MONTHLY

FACTLY

EXCLUSIVE CURRENT AFFAIRS FOR

PRELIMS

JUNE 2019

ForumIAS

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Polity

1. MOTION OF THANKS TO PRESIDENT ADDRESS PASSED BY PARLIAMENT

News: A Motion of Thanks to President for his address to the joint sitting of Parliament (17th Lok Sabha) was passed by both the Houses.

Facts:

- **President's Address to Parliament** –
  - It is governed by **Articles 86 (1)** and **87** of the Indian Constitution and **Rules 16 to 24** of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha.
  - **Article 86(1) of the Indian Constitution** mandates President of India to address either house of Parliament or both houses of parliament assembled together and for that purpose require the attendance of members.
  - **Article 87 of the Indian Constitution (Special address by the President)** provides two instances when the President specially addresses both Houses of Parliament (a) first session of each year and (b) first Session after each general election when the reconstituted Lok Sabha meets for the first time.
  - It is a broad statement of government policy and it is approved by cabinet.

- **Motion of Thanks** –
  - The president's address is followed by Motion of thanks, which is moved in each house for voting by ruling party's MP. Deliberated in each house, it provides a chance for opposition to critically examine the government's policies.
  - The Motion of Thanks must be passed in both the houses (with or without amendments). Amendment to motion of thanks can address parts of speech or issues it failed to mention. However, a failure to get motion of thanks passed amounts to defeat of government and leads to collapse of government. Thus, motion of thanks is deemed to be a No Confidence Motion.
  - There have been only five instances so far, when the Motion of Thanks was adopted by Rajya Sabha with amendments (**in the years 1980, 1989, and 2001, 2015 and 2016**)

2. NORTH EASTERN COUNCIL

News: Plenary session of North Eastern Council will be held in Guwahati on Aug 3-4, 2019.

Facts:

- **North Eastern Council (NEC)** –
  - It is the **zonal council** for the North Eastern Region of India.
  - It was established in 1972, is a statutory organization under North Eastern Council Act, 1971.
  - It is the nodal agency for economic and social development of North Eastern Region.
  - **Composition of the Council**: (a) Governors and Chief Ministers of constituent States and (b) three members nominated by the President. It is chaired by the Union Home Minister and the Vice Chairman of the council is Minister of State (Independent Charge), Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER).
  - It can also perform the tasks undertaken by the various Zonal Councils to discuss such inter-State issues such as drug trafficking, smuggling of arms and ammunition, boundary disputes etc.
- North Eastern Region consists of 8 states - Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura.

3. THE AADHAAR AND OTHER LAWS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019

News: The Aadhaar and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2019 was introduced in Lok Sabha.

Facts:

- **Key Provisions of the Bill include**:
  - **Offline Verification**: It allows for offline verification of Aadhaar card holder, without authentication, through modes specified by UIDAI by regulation.

o **Voluntary Use**: It allows for voluntary use of Aadhaar to establish identity. The Bill states that authentication of an individual's identity via Aadhaar, for the provision of any service, may be made mandatory only by a law of Parliament.

o **Aadhaar number of children**: The Bill specifies that at the time of enrolling a child to obtain an Aadhaar number, the enrolling agency shall seek the consent of his parent or guardian. The bill gives an option to children who are Aadhaar number holders to cancel their Aadhaar number on attaining the age of eighteen years.

o **Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) Fund**: The bill Provides for establishment of UIDAI Fund.

o **Complaints:** Under the Aadhaar Act, courts can take cognizance of an offence only if the UIDAI registers a complaint. The Bill amends this to allow the individual to register complaints in certain cases, including impersonation or disclosure of their identity.

o **Disclosure of information in certain cases -** Under the Aadhaar Act, restrictions on security and confidentiality of Aadhaar related information do not apply in case the disclosure is pursuant to an order of a District Court (or above). The Bill amends this to allow such disclosure only for orders by High Courts (or above). Further, under the Act, an officer not below the rank of a Joint Secretary may issue directions for disclosing information in the interest of national security. The Bill amends this to allow such disclosure on directions of officers not below the rank of a Secretary.

Additional Information:

- **Aadhaar**
  - o Aadhaar is a **12-digit** unique identification number which is issued to all Indian residents under **section 3 of The Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016**.
  - o Aadhaar is issued by UIDAI on behalf of Government of India (GoI) to residents of India on voluntary basis
  - o Aadhaar serves as proof of identity and address, anywhere in India. Each Aadhaar number is unique to an individual and will remain valid for life.

4. ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION

News: Prime Minister has called an all-party meeting to discuss the issue of 'one nation, one election'.

Facts:

- One Nation, One Election refers to holding elections to Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assembly simultaneously, once in five year.
- Simultaneous elections were held in the India during the first two decades after Independence up to 1967. However, dissolution of certain Assemblies in 1968 and 1969 followed by the dissolution of the Lok Sabha led to the "disruption of the conduct of simultaneous elections."

- **Problems Associated with Frequent elections are –**
  - o Massive expenditure on conducting frequent elections.
  - o Impact on governance due to Model Code of Conduct.
  - o Diversion of security and civil staff from primary duties.
  - o Disruption to normal public life as delivery of essential services is affected.

- **Benefits of One Nation One Election**:
  - o efficiency in governance as populist tendencies will diminish.
  - o continuity in policies and program.
  - o Reducing expenditure on conducting elections.
- **Challenges/Hurdles in conducting simultaneous election**
  - o To conduct simultaneous elections in India, many amendments to the constitution of India are required. Besides, the deployment of security forces located in widely varying geographic and climatic conditions at the same time will also be extremely difficult.
  - o Common cycle of elections may be disrupted if any one of the simultaneously elected legislatures is brought down by a no-confidence motion. One solution which has been proposed for this is **Constructive vote of no confidence**. It means that a no confidence motion against ruling govt can be made only if there is positive majority for prospective successor.

5. NATIONAL PARTY STATUS

News: The Election Commission of India (ECI) has recognized **National People's Party (NPP) as a National Party**.

Facts:

- NPP is the **eighth political party** to be recognised as National Party. NPP became the first regional party of the north-east to be accorded the status of National Party.
- Currently, there are seven national parties in India namely (a) All India Trinamool Congress (b) Bhartiya Janta Party (c) Bahujan Samajwadi Party (c) Communist Party of India (d) Communist Party of India (Marxist) (e) Indian National Congress (INC) and (f)Nationalist Congress Party.
- NPP was given the national party status for fulfilling conditions such as polling more than 6% of the total votes in the last general election and being recognised as a State party in at least four States. NPP is recognised state party in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya and Nagaland

Additional Information:

- The Election Commission lists political parties as "national party", "state party" or "registered (unrecognised) party". The conditions for being listed as a national or a state party are specified under the Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968.
- **National Party** : A party is recognised as a **national party** if it fulfils any of the following conditions:
  - o If it secures 6% of total valid votes polled in any four or more states at a general election to the Lok Sabha or to the legislative assembly and in addition if it wins at least four seats in the Lok Sabha from any state or states, or
  - o If it wins at least 2% of total seats in the Lok Sabha at a general election and these seats have to be won from at least three different states, or
  - o If it is recognised as a state party in at least four states.
- **State Party**: A party is recognized as a **State Party** if it fulfils any of the following conditions:
  - o If it secures at least 3% of total number of seats in the legislative assembly or at least 3 seats in legislative assembly in last general election to legislative assembly, whichever is more or
  - o If it has won 1 Lok Sabha seat for every 25 Lok Sabha seat allotted for the State at a Lok Sabha General Elections, or
  - o If it has polled minimum of 6% of total valid votes polled in a State and in addition it has won 1 Lok Sabha seat at a General Election to Lok Sabha or Legislative Assembly, or
  - o If it has polled a minimum of 6% of total valid votes polled in a State and in addition it has won 2 seats at a General Election to legislative assembly, or
  - o If at a General Election to Lok Sabha or Legislative Assembly, the party has polled not less than 8% of the total valid votes polled in the State.

6. PRO TEM SPEAKER

News: BJP MP Virendra Kumar has been appointed as the Pro-tem Speaker for the newly elected 17th Lok Sabha.

Facts:

- **Pro-tem Speaker**:
  - o Pro-tem in Latin means '**for the time being**'.
  - o He/she is appointed by President/Governor in concurrence to **Art 94** and **180 of Indian Constitution for Union and States legislature respectively.**
  - o He/she is a temporary speaker appointed for a limited period of time to conduct the works in Lok Sabha or state legislatures till the time the house selects its speaker and deputy speaker.
  - o Usually, senior most member is chosen as pro-tem speaker.
  - o Once the new Speaker is elected, the office of the pro-tem speaker ceases to exist.
  - o The pro-tem speaker has the same powers, privileges as that of speaker
  - o **Duties**: The main duty of the pro-tem speaker is to a) administer the oath to the newly elected members b) enables the house to elect the new speaker and c) also conducts the floor test for the newly constituted government.

7. NITI AAYOG

News: Prime Minister has approved the reconstitution of National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog).
Facts:

- NITI Aayog comprises of
  - o Chairperson – PM,
  - o Vice Chairperson – Appointed by PM. Incumbent – Rajiv Kumar
  - o Chief Executive Officer – To be appointed by PM for fixed tenure. Incumbent – Amitabh Kant
  - o Governing Council – It comprises of Chief Minister of each state and UTs with legislature and Lt. Governors of other UTs,
  - o Regional Council – To address specific issues. It is formed on need basis. It comprises of CMs and Lt. Governor of the region. Chaired by Chairperson of NITI Aayog or his nominee.
  - o Members – Full Time members, maximum of 2 Part Time members and maximum of 4 ex-officio members to be nominated by PM.
  - o Special Invitee – Experts with relevant domain knowledge. To be nominated by PM
- The ex-officio members at present include Defence Minister, the Home Minister, the Finance Minister and the Agriculture Minister.
- Special invitees to NITI Aayog include Minister of Road, Transport and Highways, Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, Minister of Railways and Minister of Statistics.

Additional Information:

- **NITI Aayog**
  - o It was formed via a resolution of the Union Cabinet on January 1, 2015. It had replaced the erstwhile planning commission.
  - o It is the premier policy '**Think Tank**' of the Government of India providing both directional and policy inputs.
  - o While designing strategic and long-term policies and programmes for the Government of India, it also provides relevant technical advice to the Centre and States.
  - o It also acts as the quintessential platform of the Government of India to bring States to act together in national interest and thereby fosters **Cooperative Federalism**.
  - o It's important initiatives include "15 year road map", "7-year vision, strategy and action plan" and Atal Innovation Mission.

8. THE DNA TECHNOLOGY (USE &APPLICATION) REGULATION BILL 2019

News: The Union Cabinet has approved the **DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2019**.
Facts:

- This Bill provides for the regulation of use and application of DNA technology for the purpose of establishing identity of missing persons, victims, offenders, under trials and unknown deceased persons.
- The intended purpose of the bill is for expanding the application of DNA-based forensic technologies to support and strengthen the justice delivery system of the country.

- **Key provisions of the Bill**
    - **Use of DNA data**: Under the bill, DNA testing is allowed only in respect of matters listed in schedule of bill. This includes offences under the Indian Penal Code, 1860, as well as offences under other laws such as the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956, the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971, the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955, and the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988. It also includes DNA testing for establishment of individual identity
    - **DNA data Bank**: The bill establishes National and regional DNA data banks, for every states, or two or more states.
    - **DNA Regulatory Board**: The Bill establishes a DNA Regulatory Board to accredit the DNA laboratories that analyse DNA samples to establish the identity of an individual. All DNA laboratories will share DNA data prepared by them with the National and Regional DNA Data Banks. DNA laboratories are required to obtain accreditation from DNA Regulatory Board.
    - **Removal of DNA Profile**: Bill provides for removal of the DNA profiles of the following persons: (i) of a suspect if a police report is filed or court order given, (ii) of an undertrial if a court order is given, and (iii) on written request, for persons who are not a suspect, offender or undertrial, from the crime scene or missing persons' index.
    - Those leaking the DNA profile information to people or entities who are not entitled to have it, will be punished with a jail term of up to three years and a fine of up to Rs. 1 lakh. Similar, punishment has also been provided for those who seek the information on DNA profiles illegally.

Additional Information:

- The **Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA)** is like a set of instructions or blueprint of all living forms, and it encodes a detailed set of plans for building different pieces of the cell of a living organism to grow and function. The DNA content of every human individual is comprised of one-half of the DNA from each of the two parents. The DNA blueprint varies from one individual to another, and it is this variation, which makes every individual (except identical twins) unique and different. The individual-to-individual variations in DNA permit its use as a means of identification and for establishment of biological relationships between individuals.

9. SETTING UP OF FOREIGNERS TRIBUNALS

News: The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has issued Foreigners (Tribunals) Amendment Order, 2019. The order has amended the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964.
Facts:

- Salient Feature of **Foreigners (Tribunals) Amendment Order, 2019:**
    - It has empowered **district magistrates** in all States and Union Territories to set up foreigners' tribunals (FTs) to decide whether a person staying illegally in India is a foreigner or not. Earlier, the powers to constitute tribunals were vested only with the centre.
    - The Amended order also **empowers individuals to approach the tribunals**. Earlier only the State administration could move to Tribunal against a suspect.
    - It has allowed District Magistrates to refer individuals who haven't filed claims against their exclusion from NRC to the Tribunals to decide if they are foreigners or not.
- The amendment order is applicable to whole of country and is not specific to any state. However, since NRC work is going on only in Assam, the amendment order is applicable only to Assam as on date for all practical purposes. Currently, the quasi-judicial foreigners' tribunals are unique to Assam and were set up under the Foreigners Tribunal Order 1964.
- In other parts of India, once a 'foreigner' has been apprehended by the police for staying illegally, the person is produced before a local court under the Passport Act, 1920, or the Foreigners Act, 1946. The illegal foreigner is then subject to a prison term of 3 months to 8 years. Once the jail term is over, they are kept in detention centres until deportation to the country of origin.
- Recently, out of the apprehension that there would be an influx of petitions in the foreigners' tribunals once the final National Register of Citizens (NRC) is published on July 31st 2019, the MHA has decided to extend assistance to the Assam government in setting up 1,000 foreigner's tribunals.

Additional Information:

- **Foreigners Tribunals**
  - o They are quasi-judicial bodies. They furnish opinion on the question as to whether a person is or not a foreigner within the meaning of Foreigners Act 1946.
  - o They get two kinds of cases:
    - ▪ those against whom a "reference" has been made by border police, and
    - ▪ those whose names in the electoral rolls have a D (Doubtful) against them.
  - o As per the Foreigners Act 1946, the onus of proving that a person is foreigner or not lies upon the person itself

- **The Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964**
  - o It was issued by Central govt. Under Section 3 of The Foreigners Act, 1946.
  - o It gives the power to central government to constitute a tribunal to decide whether a person is foreigner or not.
  - o It is applicable to whole of India and is not specific to any state.
  - o It has been amended several times.

- **National Register of Citizens (NRC)**
  - o It is a register which contains the name of all citizens of India residing in Assam. It was prepared in 1951.
  - o The process of NRC update in Assam has been taken up as per a Supreme Court order in 2013. The update is being carried out under **Sec 6A of Citizenship Act, 1955**, and according to rules framed in the Assam Accord, 1985
  - o The update seeks to identify illegal migrants in Assam who had entered the state on or after 25th March 1971.

10. THE CENTRAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS (RESERVATIONS IN TEACHER'S CADRE) BILL, 2019

News: The Lok Sabha has passed the **Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Teachers' Cadre) Bill, 2019**.

Facts:

- The Bill brings about **two major changes** in reservation of teaching posts in central educational institutions.
  - o Firstly, it establishes that for the purpose of reservation, a Central education Institution would be considered as one unit (not Department or subject). This means that posts of the same level across all departments (such as assistant professor) in a university would be grouped together when calculating the total number of reserved seats. Under previous guidelines, each department was regarded as an individual unit for the purpose of reservation
  - o Secondly, it extends reservations beyond Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), to include socially and educationally backward classes (OBC) and economically weaker sections (EWS).

- **Salient Features of the Bill**
  - o **Reservation of Posts**
    - ▪ Central Educational Institution has been considered as one unit for providing reservation to posts in direct recruitment out of the sanctioned strength in teachers' cadre.
    - ▪ Reservation of posts in direct recruitment by central education institutions has been provided for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, the socially and educationally backward classes and the economically weaker sections
  - o **Coverage and exceptions:**
    - ▪ The Bill will apply to 'central educational institutions' which include universities set up by Acts of Parliament, institutions deemed to be a university, institutions of national importance, and institutions receiving aid from the central government.
    - ▪ However, it excludes certain institutions of excellence, research institutions, and institutions of national and strategic importance which have been specified in the Schedule to the Bill. It also excludes minority education institutions.

11. JAL SHAKTI MINISTRY

News: The government has formed a new Ministry called 'Jal Shakti'.

Facts:

- **Jal Shakti Ministry**
    - It has been formed by merging the erstwhile **Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation** and the **Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation**.
    - It will deal with issues ranging from the provision of clean drinking water, international and inter-states water disputes, management of water resources, and the Namami Gange project.
- Jal Shakti Ministry will roll out government ambitious plans to provide **water connections to every household in India by 2024.**

Additional Information:

- **Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation**
    - It was the apex body for formulation and administration of rules and regulations relating to the development and regulation of the water resources in India.
    - It was the nodal ministry for the Namami Gange- the flagship initiative to clean the River Ganga.
- **The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation**
    - It was the Nodal Ministry for the overall policy, planning, funding and coordination of two flagship programmes namely,
        - National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP) for rural drinking water supply
        - Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) [SBM (G)] for sanitation in rural India.
- The new Ministries/Departments of the government are created by the President on the advice of Cabinet under the **Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961.**

ForumIAS

Policy

1. PRIME MINISTER'S SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME (PMSS)

News: Indian Prime Minister has approved **major changes** in the **Prime Minister's scholarship scheme** under the National Defence Fund.

Facts:

- Prime Minister's Scholarship Scheme (PMSS)' seeks to encourage technical and post-graduate education for the widows and wards of the deceased/ex-service personnel of Armed Forces and Para Military Forces and Railway Protection Force
- The rates of scholarship have been increased from Rs. 2000/month to Rs. 2500/month for boys and from Rs. 2250/month to Rs. 3000 /month for girls.
- Further, the ambit of the Scholarship Scheme is extended to the wards of State Police officials who are/were martyred during terror/naxal attacks.
- The quota of new scholarships for wards of state police officials will be Rs. 500 in a year.
- The **Ministry of Home Affairs** has been made the **nodal Ministry** in this regard.

Additional Information:

- **The National Defence Fund (NDF):**
    - o It was set up in 1962 to take charge of the voluntary donations in cash and kind received for promotion of the national defence effort, and to decide on their utilisation.
    - o At present, the fund is being used for the welfare of the members of the Armed Forces, Para Military forces and Railway Protection Force, and their dependents.
    - o The fund is administered by an Executive Committee with the Prime Minister as the Chairperson and the Defence, Finance and Home Ministers as Members.

