 270 c, and TOI 270 d. The dwarf star is 40% smaller than the Sun in size and mass.
- TOI 270 b is the innermost planet. TOI 270 c and TOI 270 d are Neptune-like planets because their compositions are dominated by gases rather than rock.
- The three planets orbit the star every 3.4 days, 5.7 days, and 11.4 days respectively.



Additional Information:

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

2. THIRTY METER TELESCOPE

News: There have been protests in Hawaii over the Thirty Meter Telescope

Facts:

- Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) is a proposed astronomical observatory with an extremely large telescope (ELT). It is called so because of its 30 m prime mirror diameter.
- It is proposed to be built on **Mauna Kea in Hawaii**. The protests are taking place as Mauna Kea is considered to be a sacred ground by native Hawaiians.
- The TMT is being designed and developed by the TMT International Observatory LLC (TIO) - a non-profit international partnership of institutions from the USA, Japan, China, India and Canada.
- Significance:**
 - Provide information about the nature of “first-light” objects and their effects on the universe’s evolution.



- Observe the formation and development of the large-scale structures by looking at faint distant galaxies and the intergalactic medium.
- Help detect and investigate black holes that reside in the centre of many distant galaxies.
- Study in detail the black hole in the centre of Milky Way.
- Help in advancing knowledge of the physical processes that lead to star and planet formation.

Additional Information:

- **Mauna Kea:** Mauna Kea is a dormant volcano. It is the highest point in Hawaii.

3. HAYABUSA-2

News: Hayabusa2 spacecraft successfully touched down for the second time on the asteroid Ryugu.

Facts:

- Hayabusa 2 is a **Japanese spacecraft**. It was launched in December 2014 on a six-year mission.
- It seeks to study the **asteroid Ryugu** and collect samples to bring to Earth for analysis. It will bring the asteroid sample to Earth in 2020.
- It is a follow-up mission of Hayabusa-1 mission.
- Hayabusa-1 mission had taken samples from asteroid **Itokawa**. It was the **first spacecraft to take samples from an asteroid** and also the **first mission to successfully land and take off from an asteroid**.

Additional Information:

- **Asteroid Ryugu:**
 - It is a near-Earth object and a potentially hazardous asteroid of the Apollo group. A near-Earth object (NEO) is any small Solar System body whose orbit brings it to proximity with Earth.
 - The Apollo asteroids are a class of asteroids with Earth-crossing orbits i.e. the asteroid's path around the Sun crosses Earth's orbit
- **OSIRIS REx mission**
 - It is a mission by NASA. It is one of the missions under New Frontiers program.
 - OSIRIS Rex stands for Origins, Spectral Interpretation, Resource Identification, Security-Regolith Explorer. The goal of the mission is to collect a sample from near-Earth asteroid Bennu and then to bring the sample to Earth.
- **New Frontiers Program:**
 - It is a series of space exploration missions being conducted by NASA with the purpose of researching several of the Solar System bodies. It comprises of four mission:
 - New Horizons, which flew past Pluto in 2015
 - Juno which is a Jupiter exploration mission
 - Dragon Fly mission to titan (moon of Saturn)
 - OSIRIS Rex mission

4. DEEP OCEAN MISSION

News: Deep Ocean Mission (DOM) has received in-principle approval from the government.

Facts:

- **Aim:** The mission aims to explore Deep Ocean to harness vast marine resources
- **Key areas:**
 - Deep-sea mining: exploitation of polymetallic nodules (PMN)
 - Ocean climate change advisory services

- Development of technologies for deep sea mining, underwater vehicles, and underwater robotics.
- Technological and conservational innovations for sustainable utilization of marine bio resources
- Tapping energy from the ocean and offshore-based desalination.
- Krill fishery from Southern Ocean.
- **Two key projects** have been planned under the Mission:
 - Desalination plant powered by tidal energy
 - Submersible vehicle equipped to explore depths of at least 6,000 metres.
- The mission will be led by the Union **Ministry of Earth Sciences**. It will be a **five-year mission** and will commence from October 31, 2019.

Additional Information:

- **Polymetallic Nodules:**
 - Polymetallic nodules are rock concretions composed of minerals such as manganese, nickel, cobalt, copper and iron hydroxide. They were first discovered in 1896 in the Kara Sea, in the Arctic Ocean off Siberia.
 - They are formed by slow precipitation of the metallic components from seawater.
 - They are found in abundance in four regions:
 - Clarion-Clipperton Zone (CCZ): It is located in the Pacific, extending from the west coast of Mexico to Hawaii.
 - Peru Basin: It lies about 3000 kilometres off the Peruvian coast
 - Penrhyn Basin: In the Pacific Ocean, near the Cook Islands
 - Central Indian Ocean
- **Polymetallic Nodules Exploration by India**
 - The International Sea-Bed Authority has allotted a site of 75,000 square kilometres in the Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB) to India for exploitation of polymetallic nodules. The estimated resource of polymetallic nodules in the area is about 380 million tonnes.
 - In 2012, India launched **Polymetallic Nodule programme** for exploration and development of technologies for harnessing of nodules from the CIOB allocated to India by ISA.
- **Progress made so far:**
 - A FGM (First Generation Mine-site) with an area of 18,000 sq. km has been identified for extraction of minerals.
 - A Remotely Operable Submersible (ROSUB 6000) has been developed by National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT). It is capable of operating at 6000 m water depth and has already been successfully tested at a depth of 5289 m.
 - NIOT has developed and demonstrated mining technology with artificial nodules at 500 metres depth.
 - Ministry of Earth Sciences launched O-SMART (Ocean Services, Technology, Observations, Resources Modelling and Science) scheme in 2018 which seeks to fund technology development for deep ocean mining among others.
- **International Sea-Bed Authority (ISA)**
 - It is a **UN body** set up under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. It is mandated to regulate exploration and exploitation of marine non-living resources of oceans in international waters.

5. BLACK GOLD

News: Indian scientists from Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) have developed a new material called “Black gold”.

Facts:

- The material was developed using gold nanoparticles. The material is black in colour and therefore named “Black Gold”
- **Characteristics:**
 - Unlike gold, black gold has unique properties such as capacity to absorb light and carbon dioxide (CO₂).
 - It has the ability to absorb the entire visible and near-infrared region of solar light.
 - It can also act as a catalyst and convert CO₂ into methane at atmospheric pressure and temperature using solar energy.
- **Significance:**
 - It can be used for a number of applications such as solar energy harvesting and desalinating seawater
 - It can perform artificial photosynthesis.

6. ANTIBIOTIC COLISTIN BANNED IN ANIMAL FEED, POULTRY, AQUA FARMS

News: The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has issued an order prohibiting the manufacture, sale and distribution of colistin and its formulations for food producing animals, poultry and aqua farms.

Facts:

- **Rationale:** The prohibition comes as an effort to curb the growing menace of antimicrobial resistance (AMR).
- **About Colistin:**
 - Colistin is a polypeptide antibiotic from the group of polymyxins. It is predominantly used in veterinary medicine in the treatment of intestinal diseases as well as other infections.
 - In humans, it is used as a last line therapy to treat infections caused by multidrug-resistant Gram-negative bacteria.
 - According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), Colistin is a “reserve” antibiotic i.e. to be used only when absolute necessary.
 - Japan and Malaysia also prohibits use of antibiotic colistin.

Additional Information:

- Anti-microbial resistance is the ability of a microorganism (like bacteria, fungi, viruses, and some parasites) to stop an antimicrobial (such as antibiotics, antifungals, antivirals and antimalarial) from working against it.
- One of the major causes of AMR is the rampant use of antibiotics in livestock animals and poultry.
- A 2017 global study on antibiotic use in farm animals projected the consumption of antibiotics through animal sources to nearly double during 2013-2030.
- The study had ranked India the **fourth largest consumer** of antibiotics in food animals globally after China, the United States and Brazil.
- WHO recently released AWaRe – an online tool to ensure safer antibiotic use to decrease AMR.

7. CHANDRAYAAN 2

News: Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) successfully launched Chandrayaan-2 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.

Facts:

- Chandrayaan-2 is **India's second unmanned lunar mission** after Chandrayaan-1.
- It is the **1st Indian expedition to attempt a soft landing on moon** with indigenous technology. If successful, India will become the **4th country to soft land on moon**- after USA, Russia and China.
- The main aim of the Chandrayaan-2 mission is to conduct a detailed study of moon for a better understanding of its origin and evolution.
- It seeks to soft land on the lunar South Polar region, in a highland between two craters –Manzinus C and Simpelius N, at a latitude of 70°S. If successful, **India will become the first country in the world to ever soft land on Moon's South Polar Region.**
- The Chandrayaan - 2 comprises of :
 - Orbiter:** It will circle and observe the moon and relay information to the Lander
 - Lander named 'Vikram'** (named 'Vikram' to honour Late Dr. Vikram Sarabhai): It will execute the soft landing on moon and will send out the Rover.
 - Rover named 'Pragyan'** (meaning wisdom): It is a 6-wheeled, AI powered vehicle and will carry out in-situ experiments. The lander and rover will function for **1 lunar day (1 lunar day=14 earth days)**
- The Chandrayaan-2 mission is carrying 13 payloads.
- Chandrayaan-2 was launched aboard a **GSLV Mark III rocket** -touted as the most powerful rocket built by ISRO.