2. ATAL PENSION YOJANA

News: The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) has submitted a **proposal** to increase the limit of pension and age under Atal Pension Yojana (APY).

Facts:

- To make APY more attractive, the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) has sought the Finance Ministry's nod to double the guaranteed minimum pension under the scheme to Rs 10,000 per month and increase the upper age limit to avail the scheme to 50 from existing 40.

- **Salient Features of Atal Pension Yojana Scheme**
    - o It is a centrally sponsored **guaranteed pension scheme**. It was **launched in 2015.**
    - o The scheme was launched with the aim to provide affordable universal access to essential social security protection to unorganized work force of country, which constitute more than 85 per cent of the workforce. It had replaced earlier government-backed pension Swavalamban scheme targeted at the unorganised sector.
    - o It is administered by the **Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority** (PFRDA) through the National Pension System (NPS) architecture. The scheme is under the **Ministry of Finance**.
    - o Under the scheme, a guaranteed minimum monthly pension of ₹1,000/ ₹2,000/ ₹3,000/ ₹4,000/ ₹5,000 is provided from the age of 60 years depending on the contributions by subscribers.
    - o The scheme is available to all bank account holders who are not members of any statutory social security scheme and are not income tax payers. The minimum age of joining APY is 18 years and maximum age is 40 years.
    - o The Central Government also co-contributes 50% of the subscriber's contribution or Rs. 1000 per annum, whichever is lower. The Government co-contribution is available for those who are not covered by any Statutory Social Security Schemes and is not an Income Tax payer.
    - o In case of death of subscriber, the pension is available to the spouse and on the death of both of them, the pension corpus is returned to his nominee. On death of the subscriber before 60 years,

spouse has the option to continue the contribution in the APY account of subscriber or exit the scheme.

Additional Information:
- **Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA):**
  - It is a statutory organization under the Ministry of Finance to promote old age income security by establishing, developing and regulating pension funds.
  - PFRDA was established in 2003 through executive resolution. In 2013, PFRDA Act was passed by GoI.
  - PFRDA regulates the New Pension Scheme.

3. COMMON SERVICE CENTRES (CSC)

News: An analysis of Common Service Centres (CSC) data from 2014 to 2019 has shown that there has been a four-fold increase in the number of transactions through CSCs since 2014.

Facts:
- **Common Service Centres**
  - It is an initiative of the Ministry of Electronics & IT (MeitY). It was launched in 2006. It is a mission mode project under Digital India Program.
  - It acts as access points for delivery of various electronic services to villages in India.
  - CSC e-Governance Services India Limited is a Special Purpose Vehicle (CSC SPV) incorporated under the Companies Act, 1956 by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) to monitor the implementation of the Common Services Centres Scheme.
  - The Government launched the CSC 2.0 scheme in 2015 to expand the outreach of CSCs to all Gram Panchayats across the country.
  - Under CSC 2.0 scheme, the aim was to set up at least one CSC in each of the 2.5 lakh GPs across the country by 2019.

Additional Information:
- **BharatNet:**
  - BharatNet project (previously known as National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN)) seeks to provide high speed broadband connectivity to all gram panchayats across India.
  - It is funded by Universal service Obligation Fund (USOF). The fund was established for improving telecom services in rural and remote areas in India.

4. JAL SHAKTI ABHIYAN

News: The central government decided to launch Jal Shakti Abhiyan- a water conservation and water security campaign.

Facts:
- **Salient Features of Jal Shakti Abhiyaan Campaign**
  - It is a time-bound, mission mode, water conservation and irrigation efficiency campaign for water security in India.
  - The 1st phase of the programme will run from July 1st to September 15th 2019 for all states and UTs.

Precious drops

The Jal Shakti Abhiyan aims at making water conservation and promotion of irrigation efficiency a public campaign through asset creation and communication campaigns. The map shows districts/blocks where the measures will be carried out

■ DISTRICTS WITH WATER-STRESSED BLOCKS (NON-ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS)
■ DISTRICTS WITH WATER-STRESSED BLOCKS (ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS)

groundwater experts and scientists will work together with State and district officials in the country's water-stressed districts for water conservation, resource management and irrigation efficiency

Programme details:
- The Jal Shakti Abhiyan is a time-bound, mission-mode water conservation and irrigation efficiency campaign for water security in rural India.
- The JSA will run from July 1 to September 15, 2019
- During this time, officers,

Intervention areas:
- Water conservation and rain water harvesting
- Renovation of water bodies
- Renovation of borewell recharge structures
- Watershed development
- Intensive afforestation

SOURCE: JAL SHAKTI ABHIYAN

The second phase will run from 11th October 2019 to 30th November 2019 for sates/UTs receiving NE retreating monsoon (Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Puducherry, Tamilnadu).

- o The theme of the campaign is **Sanchay Jal, Behtar Kal**.
- o It aims at making water conservation and promotion of irrigation efficiency a 'janandolan' (public campaign) through asset creation and communication campaigns in rural India. It will be rolled out in 255 water stressed districts.
- The Jal Shakti Abhiyan is a collaborative effort of various Ministries of the Government of India and State Governments. It will be coordinated by Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Jal Shakti Ministry
- The intervention areas in Rural India include:
  - o Water conservation and rainwater harvesting,
  - o Renovation of traditional and other water bodies,
  - o Renovation of bore well recharge structures,
  - o Watershed development and
  - o Intensive afforestation.
- For urban areas the interventions include:
  - o In urban areas, plans/approvals with time bound targets to be developed for waste water reuse for industrial and agricultural purposes,
  - o Plans to be developed for at least one urban water body for groundwater recharge in the block or city.
  - o Municipalities to pass by-laws for the separation of grey water and blackwater
- The other special interventions that are proposed to be carried out are:
  - o Development of Block and District Water Conservation Plans (To be integrated with the District Irrigation Plans),
  - o Krishi Vigyan Kendra Melas to promote efficient water use for irrigation (More Crop per Drop), and better choice of crops, for water conservation and
  - o 3D village contour maps may be created and made accessible for efficient planning of interventions

5. GO TRIBAL CAMPAIGN:

News: Ministry of Tribal Affairs and Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) launched Go tribal campaign in association with Amazon Global.

Facts:

- The campaign aims to create awareness and promote the use of tribal arts and crafts. With this, it seeks to aid in socio-economic welfare of Indian tribes.
- "**Tribes India**" was also launched. Under this, Tribes India products will be marketed by Amazon through their global website.

Additional Information:
TRIFED:

- Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) is an organization under Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- It is engaged in marketing development of tribal products including tribal art and craft under the brand name "TRIBES INDIA"

6. SWACHH SURVEKSHAN LEAGUE 2020

News: The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs launched Swachh Survekshan League 2020 to be held in January 2020.

Facts:

- It is a **quarterly cleanliness assessment** of cities and towns in India. It will be integrated with the Swachh Survekshan 2020.
- It seeks to sustain the on-ground performance of cities along with continuous monitoring of service level performance in the matter of cleanliness.

- It will be conducted in 3 quarters, i.e. April- June, July – September and October- December 2019. Each quarter will have a weightage of 2000 marks.
- 25% weightage of the quarterly assessments will be included in the annual survey in January 2020.
- The evaluation will be done on the basis of monthly update of SBM-U online MIS by cities and citizen's validation on the 12 service level progress indicators
- Ranks will be assigned in two categories: a) cities with population of 1 lakh and above and b) cities with population of less than 1 lakh.

Additional Information:

- **Swachh Survekshan:**
  - Launched in 2016, Swachh Survekshan is annual cleanliness survey of urban India conducted under Swachh Bharat Mission- Urban (SBM-U). Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs conducts the survey.
  - The objective of the Swachh Survekshan survey is to a) encourage large scale citizen participation and create awareness about cleanliness, b) inculcate a spirit of healthy competition among cities and towns towards creating cleaner cities/towns.
  - Indore (Madhya Pradesh) was awarded the cleanest city in India in the Swachh Survekshan 2019.

Note: *A separate Swachh Survekshan (Gramin) is conducted in rural areas by Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (now integrated into the Jal Shakti Ministry)*

Economy

1. NEW GST RETURN FILING SYSTEM FROM OCTOBER 2019

News: The GST Council in its 31st meeting has decided that a new GST return system will be introduced to facilitate taxpayers. This will be rolled out from October, 2019 for big businessmen and from January, 2020 for small businessmen.

Facts:

- The traders/businessmen having zero transactions or nil filers could now file returns through SMS.
- Regular small taxpayers (with aggregate annual turnover in the previous financial year upto Rs. 5 Crore) can now file GST returns on a quarterly basis, either in 'SAHAJ' (ITR - 1) or 'SUGAM' (ITR -4) forms.
- Small Taxpayers dealing with only in **business to consumer** (B2C) can file **'Sahaj'** (ITR -1) on quarterly basis.
- Small taxpayers dealing with B2B or B2C and B2B can file **'Sugam'** (ITR-4) on quarterly basis.
- The quarterly returns will be mostly be similar to the monthly returns, but require lesser information to be filled as compared to the regular returns.
- Further, large taxpayers business (with aggregate annual turnover in the previous financial year above Rs. 5 Crore) will have to file returns every month.
- The new simplified process can be summarised as – 'UPLOAD-LOCK-PAY'.

Additional Information:

- Goods and Services Tax (GST)
  - It is a destination-based tax on consumption of goods and services
  - It has subsumed many Central and State taxes like excise duty, VAT and service tax. It is a single comprehensive tax levied on all goods and services produced in India as well as those imported from other countries.
  - Alcohol for human consumption, electricity and petroleum products are not under the purview of GST
  - There are multiple items which are exempted under GST – meaning that they attract nil rate of tax.

2. STATE DIVIDE IN UNEMPLOYMENT: NAGALAND 21.4%, MEGHALAYA 1.5%

News: The Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) for 2017-18 reflects huge variations among the states in terms of the unemployment rate.

Facts:

- **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2017-18**
  - As per survey the overall unemployment rate in India is 6.1%. It is highest in the last 45 years.
  - Overall Male unemployment rate (6.2%) is higher than the Female unemployment rate (5.7%).
  - Highest overall unemployment rate among the state is that of Nagaland (21.4%), followed by Goa and Manipur
  - Meghalaya (1.5%) has the lowest unemployment rate among the states followed by Chhattisgarh and Sikkim.

Additional Information:

- **Unemployment rate**
  - It is a measure of the prevalence of unemployment and it is calculated as a percentage by dividing the number of unemployed individuals by all individuals currently in the labour force.
- **Labour force participation rate**
  - It is defined as the section of the working population in the age group of 16-64 in the economy currently employed or seeking employment.
- The **Ministry of Statistics and Programme and Implementation** had launched Periodic Labour Force Survey in 2017. The data was collected by National Sample Survey Office (NSSO).

3. GOVERNMENT CONSTITUTES WPI REVISION TEAM

News: The Government has constituted working group for the revision of current series of Wholesale Price Index (base 2011-12) under the chairmanship of NITI Aayog member Ramesh Chand.

Facts:

- The **Term of Reference (ToR)** of working group include:
    o To select the most appropriate Base Year for the preparation of a new official series of Index Numbers of Wholesale Price (WPI) and Producer Price Index (PPI) in India.
    o To review commodity basket of the current series of WPI and suggest additions/deletions of commodities in the light of structural changes in the economy witnessed since2011-12
    o To review the existing system of price collection in particular for manufacturing sector and suggest changes for improvement.
    o To decide on the computational methodology to be adopted for monthly WPI/PPI.
- The current series of Wholesale Price Index (WPI) with 2011-12 as base year was introduced in May 2017. Since 2011-12, significant structural changes have taken place in the economy. Therefore, it has become necessary to examine the coverage of commodities, weighting diagram and related issues pertaining to the existing series of index numbers of Wholesale Price Index.

Additional Information:

- **Wholesale Price Inflation (WPI)**
    o It tracks changes in the price of a basket of goods at a wholesale level i.e. goods that are sold in bulk and traded between organizations instead of consumers.
    o The index basket of the WPI covers commodities falling under the three major groups namely Primary Articles (22%), Fuel and Power (13%) and Manufactured products (64%). It is important to note that **WPI does not cover services**. Services are covered in CPI.
    o WPI is computed by the Office of Economic Advisor (OEA), Department for promotion of industry and internal trade, Ministry of Commerce.

4. SEBI TIGHTENS NORMS FOR MUTUAL FUND INVESTMENTS

News: The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has introduced more checks and balances for mutual funds (MFs) to secure investors and stem systemic risks.

Facts:

- **Key Announcement by SEBI:**
    o Mutual fund schemes can now invest only in listed debt or equity and non-convertible debentures.
    o The valuation of securities in debt funds will now be on mark-to-market basis instead of the earlier practice of considering it on an amortization basis.
    o Liquid funds can now invest a maximum of 20% of their assets in a single sector as against the current cap of 25%, and must keep aside at least a fifth of their assets in cash equivalents to meet sudden redemption pressures.
- The changes are based on recommendations made by the mutual fund advisory committee constituted by SEBI to limit liquid fund exposure to a single sector, especially to non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) catering to the housing sector.

Additional Information:

- **SEBI**
    o It is regulator of securities market in India. It was established in 1988 and given statutory powers in 1992 through the SEBI Act, 1992.
- **Liquid fund**
    o It is a category of mutual fund which invests primarily in money market instruments like certificate of deposits, treasury bills, commercial papers and term deposits. They invest in securities with a residual maturity of up to 91 days.

- **Mutual Fund (MF)**
  - It is an investment vehicle made up of a pool of money collected from retail investors. The pooled money is used to buy other securities by professional money managers. It charges a small fee for managing the money.

5. RBI BEGINS MONITORING HFCS

News: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has started monitoring the liquidity position, asset-liability gap and repayment schedules of housing finance companies (HFCs) on a daily basis

Facts:

- The move to monitor HFCs on a daily basis comes after some HFC had gone into liquidity crisis which had resulted in defaults. This crisis had started since the debt default by IL&FS in September last year.
- The RBI does not regulate Housing finance companies (HFCs). They are regulated by the **National Housing Bank (NHB)**.
- The RBI has taken this step as RBI is mandated to look after financial stability of the entire economy and banks have significant exposure to HFCs. the liquidity crisis of the HFCs could have a spill over effect on the other segments in the financial sector including banks which could affect financial stability.

Additional Information:

- The National Housing Bank (NHB) was set up in 1988 under the National Housing Bank Act, 1987. NHB is an apex financial institution for housing.
- Recently, RBI had divested its stake in National Housing Bank (NHB) and National Bank for Agriculture & Rural Development (NABARD) by making them fully government-owned.

6. APEDA ORGANIZES BUYERS-SELLERS MEET

News: Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) in association with North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation (NERAMAC) has organised the International Buyers-Sellers Meet in Imphal, Manipur.

Facts:

- **APEDA**
  - It is a **statutory body** established under Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority Act, 1985. It replaced the Processed Food Export Promotion Council (PFEPC).
  - **APEDA comes under the Ministry of Commerce and Industries.**
  - APEDA is mandated with the responsibility of promotion and development of the export of agricultural and its allied products.

7. U K SINHA COMMITTEE ON MSMES – KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

News: The RBI-appointed U.K. Sinha-led committee, set up to study the problems faced by MSMEs, submitted its recommendations recently.

Facts:

- **Key Recommendations of the Committee**
  - Committee recommended a more focused engagement of Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) with State Governments for MSME development and promotion
  - A **Government sponsored Fund of Funds (FoF) of ₹10,000 crore** to support VC/PE firms investing in the MSME sector. This would encourage innovation in term-sheets and product structures.
  - A **Distressed Asset Fund of ₹5000 crore**, be structured to assist units in clusters where a change in the external environment e.g., a ban on plastics or 'dumping' has led to a large number of MSMEs becoming NPA.
  - Government may make it mandatory for PSUs / Government Departments to meet their MSME procurement targets through Government e-Marketplace (GeM) portal only.

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- ○ The panel has recommended doubling the cap on collateral-free loans to Rs 20 lakhs from the current Rs 10 lakh. This will be extended to borrowers falling under the Mudra scheme, self-help groups and MSMEs.
- ○ The committee has also recommended that banks who wish to specialise in MSME lending, their targets for farm loans under the priority sector lender could be waived off and instead can be given a target for loans to the SME sector.

Additional Information:

- **MSME Sector**
  - ○ India have 63.38 million MSME's accounting for 45% of manufacturing output, 40% of exports, 28% of GDP and providing employment to 11 million people.
  - ○ As per Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises Development (MSMED) Act, 2006, MSME are classified into two classes:
    - ▪ Manufacturing enterprise (defined in terms of investment in plant and machinery)
    - ▪ Services enterprises (defined in terms of investment in equipment)

Manufacturing Sector	
Enterprises	Investment in Plant and Machinery
Micro Enterprises	Does not exceed Rs. 25 lakh
Small Enterprises	More than Rs 25 lakh but does not exceed Rs. 5 crore
Medium Enterprise	More than Rs. 5 crore but does not exceed Rs. 10 crore

Service Sector	
Enterprises	Investment in Equipment
Micro Enterprises	Does not exceed Rs. 10 lakh
Small Enterprises	More than Rs 10 lakh but does not exceed Rs. 2 crore
Medium Enterprises	More than Rs. 2 crore but does not exceed Rs. 5 crore

8. RBI'S CUSTOMER-COMPLAINT PROCESSING GOES DIGITAL

News: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has launched a Complaint Management System (CMS). It is a software application to facilitate RBI's grievance redressal processes.

Facts:

- Customers can lodge complaints against any entity regulated by RBI with public interface such as commercial banks, urban cooperative banks, Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs).
- This system will make sure that every complaint is received and grievances have to be resolved under a limited time period.
- The CMS would be completely online and the complainants will also be able to track the status of their complaints online.
- Currently, people with grievances about banking services have to lodge complaints at the banking ombudsman office falling in their jurisdiction.
- Banks are expected to use data on CMS for reducing their turn around time in resolution of complaints.

Additional Information:

- Banking Ombudsman is a quasi-judicial authority functioning under the Banking Ombudsman Scheme, 2006. The authority was created to enable resolution of complaints of customers of banks relating to services rendered by the lenders.

9. PARLIAMENTARY PANEL SHIES AWAY FROM QUANTIFYING BLACK MONEY

News: The parliamentary panel on finance of the 16th Lok Sabha has submitted its report to the Lok Sabha.

Facts:

- The panel has said it is difficult to provide a credible estimate of the black money stashed away overseas by Indians. It is due to different methods used by different agencies which yield vastly different figures. The panel suggested that black money could be anywhere ranging from 7 - 120% of the GDP.

- This massive range in the panel's report is because of three studies by the (a) National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP) (b) National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER) and the (c) National Institute of Financial Management (NIFM) who have provided widely varying results.
- All three studies concluded that the maximum amount of black money was generated in realty, mining, pharmaceuticals, pan masala, gutka and tobacco industries.
- Besides bullion and commodity markets, the film industry, educational institutes, securities market and manufacturing too contributed to unaccounted wealth.