Additional Information:

- Chandrayaan 1:**
 - Chandrayaan 1 was **India's first mission to moon**. It was launched in 2008 aboard a **PSLV C-II**.
 - Unlike Chandrayaan 2 which include an orbiter, lander and rover, Chandrayaan 1 had only an orbiter and an impactor.
 - Chandrayaan-1 discovered the presence of hydroxyl and water molecules on moon's surface. It also detected Magnesium, Aluminium and Silicon on the lunar surface.
- GSLV MK III:**
 - The GSLV Mk-III is a geosynchronous satellite launch vehicle developed by ISRO. It is the heaviest rocket ever made by India.
 - It has 3 stages with two solid motor strap-onus, a liquid propellant core stage, and a cryogenic stage.
 - It is India's first fully functional rocket to be tested with a cryogenic engine that uses liquid propellants (liquid oxygen and liquid hydrogen).
 - It has been designed to carry 4-tonne class satellites into Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO) or about 10 tons to Low Earth Orbit (LEO).
- GSLV and PSLV:**
 - GSLV (Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle) and PSLV (Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle) are satellite launch vehicles developed by ISRO.
- Key Differences between GSLV and PSLV**

#	PSLV	GSLV
1	Used to launch Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellites into Polar and Sun Synchronous Orbits	Used to launch satellites and other space objects into Geosynchronous Transfer Orbits.
2	It has a four-stage system comprising a	It has a three-stage launch system with strap-

	combination of solid and liquid-fuelled rocket stages.	on motors
3	Does not use cryogenic fuel	Uses cryogenic engine in the third stage. The engine uses liquefied oxygen and hydrogen as fuel.
4	Lower load capacity than GSLV- can put 1,750 kg of payload to Sun-Synchronous Polar Orbits of 600 km altitude and 1,425 kg in sub GTO	Has greater load capacity than PSLV- can put a payload of up to 2500 in GTO and 5 tonnes in LEO

Internal Security and Defence

1. HAND-IN-HAND EXERCISE

News: India and China will hold the 8th edition of Hand in Hand exercise at Umroi, Meghalaya in December 2019.

Facts:

- The 8th Hand-in Hand Exercise will be based on counter-terrorism and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations.
- **About Hand-in Hand Exercise**
 - Hand in Hand exercise is an **annual military exercise** between India and China. The first Hand in Hand exercise was held in Kunming, China in 2007.
 - The exercises are tactical-level operations that **aims to build closer relations** between Indian and Chinese armies.
 - The 6th edition of the exercise was held in Pune in 2016 and 7th edition was held in Chengdu region of China in 2018. The exercise did not took place in 2017 due to Doklam Crisis.

2. SAGAR MAITRI MISSION-2

News: INS Sagardhwani oceanographic research vessel has sailed for a scientific venture called Sagar Maitri (Marine & Allied Interdisciplinary Training and Research Initiative) Mission- 2

Facts:

- Sagar Maitri Mission 2 commemorates the 50-years celebrations India's only research ship INS Kistna's missions. INS Kistna conducted missions as part of the International Indian Ocean Expeditions (IIOE) (1962-65).
- Sagar Maitri mission is an initiative by Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO).
The initiative aligns with Indian Prime Minister's vision of 'Safety and Growth of All in the Region' (SAGAR).
- Under the SAGAR policy, MAITRI (Marine & Allied Interdisciplinary Training and Research Initiative) is the scientific component of DRDO.
- The **key objectives of Sagar Maitri** mission are:
 - Data collection from the entire North Indian Ocean with special focus on Andaman Sea and adjoining seas
 - Establishing long-term collaboration with Indian Ocean Region (IOR) countries in the field of ocean research and development.
- The first Sagar Maitri mission was held in April 2019. INS Sagardhwani had visited Myanmar

Additional Information:

- **SAGAR:**
 - SAGAR stands for 'Safety and Growth of All in the Region'. The concept was put forward by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his 2015 Mauritius visit.
 - The main aim of the policy is to promote cooperation among Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) countries to achieve sustainable inclusive development, peace and security.
 - The different elements of SAGAR policy includes:
 - Enhancing capacities to safeguard land and maritime territories and interests

- Strengthen economic and security cooperation
- Promote collective action to deal with natural disasters and maritime threats e.g. Piracy
- Promote collaboration for sustainable regional development
- Collaborate for greater scientific interaction, especially in ocean research in underwater acoustics
- Promote respect for maritime rules, norms and peaceful resolution of disputes
- **IORA:**
 - It was established in 1997
 - The objective of IORA is to strengthen regional cooperation and sustainable development within the Indian Ocean Region.
 - It has 22 Member States and 9 Dialogue Partners. Its Secretariat is located in Ebene, Mauritius.
 - India, Australia, Iran, Indonesia Thailand, Malaysia, South Africa, Mozambique, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Bangladesh, Singapore, Mauritius, Madagascar, UAE, Yemen, Seychelles, Somalia, Comoros and Oman are members of IORA
- **INS Sagardhwani**
 - INS Sagardhwani is an oceanographic research vessel. It is an indigenously built ship. It was commissioned in 1994.
 - It is owned by Naval Physical & Oceanographic Laboratory (NPOL) – a R&D establishment of the DRDO.

3. INS VIRAAAT

News: The government informed Parliament that it has decided to scrap INS Viraat.

Facts:

- INS Viraat is a Centaur class aircraft carrier.
- It was commissioned into the Indian Navy in May 1987. Before that it had served in the British Navy as HMS Hermes for 25 years.
- It holds a Guinness Book of World Records for being the longest serving warship in the world
- The motto of INS Viraat was “Jalamev Yasya Balmev Tasya” (One who controls the sea is all powerful).
- It was decommissioned in 2017.

4. IN LCU L-56

News: IN LCU L-56, the sixth of eight indigenously built LCU MK IV class ship was commissioned into the Indian Navy.

Facts:

- LCU 56 (LCU – Landing Craft Utility) is an amphibious ship. Its main role is to transport and deploy main battle tanks, armoured vehicles, troops and equipment from ship to shore.
- It has a displacement of 900 tonnes. It measures 62 metres in length.
- It is fitted with two MTU diesel engines that provides it a sustainable speed of over 15 knots. The ship is equipped with the state-of-art equipment and is armed with two 30 mm CRN-91 guns.
- The ship has been designed and built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Ltd (GRSE), Kolkata. It has 90% indigenous content.
- The ship will be administered and based in Port Blair under the Naval Component Commander (NAVCC) in Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC).

- LCU 56 will enhance the maritime and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) capability of Andaman Nicobar Command.
- It will also perform other activities such as beaching operations, search and rescue missions, disaster relief operations, coastal patrol, and surveillance operations along the Andaman and Nicobar Group of Islands.

Additional Information:

- **Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE)**
 - GRSE is a shipbuilding company. It is under the administrative control of the Ministry of Defence. It was founded in 1884 and in 1934 was incorporated under the Indian Companies Act, 1913
 - GRSE primarily caters to the shipbuilding requirements of Indian Navy and Indian Coast guard. It had built India's first indigenous warship, INS Ajay, in 1961.
 - Recently, GRSE became the first Indian shipyard to build and deliver 100 warships.
- **Landing Craft Utility (LCU) Mk-IV Class**
 - In 2011, the GRSE was entrusted with designing and building 8 LCU Mk-IV class ships. These ships are meant to perform multi-role amphibious missions jointly carried out by the Indian Navy and Indian Army.
 - The first ship LCU-L51 was commissioned into service in 2017.

5. INAS 313

News: Indian Naval Air Squadron (INAS) 313 was commissioned into Indian Navy

Facts:

- INAS 313 has been named as Sea Eagle. It is Navy's fifth Dornier aircraft squadron.
- It will operate from Chennai International airport. With this, Tamil Nadu will have three naval air bases which is the highest number for any coastal state. INS Rajali at Arakkonam and INS Parundu at Ramnad are the other two air bases in Tamil Nadu.
- The squadron will operate Dornier aircraft. It is a multi-role Short Range Maritime Reconnaissance (SRMR) aircraft manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).
- The aircraft will be used for maritime surveillance, Search and Rescue Operations and to provide targeting data to weapon platforms.
- INAS 313 would enhance Indian Navy's efforts in ensuring maritime security through constant surveillance in the north-eastern part of Indian Ocean.

Additional Information:

- **Sea Eagle:** It is a bird of prey in the family Accipitridae.
- **Squadron:** It is a unit comprising a number of military aircrafts (generally 12-24)

*Social***1. SURROGACY (REGULATION) BILL, 2019**

News: The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has introduced the Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2019 in the Lok Sabha.