Additional Information:
- Black money
  - It is the money on which appropriate taxes have not been paid to the government. It is generally obtained illegally and thus kept away from declaration.
  - Various steps taken by the government to curb black money are:
    - Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) Act, 2015
    - THE BENAMI TRANSACTIONS (PROHIBITION) AMENDMENT ACT, 2016
    - Demonetization
    - GAAR rules came into force on April 1, 2018

10. NGOS FOR PROMOTION OF ROAD SAFETY

News: Union minister has informed that Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has launched a scheme for grant of financial assistance to NGOs for administering Road Safety Advocacy in the last FY 2017-18.

Facts:
- Under this Scheme, proposals for road safety advocacy programmes through 203 different Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)/Trusts/ Cooperative Societies have been sanctioned in FY 2017-18.
- As per the scheme provisions, financial assistance for a road safety programme is Rs. 5 lakh.
- The scheme does not provide for any advance payment and financial assistance is reimbursed only after the successful completion of the programme.
- There are adequate safeguards in the scheme to ensure proper utilization of funds such as (a)No advance payment is released to any agency (b)Registration of the NGO on Darpan Portal (c)The scheme is administered through a Project Management Unit (PMU) for scrutiny of proposals

Additional Information
- **DARPAN Portal**
  - A portal by NITI Aayog which provides for voluntary registration of NGOs. It is repository of Information about NGOs.

11. RAILWAYS PLANS A 'GIVE IT UP' FOR TRAIN TICKET SUBSIDY

News: The Indian Railways has planned to launch "Give It up Campaign" to urge passengers to give up fare subsidy at the time of booking their train tickets.

Facts:
- This proposal is a part of 100-day roadmap document for Indian Railways submitted to the Prime Minister to increase earnings of railways.
- According to Indian railways, it recovers only **53%** of the cost incurred from the passenger transport business. Rest **47%** of the cost is given back as subsidies by government to consumers.
- The campaign is intended to reduce passenger subsidy on Indian Railways.

Additional Information:
- Previously in 2015, the government had launched **Give It Up** campaign to motivate LPG users who can afford to pay the market price for LPG to voluntarily surrender their LPG subsidy.

12. KALESHWARAM LIFT IRRIGATION PROJECT INAUGURATED

News: Kaleshwaram Multipurpose Lift Irrigation Project on River Godavari has been inaugurated by Telangana Chief Minister.

Facts:

- **Project Details:**
    - Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project is a multi-purpose irrigation project on the **Godavari River in Kaleshwaram, Bhoopalpally, Telangana.**
    - The objective of project is to make Telangana drought proof by harnessing the flood waters of the Godavari. The project will provide water for drinking and irrigation purpose to about 45 lakh acres in 20 of the 31 districts in Telangana, apart from Hyderabad and Secunderabad.
    - It is being touted as world's largest multi-stage, multi-purpose lift irrigation project. Earlier, biggest lift schemes in the world were the Colorado lift scheme in America and the Great Manmade River in Egypt.
    - States involved in the project are Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
    - This project is unique because Telangana will harness water at the confluence of two rivers with Godavari by constructing a barrage at Medigadda in Jayshankar Bhoopalpally district and reverse pump the water into the main Godavari river and divert it through lifts and pumps into a huge and complex system of reservoirs, water tunnels, pipelines and canals.
    - The project starts at the confluence point of Pranahita River and Godavari River.
    - Barrages have been constructed at Medigadda, Annaram, and Sundilla, from which water will be moved to fill Yellampalli and Sriram Sagar Projects.
    - The total length of Kaleshwaram project is approximately 1,832 kms, of which 1,531 kms is gravity canals and 203 kms comprise water tunnels.
    - The project had to be built at such a size and scale because while the Godavari flows at 100 metres below Mean Sea Level, Telangana is located at 300 to 650 metres above MSL. Except for pumping water using gigantic pumps with mindboggling capacities, there is no other option,
    - The Kaleshwaram project will support Mission Kakatiya and Mission Bhagiratha schemes designed to provide drinking water to many villages and improve the capacities of tanks.

Additional Information:

- **Mission Kakatiya**
    - It is a flagship programme launched by the Government of Telangana which aims at rejuvenation of water tanks and other water storage structures to provide assistance and help to the small and marginal farmers of the state.

- **Mission Bhagiratha**
    - It is a project for safe drinking water for every village and city household in Telangana State. It aims is to provide piped water to 2.32 crore people in 20 lakh households in urban and 60 lakhs in rural areas of Telangana. The ambitious project will supply clean drinking water to all households in the state through water sourced from River Godavari and River Krishna.

13. CENTRE REDUCES CONTRIBUTION RATE FOR ESI

News: The government of India has announced reduction in the rate of contribution under the Employees' State Insurance (Act) from 6.5% to 4%. The reduced rates will be effective from 1 July.

Facts:

- The employers' contribution has been reduced from 4.75% to 3.25% and employees' contribution has been reduced from 1.75% to 0.75% of the wages.
- The move is aimed at formalising India's informal workforce and expanding social security coverage. Further, reduction in the share of contribution of employers will reduce the financial liability of the establishments leading to improved viability of these establishments. The employee will get higher take home salary.
- It will improve compliance and coverage of the scheme and will benefit 36 million employees working in more than 1.3 million organizations.

Additional Information:

- The Employees' State Insurance Act 1948 (the ESI Act) provides for medical, cash, maternity, disability and dependent benefits to the Insured Persons under the Act. The ESI Act is administered by Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC), Ministry of Labour and Employment.
- The ESI Act, 1948, applies to organisations with 10 or more employees, drawing a salary of up to Rs. 21,000/ month (Rs 25,000/ month in case of persons with disabilities). The threshold for coverage of establishments is 20 employees in Maharashtra and Chandigarh.

14. 'NATIONAL DATA WAREHOUSE'

News: The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has proposed to set up a 'National Data Warehouse'.

Facts:

- National Data Warehouse will be a central repository where all statistical information like surveys etc. will be collected. It will work as works as a main vault of all the statistical data collected by various ministries, UTs and state governments
- This integrated data allows policy makers and researchers to access data sets, its history and extract it across different groups.
- The warehouse will take the help of technology and use big data analytical tools to improve the quality of macro-economic aggregates.

Additional Information:

- **Other steps taken MoSPI for statistical reform:**
  - Recently, the government has also decided to merge the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) with the Central Statistics Office (CSO) under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).
  - The **National Statistical Commission (NSC)** of India is an autonomous body which formed in July 2005.It is formed through an executive resolution. It is a non-statutory body. It is formed on the recommendation of Rangarajan Commission. The objective of its commission is to reduce the problems faced by statistical agencies in the country in relation to collection of data. Efforts are on to evolve a legislative framework under which the **National Statistical Commission (NSC) may function with independence.**
  - To ensure the credibility of data, the Government of India adopted the **United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (FPOS) in May, 2016**.

15. FISCAL PERFORMANCE INDEX (FPI)

News: Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has launched a Fiscal Performance Index (FPI) to assess state and central budgets.

Facts:

- **FPI:**
  - It is an index to assess quality of Budgets at the Central and State levels.
  - The index has been constructed using **UNDP's Human Development Index methodology**.
  - The Index incorporates qualitative assessments of (a) revenue expenditure (b) capital expenditure (c) revenues (d) fiscal prudence and (d) level of public debt. For e.g. - The index will consider expenditure on infrastructure, education, healthcare and other social sectors beneficial for economic growth compared to other revenue expenditure.
  - It will also consider tax revenues a more sustainable source of revenues for the government as compared to one-time income sources.
- **Why there is need for FPI?**
  - As per CII, a single criterion such as the 'fiscal deficit to GDP ratio' does not tell us anything about the quality of the Budget. Hence, the Government should use multiple indicators to measure the quality of Budgets at the Central and the State levels rather than a single indicator.

- o The Index incorporates qualitative assessments of revenue expenditure, capital expenditure, revenues, fiscal prudence and the level of public debt to arrive at a more holistic picture of fiscal performance than the fiscal deficit to GDP ratio.
- **Study By CII:**
  - o CII has used this index to analyse state and central budgets from 2004-05 to 2016-17.
  - o The study has found that despite improvement in reduction in the fiscal deficit between FY13 and FY18, the overall performance of the budget has remained steady with improvements only in FY16 and FY17.This is largely due to moderation in the revenue, capital expenditure and net tax revenues indices.
  - o The study also points out that relatively high-income states including Gujarat, Haryana and Maharashtra which have good fiscal health because of low fiscal deficit to GDP ratio do not perform well on the composite FPI because of poor expenditure and revenue quality compared to other states.
  - o Further, states such as Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have done well on the FPI because of their good performance in revenue and capital expenditure indices.
  - o The report also recommended that govt should attempt a) broadening of tax base b) increasing investment in Education, healthcare and infrastructure.

International Relation

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1. ASEAN OUTLOOK ON THE INDO-PACIFIC

News: The ASEAN nations have adopted the **'ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific'** in the recently concluded ASEAN Officials Meeting (SOM) held in Bangkok, Thailand.

Facts:

- The outlook says that it views Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean regions not as contiguous territorial spaces but as a closely integrated and interconnected region.
- The outlook states that it views the Indo-Pacific as a region of dialogue and cooperation instead of rivalry, besides envisaging development and prosperity for all.
- India has welcomed the ASEAN's outlook on the Indo-Pacific by saying that it sees important elements of convergence with its own perspective on the region.

Additional Information:

- **Indo Pacific –**
  - The Indo-Pacific is an integrated region that combines the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean and the land masses that surround them.
- **ASEAN –**
  - The Association of Southeast Asian Nations was established in 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand. It was established with the signing of an ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration). It comprises of 10 countries. Founding members of ASEAN were Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Philippines and Thailand. Later five other countries were added – Brunei, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam.

2. G-20 SUMMIT

News: Prime Minister attended the 14th G20 Summit 2019 held in Osaka, Japan.

Facts

- The **theme** of the G20 summit 2019 was **human-centred future society**.
- **Key Takeaways**:
  - The 2019 G20 Summit discussed eight themes to Ensure Global Sustainable Development.
  - **Data storage** - Prime Minister Modi referred data as a "**new form of wealth**" and advocated forming rules within the ambit of WTO and not at the G-20. It ran counter to Japan's initiative of "Data Free Flow with Trust, (DFFT)".
  - **Terrorism**: Prime Minister Narendra Modi described terrorism as the biggest threat to humanity and said the scourge not only kills innocents but also severely affects economic development and social stability.
  - **Disaster Management**: Prime Minister invited the G20 countries to join a global coalition on disaster resilience.
  - **Paris Climate Change agreement**: The world leaders vowed to tackle climate change. Japan has pushed for the Osaka summit to become a landmark for progress on environmental issues, including tackling the global problem of plastic waste and recommitting to efforts to counter climate change.
  - **Tackling ocean plastic waste** -Group of 20 Environment Ministers agreed to adopt a new implementation framework for actions to tackle the issue of marine plastic waste on a global scale. The new framework is aimed at facilitating further concrete action on marine waste, though on a voluntary basis, after the G20 Hamburg Summit in Germany adopted the "G20 action plan on marine litter" in 2017.
  - **Three major challenges**: The three major challenges highlighted at the summit were a) instability and downfall in the global economy, b) to make development sustainable and all-inclusive c) terrorism.
  - Saudi Arabia will be hosting the next G-20 in 2020, followed by Italy in 2021 and India in 2022.

- **Additional Information:**
  - o The G20 (or Group of Twenty) is an international forum for the governments and central bank governors from 19 countries and the European Union. It was founded in 1999 with the aim to discuss policy pertaining to the promotion of international financial stability.
  - o Members of G20 include 19 countries and European Union. The 19 countries are : Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States. Spain is a permanent guest and always participates in the G20 summits
  - o Together, the G20 members represent two thirds of the world population,85% of the global gross product,75% of international trade and 80% of global investments in research and development.
  - o The G20 operates without a permanent secretariat or staff. The G20 summits are attended by Head of States/ Head of Government.

3. INDIA BEATS U.S. AT WTO IN SOLAR ENERGY CASE

News: India has won a major trade dispute against the United States at the World Trade Organization (WTO) w.r.t solar energy case.

Facts:

- The WTO dispute resolution panel has ruled that US domestic content requirements and subsidies provided by eight of its states in the renewable energy sector are violative of global trade norms, i.e. they are inconsistent with certain provisions of **General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).**
- In September 2016, India had dragged the U.S. to WTO's dispute settlement mechanism over US domestic content requirements and subsidies provided by eight states in the renewable energy sector.
- India had argued that some of the renewable energy programmes administered by the US states violated core provisions in the **Trade related Investment Measures (TRIMS)** agreement by insisting mandatory domestic content requirements.
- India has also said that the programmes implemented by the US states in the renewable energy sector violate the national treatment provision under which foreign producers are required to be treated on a par with domestic producers.
- The ruling of dispute panel can be challenged in **WTO's appellate body** which is part of the dispute settlement mechanism of the WTO.

Additional Information:

- **WTO**
  - o It is an intergovernmental organisation. It is concerned with regulation of international trade between nations. It was established on 1 Jan, 1995 under Marrakesh Agreement. WTO replaced General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). It is located at Geneva Switzerland. At present, WTO comprises of 164 countries. The last country which joined WTO is Afghanistan (joined on 29 July, 2016).

- **WTO Dispute Resolution Mechanism**
  - o There are two main ways to settle a dispute once a complaint has been filed in the WTO:
    - The parties find a mutually agreed solution, particularly during the phase of bilateral consultations; and
    - Through adjudication, including the subsequent implementation of the panel and Appellate Body reports, which are binding upon the parties once adopted by the Dispute Settlement Board.
    - There are three main stages to the WTO dispute settlement process:
      - ✓ consultations between the parties;
      - ✓ adjudication by panels and, if applicable, by the Appellate Body; and
      - ✓ the implementation of the ruling, which includes the possibility of countermeasures in the event of failure by the losing party to implement the ruling.

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4. UNSC NON-PERMANENT SEAT: INDIA'S CANDIDATURE RECEIVES UNANIMOUS ENDORSEMENT BY ASIA-PACIFIC GROUP

News: The 55 countries of the Asia-Pacific group at the United Nations have unanimously endorsed India's candidature for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for a two-year term in 2021-2022.

Facts:

- **UNSC**
  - The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations.
  - The UNSC consists of fifteen members. Five Permanent members and ten elected non-permanent members with two-year terms.
  - Five permanent members are (veto yielding) – USA, China, Russia, United Kingdom and France
  - The 10 non-permanent members are elected on a regional basis to serve **two-year** term. Each year, the UN General Assembly elects five non-permanent members for a two-year term. These 10 seats are distributed on a regional basis (a) **three** for African countries (b) **two** for Asia-Pacific countries (c) **one** for Eastern European countries (d) two for Latin American and Caribbean countries (e) two for Western European and other countries.
- In past India has held non-permanent seat at UNSC **7** times.
- India is also at the forefront of efforts at the UN to push for the long-pending reform of the Security Council emphasising that it rightly deserves a place at the UN high table as a permanent member.

5. COUNCIL OF EUROPE RESTORES RUSSIA'S VOTING RIGHTS

News: The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has voted in favour of restoring Russia's voting rights five years after they were revoked over its illegal annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014

Facts:

- The move paves the way for Russia to participate in the election of a new secretary general for the pan-European rights body.
- Russia was denied its voting rights after Russia's annexation of the Crimea in 2014.
- Russia had responded by boycotting the assembly since 2017, the country had also refused to pay its share of 33 million Euros to the human rights watchdog.
- It had threatened to quit the body altogether if it is not allowed to take part in the upcoming election in the Council of Europe.

Additional Information:

- **The Council of Europe**
  - It is Europe's oldest political body. It is European's continent's leading human rights organisation. Its aim is to uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe. It is headquartered in Strasbourg, France.
  - The council was founded in 1949 and it has 47 member states, 28 of which are members of European Union (EU). However, the Council of Europe is distinct from the EU.
  - The council oversees and enforces rulings made by the **European Court of Human Rights** which considers cases brought by individuals and groups against the signatories to the convention.
  - The Council of Europe is also an official United Nations Observer.

6. US UNVEILS 50 BILLION DOLLAR ECONOMIC PLAN FOR PALESTINE

News: United States has unveiled a $ 50 billion global investment plan for the Palestinians under the **Middle East peace plan.**

Facts:

- The scheme calls for a mix of public and private financing and intends to create at least a million new jobs for Palestinians.
- The plan calls for project's worth of 27.5 billion dollars in the West Bank and Gaza, and 9.1 billion dollars for Palestinians in Egypt, 7.4 billion dollars for Palestinians in Jordan and 6.3 billion dollars for Palestinians in Lebanon.

- The projects envisioned are in the health care, education, power, water, high-tech, tourism and agriculture sectors. It aims to reduce poverty rate by 50%
- The plan also outlines ambitions for free and secures movement of people and goods across borders to increase trading opportunities.
- But the plan makes no reference to longstanding Israeli objections to foreign investment and trade with the blockaded Gaza strip. Also, it does not specify how these projects will be funded.
- However, the Palestinian President has rejected the economic plan and the US peace effort. He said that the economic situation should not be discussed before the political one.

Additional Information:
- Recently, the US had recognised Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights reversing half a century of US policy.
- Israel seized the Golan Heights from Syria after a decisive victory in the war of 1967 and applied Israeli law to the region in 1981, an annexation that was rejected by the international community.
- Further, US had also moved the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, overturning decades of US policy where the final status of the contested holy city was to be negotiated between Israel and the Palestinians.

7. RCEP
News: India has said that it would be premature to suggest that India could be left out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).
Facts:
- This statement came after Malaysian Prime Minister had said that he would prefer to go ahead with the RCEP Pact immediately and allow countries such as India, Australia and New Zealand to join the pact at a future date.
- India has repeatedly advocated that the agreement needs to be comprehensive in nature.
- **India's Concern**
  - India is concerned about (a) trade pact will allow greater access to Chinese goods which may have an impact on the Indian manufacturing sector (b)There are demands by other RCEP countries for lowering customs duties on a number of products and greater access to foreign goods in the Indian market.
  - Further, Australia and New Zealand are pushing for high quality rules around labour and environmental protections.
  - Japan and South Korea have also been advocating for '**TRIPS Plus**' IP protection regimes in the RCEP. If these proposals are agreed upon, then it could adversely affect the generic medicine sector in India by undermining provisions in Indian Patents Act.

WHAT IS RCEP?

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a proposed free trade agreement with 16 nations:

10 Asean nations		6 others
Brunei	Philippines	Australia
Cambodia	Singapore	China
Indonesia	Thailand	India
Laos	Vietnam	Japan
Malaysia		South Korea
Myanmar		New Zealand

Additional Information:
- RCEP
  - RCEP is proposed mega trade pact between the 16 member states (ASEAN + 6)
  - RCEP represents 50% of world's population and 39% of world's GDP.
  - It aims to boost goods trade by eliminating most tariff and non-tariff barriers — a move that is expected to provide the region's consumers greater choice of quality products at affordable rates. It also seeks to liberalise investment norms and do away with services trade restrictions.