Facts:

- **Surrogacy and its Types:**
 - **Surrogacy:** An arrangement often supported by legal agreements, whereby a woman agrees to become pregnant and give birth to a child for an intending couple, who will become the parents of child.
 - **Commercial Surrogacy:** It includes compensation (in cash or kind) paid to the surrogate mother, which exceeds the reasonable medical expenses associated with the pregnancy
 - **Altruistic Surrogacy:** It involves an arrangement where the couple does not pay the surrogate mother any compensation other than the medical and insurance expenses related to the pregnancy
- **About Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2019**
 - **Aim:** To regulate the practice and process of surrogacy in India
 - **Objectives:**
 - Ensure effective regulation of surrogacy,
 - Prohibit commercial surrogacy
 - Allow ethical altruistic surrogacy to the needy infertile Indian couples on fulfilment of conditions.
 - Prohibition of exploitation of surrogate mothers and children born through surrogacy
 - **Key Provisions:**
 - **Prohibition of Commercial Surrogacy:** The bill puts a complete ban on commercial surrogacy. It also bans surrogacy for producing children for sale, prostitution and other forms of exploitation.
 - **Permitted Purposes of Surrogacy:** It allows altruistic surrogacy for intending couples who have proven infertility.
 - **Eligibility criteria for intending couple:** An intending couple should have a “certificate of essentiality” issued by appropriate authority upon fulfilling the following criteria:
 - ✓ Indian citizenship and married for at least 5 years
 - ✓ Aged between 23 to 50 years old (wife) and 26 to 55 years old (husband)
 - ✓ Should not have any surviving child (biological, adopted or surrogate) {Exception: a child who is mentally or physically challenged or suffers from life threatening disorder or fatal illness}
 - **Eligibility Criteria for surrogate mother:**
 - ✓ A close relative of the intending couple
 - ✓ Married; having a child of her own
 - ✓ Aged 25-35 years
 - ✓ A surrogate only once in her lifetime
 - ✓ Possess a certificate of medical and psychological fitness for surrogacy

- **Formation of National and State Surrogacy Boards:** It proposes to regulate surrogacy in India by establishing a National Surrogacy Board at the central level and state surrogacy boards and appropriate authorities in the state and Union Territories.
- **Parentage of the surrogate child:** It states that any child born out of a surrogacy procedure shall be the biological child of the intending couple. Also, the child will be entitled to all rights and privileges that are available to a natural child
- **Abortion of Surrogate Child:** It states that in case of abortion of the surrogate child, a written consent of the surrogate mother is mandatory. Also, there must be an authorization from appropriate authorities, in compliance with the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971.
- **Offences and Penalties:** Any form of monetary transactions in the name of surrogacy has been made a criminal offence. It imposes a fine of up to Rs. 10 lakh and imprisonment of up to 10 years for the following offences:
 - Advertisement of the act of commercial surrogacy.
 - Exploitation of the surrogate mother.
 - Exploiting or abandoning the surrogate child.
 - Sale and Import gametes or human embryos.

Additional Information:

- Till date, commercial surrogacy has been held legal in India as per the Supreme Court judgement in the case of **Baby Manaji vs. Union of India (2008)**

2. TRANSGENDER PERSONS (PROTECTION OF RIGHTS) BILL, 2019

News: The Lok Sabha has passed the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019

Facts:

- **About Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019**
 - **Aim:** Social, economic and educational empowerment of transgender persons.
 - **Definition of transgender persons:** It defines transgender persons as those whose gender does not match the gender assigned to that person at birth. This includes trans-men or trans-women, persons with intersex variations, gender-queers, and persons having socio-cultural identities such as kinnar, hijra, jogappas, etc.
 - **Key Provisions:**
 - **Right to Self-Identification:** It states that a person would have the right to choose to be identified as a man, woman or transgender, irrespective of sex reassignment surgery and hormonal therapy. However, it requires transgender persons to go through a district magistrate and district screening committee to get certified as a transperson.
 - **Prohibition against discrimination:** It prohibits discrimination of transpersons in education, healthcare, employment, public facilities etc.
 - **Responsibilities of Government:**
 - ✓ Provide health facilities to transgender persons including separate HIV surveillance centres
 - ✓ Provide, through an insurance scheme, medical expenses for sex reassignment surgery, hormonal therapy, laser therapy or any such health-related expenses
 - ✓ Take steps for rescue and rehabilitation, vocational training and self-employment

- ✓ Create transgender sensitive schemes, and promote their inclusion in cultural activities
- **National Council for Transgender persons (NCT):** The bill proposes establishing a NCT. It would advise the central government on related policies and legislation and also act as a centre for grievance redressal. The chairman of NCT will be Union Minister for Social Justice.

Additional Information:

- **Transgender Population in India:** As per the Census of 2011, the total population of Transgender in India is 4.9lakh. The highest proportion of the trans-gender population, about 28%, has been identified in Uttar Pradesh followed by Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal
- **NALSA Judgement, 2014:** The Supreme Court in National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India & Ors. upheld that transgenders should be treated as third gender for the purpose of safeguarding their fundamental rights.
- **Section 377 Judgement, 2018:** SC decriminalised homosexuality by partially striking down the certain provisions of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).
- **Marriage between Man and Transwoman:** In April 2019, Madras High Court upheld that the marriage solemnised between a man and a transwoman was valid under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 and ordered its registration. This is first time in India where marriage between man and transwoman has been legally recognised.
- **State-level Initiatives:**
 - **Kerala** is the **first** state to formulate a transgender policy in 2015 which is aimed at ending the discrimination and bringing the third sex to the mainstream. It has also set up a transgender justice board to deal with their complaints
 - **Maharashtra** is the second state in India to set up a welfare board and the first, to set up a cultural institute dedicated to the transgender community.

3. WORLD DAY AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

News: World Day against Trafficking in Persons is celebrated every year on 30th July.

Facts:

- **Background:** In 2013, the UN member states adopted a resolution which designated July 30 as the World Day against Trafficking in Person.
- **Aim of the observance:** The observance seeks to raise awareness of the situation of victims of human trafficking and for the promotion and protection of their rights
- **Organiser:** United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
- **2019 Theme:** 'Call your government to action'. It focuses on the importance of Government action in the interest of victims of trafficking.

Additional Information:

- **Status of human trafficking**
 - According to Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2018 released by UNODC
 - Most trafficked victims are women and girls. Almost three-quarters of them are trafficked for sexual exploitation, and 35% are trafficked for forced labour.
 - Victims are trafficked from most South Asian countries- Bangladesh, India and Pakistan.
- **UNODC**
 - It is a UN office established in 1997. It is headquartered in Vienna, Austria

- It was established as the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention by combining the United Nations International Drug Control Program (UNDCP) and the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division. It was renamed UNODC in 2002
- It is the chief international organization which helps countries to combat illicit drugs, crime and terrorism.
- It implements the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons
- **Global Initiatives:**
 - **Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons**
 - It is a protocol to United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC). It seeks to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, paying particular attention to women and children.
 - UNTOC was adopted in 2000 and entered into force in 2003. India is a signatory to the convention.
 - **Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons:** It was adopted by UN General Assembly in 2010. It asks government worldwide to take coordinated and consistent measures to combat human trafficking.
 - **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG):**
 - **SDG 5.2:** It calls to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation
 - **SDG 8.7:** it calls to take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking
- **Initiatives by India:**
 - **Constitutional Provision:**
 - **Article 23:** Prohibits trafficking in human beings and forms of forced labour
 - **Article 39(e):** Directed at ensuring that health and strength of individuals are not abused and that no one is forced by economic necessity to do work unsuited to their age or strength
 - **Article 39(f):** It states that childhood and youth should be protected against exploitation.
 - Section 370 of the Indian Penal Code defines trafficking and penalizes offenders
 - Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1986 deals with trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.
 - Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018: It provides for investigation of all types of trafficking, and rescue, protection and rehabilitation of trafficked victims.
 - UJJAWALA Scheme - A Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of Trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation and Re-Integration of Victims of Trafficking for Commercial Sexual Exploitation. It is by Ministry of Women and Child Development

4. EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE (EVD)

News: The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the Ebola crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) a public health emergency of international concern.

Facts:

- **About Ebola virus disease (EVD)**
 - It is a severe illness in humans caused by Ebolavirus of the virus family Filoviridae.
 - Ebola is an emerging **zoonotic disease** (i.e. – virus is transmitted from animals to human). Examples of other zoonotic diseases are Nipah, Rabies, Anthrax etc.
 - Fruit bats are considered to be the natural host of the Ebola virus. It is spread to humans through close contact with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected animals like fruit bats, monkeys, etc.
 - There are 6 species of Ebolavirus which have been identified till date: Zaire, Bundibugyo, Sudan, Taï Forest, Reston and Bombali. The current outbreak in DRC belongs to the Zaire ebolavirus species.
 - EVD was first identified in 1976 in two simultaneous outbreaks, one in Sudan (present South Sudan) and another in DRC.
- **Ebola Outbreaks:**
 - In 2014–2016, the largest Ebola outbreak was recorded in West Africa. It started in Guinea and spread to Sierra Leone and Liberia.
 - DRC is dealing with the second largest Ebola outbreak ever with 2,025 cases of the disease being already reported till June 2019. The outbreak has spread internationally, from the DRC into Uganda.
- **Ebola Vaccine**
 - Recombinant vesicular stomatitis virus–Zaire Ebola virus (rVSV-ZEBOV) is an experimental vaccine for protection against EBD.
 - It has been developed by the **Public Health Agency of Canada** and licensed to NewLink Genetics. In 2014, Merck entered into a licensing agreement with NewLink Genetics to research, develop, manufacture and distribute the vaccine.
 - WHO has said that the vaccine used during the current outbreaks in Congo was 97.5% effective in preventing Ebola infection.