8. AFRICAN UNION (AU) SUMMIT
News: India has extended $15 million grant assistance to Niger in support of organising of the African Union (AU) summit scheduled from July 7-8, 2019 in Niamey, the capital of Niger.
Facts
- India sees the grant assistance as a reiteration of India's firm commitment to its developmental partnership with Africa, the continent where it is competing for influence with China.

- India is also establishing in Niamey the Mahatma Gandhi International Convention Centre under grant assistance. The Centre honours the memory of Mahatma Gandhi whose 150th birth anniversary is in 2019.

Additional Information:

- **African Union (AU)**
  - African Union is a **pan-Africa continental union** consisting of **55 countries**. Its structure is loosely modelled on that of European Union. It is headquartered in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
  - It was founded in May 2001 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and launched in July 2002 in South Africa. It had replaced Organisation of African Unity (OAU).
  - The key objective of AU is to achieve greater unity and solidarity between the African countries and Africans. To defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of its Member States. To accelerate the political and social-economic integration of the continent.
  - The most important decisions of the AU are made by the Assembly of the African Union, a semi-annual meeting of the heads of state and government of its member states.

9. SIPRI YEARBOOK 2019

News: The **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)** has released the findings of SIPRI Yearbook 2019. The report assesses the current state of armaments, disarmament and international security.

Facts:

- **Key Findings**
  - The report has found that the worldwide total of nuclear warheads has decreased since 2018 but countries are modernising their nuclear arsenals.
  - The report says that at the start of 2019, countries such as the United States, Russia, Britain, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea had a total of some 13,865 nuclear weapons with a decrease of 600 from previous year.
  - The decrease in the overall number of nuclear weapons is due to mainly Russia and the USA which together still account for over 90% of all nuclear weapons.
  - This reduction was partly a result of the **New START treaty** that was signed between the United States and the Russian Federation in 2010 which puts a cap on the number of deployed warheads as well as getting rid of obsolete warheads from the Cold War era.
  - However, there is a concern on the future of treaty as it will expire in 2021 and there is no serious discussion on its extension.
  - Further, the report says that China, India and Pakistan are increasing the size of their nuclear arsenals.

Additional Information:

- SIPRI is an international institute based in Sweden dedicated to research into (a) conflict (b) armaments (c) arms control and (d) disarmament. It provides data analysis and recommendations based on open source to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public.

10. INTER SESSIONAL MEETING OF THE KIMBERLEY PROCESS (KP)

News: The Inter-sessional meeting of the Kimberley Process (KP) was hosted by India from 17th to 21st June, 2019 in Mumbai.

Facts:

- The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) Intersessional Meeting 2019 is an annual mid-year event of KPCS – a tri-partite mechanism that unites participating governments, diamond industry and civil society.
- India has committed to play an active role to curb the circulation of 'conflict diamonds' or 'blood diamonds' in the international market by further strengthening the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS).
- India has said that the **4Cs (Cut, Clarity, Colour & Carat)** of diamonds may soon be expanded to 5Cs with the fifth being **Conflict-Free**.
- Similarly, in the **5Ps of diamond marketing (Precious, Popular, Prestige, Priceless)** will also be expanded with the fifth would represent **Peace Diamond**.

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Additional Information:

- **Kimberley Process:**
  - KPCS is an international mechanism mandated by UN to reduce the flow of conflict diamonds which were being used to finance wars against legitimate governments. It came into force in 2003. It regulates trade in rough diamonds. It aims to prevent the flow of conflict diamonds. It outlines the rules that govern the trade in rough diamonds.
  - Conflict diamonds also known as blood diamonds are rough diamonds used by rebel movements or their allies to finance armed conflicts aimed at undermining legitimate governments.
  - The KP is not an international organisation as it has no permanent offices or permanent staff. It relies on the contributions under the principle of burden sharing of participants supported by industry and civil society observers.
  - At present, KPCS has 55 members representing 82 countries
  - India is one of the founder members of Kimberley Process Certification Scheme and is the Chair of Kimberley Process for the year 2019

11. INTERACTION AND CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES IN ASIA (CICA) SUMMIT

News: India's External Affairs Minister attended the **5th** Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) Summit in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

Facts:

- The **theme** of the 5th Summit was "**Shared Vision for a Secure and More Prosperous CICA Region**".

- The key idea of the Conference is based on the priority of the indivisibility of security, joint initiative and mutually beneficial interaction of small and large states.

- **CICA:**
  - CICA is a multinational forum for enhancing cooperation towards promoting peace, security and stability in Asia. It was established in 1999 and its headquarters is in Kazakhstan.
  - Presently, CICA has 27 member states. 8 countries and five multinational organizations, including United Nations have the observer status.
  - India is a member of CICA since its inception. The first CICA Summit was held in 2002.

12. SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION (SCO) SUMMIT

News: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Facts:

- **Key Takeaways**:
  - The **Bishkek Declaration** of the SCO Heads of State Council condemned terrorism in all forms and manifestations.
  - The summit also signed a document titled '**Roadmap for Further Action of the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group**'.
  - The member states stressed on expanding and deepening cooperation in trade, finance, investment, transport, energy, agriculture, innovation, cutting-edge technology.
  - They also called for keeping outer space free from weapons and importance of peaceful uses of outer space.
  - Further, they also stressed on the need to address the illegal cultivation, production, circulation, sales and dissemination of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors.
  - A separate MoU was also signed for establishment of **Astana International Financial Centre**. Apart from that the other agreements were on sports, mass media, coordination of humanitarian affairs, tourism, and healthcare.

Additional Information:

- **SCO**
  - The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, also known as the Shanghai Pact, is a Eurasian political, economic, and military organisation. It was founded in 2001 by the leaders of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

o Apart from Uzbekistan, the other five countries have been a part of the Shanghai 5 since 1996. The cooperation was renamed to Shanghai Cooperation Organisation after Uzbekistan joined the organisation in 2001. India and Pakistan joined SCO as full members in 2017 summit.

13. GENERALIZED SYSTEM OF PREFERENCES (GSP)

News: President of the USA has terminated India's status as a '**beneficiary developing country**' from GSP. It has come into effect from 5th June, 2019.

Facts:

- GSP is a preferential tariff system provided by developed economies (US, UK, EU, etc) to developing countries (India, Brazil etc).
- GSP was introduced by the USA on January 1, 1976, by the Trade Act of 1974.
- The GSP trade program of USA provides preferential duty-free entry for up to 4800 products from 129 designated countries and territories.
- Internationally, the legal basis for the GSP programme is found in the **Enabling Clause** (EC), which is a platform established under World Trade Organization (WTO).
- Under the USA GSP trade program, Indian goods worth more than $6 bn were exempted from import duties in 2018. India was the largest beneficiary under the program.
- US withdrawal of GSP could affect India's competitiveness in exports of 1,900 items including organic, chemical raw materials, iron, steel, furniture, aluminium and electrical machinery as duties will now be levied on these products.

Additional Information:

- Some developed countries including countries of European Union provide unilateral tariff concessions on exports from developing countries/least developing country under their Generalized System of Preferences Scheme.
- As per WTO, India is a beneficiary of GSP provided by Armenia, Australia, European Union, Japan, Kazakhstan, New Zealand, Norway, Russian Federation, Switzerland and Turkey.

14. STRAIT OF HORMUZ

News: Amidst growing tensions between USA and Iran, two tankers were damaged south of the Strait of Hormuz. In May 2019, four vessels were attacked off the UAE coast near Fujairah, just outside the Strait of Hormuz.

Facts:

- OPEC members Saudi Arabia, Iran, the UAE, Kuwait and Iraq export most of their crude via the Hormuz Strait. Qatar, the world's largest liquefied natural gas (LNG) exporter, sends almost all of its LNG through the Strait.
- The US Fifth Fleet, based in Bahrain, is tasked with protecting commercial shipping in the area.

Additional Information:

- The Strait of Hormuz lies between Oman and Iran. It links the Persian Gulf north of it with the Gulf of Oman to the south and the Arabian Sea beyond.
- On the north coast lies Iran, and on the south coast the United Arab Emirates and Musandam, an exclave of Oman.
- It is 21 miles (33 km) wide at its narrowest point, with the shipping lane just two miles (three km) wide in either direction.

- It is considered as world's most important oil artery. Almost a fifth of the world's oil passes through the Strait. According to data from analytics firm Vortexa some 17.2 million barrels per day (bpd) pass through it.

15. INDIA SIDES WITH ISRAEL AGAINST PALESTINIAN NGO AT UN MEET

News: India has voted in support of Israel at the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to deny consultative status to a Palestinian human rights organisation named 'Shahed'.

Facts:

- India voted against Palestine after Israel has said that Shahed has links with Hezbollah and Palestinian Islamic Jihad that was designated as terrorist organisation in 1997.
- Israel has also said that Shahed operates as an arm of the Hamas based in Lebanon. The US has listed Hamas as a foreign terrorist organisation.

Additional Information:

- The two-state theory refers to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict which envisages an independent State of Palestine alongside the State of Israel.
- The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations.
- The Council serves as the central forum for discussing international economic and social issues and formulating policy recommendations addressed to the member states and the United Nations system.

16. FINANCIAL ACTION TASK FORCE: GREY AND BLACK LIST

News: The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has said that Pakistan could be put on the watchdog's blacklist if the country fails to act on its anti-terror action plan.

Facts:

- Currently, FATF had put Pakistan on the grey list and handed over it a 27-point action plan meant to be implemented within 18 months (by September 2019).
- India has been publicly pushing for Pakistan to be placed on the black list alongside Iran and North Korea for its failure to show credible, verifiable, irreversible and sustainable measures against terror groups operating within its territory.

Additional Information:

- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an inter-governmental body established in 1989 on the initiative of the G7. It is a "policy-making body" which works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in various areas. The FATF Secretariat is housed at the **OECD headquarters in Paris**.
- The objectives of the FATF are to (a) set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures (b) for combating money laundering (c) terrorist financing and (d) other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.
- FATF has 2 types of list – Grey List and Black List
- **Grey List**: These countries have deficiencies in their Anti Money Laundering (AML)/ Counter Terror Financing (CTF) regimes. However, they commit to an action plan to address these loopholes. Countries included in grey list are warned that they may be blacklisted if they do not take adequate steps. As of now, seven countries are included in FATF grey list including Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Syria and Yemen
- **Black List**: These countries are known as Non-Cooperative Countries or Territories (NCCTs). Countries which are not supporting counter- terror funding and anti-money laundering activities are listed in the Black list. At present, two countries are in Black list – Iran and North Korea.

17. ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION (OIC) SUMMIT

News: The 14th summit of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) was held in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

Key Takeaways:

- The OIC had reiterated its support for the legitimate rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and has also appointed a special envoy for the state of J&K. Indian government has rejected the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) reference to Jammu and Kashmir in a communiqué adopted at its summit meeting in the Saudi Arabia.

Additional Information:

- Organisation of Islamic Cooperation is an international organization founded in 1969, consisting of 57 member states. It is the second largest intergovernmental organization after the United Nations.

- The organisation states that (a) it is the collective voice of the Muslim world and (b) works to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony. The OIC has permanent delegations to the United Nations and the European Union.
- OIC holds its summit every three years. It has permanent delegations to the USA and the EU. Its official languages are Arabic, English and French.
- Earlier this year, India's External Affairs Minister had addressed the Inaugural session of the 46th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the OIC in Abu Dhabi after India was invited by United Arab Emirates (UAE) as the Guest of Honour. **India was invited for the first time ever in OIC summit**.

18. GLOBAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUMMIT

News: The 9th edition of the Global Entrepreneurship Summit was held in Hague, Netherlands from June 4, 2019.
Facts:

- The Summit was being hosted by the governments of the United States of America and the Kingdom of the Netherlands. It is the first time that Summit was held in the European Union.
- The theme of the summit was '**The Future Now'**. Indian firms have also taken part in GES 2019.
- The summit featured about 1,200 entrepreneurs from across 140 countries. It provided an avenue for these entrepreneurs to showcase their ideas and work to 300 investors.
- The key focus areas of the summit included the five global challenges surrounding (a) water (b)agriculture (c)healthcare (d)connectivity and (e)energy.

Additional Information:

- The GES 2017 event was held in Hyderabad, India. It had hosted more than 1,500 entrepreneurs from around the world and focussed on the issue of '**Women First, Prosperity for All**'.
- It was the first edition of the GES to take place in South Asia and more than 50% of the delegates at the event were women.

19. GLOBAL DISABILITY SUMMIT

News: Union Social Justice and Empowerment minister participated in the **2nd Global Disability Summit**. It was held at Buenos Aires, Argentina from 6-8 June, 2019.
Facts:

- The summit was hosted by the Government of Argentina Republic, the International Alliance Disability (IDA) and the Latin American Network of Non-Governmental Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and their Families (RIADIS).
- The objective of the summit was to deliberate on issues across the world concerning empowerment and inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). It also sought to work out a mechanism for enabling them to live an independent and dignified life.
- According to IDA, the Summit represented an opportunity to reflect on the formulation and strengthening of public policies and good practices in the different discussion panels with the voices of Persons with disabilities to be at the forefront.
- First Global disability summit was held in London in 2018.
- India's participation is in line with domestic efforts for inclusion of person's with disability through Accessible India Campaign

Additional Information:

- Scheme by Govt for divyang
  - **Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyaan)** – creation of accessible environment to Person with disabilities (PwDs).
  - Scholarship for PwDs.
  - Unique ID for PwDs.
- The International Disability Alliance (IDA) was created in 1999. It is an umbrella organization focused on improving awareness and rights for individuals with disabilities around the globe.

- IDA currently comprises eight global and six regional organizations of persons with disabilities (DPOs).The IDA works very closely with the United Nations and in particular they use the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) as their code of conduct.

ForumIAS

Environment

1. BLACK SOFTSHELL TURTLE

News: Ugratara Temple in Assam organised a special "darshan" of 34 hatchlings of the rare black soft-shell turtle before being reintroduced into the wild.

Facts:

- The black soft-shell turtle (Nilssonianigricans) is a species of freshwater turtle.
- It is found in India (Assam) and Bangladesh.
- These turtles are called "soft-shell" because their shell is light and flexible. This allows them to move more easily in open water, or in muddy lake bottoms. Having a soft shell also allows them to move much faster on land than most turtles.
- The black soft-shell turtle figures in the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List as "**extinct in the wild**" since 2002.
- The major threats to the black soft-shell turtle are-
    - consumption of turtle meat and eggs
    - silt mining
    - encroachment of wetlands and
    - Changes in flooding patterns.
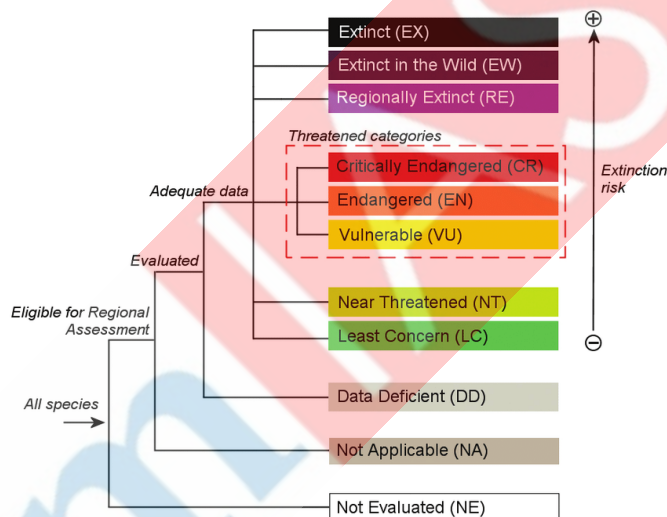
Additional Information:

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List

- The IUCN Red List Categories define the extinction risk of species assessed. There are 9 categories
- Among the categories, Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN) and Vulnerable (VU) species are considered to be threatened with extinction

2. RSEARCH CENTRE FOR OLIVE RIDLEYS

News: A proposal has been made to establish a permanent research centre dedicated to Olive Ridley Turtles in the Khallikote forest range, near the Rushikulya rookery on the Odisha coast.

Facts:

- The research Centre would study the mass nesting of Olive Ridleys and the environmental factors related to it. It would also work to alleviate myths and unscientific theories related to the mass nesting
- It would also study the coastal flora and fauna.
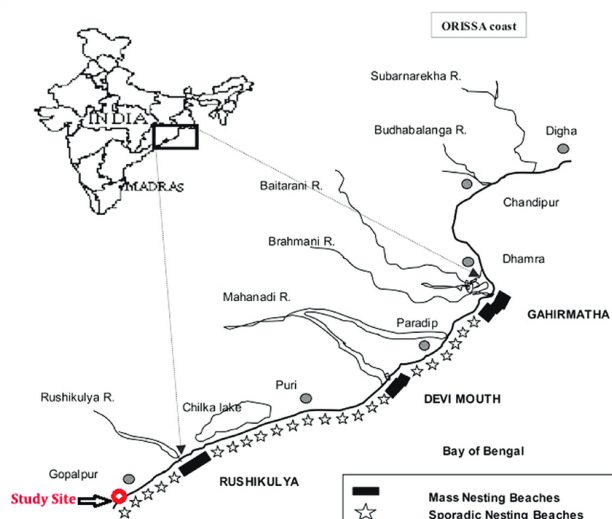
Additional Information:

- **Olive Ridleys:**
    - The Olive Ridley turtles are the **smallest** and most abundant of all sea turtles in the world.
    - They inhabit in the warm waters of the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans.
    - It is listed as **Vulnerable** in the IUCN Red List.
    - The Olive Ridley turtles are best known for their unique mass nesting called **Arribada**. During Arribada, a large number of female turtles come together on the same beach to lay eggs.

- o An important breeding area for olive Ridleys in the Indian Ocean along the Bay of Bengal is Odisha. There are three major mass nesting areas:
  - ▪ Gahirmatha rookery close to the mouth of Brahmani-Baitarani Rivers,
  - ▪ Devi river mouth and
  - ▪ Rushikulya river mouth.
- **Rookery:** A rookery is a communal nesting ground of animals.

3. GODAVARI MANGROVES

News: The Andhra Pradesh Government constituted a seven-member committee for fulfilment of norms required for proposing the Godavari Mangroves (Mada forests) at Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary as a World Heritage Site

Facts:

- Godavari Mangroves are the second largest mangroves in India. The largest mangrove forest in the world is **Sundarbans**, West Bengal.
- The Godavari mangroves are located in the Godavari estuary in the East Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh.
- A large part of Godavari mangrove forest comes under Coringa wildlife sanctuary.