Additional Information:

- **Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)**
 - It is defined as an extraordinary event which is determined to constitute a public health risk to other States through the international spread of disease and it potentially requires a coordinated international response.
 - The PHEIC emergency provision is the highest level of alarm the WHO can put. Previously, PHEIC was declared in four cases:
 - H1N1 influenza (swine flu) virus pandemic (2009)
 - resurgence of wild poliovirus (2014)
 - west Africa Ebola virus outbreak (2014)
 - Zika virus outbreak (2018).
- **Pandemic and Epidemic:**
 - Epidemic refers to an increase, often sudden, in the number of cases of a disease above what is normally expected in that population in that area at a particular point of time.
 - A pandemic is the worldwide spread of an epidemic

5. NEW NORMS FOR 'TRANS FAT FREE' STATUS

News: The Food safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has put forward new norms for trans-fat free status.

Facts:

- **About the new norms:**
 - According to the norms, bakeries, sweet shops and other food outlets would be able to use a government trans-fat free logo for their healthier food offerings.
 - Food establishments can display “Trans Fat Free” logo in their outlets and on their food products in compliance with the Food Safety and Standards (Advertising and Claims) Regulations, 2018.
 - The regulations specify that trans-fat free claim can be made for foods which contain less than 0.2 gm trans-fat per 100gm /100ml.
- **About Trans-fat**
 - Trans-fat are made by adding hydrogen to liquid vegetable oils to make them more solid. It is used to increase the shelf life of foods.
 - They are present in hydrogenated fats such as margarine and bakery shortenings, used in preparation of bakery products
- **Risks associated with trans-fat:**
 - Trans-fat increases bad cholesterol levels in body and increases the risk of developing cardiovascular diseases.
 - The WHO estimates that consumption of partially hydrogenated vegetable oils (PHVOs) high in trans-fat leads to more than 5 lakh deaths annually due to cardiovascular disease.

Note: PHVOs are made by adding hydrogen to vegetable oils in order to make them more solid and less liquid.

Additional Information

- India has already limited transfat content in fat and oil to 5% and aims to reduce it to 3% (by 2021), and 2% (by 2022)
- **Global Initiative to Eliminate trans-fat**
 - **REPLACE:**
 - In 2018, WHO launched REPLACE. It is a **comprehensive plan to eliminate industrially-produced trans-fat** from the global food supply by 2023.
 - The plan includes **6 areas of action** as follows:
 - **Review** dietary sources of industrially-produced trans-fat and the landscape for required policy change.
 - **Promote** the replacement of industrially-produced trans-fat with healthier fats and oils.
 - **Legislate** or enact regulatory actions to eliminate industrially-produced trans-fat.
 - **Assess** and monitor trans-fat content in the food supply and changes in trans-fat consumption in the population.
 - **Create** awareness of the negative health impact of trans-fat among policy-makers, producers, suppliers, and the public.
 - **Enforce** compliance with policies and regulations.
- **Initiatives by FSSAI:**
 - FSSAI has proposed amendments to ‘Food Products Standards and Food Additive Regulations, 2011’. The amendment seeks to limit trans-fatty acids in all oils and fats to not

more than 3% by January, 2021 and to not more than 2% by January, 2022. The current limit is 5%.

- **“Heart Attack Rewind”**: It is a mass media campaign launched by FSSAI in 2018. It was broadcasted in 17 languages for a period of four weeks on major digital platforms to aware people about harmful effect of trans-fat.
- **Eat Right India Movement**: Launched in 2018, it aims to improve public health in India and combat negative nutritional trends to fight lifestyle diseases. A major focus is on reduction of high fat, sugar and salt foods in the diet
- **State-level Initiative:**
 - In a first, **Kerala** has formulated a draft action plan against trans-fat. The action plan against trans-fat envisages
 - massive awareness campaign on harmful effects on trans-fat and high fat, sugar, salt (HFSS) foods,
 - identify supply and monitor retail sale of PHVOs,
 - provide scientific sessions and training to food business operators on using TFA free alternatives,
 - Monitor and test food samples to keep use of trans-fat at check.
- **FSSAI**
 - Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is a statutory, autonomous body established under Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. It functions under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
 - FSSAI is responsible for protecting and promoting public health through the regulation and supervision of food safety

*Miscellaneous***1. JAIPUR GETS UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE TAG**

News: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has added Jaipur to its World Heritage List.

Facts:

- **About Jaipur**
 - The City of Jaipur is popularly known as “Pink City” for its trademark pink building colour.
 - It was founded in 1727 by Sawai Jai Singh II, the ruler of the Rajput State of Amber. In 1956, Jaipur became the capital of the state of Rajasthan.
 - Jaipur’s urban planning shows a blend of Hindu, Mughal and Western cultures. Popular monuments in Jaipur are Amer Fort, Hawa Mahal, Jal Mahal etc.
- **About World Heritage Site:**
 - These are sites inscribed on the World Heritage List of the UNESCO.
 - These sites are considered to be 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).
 - To be included on the World Heritage List, sites must be of outstanding universal value and meet at least one out of ten selection criteria as prescribed by UNESCO.
 - There are three types of Heritage sites – Cultural, Natural and Mixed.

Additional Information:

- **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 (Khangchendzonga 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 specialised agency based in Paris. It was established in 1945.
 - It seeks to build peace through international cooperation in Education, the Sciences and Culture.

Pointly

1. **Hyperbola-1:** Private Chinese start-up company iSpace launched Hyperbola-1- China's first private rocket capable of carrying satellites.
2. **Spektr-RG:** Russia launched Spektr-RG- a space observatory intended to observe black holes, neutron stars and magnetic fields.
3. **Tiangong-2:** It is a Chinese space laboratory that recently burned up in the Earth's atmosphere as part of a planned deorbit.
4. **Orion Multi-Purpose Crew Vehicle:** NASA successfully demonstrated launch abort system of Orion Multi-Purpose Crew Vehicle- a US-European spacecraft planned to carry a crew of four astronauts to space.
5. **Red Mud:** It is a solid waste generated during the aluminium production process.
6. **Dracaena Cambodiana:** It is a dragon tree species in the Dongka Sarpo area of West Karbi Anglong in Assam. The plant yields bright red resin which is known for its medicinal properties.
7. **Carbon Tax:** South Africa introduced a carbon tax that aims to reduce 34% carbon emissions by 2020 and 42% emissions by 2025. A carbon tax directly sets a price on carbon after defining a tax rate on greenhouse gas emissions or on the carbon content of fossil fuels.
8. **American pocket shark:** It is new shark species native to the Gulf of Mexico, capable of squirting luminous liquid into the ocean.
9. **Dugong:** Also known as Sea cow, it is a sea-grass eating mammal. It is listed as Vulnerable in the IUCN Red List.
10. **Tamil yeoman:** It is a butterfly species endemic to Western Ghats. It has been declared as the state butterfly of Tamil Nadu.
11. **Internet Saathi:** It is an initiative by Google India and Tata Trusts which aims to facilitate digital literacy among women in rural India.
12. **Securitypedia:** It is a website launched by Central Industrial Security Force (CISF). It contains a wide range of security related issues, best practices and latest technologies in the domain of security available across the globe.
13. **Port Integrity Campaign:** It is a campaign launched by Maritime Anti-Corruption Network (MACN) with support of Govt. of India. It aims to reduce and in the long term eliminate integrity issues and bottlenecks to trade during operations in Indian ports.
14. **Plan Bee:** It is an initiative launched by Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) to prevent elephant deaths while crossing railways tracks. It involves a device which produces and amplifies the sound of swarming beesto keep elephants away from railway tracks.
15. **Bhabha Kavach:** It is India's lightest and cheapest bullet proof jacket developed by Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) and Mishra Dhatu Nigam Limited (MIDHANI).
16. **Mukhyamantri TirthYatra Yojana:** It is a Delhi government scheme. It provides fully-funded pilgrimage trip for senior citizens by state government.
17. **Kan Sikul, Kan Huan – My School, my farm:** It is an initiative of District Administration of Lawngtlai, Mizoram. It aims to make every school, Anganwadi, Child care institution and hostel in Lawngtlai, self-sufficient in local variety of fruits and vegetables by March 2020.
18. **Project Sahara:** It is an initiative by Ahmedabad District Administration. Under the project, Non-pneumatic Anti-Shock garment (NASG) is provided to primary health centres in the district to prevent maternal deaths due to postpartum haemorrhage.

19. **Self-care Interventions for Health:** The World Health Organization (WHO) has launched its first guidelines on self-care interventions for health, with a focus on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)
20. **Project Sampark:** The Defence Ministry has inaugurated Ujh Bridge in Kathua district and Basantar Bridge in Samba district of Jammu & Kashmir. The bridges have been constructed by Border Roads Organization (BRO) under Project Sampark. BRO functions under the control of the Ministry of Defence. Project Sampark started in 1975.
21. **National Digital Health Blueprint:** Ministry of Health and family welfare has released the National Digital Health Blueprint (NDHB) that has been prepared by NITI Aayog. The vision of NDHB is to create a National Digital Health ecosystem that supports Universal Health Coverage (UHC)

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