Additional Information:

- **Mangroves:**
  - o Mangroves are diverse group of salt tolerant plants growing in the inter-tidal estuarine zones above the mean sea level of sheltered coastal environments.
  - o Important mangrove forests in India are: Sundarbans (West Bengal), Bhitarkanika (Odisha), Godavari and Krishna Mangroves (Andhra Pradesh) and Pichavaram Mangroves (Tamil Nadu)
- **Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary:** It is situated in Andhra Pradesh. It is located on the deltaic branches of Gouthami and Godavari Rivers at Kakinada Bay.
- **World Heritage Sites:**
  - o These sites are inscribed on the **World Heritage List** of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
  - o These sites are considered to be have high cultural and/or natural heritage which transcends national boundaries and are important to future generations.
  - o UNESCO seeks to protect and preserve these sites through the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972).

4. SUPREME COURT HALTS KANDI ROAD PROJECT

News: The Supreme Court halted further construction of the Kandi road project.

Facts:

- The Kandi Road Project seeks to connect Ramnagar in Kumaon to Kotdwar in Garhwal.
- The construction of the road has been stopped as it passes through a "critical" corridor between the Rajaji Tiger Reserve and the Corbett Tiger Reserve.

Additional Information:

- **Tiger Reserves:**
  - o Tiger Reserves are protected areas established under the Project Tiger
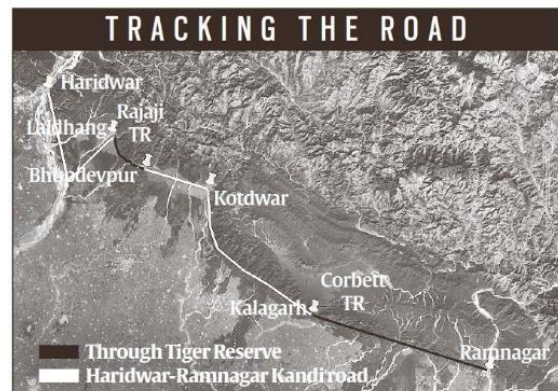
- o Project Tiger was launched by the Government of India in the year 1973. Tiger is listed as **Endangere**d in the IUCN Red List.
- o Tiger Reserve aims at conserving the habitat to ensure a viable population of the tigers along with their prey base in their habitat.
- o There are 50 tiger reserves in India.
- o The **National Tiger Conservation Authority**, constituted under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 is the principal authority for tiger conservation in India. It is under Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

- **The Rajaji Tiger Reserve:**
  - o It spreads over three districts of Uttarakhand: Haridwar, Dehradun and PauriGarhwal.
  - o Rajaji National Park was created in 1983. The Park was formed by the amalgamation of Rajaji Sanctuary, Motichur Sanctuary, and Chilla Range of Pauri Forest Division.
  - o The national park was accorded the status of Tiger Reserve in 2015 and became the 48Th tiger reserve in India.

- **Jim Corbett Tiger Reserve**
  - o Jim Corbett National Park was established in 1936 as Hailey National Park- the first national park in India.
  - o It is located in the Nainital district of Uttarakhand.
  - o The park was declared a Tiger Reserve in 1973- the first to come under the Project Tiger initiative

5. EL SALVADOR RECOGNISES FORESTS AS LIVING ENTITIES

News: El Salvador recognized forests as living entities
Facts:

- This decision was taken as El Salvador has lost about 85% of its native forests since the 1960s
- According to the pronouncement, each person in El Salvador must commit to caring for, preserving, and respecting forests.
- People should also promote concrete actions that expand forests in the country.
- Destroying forests without permission could lead to human rights violations for which legal action can be taken.

Additional Information:

- **New Zealand** had passed legislation giving legal rights to the Whanganui river ecosystem and Mount Taranaki.
- **Ecuador** had given legal rights to nature in its Constitution adopted in 2008.
- In 2017, **Uttarakhand** High Court recognized River Ganga and the Yamuna as living entities- first time a court recognized a non-human as a living entity in India.
- In 2018, **Sikkim** government allowed the people of the state to forge fraternal ties (brotherhood/sisterhood) with the trees in an attempt to preserve them.

6. THE NEW PLASTICS ECONOMY REPORT

News: Ellen MacArthur Foundation, a UK based charity, released The New Plastics Economy report.
Facts:

- It is the first study to estimate the weight of plastics consumed by individual humans. According to the study, an individual consumes about 250 g annually.
- The study also noted that on current trends, the ocean will contain one metric tonne of plastic for every three metric tonnes of fish by 2025.

Additional Information:

- **Microplastics:**
  - Microplastics are plastics which are **less than five mm in diameter** in size. Sources of micro plastic include clothing, cosmetics, industrial processes etc.
  - According to a 2017 International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) report, microplastics are estimated to constitute up to 30% of marine litter polluting the oceans.
  - Scientists have discovered micro plastics in a remote area of the Pyrenees Mountains (it forms a natural border between France and Spain).
  - Other recent studies have found micro plastics in farmland soils near Shanghai, China, in the Galápagos Islands (a UNESCO world heritage site), and in rivers in the Czech Republic.
  - According to a study, river Tame in Greater Manchester, England has the worst level of micro plastic pollution ever recorded anywhere in the world.

- **New Plastics Economy:**
  - The New Plastics Economy is an initiative led by Ellen MacArthur Foundation. It is seeks to create a circular economy for plastics and combat plastic waste.
  - It is based on 6 Rs: Reduce (raw material use), b) Redesign (design products for re-use or recycling) c) Remove (single-use plastics when feasible), d) Re-use, f) Recycle (to stop plastics going to waste) and g) Recover (generate fuel)

7. BITCOIN USE CAUSING HUGE CO2 EMISSIONS: STUDY

News: A study by Technical University of Munich (TUM) revealed that Bitcoin system has a carbon footprint of between 22 and 22.9 mega tonnes per year owing to energy intensive bitcoin mining.

Facts:

- **According to the study:**
  - The carbon footprint of Bitcoin system is comparable to the footprint of cities such as Hamburg, Vienna or Las Vegas.
  - The annual electricity consumption by Bitcoin, as of November 2018, is about 46 TWh.
  - 68% of the Bitcoin network computing power is in Asian countries, 17 % in European countries, and 15% in North America.

Additional Information:

- **Bitcoins**
  - Bitcoins are crypto currencies (virtual/digital currency) used for various financial transactions.
  - They are backed by the diversified and decentralized system of Block Chain Technology.
  - **Bitcoin mining** is the process of creating bitcoins. The mining process includes solving hard computation math problems. The person who solves (miners) is rewarded with new bitcoins. The process also makes the bitcoin payment network more secure.
  - Examples of crypto currencies: Ripple, Petro (by Venezuela government), Aber (by UAE and Saudi Arabia)
- **Carbon Footprint**: It is a measure of the environmental impact of an individual or an entity. It measures the total greenhouse gas emitted into the atmosphere as a result of activity(s) of a person or entity.
- **Blockchain Technology**: A Blockchain is a digital, immutable, **distributed ledger** that chronologically records transactions in near real time. It is managed by cluster of computers not owned by any single entity; therefore, it is **decentralized.**

8. GREAT PACIFIC GARBAGE PATCH

News: A floating device designed to collect plastic waste from the Great Pacific garbage patch has been re-deployed.

Facts:

- The device, known as System 001/B, has been developed by the Netherlands-based engineering NGO Ocean Cleanup.
- System 001 was deployed in 2018. However, during the first run, the device broke down.
- The Great Pacific Garbage Patch, also known as Pacific trash vortex is the largest accumulation of ocean plastic in the world.

- It is located in the North Pacific Subtropical Gyre, between Hawaii and California. It covers an estimated surface area of 1.6 million square kilometers
- The Great Pacific garbage patch formed gradually as a result of marine litter gathered by gyres.
- The gyre's rotational pattern draws in waste material from across the North Pacific. As the litter gets captured in the currents, wind-driven surface currents gradually move debris toward the centre, thus trapping it.
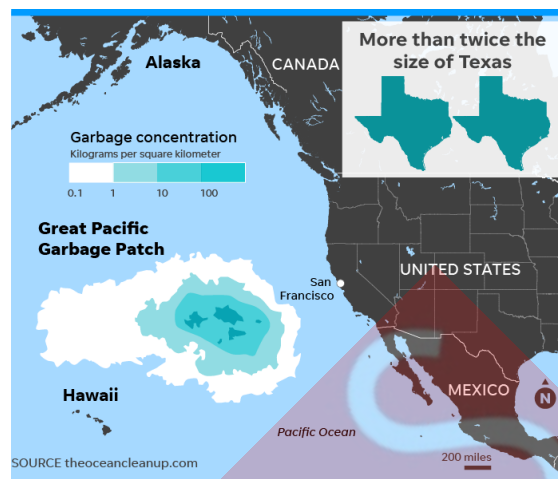
Additional Information:

- **Gyres:** A gyre is a large system of rotating ocean currents. They occur when airflows moving from the tropics to the Polar Regions create a clockwise rotating air mass, which then drives oceanic surface currents in the same direction.
- **Other Garbage Patches:**

GARBAGE PATCH	LOCATION
1. South Pacific Garbage Patch	South Pacific Gyre (in the South Pacific Ocean between Australia and South America)
2. North Atlantic Garbage Patch	North Atlantic Gyre (spreads from the equator to Iceland, North American, Europe, and Africa)
3. The South Atlantic Garbage Patch	South Atlantic Gyre
4. The Indian Ocean Garbage Patch	Indian Ocean Gyre

9. PLASTICRUST– A NEW KIND OF SEA POLLUTION

News: Scientists from the Marine and Environmental Sciences Centre discovered a new type of plastic pollution which has been dubbed as "plasticrusts".

Facts:

- Plasticrust is a layer of plastic encrusted onto ocean rocks. It is composed mainly of polythene.
- It was found on Madeira, a volcanic Portuguese island off northwest Africa.

Additional Information:

- **Plastiglomerate**: It is a plastic-rock hybrid. It is formed whenmolten plastic waste merges together with natural materials such as basaltic lava fragments, sand, shells, wood and coral. It was first discovered in 2014 on a beach in Hawaii.

10. EUROPE HEATWAVE

News: France recorded its all-time hottest temperature amid a European heat wave.

Facts:

- Gallargues-le-Montueux in southern France recorded an all-time high of 45.9°C during the last week of June
- According to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), heat wave in Europe was a result of warm air masses from Africa.

Additional Information:

- **Heat wave:**
  - Generally, heat wave is defined as a period of abnormally high temperatures-more than the normal maximum temperature that occurs during the summer season.
  - IMD declares heat wave when actual maximum temperature of a place remains 45°C or more irrespective of normal maximum temperature.
  - The IMD may also declare a heat wave when maximum temperature of a station reaches at least 40°C or more for Plains, 37°C or more for coastal stations and at least 30°C or more for Hilly regions.
  - Heat wave is listed as one of the natural disasters by NDMA.

11. WORLD'S HIGHEST OPERATING WEATHER STATIONS INSTALLED ON MOUNT EVEREST

News: The National Geographic Society announced the successful installation of the world's highest operating weather stations on Mount Everest.

Facts:

- The weather stations will help continuously monitor the upper reaches of the atmosphere which is critical to tracking and predicting weather patterns around the globe.
- They will record data on temperature, relative humidity, barometric pressure, wind speed, and wind direction.
- The weather stations will also give scientists direct observations to understand jet stream and will also help understand how climate change is affecting the Himalayas.
- The data from the weather stations will also help communities respond to climate risks.
- The analysis from these stations will also reveal how monsoon patterns will change in India.

Additional Information:

- **Mt. Everest:**
  - Mount Everest, known in Nepal as Sagarmatha and in Tibetan as Chomolungma, is Earth's highest mountain above sea level -8,848 m (29,029 ft).
  - It is located in the Mahalangur Himal sub-range of the Himalayas.

12. 10TH EDITION OF REGIONAL GRIHA SUMMIT

News: Union Minister Nitin Gadkari addressed the 10th edition of regional GRIHA summit held in Nagpur.

Facts:

- **Theme of the Summit**: "**Transformation Strategies for Built Environment**". The theme has been adapted to focus on the impact of incorporating sustainability initiatives into functioning public buildings.
- GRIHA
  - It is an acronym for Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment. It is a rating tool that helps people to assess the performance of their building against certain nationally acceptable benchmarks.
  - It evaluates the environmental performance of a building holistically over its entire life cycle thereby providing a definitive standard for what constitutes a green building.
  - It has been developed by TERI. It was adopted as the national rating system for green buildings by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) in 2007.
  - The Government of India, in its Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs), has mentioned GRIHA as a national tool to evaluate greenhouse gas reduction from habitats

Additional information:

- **INDCs:**
  - INDCs are national climate actions countries intend to take to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change, as a commitment to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (2015).
  - India's INDCs include:
    - reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by 33% to 35% by 2030 from 2005 level,
    - increase total cumulative electricity generation from fossil free energy sources to 40% by 2030,
    - Create additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tons through additional forest and tree cover.

13. GUJARAT'S EMISSION TRADING PROGRAMME

News: The Gujarat government launched an emissions trading programme on 5th June (World Environment Day)

Facts:

- The programme aims to reduce particulate air pollution and facilitate robust economic growth.
- Under the programme, the government sets a cap on emissions and allows industries to buy and sell permits to stay below the cap.
- The Gujarat state pollution control board (GPCB) will define the total mass of pollution that can be released into the air over a certain fixed period by all industrial units together. This will be equivalent to the cap.

- The programme is the first market-based approach to regulate pollution emissions in India. Further, it is also the first in the world to regulate particulate air pollution.
- Globally, the cap-and-trade system has been used to reduce other forms of emissions such as sulphur dioxide (SO2) and nitrogen oxides (NOx) in the US.
- At present, the programme is being piloted in Surat to understand its impact on emissions, industry costs and regulatory costs.

Additional Information:

- **Emissions trading:**
  - o Emissions trading is a market-based approach to controlling pollution.
  - o The main form of emissions trading is known as "cap and trade" - a cap on emissions is set and then permits are created up to the level of this cap.
  - o Emissions trading is a central element of the Kyoto protocol in the form of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)

14. G20 AGREES TO TACKLE OCEAN PLASTIC WASTE

News: At the G20 Ministerial Meeting on Energy Transitions and Global Environment for Sustainable Growth, held in Japan, G20 economies adopted a new implementation framework for actions to combat marine plastic pollution.

Facts:

- The new framework is aimed at facilitating further concrete action on marine waste, on a voluntary basis.
- Under the new framework, G20 members are tasked with promoting a comprehensive approach to prevent and reduce plastic waste discharge to the oceans through various measures and international cooperation.
- The member countries will also share best practices, promote innovation and boost scientific monitoring and analytical methodologies.
- Japan has decided to host the first meeting under the new framework 2019 autumn at the G20 Resource Efficiency Dialogue.

Additional Information:

- **G20 action plan on marine litter**
  - o In 2017, at G20 Hamburg Summit in Germany, the member countries had adopted the "G20 action plan on marine litter".
  - o The plan seeks to promote and initiate measures and actions at local, national, and regional levels to prevent and reduce marine litter.

15. INDIA'S FIRST TYPE APPROVAL CERTIFICATE (TAC) FOR BHARAT STAGE VI (BS VI)

News: International Centre for Automotive Technology (ICAT) released Type Approval Certificate (TAC) for Bharat Stage VI (BS VI) norms for two-wheeler category.

Facts:

- This is India's first certification in the two-wheeler segment for the BS – VI norms.
- Bharat Stage norms are the automotive emission norms which the automotive manufacturers have to comply to sell their vehicles in India.
- These norms are applicable to all two wheelers, three wheelers, four wheelers and construction equipment vehicles.
- The Government of India has decided to leapfrog from the exiting BS – IV norms to the BS- VI, thereby skipping the BS – V norms
- BS – VI norms will be implemented with effect from 1st April 2020.
- The main difference between BS-IV and BS-VI is in the amount of sulphur in the fuel. BS-VI fuel is estimated to bring around an 80% reduction in sulphur content.

Additional Information:

- **International Centre for Automotive Technology (ICAT):**

- o ICAT is the premier testing and certification agency authorized by Ministry of Road Transport and Highways
- o It provides testing and certification services to the vehicle and component manufacturers in India and abroad.
- **Type Approval Certificate:** It is a certificate given to a product which meets the required standard, technical and safety requirements.

16. CLEAN AND GREEN NAVY
News: Indian Navy has taken various initiatives towards the goal of Clean and Green Navy.
Facts:

- Indian Navy has formulated **Indian Navy Environment Conservation Roadmap** (INECR). The roadmap aims for reduction in energy consumption and diversification of energy supply as the key result areas.
- The Navy has also pledged 1.5% of its works Budget towards Renewable Energy generation.
- It has also formulated Green Initiatives Programme which would aid in boosting the national interests of environment sustainability and self-reliance in energy
- Further, 24 MW of Solar Photovoltaic (PV) projects consisting of both Rooftop and Land based solar panels are under execution at various shore establishments of the Navy under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission (JNNSM).

Additional Information:

- **Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission:** It is an initiative to promote solar power in India. It was inaugurated in 2010. It seeks to achieve a solar installation of 100 GW by 2022

17. WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY
News: World Environment Day celebrated on 5th June
Facts:

- World Environment Day 2019
  - o It is celebrated annually on 5 June. It is an initiative that the United Nations launched in an attempt to effectively combat problems of environmental degradation.
  - o It was designated by the UN General Assembly in 1972 on the first day of United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. The first World Environment Day was celebrated in 1974.
  - o 2019 **Theme**: "***Air pollution***".
  - o It is being hosted by **China.**
  - o India hosted 2018's World Environment Day. The theme for 2018 was 'Beat Plastic Pollution'.

World Environment Day, 2019 in India:
India took the following initiatives on 2019 World Environment Day
1. **#SelfieWithSapling** campaign launched by MoEFCC
2. A song **#HawaAaneDe** on the subject Air Pollution launched by MoEFCC
3. School Nursery Initiative to be launched by MoEFCC: The initiative would entail school kids planting a seed, nurturing the sapling and on his/her annual result would take the plant to be a trophy.

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18. WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT
News: The World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought (WDCD) observed on 17th June.
Facts:

- 2019 **Theme:** "***Let's grow the future together***".
- Global observance of WDCD was hosted by the **Turkey**.
- World Day to Combat Desertification 2019 marks the 25th anniversary of the **UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).**

- The World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought is observed every year since 1995. In 1994, the United Nations General Assembly declared June 17 the "World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought".
- The day aims to promote public awareness of international efforts to combat desertification.

Additional Information:
- **SDG and Desertification: Goal 15** of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) calls for sustainable management of forests, combating desertification, halting and reversing land degradation, halting biodiversity loss.
- **United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification:**
  - o The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management.
  - o It was established in 1994. It has 197 parties.
  - o **India** for the first time will host the **14th session of the Conference of Parties** (COP-14) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in September 2019 in Greater Noida, NCR.
- **India and the Bonn Challenge:**
  - o The Bonn Challenge was launched in 2011. It is a global effort to bring 150 million hectares of the world's deforested and degraded land into restoration by 2020, and 350 million hectares by 2030.
  - o India joined the Bonn Challenge in 2015 and pledged to bring into restoration **13 million hectares** of degraded and deforested land by **2020**. India also seeks to restore additional 8 million hectares by 2030.

19. CYCLONE VAYU:
News: Cyclone Vayu developed in Arabian Sea.
Facts:
- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) classified Cyclone Vayu as a "very severe" Cyclonic storm.
- The IMD ranks cyclones on a 5-point scale- a) Cyclonic storm, b) Severe cyclonic storm, c) Very severe cyclonic storm, d) Extremely Severe cyclonic storm and e) Super cyclonic storm.
  - o If a Deep Depression develops wind speeds of between 62–88 km/h, it is called a Cyclonic storm.
  - o Severe Cyclonic Storms have storm force wind speeds of between 89–117 km/h.
  - o Very Severe Cyclonic Storms have hurricane-force winds of 118–166 km/h.
  - o Extremely Severe Cyclonic Storms have hurricane-force winds of 167–221 km/h
  - o Super Cyclonic Storms have hurricane-force winds 222 km/h and above

Additional Facts:
- **Cyclones in India:**
  - o Cyclones mainly occur during post monsoon and less in pre-monsoon and monsoon season.
  - o Cyclones affect both the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea; however, the **Bay of Bengal witness more cyclones than the Arabian Sea.** This is because:
    - ▪ Ocean Surface temperature: Bay of Bengal has higher ocean surface temperature than the Arabian Sea. This helps in formation and intensification of cyclonic storms.
    - ▪ Vertical Mixing:
      - ✓ The Bay of Bengal receives higher rainfall and constant inflow of fresh water. Therefore, its surface water keeps getting refreshed. This makes it impossible for the warm water to mix with the cooler water below, making it ideal for a depression.
      - ✓ On the other hand, enhanced vertical mixing in the Arabian Sea, limits cyclone intensification
    - ▪ Remnants:
      - ✓ Cyclones that form over the Bay of Bengal are either those develop in situ over southeast Bay of Bengal and adjoining Andaman Sea or remnants of typhoons over Northwest Pacific and move across south China sea to Indian Seas. As the frequency

of typhoons over Northwest Pacific is quite high, the Bay of Bengal also gets higher number of cyclones.

✓ On the other hand, the cyclones over the Arabian Sea either originate in situ over southeast Arabian Sea or remnants of cyclones from the Bay of Bengal that move across south peninsula. As the majority of Cyclones over the Bay of Bengal weaken over land after landfall, the frequency of migration into Arabian Sea is low.

20. ODISHA'S FLOOD HAZARD MAP

News: Odisha released flood hazard Atlas to tackle floods more effectively.

Facts:

- The Atlas has been prepared by the National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC) of the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO)
- It is based on flood inundation data captured through satellite imagery over the period from 2001 to 2018.
- The flood hazard zones has been classified into five categories very high, high, moderate, low and very low based on the frequency of inundation.

- **Significance of the Flood hazard Atlas:**
    - o Will help systematically plan flood control measures
    - o Help control developmental activities on floodplains
    - o Help carry out relief and rescue operations more effectively
    - o Help plan relief shelters and health centres more effectively

Additional Information:

- **National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC):**
    - o It is one of the centres of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), Department of Space (DOS).
    - o It is responsible establishing ground stations for receiving satellite data, generation of data products, dissemination to the users, and development of techniques for remote sensing applications
    - o It provides geospatial services for disaster management, good governance etc.

ForumIAS

Science and Technology

1. PUNCH MISSION

News: NASA has selected Dipankar Banerjee, an Indian solar physicist from Indian Institute of Astrophysics, as a Co-Investigator of PUNCH mission.

Facts:

- PUNCH stands for The Polarimeter to Unify the Corona and Heliosphere.
- The PUNCH Mission is composed of four suitcase-sized satellites
- The aim of the mission is to image and track the solar wind and coronal mass ejections.
- It will also study how the corona connects with the interplanetary medium.
- The mission will also image the regions beyond the Sun's outer corona.
- The mission is expected to be launched in 2022.

Additional Information

- **Corona:**
  - It is outermost region of the Sun's atmosphere, consisting of plasma (hot ionized gas)
- **Coronal mass ejections:**
  - They are huge masses of plasma that get thrown out of the Sun's atmosphere.
  - The coronal mass ejections can affect and drive space weather events near the Earth.
- **Solar Wind:** It is the constant stream of solar coronal material that flows off the sun.
- **Interplanetary medium:** It is the thinly scattered matter that exists between the planets and other bodies of the solar system, as well as the forces (e.g., magnetic and electric) that pervade this region of space.

2. DRAGON FLY MISSION

News: NASA has announced that it will send a multi-rotor vehicle called Dragonfly to Titan (Saturn's moon).

Facts:

- This will be the first time that NASA will fly a multi- rotor vehicle for science on other planet.
- The Dragonfly will fly to different locations on Titan looking for prebiotic chemical processes common to both Earth and Titan.
- The Dragonfly mission is the 4th mission of NASA's New Frontiers Programme.
- Dragonfly will launch in 2026 and arrive in 2034.

Additional Information:

- **Titan:**
  - The Titan is the largest moon of Saturn.
  - It is the solar system's second largest moon; the first largest moon being Jupiter's Ganymede.
  - Titan has a nitrogen-based atmosphere like Earth. However, unlike Earth, Titan has clouds and rain of methane.
  - The surface temperature at Titan is -179 degrees Celsius. Further, its surface pressure is 50% higher than that of Earth's
- **New Frontiers Programme**
  - It is a series of space exploration missions being conducted by NASA with the purpose of researching several of the Solar System bodies
  - The three prior New Frontiers missions are:
  - New Horizons, which flew past Pluto in 2015,
  - Juno which is a Jupiter exploration mission, and
  - OSIRIS-REx, which is circling the asteroid Bennu.

3. LUNAR EVACUATION SYSTEM

News: The European Space Agency (ESA) tested the Lunar Evacuation System Assembly (LESA).

Facts:

- The test was among preparations for NASA's 2024 Artemis Mission
- LESA is a device which is designed to assist in astronaut rescue missions on the surface of the Moon
- LESA is a pyramid-like structure. It can be operated by a single astronaut to help rescue an injured astronaut on the surface of the moon.
- It will enable an astronaut to lift their crewmate onto a mobile stretcher in less than 10 minutes, before carrying them to the safety of a nearby pressurised lander.

Additional Information:

- **ARTEMIS Mission:**
    - ARTEMIS stands for Acceleration, Reconnection, Turbulence and Electrodynamics of the Moon's Interaction with the Sun.
    - It will be a manned moon mission.
    - **The Artemis mission includes:**
        - establishing of lunar outpost,
        - investigating the Moon's resources and how they might be exploited and
        - Using lunar surface as a base to explore Mars and further into deep space.

4. NASA'S TESS SPOTS THREE NEW EARTH-SIZED EXOPLANETS

News: NASA's Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) has discovered a new exoplanet **dubbed as L** 98-59b. Two other exoplanets, L 98-59c and L 98-59d, have also been discovered.

Facts:

- L 98-59b, is about 80% the size of Earth. It is the smallest exoplanet discovered by TESS till date. However, the smallest exoplanet discovered is Kepler – 37b (It is smaller than Mercury and slightly larger than our moon)
- L 98-59c is around 1.4 Earths in size. While, L 98-59d is 1.6 times the size of Earth.
- The new planets discover orbit a star called L 98-59. It is an M dwarf star. It is located about 35 light-years away in the constellation Volans.

Additional Information:

- **M dwarf Stars**
    - M dwarf stars are smaller and cooler than the Sun. They make up about three quarters of the stars in the Milky Way galaxy.
    - Other prominent M dwarfs include TRAPPIST-1 and Proxima Centauri. Proxima Centauri is the nearest-known star to the Sun.
- **Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS):**
    - TESS is an all-sky survey mission that seeks to discover exoplanets around nearby bright stars.
    - It was launched in April 2018, aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket.
- **Exoplanet:** Exoplanet is a planet outside the Solar System

5. FAST RADIO BURSTS (FRBs)

News: Astronomers using CSIRO's Australian Square Kilometre Array Pathfinder (ASKAP) have determined the precise location of a fast radio bursts (FRBs) dubbed FRB 180924.

Facts:

- FRB 180924 was spotted in September 2018 using ASKAP. The FRB originated from lenticular or early-type spiral galaxy about 3.6 billion light-years away
- This is the second FRB ever to have been traced to a location. Scientists previously had traced FRB 121102 to a region of a dwarf galaxy some 3 billion light-years away from Earth.
- Fast radio bursts (FRBs) are brief radio emissions from distant astronomical sources.
- They have a millisecond duration. They can emit as much energy in a millisecond as the Sun does in 10,000 years.
- FRBs were first detected by the Parkes radio telescope in Australia in 2007.

- Some FRBs are known to repeat, but most are single bursts.
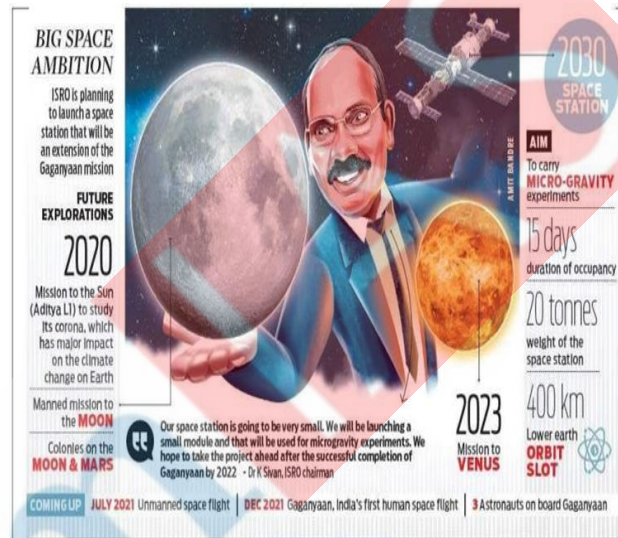
Additional Information:

- **Australian Square Kilometre Array Pathfinder (ASKAP):**
  - It is a radio telescope array located at Murchison Radio-astronomy Observatory (MRO) in the Australian Mid-West.
  - It is operated by Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)- an independent Australian federal government agency responsible for scientific research

6. INDIA TO HAVE ITS OWN SPACE STATION: ISRO

News: Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) has said that India is planning to have its own space station

Facts:

- India's space station would be small with weight of the space station likely to be 20 tonnes.
- It will have a provision for people to live for 15-20 days.
- It will be used for studies including microgravity tests.
- It will be placed in the Lower Earth orbit
- ISRO has been working on 'space docking experiment' (Spadex).
- Spadex seeks to demonstrate autonomous docking. It involves transfer of material between the 2 satellites, in order to demonstrate the potential for refuelling capability between spacecraft.

Additional Information

- **Space Station**
  - A space station is a habitable artificial satellite.
  - It is capable of hosting crew members for an extended period of time, and provides facilities for experiments and support vehicles to dock.
  - Currently, there is only one fully functional space station in the Earth's lower orbit, the International Space Station.
  - The ISS is a partnership between European Union (European Space Agency), the United States (NASA), Japan (JAXA), Canada (CSA) and Russia (Roscosmos).
  - China has announced that its Tiangong or "Heavenly Palace", a space station, will go into orbit in 2022.

7. NIPAH VIRUS

**News:** The Nipah virus resurfaced in Kerala with the confirmation of the infection in a 23-year-old college student.

Facts:

- Nipah Virus is a zoonotic virus i.e. transmitted from animals to humans.
- It is a member of the genus Henipavirus in the family Paramyxoviridae.
- Fruit bats are the natural host of Nipah virus.
- It was first recognised in 1998-99 during an outbreak among pig farmers in Malaysia and Singapore.
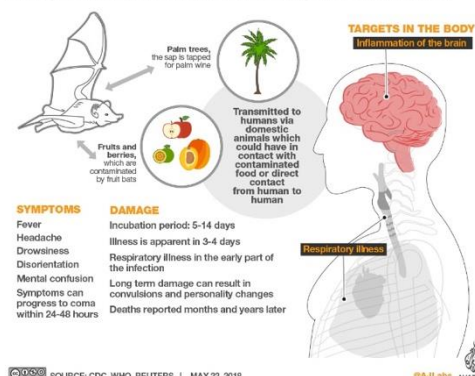
- Nipah virus can be transmitted to humans from animals (such as bats or pigs), or contaminated foods and can also be transmitted directly from human-to-human.
- Nipah virus infection in humans causes asymptomatic infection, acute respiratory infection and fatal encephalitis. It has a high case fatality rate estimated to range between 40 and 75%
- There is no treatment or vaccine available for either people or animals. The primary treatment for humans is supportive care.
- In 2018, there was a Nipah outbreak in Kozhikode and Malappuram districts of Kerala

8. ACUTE ENCEPHALITIS SYNDROME (AES)
News: There has been a number of child deaths in Bihar due to Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES).
Facts:

- Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES) is an umbrella term for all symptoms which cause encephalitis- acute inflation of the brain.
- AES can be caused by bacteria, fungi or virus of different strains which are difficult to identify individually.
- In 2006, the World Health Organisation (WHO) coined the term AES to signify a group of diseases which seem similar to one another but are difficult to differentiate.
- In India, the most common pathogen for encephalitis is the Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV).
- JEV is a mosquito-borne flavivirus, and belongs to the same genus as dengue, yellow fever and West Nile viruses.

9. SHEATH BLIGHT DISEASE
News: Scientists at the National Institute of Plant Genome Research have discovered the genomic diversity associated with aggressiveness of two Indian strains of Rhizoctoniasolani.
Facts:

- Rhizoctoniasolani is a fungal pathogen that causes Sheath Blight disease in rice.
- Sheath Blight disease is a major issue in rice cultivation. It can cause up to 60% reduction in rice yield.
- It is difficult to breed disease resistant rice varieties as there is a lack of natural source of disease resistance
- The scientists have identified several genes and gene families in the strain that might account for their disease aggressiveness. Therefore, the study is expected to help develop rice varieties resistant to sheath blight disease.

ForumIAS

Internal Security and Defence

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1. EXERCISE GARAUDA VI

News: India and France will participate in Exercise Garuda VI from 01-12 Jul 2019

Facts:

- Exercise Garuda is a bilateral exercise between the Indian Air force (IAF) and French Air Force. It is held alternatively in India and France
- The sixth edition of the Exercise Garuda will be held at French Air Force Base, Mont-de-Marsan.
- This will enhance understanding of interoperability during mutual operations between the two Air Forces and provide an opportunity to learn from each other's best practice
- The exercise will also promote professional interaction, exchange experiences and operational knowledge besides strengthening bilateral relations with the French Air Force.
- It will also provide a good opportunity to the air warriors to operate in an international environment

Additional Information:

- The first edition of the Garuda exercise was held in February 2003 in Gwalior
- The last exercise, 'Garuda V' was held at Air Force Station Jodhpur in June 2014.

2. OPERATION SUNRISE -2

News: India and Myanmar participated in 3-week long military operation, codenamed as "Operation Sunrise-2" between May 16 and June 8

Facts:

- Operations were conducted by the two armies on their respective border areas in an effort to destroy terrorist camps including the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang), the United Liberation Front of Assam (I) and the National Democratic Front of Boroland.
- Operation Sunrise- 2 was a follow up to 'Operation Sunrise-1'

Additional Information:

- **Operation Sunrise -1:**
  - o It took place between 22 and 26 February 2019.
  - o The Indian Army targeted members of the Arakan Army, an insurgent group in Myanmar who are opposed to Kaladan multi-modal transit transport project.
- **Kaladan multi-modal transit transport project:** It seeks to connect Kolkata to Sittwe port (Rakhine, Myanmar) by sea from there to Paletwa through river Kaladan and finally to Zorinpui at Mizoram border by road.
- **India-Myanmar Border (India-Myanmar barrier):**
  - o India- Myanmar border runs for a 1,640-km.
  - o Four Northeast Indian states share the border with Myanmar: Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Manipur.

3. EXERCISE KHARGA PRAHAR, 2019

News: Exercise "KhargaPrahar" was conducted by the Indian Army in Punjab from 27 May 2019 to 4 June 2019.

Facts:

- The Exercise was undertaken by various units and formations of Kharga Corps

- The Indian Air force also participated in the exercise. Para drops from the Indian Air Force aircraft were carried out. Further, simulated battlefield air strikes were conducted in support of ground forces
- The exercise was aimed at validating important operational aspects and operational preparedness of the Kharga Corps

Australia	Bangladesh	Brunei
Cambodia	China	Denmark
India	Japan	South Korea
Laos	Myanmar	Netherlands
Norway	Philippines	Singapore
Sri Lanka	Thailand	United Kingdom
United States	Vietnam	

Additional Information:

- The Indian Army's II Corps, is known as Kharga Corps.
- The Corps was raised in 1971 in West Bengal.
- It has been stationed at Ambala since 1985.

4. OPERATION SANKALP

News: The Indian Navy has launched Operation Sankalp to safeguard Indian vessels transiting through the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman.

Facts:

- The Navy has deployed stealth guided missile destroyers INS Chennai and patrol vessel INS Sunayna in the region for maritime security operations.
- Aerial surveillance by naval aircraft is also being undertaken.
- The Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) is also keeping a close watch on the movement of ships in the Gulf region
- The operation has been launched in the wake of escalating tension in the Gulf of Oman where two oil tankers were attacked. Iran was accused of the attacks amidst rising conflict between USA and Iran.

Additional Information:

- **Gulf of Oman:** It is a gulf that connects the Arabian Sea with the Strait of Hormuz, which then runs to the Persian Gulf.
- It borders Iran and Pakistan on the north, Oman on the south and the United Arab Emirates on the west.
- **Information Fusion Centre** – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)
  - o It was established in 2018 at the Navy's Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC) in Gurugram.
  - o It is a single point centre linking all the coastal radar chains to generate a seamless real-time picture of the nearly 7,500-km coastline.
  - o Through this Centre, information on white shipping or commercial shipping is exchanged with countries in the region to improve maritime domain awareness in the Indian Ocean.

5. ICG CO-HOSTS 12TH RECAAP ISC CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP

News: Indian Coast Guard (ICG) co-hosted 12th Capacity Building workshop with Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) Information Sharing Centre (ISC) on June 19-20, 2019.

Facts:

- ReCAAP is the first regional Government-to-Government agreement to deal with piracy and armed robbery at sea in Asia.
- Information sharing, capacity building and mutual legal assistance are the three pillars of co-operation under the ReCAAP agreement.
- ISC is established at Singapore to collate and disseminate the information among the contracting parties and the maritime community. India had played an important role in setting of ReCAAP ISC
- Capacity building workshop is organized annually by the ISC and is co-hosted by one of the contracting parties.

- Presently 20 countries are members of ReCAAP.
- India has hosted this workshop twice in the past – 2011 (Goa), 2017 (New delhi).

Additional Information:

- **Indian Coast Guard:**
  - The Indian Coast Guard is a multi-mission organization entrusted with superintendence and policing of India's maritime areas including the Exclusive Economic Zone.
  - The Indian Government has designated the ICG as the focal point within India for the ReCAAP.

6. MISSION BASED DEPLOYMENTS

News: The Indian Navy deployed its P-8I long-range maritime surveillance aircraft for anti-piracy sorties from Salalah in Oman to patrol the Gulf of Aden under its Mission Based Deployments (MBD) in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)

Facts:

- Mission-Based Deployments (MBD) concept was adopted by the Navy in 2017.
- MBD is implemented to enable Indian Navy to be first responder in any crisis such as piracy, illegal fishing, arms smuggling, and natural disasters. It fulfills India's role as a "net security provider" in the IOR region.
- Under MBD concept, previously, IN ships were deployed for:
  - Operation 'GULFDEP' in the Persian Gulf,
  - Operation 'CENTDEP' in the central Indian Ocean Region,
  - Operation 'NORDEP' in the northern Bay of Bengal and
  - Operation 'MALDEP' in the Andaman Sea and approaches to the Malacca Strait.

Additional Information:

- Under the 'Neighbourhood First' policy, the Indian Navy undertakes Joint Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surveillance with Maldives, Seychelles and Mauritius. It also undertakes Coordinated Patrols (CORPAT) with Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand and Indonesia.

7. DEFENCE SPACE RESEARCH AGENCY

News: The Cabinet Committee on Security chaired by Prime Minister has cleared the setting up of the Defence Space Research Agency (DSRO).

Facts:

- The DSRO will comprise scientists who will work closely with integrated defence staff officers.
- It will work on space warfare weapon systems and technologies.
- It would provide the research and development support to the Defence Space Agency (DSA).

Additional Information:

- **Defence Space Agency (DSA)**
  - In April 2019, the government decided to set up the Defence Space Agency in Bengaluru.
  - The DSA will comprise members of the three services. It will be headed by an Air Vice Marshal-level officer.
  - It will command the space assets of the Army, Navy and Air Force.
  - It will also formulate a strategy to protect India's interests in space, including addressing space-based threats.
- **Integrated Defence Staff:**
  - The Integrated Defence Staff (IDS0 was established in 2001. It was established after the recommendation of Kargil Review Committee.
  - It is under the Ministry of Defence. It is headquartered in New Delhi.
  - It is composed of representatives from the Indian Army, Indian Navy, Indian Air Force, Ministry of External Affairs, Defence Research and Development Organisation, Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Finance.

o The main objective of IDS is to promote synergy among the three services and to integrate these with the Ministry of Defence. It plays an advisory role to the Chairman of Chiefs of Staff Committee.

8. INDSPACEEX

News: India will organize its first ever simulated space warfare exercise called IndSpaceEX in the last week of July 2019

Facts:

- It will be a table-top war game with all stakeholders.
- It will be organized under the aegis of Integrated Defence Staff, Ministry of Defence.
- The main aim of 'IndSpaceEx' exercise is to assess the requisite space and counter space capabilities that are needed by India.
- The exercise will help India better grasp the strategic challenges in space that need to be handled.
- Exercise comes in the backdrop of India successfully conducting Mission Shakti and initiating the establishment of a new tri-service Defence Space Agency.

Additional Information:

- **Mission Shakti:**
    - o Mission Shakti is an anti-Satellite (ASAT) missile test which was conducted by India in March 2019. ASAT are missile-based systems to attack moving satellites.
    - o The ASAT test had been carried out by bringing down one of the Indian satellites in the low earth orbit.
    - o The test was aimed at strengthening the capability to safeguard space assets and India's overall security.

9. NAVY PLANS TO BUILD 6 SUBMARINES UNDER STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP (SP) MODEL

News: The defence ministry issued an Expression of Interest (EoI) to shortlist Indian strategic partners for the construction of six conventional submarines under Project 75 (I)

Facts:

- This is the second project being undertaken under the Strategic Partnership (SP) Model.
- Previously, the government had cleared the procurement of 111 Naval Utility Helicopters (NUH) under the SP Model.
- In 2017, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) announced the Strategic Partnership model for the Indian private sector.
- The concept of the model was first suggested by the **Dhirendra Singh Committee** in 2015.
- The strategic partnership model seeks to identify a few Indian private companies as Strategic Partners who would initially tie up with a few shortlisted foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) to manufacture defence platforms and equipment.
- Four segments have been identified for acquisition under Strategic Partnership (SP) route: a) Fighter Aircraft, b) Helicopters, c) Submarines and d) Armoured Fighting Vehicles (AFVs) / Main Battle Tanks (MBTs).

Additional Information:

- **Project 75 (I)**
    - o Project 75 (I) seeks to open a second production line for diesel electric submarines in India.
    - o In 1999, the Cabinet Committee on Security had approved a '30-Year Plan for Indigenous Submarine Construction', which was to develop two production lines on which six submarines each viz. a) Project 75 and b) Project 75 (I).
    - o Submarines under the Project 75 include: INS Kalvari, INS Khanderi, INS Karanj, INS Vagir, INS Vagsheer, and INS Vela. INS Kalvari has been already commissioned into the Navy in 2017. Others are in advanced stages of joining Navy.

10. VARUNASTRA

News: The Indian Navy decided to induct the indigenously developed advanced heavyweight anti-submarine torpedo "Varunastra" into its arsenal.

Facts:

- Varunastra has been developed by the Naval Science and Technology Laboratory (NTSL), Visakhapatnam. Further, Bharat Dynamics has been associated with NSTL in the development of Varunastra as a production agency.
- Varunastra can be launched from ships and submarines. It can also be launched from ashore.
- It is equipped with one of the most advanced automatic and remote-controlled guidance systems. The weapon system uses its own intelligence in tracing the target.
- It is seven to eight metres long, weighs 1,500 kg and has a diameter of 533 mm.
- When fired it can travel at **40 knots, or 74 kmph**. The **operational range** is **40 km** and it can carry a warhead weighing 250 kg.

Additional Information:

- **Naval Science and Technology Laboratory** (NTSL): It is a premiere laboratory of Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO). Its main aim is to develop underwater weapons and associated technologies.
- **Bharat Dynamics Limited** (BDL): It is a Government of India Enterprise under the Ministry of Defence. It is a manufacturing base for guided missiles and allied defence equipment.
- **Torpedo**: It is a self-propelled underwater missile, launched from a submarine, surface vessel, or airplane and designed for exploding upon contact with the target or in close proximity to it.

11. MAN-PORTABLE ANTI-TANK GUIDED MISSILE (MPATGM)

News: India has scrapped a deal with Israel for the purchase of Spike anti-tank missiles from defence contractor Rafael Advanced Defence Systems.

Facts:

- The decision to scrap the deal came after Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) claimed that it could deliver an alternative- the Man-Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile (MPATGM) by 2021.
- The MPATGM is a third-generation fire- and forget anti-tank guided missile (ATGM). It is fitted with high-explosive anti-tank (HEAT) warhead. ATGM is a guided missile primarily designed to hit and destroy heavily armoured military vehicles.
- It has a strike range of 2.5 km and is capable of being fired from shoulder. It can be used during day and night.
- It weighs around 14.5 kg to maintain man portability and has a minimum lateral centre and gravity offset.
- It also has features like Imaging Infrared Radar (IIR) Seeker with integrated avionics.
- DRDO had successfully test-fired MPATGM in March 2019.

12. HYPERSONIC TECHNOLOGY DEMONSTRATOR VEHICLE (HSTDV)

News: DRDO successfully conducted the first test flight of the indigenously developed Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle (HSTDV) from Dr. Abdul Kalam Island, off the Odisha coast.

Facts:

- The HSTDV is an unmanned scramjet demonstration aircraft for hypersonic speed flight
- It can cruise at a speed of 6 Mach and move up to an altitude of 32.5 kilometres in 20 seconds
- It can be used for launching hypersonic cruise missiles. It also has multiple civilian applications including the launching of small satellites at low cost and reusable satellite launch vehicle.
- The only other countries that possess this technology are the US, Russia and China.

Additional Facts:

- **Hypersonic cruise missiles:** These are cruise missiles that can travel at least at a speed of Mach 5. A cruise missile is a guided missile that remains in the atmosphere and flies the major portion of its flight path at approximately constant speed.

- **Scram-jet technology:**
  - o SCRAMJET stands for Supersonic Combustion Ramjet.
  - o It is a variant of Ramjet Engine and an improvement over it.
  - o In scram-jet technology, combustion of fuel takes place in a chamber in the missile at supersonic speeds.
  - o In a ramjet, the combustion chamber – where the air is mixed with fuel and ignited – only works at subsonic speeds. In the scramjet the combustion chamber is specially designed to operate with supersonic airflow.

13. NATIONAL ADVANCED SURFACE TO AIR MISSILE SYSTEM-II (NASAMS-II)

News: India began the process of acquiring the National Advanced Surface to Air Missile System-II (NASAMS-II) from the US

Facts:

- NASAMS-II is an upgraded version of Raytheon National Advanced Surface-To-Air Missile System (NASAMS).

- It features new 3D mobile surveillance radars and 12 missile launchers for quicker reaction.

- A NASAMS battery consists of up to 12 multi missile launchers each of which can carry six AIM-120-series advanced medium-range air-to-air missiles (AMRAAMs) or other surface-to-air missiles (SAMs).

- NASAMS II will be used to fully secure NCT Delhi's airspace against aerial threats ranging from drones to ballistic missiles. The NASAMS-II will be used along with indigenous, Russian and Israeli systems to establish a multi-layered missile shield over the National Capital Territory of Delhi.

Additional facts:

- **Surface to air Missile**: A surface-to-air missile is a missile designed to be launched from the ground to destroy aircraft or other missiles. Examples: Akash missile, Trishul missile.

14. SPICE BOMBS

News: The Indian Air Force (IAF) signed Rs 300-crore deal with the Israeli government to buy as 100 SPICE bombs from Rafael Advanced defence Systems.

Facts:

- SPICE stands for Smart, Precise Impact, Cost Effective.

- It is equipped with a family of weapons used for air-to-ground operations

- It is basically an electro-optical/GPS guidance kit to convert air dropped unguided bombs into precision guided 'Smart' bombs and its kit consists of inertial navigation, satellite guidance and electro-optical sensors for pinpoint accuracy

- They also consist of an add-on kit for warheads, including MK-84, APW, RAP-2000 and BLU-109.

- SPICE has a stand-off range of 60 km.

- These bombs are difficult to detect by most ground-based radars. SPICE can also overcome errors in locating the target, GPS jamming and reduces collateral damage.

- The newly ordered SPICE bombs are an advanced version of SPICE-2000 bombs.

- India has been using SPICE-2000 bombs since 2015 on French-developed fighter jets, Mirage-2000.

15. S-400 TRIUMF

News: USA has reiterated threat of sanctions on India over the Triumf deal

Facts:

- India had signed a $5.4 billion deal to purchase five batteries of the Russian S-400 Triumf missile defence system, following a 2018 summit between Russian President and Indian Prime Minister in New Delhi.

- S-400 Triumf Missile Defence System is a mobile, surface-to-air missile system (SAM).

- It is capable of simultaneously engaging aircraft, UAVs, cruise missiles, and has a terminal ballistic missile defence capability and has an operational range of over 400 kms.
- The S-400 Triumf is known as the SA-21 Growler by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). NATO members consider the S-400 a major threat because of its long range.
- The procurement of S-400 Triumf missile system could potentially come under US sanctions under Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA).

Additional Information:
CAATSA:
- It is US legislation which aims to counter the aggression by Iran, Russia and North Korea through punitive measures. It was enacted in 2017.
- Under the Act, the US President is empowered to impose sanctions on persons/countries engaged in a "significant transaction" with Russian defence and intelligence sectors.

Social

1. INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST DRUG ABUSE AND ILLICIT TRAFFICKING

News: The International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking is observed annually on 26 June.

Facts:

- In 1987, the UN General assembly decided to observe 26 June as the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. The day was first observed in 1989.
- The observance seeks to raise awareness of the major problem that illicit drugs represent to society.
- It aims to strengthen action and cooperation to achieve the goal of an international society free of drug abuse.
- **2019 Theme**: '*Health for Justice. Justice for Health'.* It highlights the justice and health are two sides of the same coin when it comes to addressing drug problems.

Additional Information:

- **Convention against the Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988:** Itprovides comprehensive measures against drug trafficking, including provisions against money laundering and the diversion of precursor chemicals. It also provides for international cooperation such as extradition of drug traffickers etc. India is a party to the Convention.
- **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC):** Established in 1997, it is the chief international organization which helps countries to combat illicit drugs, crime and terrorism.

2. TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS (TIP) REPORT, 2019

News: USA State Department released Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report, 2019

Facts:

- The report categorizes countries into three groups based on the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) **India** has been retained in Tier 2 list of countries in the 2019 report.
- The report has recommended India to:
  - o amend the definition of trafficking in Section 370 of the Indian Penal Code to include forced labour trafficking
  - o establish Anti-Human Trafficking Units in all districts with dedicated funding and clear mandates

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Categorization in TIP Report:
1. **Tier 1:** Countries whose governments fully comply with the TVPA's minimum standards. Examples, USA, Australia, Japan, Spain
2. **Tier 2:** countries whose governments do not fully meet TVPA's minimum standards but are making significant efforts to do so. Examples: Brazil, Indonesia, Pakistan, Italy
3. **Tier 3:** countries which do not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and are not making any efforts to do so. Examples: Russia, China, Venezuela, Iran, North Korea, Syria

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Additional Information:

- **Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children:**
  - o It is one of the three Palermo protocols adopted by the United Nations to supplement the 2000 Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000).
  - o It entered into force in 2003. It is the first global legally binding instrument with an agreed definition on trafficking in persons.

3. WORLD POPULATION PROJECTIONS, 2019

News: Population Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs released World Population Projection 2019

Facts:

- **Highlights from the Report**:

- **Population Growth:**
  - World population would rise to 9.7 billion by 2050.However, the overall growth rate will continue to fall.
  - The countries expected to show the biggest increase are India, Nigeria and Pakistan.
  - However, a growing number of countries are experiencing a reduction in population size. Between 2019 and 2050, populations are projected to decrease by 1% or more in 55 countries or areas.
- **Fertility rates:**
  - Globally, the average number of births per woman fell from 3.2 in 1990 to 2.5 in 2019.
  - It is projected to fall further to 2.2 births by 2050.
- **Life Expectancy:**
  - Life expectancy at birth for the world, is expected to increase to 77.1 years in 2050. It had increased from 64.2 years in 1990 to 72.6 years in 2019
  - Life expectancy in poorer countries is projected to continue to lag behind.
  - The main reasons are high child and maternal mortality rates, conflict and insecurity, and the continuing impact of the HIV epidemic.
- **Elderly Population:**
  - Persons aged 65 years or over worldwide outnumbered children under age five for the first time in 2018.
  - By 2050, there will be more than twice as many persons above 65 as children under five.
  - By 2050, number of persons aged 65 or over will also surpass the number of adolescents and youth aged 15-24
- **Sex Ratio:** Males are projected to continue to outnumber females until the end of the century but the gap will narrow down eventually.
- **India Specific:**
  - Expected to add nearly 273 million people between 2019 and 2050
  - Projected to surpass China as the world's most populous country by 2027 and will remain the world's most populous country with nearly 1.5 billion inhabitants
  - Children under the age of five still outnumber the over-65 population.
  - People over age 65 will make up about one-seventh of India's population by 2050.
  - Children under the age of five are projected to constitute less than 6% of India's population in 2050, as compared to 7% globally.

4. WORLD FOOD SAFETY DAY
News: First ever World Food Safety Day was celebrated on 7th June
Facts:

- The observance of the day seeks to mainstream food safety in the public agenda and reduce the burden of foodborne diseases globally
- **2019 theme**: '**Food safety, everyone's business'**.
- United Nations General Assembly has designated Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to lead efforts in global food safety.
- FAO addresses food safety issues along the food chain during production and processing
- WHO oversees food safety relationship with the public health sector.

Initiatives taken by India for Food Safety:

1. **State Food Safety Index (SFSI):** Developed by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), the index seeks to measure the performance of States on five parameters of food safety. Five parameters include- Human Resources and Institutional Arrangements, compliance, Food Testing- Infrastructure and Surveillance, Training and capacity building, and Consumer Empowerment.
2. **Eat Right Movement**: Launched in 2018 by FSSAI, it focuses on empowering citizens to make right food choices and encourage food industry to reformulate their products, provide better nutritional information to consumers and make investments in healthy food.
3. **Raman 1.0**: It is a hand-held battery-operated device which performs rapid detection of economically driven adulteration in edible oils, fats and ghee.
4. **Food Safety Magic Box**: It is a do-it-yourself food testing kit which comprises a manual and equipment to check for food adulterants, which schoolchildren can use in their classroom laboratories.

5. AWARE- TOOL FOR SAFER USE OF ANTIBIOTICS, CURB RESISTANCE

News: WHO launched new online tool known as 'AWaRe' to promote safer use of antibiotics.

Facts:

*   The tool 'AWaRe' classifies antibiotics into three groups – a) Access— antibiotics used to treat the most common and serious infections, b) Watch— antibiotics available at all times in the healthcare system, c) Reserve— antibiotics to be used sparingly or preserved and used only as a last resort
*   The tool is aimed at guiding policy-makers and health workers to use antibiotics safely and more effectively.
*   It also seeks to limit drugs that are at risk of resistance.
*   It seeks to achieve a 60% increase in the use of antibiotics under the Access group which are cheap drugs that target a specific microorganism rather than several.

Additional Information:

*   Antibiotic resistance is a type of antimicrobial resistance 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.

6. 31.4% OF INDIAN CHILDREN WILL BE STUNTED BY 2022: REPORT

News: UN World Food Programme in collaboration with the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation released a baseline analysis of India's progress in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero Hunger

Facts:

Key highlights from the report,

*   Food grain yields in India have risen 33% over the last 20 years
*   Though the food production is higher than ever before, the consumer's access to rice, wheat and other cereals has not increased at the same rate. This is because of population growth, inequality, food wastage and losses, and exports
*   The average per capita consumption of energy among the poorest 30% of the population is 1811 kilo calories-much lower than the norm of 2155 kilo calories/day.
*   Going by the current trends, 31.4% under five years will still be stunted by 2022
*   There is regional variation in stunting- In States like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh 48% and 46% of children are stunted. While, it is only 20% in states like Kerala and Goa
*   High rates of stunting among children in the poorest wealth quintile (51.4%), Scheduled Tribes (43.6%) and Scheduled Castes (42.5%), and children born to mothers with no education (51%).

Additional Information:

*   **Stunting**: Impaired growth and development (low height for age) that children experience from poor nutrition, repeated infection, and inadequate psychosocial stimulation.
*   **UN World Food Programme**: It is the UN agency focused on hunger alleviation and food security.

7. E-2020 INITIATIVE: 2019 PROGRESS REPORT

News: WHO released E-2020 initiative: 2019 progress report

Facts:

- **According to the progress report,**
  - 5 countries viz. China, Iran, Malaysia Timor-Leste and El Salvador reported no indigenous cases of malaria in 2018
  - Algeria and Paraguay declared malaria free after reporting zero indigenous cases for the fifth consecutive year.
  - Argentina, though not an E-2020 country, was also certified malaria-free in 2019.

Additional Information:

- **Global Technical Strategy for Malaria 2016-2030:** In 2015, the World Health Assembly approved a Global Technical Strategy for Malaria with the following goals-
  - By 2030, 90% Reduction in malaria mortality rates globally compared with 2015
  - By 2030, 90% Reduction in malaria case incidence globally compared with 2015
  - Eliminate malaria in at least 10 countries by 2020 and 35 by 2030
  - Prevent re-establishment of malaria in all countries that are malaria-free
- **E-2020 Initiative**: In 2016, WHO launched E-2020 initiative to scale up efforts eliminate malaria in 21 countries by 2020. India is not among the 21 countries under E-2020 initiative.
- **Malaria free status**: Countries that have achieved at least 3 consecutive years of zero local cases of malaria are eligible to apply for the WHO certification of malaria elimination.
- **Malaria**: It caused by Plasmodium parasites that are transmitted to people through the bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes.
- **World Malaria Report 2018**:
  - An estimated 219 million cases of malaria occurred worldwide in 2017
  - The African region bears the largest burden of malaria morbidity. Nigeria accounted for the highest number of malaria cases (25%) followed by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, and India (4%). However, there was a 24% decrease in malaria cases in India in 2017 compared to 2016.

8. HEALTHY STATES, PROGRESSIVE INDIA: REPORT ON RANK OF STATES AND UTS

News: The NITI Aayog released the 2nd edition of its State Health Index 2019 in a report titled "Healthy States, Progressive India: Report on Rank of States and UTs.

Facts:

- **About the Report:**
  - The report has been prepared by NITI Aayog in collaboration with the Health Ministry and with technical assistance from the World Bank
  - The Health Index is a composite score incorporating 23 indicators covering key aspects of health sector performance.
  - It analyses overall performance and incremental improvement in the States and the Union Territories for the period with 2015-16 as the base year and 2017-18 as the reference year
  - The report ranked states and UTs in three categories — larger States, smaller States and Union Territories to ensure comparison among similar entities
- **Highlights from the Report**
  - **Larger states**
    - Kerala designated as the best performing State in the health sector among the 21 large States, followed by Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra.
    - In terms of incremental improvement, Haryana, Rajasthan and Jharkhand performed best.
    - Uttar Pradesh was the worst performing state. Other poor performing states were Bihar, Odisha, and Madhya Pradesh.
  - **Smaller states:**
    - Mizoram ranked first in overall performance.
    - Tripura and Manipur improved the most.

- Sikkim and Arunchal Pradesh had the biggest decrease in overall health index scores
  - o **UTs**
    - Chandigarh ranked first in overall performance
    - Dadra and Nagar Haveli improved the most
  - o **EAG States:**
    - Among the eight EAG States, only three of the States- Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh showed improvement in the overall performance between 2015-16 and 2017-18. However, other EAG states didn't show much improvement.

Note: Empowered Action Group (EAG) States includes Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Odisha.

- **Correlation between Health Index scores and the economic development:**
  - o General positive correlation between the Health Index scores and the economic development levels of States and UTs as measured by per capita Net State Domestic Product (NSDP)
  - o However, a few States with relative low level of economic development performed well in the Health Index. Examples: Jammu and Kashmir, Manipur, Mizoram, Andhra Pradesh, and Punjab.

9. WOMEN'S PROGRESS OF THE WORLD 2019-2020

News: UN Women released report titled "Women's Progress of the World 2019-2020: Families in a Changing World"
Facts:

- **Highlights from the report:**
  - o **Household Composition:**
    - Globally, 38% of households are couples living with children; 27% are extended families
    - Globally, 84.3% of single-parent households are headed by women
    - In India, 13 million (4.5% of all households) are run by single mothers.
    - In India, the poverty rate of single-mother households is 38% compared to 22.6% of dual parent households
  - o **Marriage:**
    - Women worldwide have been delaying marriage. Age of first marriage stood at 23.3 years in 2010.
    - Women marry earliest in Central and Southern Asia (20.8 years) and latest in Australia and New Zealand (30 years).
  - o **Fertility:**
    - Current global total fertility rate is estimated at 2.4 live births per woman
    - Early pregnancy is most prevalent in Sub-Saharan Africa
- **Elderly Population:** In 2017, women represented 54% of those aged 60 years or over globally and more than 60% of those above age 80.22
- **Female Labor Force Participation:**
  - o Labour force participation rate (LFPR) for women aged 25-54 is 63% in 2018
  - o Women's LFPR is affected by their marital status. Half the world's married women remain out of labour force.
  - o During the period 1997–2018, women's labour force fell by 6.9% points in India — one of the largest globally.

Additional Information:

- **UN Women:** It is the UN entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

- **Generation Equality: Realizing Women's Right for an equal future**
  - o It is a campaign launched by UN Women in May 2019. It demands equal pay, equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work, an end to sexual harassment and violence against women and girls, health care services, and equal participation of women in political life
  - o It coincides with the 25th anniversary of the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. The Beijing Declaration was adopted which is an agenda for women's empowerment and considered the key global policy document on gender equality

ForumIAS

Miscellaneous

1. STATISTICS DAY

News: Statistics Day was celebrated on 29th June in India

Facts:

- June 29, birth date of Professor **P C Mahalanobis**, was selected to celebrate Statistics Day in recognition of his contribution in establishing the National Statistical System.
- Statistics Day is aimed at sensitizing the public about how Statistics helps in shaping and framing policies.
- **2019 Theme:** "**Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)".** The theme was chosen to mainstream discussions towards filling the data gaps and improvement of timelines in SDGs.
- On Statistics Day the handbook of **National Indicator Framework (NIF)** was released
- NIF has been prepared by Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation (MoSPI).
- It is a set of national indicators which forms the backbone of monitoring progress towards Sustainable Development Goals

Additional Information:

National Statistical Commission:

- The National Statistical Commission was established under MoSPI in 2006 based on the recommendations of Rangaranjan Committee (2001).
- It functions as the nodal agency for core statistical activities in India

P C Mahalanobis

- He is known as the **Father of Indian Statistics**
- Mahalanobis established the **National Sample Survey** in 1950. He also set up the **Central Statistical Organization (CSO)** to coordinate statistical activities in India. He also founded the **Indian Statistical Institute.**

2. INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY

News: International Yoga Day was celebrated on 21st June.

Facts:

- International Yoga Day was first celebrated in 2015
- It is celebrated to promote yoga and spread awareness about its benefits.
- **2019 Theme**: **Yoga for Climate Action.**
- The idea of International Day of Yoga was first proposed by the India Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his speech at the United Nations General Assembly, in 2014.
- 21st June has been chosen as International Yoga day as it is the longest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere (Summer Solstice). The summer solstice is also considered important in Indian mythology as it marks an event that is considered the start of Yogic science.

Additional Information:

- Yoga is an ancient physical, mental and spiritual practice that originated in India.
- Yoga has been inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2016.
- Yoga is a part of AYUSH systems of healthcare. AYUSH stands for Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy. Recently SOWA-RIGPA (Tibetan system of medicine) has also been added to the AYUSH system of healthcare practiced in India.

3. WORLD REFUGEE DAY

News: World Refugee Day was celebrated on 20th June

Facts:

- In 2000, the United Nations General Assembly decided that every year 20 June would be celebrated as World Refugee Day.

- The day seeks to draw the public's attention to the millions of refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide.
- **2019 Theme: "*Step With Refugees — Take A Step on World Refugee Day*".** The theme focuses on that there is a need to take steps in solidarity with refugees from around the world.

Additional Information:
1. **1951 UN's Refugee Convention**:
   - ✓ It sets out the rights of refugees and also highlights the obligations of refugees towards their host country.
   - ✓ India is not a party to the Refugee Convention.
2. **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees**: Established in 1950, it is mandated to lead and coordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide

4. GI TAG FOR KOLAHPURIS
News: Kolahpuri chappal was given Geographical indication (GI) tag.
Facts:

- Kolahpuri chappals are leather sandals which are handcrafted and tanned using vegetable dyes.
- Kolhapuris are produced in Kolhapur, Solapur, Sangli and Satara districts of Maharashtra and Dharwad, Belgaum, Bagalkot and Bijapur districts of Karnataka
- The GI tag was jointly received by Maharashtra and Karnataka.

Additional Information:

- GI is an Intellectual Property Right. It is a status accorded to a good which is unique to a particular region or area, and is originated from there.
- The GI tag in India is governed by the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection Act), 1999 and is administered by the Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks, under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- A GI tag is registered for an initial period of 10 years, which may be renewed from time to time.
- Good in the categories of a) Agricultural products (e.g. Nagpur Orange), b) foodstuffs (e.g. Joynagar Moa), c) handicrafts (e.g. Agates of Cambay), d) textile (e.g. Kullu Shawl), e) natural products (e.g. Makrana Marble) and f) manufactured products (e.g. Kannauj Perfume) come under the ambit of GI Tags.
- Darjeeling Tea is the first good to receive a GI Tag in India.
- Recently, Himachali Kala Zeera, Jeeraphool from Chhattisgarh and KandhamalHaldi from Odisha had also received GI Tags.

5. SAHITYA AKADEMI AWARDS
News: SahityaAkademi selected 22 writers for the Sahitya Akadem iBal Sahitya Puraskar 2019 and 23 writers for Yuva Puraskar 2019.
Facts:

- Bal Sahitya Puraskar is given to authors for their contribution in children literature.
- The Yuva Puraskar is given to writers aged below 35.
- The Sahitya Akademi, India's National Academy of Letters, is an organisation dedicated to the promotion of literature in the languages of India recognised by the Akademi.
- It is the only institution that undertakes literary activities in 24 Indian languages, including English.
- It was founded by the government of India in 1954. Though set up by the government, the Akademi functions as an autonomous organisation.

6. JNANPITH AWARD
News: Noted English writer Amitav Ghosh was conferred 54th Jnanpith award
Facts:

- The Jnanpith Award is an Indian literary award presented annually by the Bharatiya Jnanpith. It was instituted in 1961. It is awarded for outstanding contribution to Indian literature.

- It is presented to Indian writers writing in Indian languages included in the **Eighth Schedule** to the Constitution of India and English

Additional Information:
- **Eighth Schedule:**
  - The Eighth Schedule of The Indian Constitution lists out official languages.
  - At present it consists of following 22 languages:
    (1) Assamese, (2) Bengali, (3) Gujarati, (4) Hindi, (5) Kannada, (6) Kashmiri, (7) Konkani, (8) Malayalam, (9) Manipuri, (10) Marathi, (11) Nepali, (12) Oriya, (13) Punjabi, (14) Sanskrit, (15) Sindhi, (16) Tamil, (17) Telugu, (18) Urdu (19) Bodo, (20) Santhali, (21) Maithili and (22) Dogri.
- **Bhartiya Jnanpith** : It is a literary and research organisation founded in 1944 to take up research in Sanskrit, Prakrit and Pali

7. GLOBAL FOOD CHAMPION AWARD
News: The Akshaya Patra Foundation was been awarded the BBC World Service's Global Food Champion 2019.
Facts:
- Global Food Champion is an annual award that honours people or projects that is changing the way the world produces, processes, consumes or thinks about food for the better.
- The Akshaya Patra Foundation (TAPF) is an NGO for children in India which implements the Mid-day meal scheme in number of states in India. It is the world's largest mid-day meal provider.

Additional Information:
- **Mid-day Meal Scheme**: Mid-Day Meal Scheme is a centrally-sponsored Scheme that provides children studying in Classes I-VIII of government and government aided schools with cooked mid-day meal.

8. AMBABUCHI MELA
News: The annual four-day Ambubachi Mela was held at Amingaon near Guwahati, Assam
Facts:
- Ambubachi Mela is a festival to mark the annual menstruation of the Kamakhya goddess (also known as Siddha Kubjika) at Kamakhya temple- one of the oldest of the 51 Shakti Pithas. Kamakhya temple is situated on the Nilachal Hills in western part of Guwahati city in Assam.
- The festival is also known as 'Mahakumbh of the East' as it draws lakhs of devotees from all over the world.
- Ambubachi Mela is also considered as an occasion to promote awareness on menstrual hygiene.

Additional Information:
- **Tuloni Bea:** It is a Hindu Assamese tradition of holding a ritualistic wedding ceremony for girls to mark their first menstrual cycle.

9. KAILASH MANSAROVAR YATRA
News: India's External Affairs Minister flagged off the first batch of pilgrims for 2019 Kailash Mansarovar Yatra
Facts:
- Mount Kailash is a part of the Transhimalaya in Tibet Autonomous Region, China. It is considered to be the abode of Lord Shiva.
- Mansarovar Lake is a freshwater lake near Mount Kailash in Tibet.
- Kailash Manasarovar Yatra is organized by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) with the support of the state governments of Uttarakhand, Delhi, and Sikkim and the cooperation of Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP).
- MEA organizes the yatra during June to September each year through two different routes (a) Lipulekh Pass (Uttarakhand) and (b) Nathu La Pass (Sikkim).
- The Yatra is open to Indian citizens aged 18-70 years holding valid Indian passports. The MEA does not provide any subsidy or financial assistance to the pilgrims

10. GLOBAL PEACE INDEX 2019

News: Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), an Australian think-thank, released Global Peace index (GPI) 2019

Facts:

- The GPI measures ongoing domestic and international conflict, safety and security in society, and the degree of militarization. It evaluates 163 countries on the basis of 23 indicators.
- The index ranked **Iceland** as the **most peaceful country** in the world, followed by New Zealand, Austria, Portugal, and Denmark.
- **India** has been ranked at **141**. The ranking of India in 2018 was the 136th.
- In South Asia, Bhutan topped the index with 15th rank, followed by Sri Lanka 72, Nepal 76 and Bangladesh 101. Pakistan has been ranked 153rd on the index.
- **Afghanistan** has been ranked as the **least peaceful country** in the world replacing Syria.
- This year, the report has also included a new research on possible effect of climate change on peace. The report notes that climate change can indirectly increase the likelihood of violent conflict through its impacts on resource availability, livelihood, security and migration.

11. CHAUKHANDI STUPA

News: Archaeological Survey of India declared Chaukhandi Stupa as a "protected area of national importance" under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act, 1958.

Facts:

- Chaukhandi Stupa is one of the important Buddhist Stupas at Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh
- It is a lofty mound of brick whose square edifice is surrounded by an octagonal tower.
- It is considered to have been built as a terraced temple during the Gupta period between the 4th and 6th centuries.
- Govardhan, the son of Raja Todarmal gave the present shape to the Chaukhandi Stupa. He built an octagonal tower to commemorate the visit of Mughal emperor Humayun.

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Pointly

1. **Ravana 1:** Sri Lanka successfully launched its first satellite Ravana-1. It is a low orbit cube research satellite. The satellite seeks to captures pictures of Sri Lanka and surrounding regions.

2. **AI-DA-** The exhibition of art created by world's first ultra-realistic humanoid AI robot artist called AI-Da was held at University of Oxford.

3. **Glanders Disease:** Horses in Uttar Pradesh tested positive of Glanders disease- a zoonotic infectious disease caused by bacterium Burkholderia mallei. The disease primarily affects equines.

4. **Chikungunia:** Institute of Life Sciences (ILS), under the Dept. of Biotechnology, for the first-time developed antibodies against Chikungunia – a virus disease transmitted to humans by infected Aedes Aegypti and Aedesal bopictus species of mosquitoes.

5. **Parthenogenesis-** An Anaconda gave birth to a baby clone in the New England Aquarium, USA, through the process of parthenogenesis. Parthenogenesis is a means of asexual reproduction which involves development of a female gamete (rarely a male) without fertilization.

6. **Anthrax:** Indian scientists developed a new vaccine against anthrax- a disease caused by a bacterium called Bacillus anthracis.

7. **Carbon Quantum Dots (CQDS):** Scientists from CSIR-NEIST, Assam, developed chemical process that converts coal into CQDS. CQDS are carbon-based nanomaterial used as diagnostic tools for bio-imaging especially in detecting cancer cells, for chemical sensing and in opto-electronics.

8. **Zarengold-** Russia launched Zarengold- the first tourist train to the Arctic region.

9. **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day**: 15th June is observed as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, every year, to voice opposition to the abuse and suffering inflicted on elderly people.

10. **Micryletta Aishani**: New frog species belonging to the genus Micryletta (commonly known as paddy frogs) discovered in Assam. Unlike other frog species which breeds during monsoon, this new species breed before monsoon.

11. **North pacific Right Whale**: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) documented vocalisations made by eastern North Pacific right whales in the Bering Sea. North Pacific Right Whale Northeast Pacific Subpopulation is listed as critically endangered in the IUCN Red List.

12. **Operation Vijay**: The year 2019 marks the 20th anniversary of victory in 'Operation VIJAY' popularly known as the 'Kargil War'. The theme of the celebrations is '**Remember, Rejoice and Renew'**.

13. **Operation Bandar:** The Indian Air Force mission to bomb a terrorist hideout in Pakistan's Balakot was codenamed 'Operation Bandar'

14. **Operation Zafran**: The Army code-named its heightened operational alert and increasing defences along the border to address a possible Pakistan retaliation to Balakot air strike as "Operation Zafran"

15. **JL-3** China successfully tested its latest submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM), the JL-3 which has a range of 11,900km.

16. **Padho-Badhi campaign**: Ministry of Minority Affairs will launch "Padho-Badhi" campaign, focussed on areas where minority families do not send their daughters to school.

17. **Internet Clean-up campaign**: China launched Internet Clean Up campaign to punish and expose websites for illegal and criminal actions.

18. **Bureau Of Police Research And Development**: Senior IPS officer V S Kaumudi has been appointed as the Director General of the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D). BPR&D, under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**, is the nodal national police organisation to study, research and develop on subjects and issues related to policing.

19. **Rayoli:** India's first dinosaur museum and Fossil Park was inaugurated at Raiyoli village of Mahisagar district, Gujarat. Raiyoli is known to be the third largest fossil site in the world and also the second largest dinosaur hatchery in the world.

20. **International Olympic Committee (IOC):** IOC formally opened its new headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland. Established in 1894, the IOC is the governing body of National Olympic Committees and ensures regular celebration of Olympic Games.

21. **International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO):** Government has appointed Shefali Juneja as India's representative to the council of the ICAO- a specialized agency of the United Nations charged with coordinating and regulating international air travel.

22. **Dirty List**: Brazil's Dirty List is a registry of employers who have been found by the Brazilian government to have engaged in slave labour. It is recognized by UN as a key tool in Brazil's anti-slavery drive.

23. **Order of the Aztec Eagle:** Former President of India, Pratibha Patil, conferred with the Orden Mexicana del Aguila Azteca (Order of the Aztec Eagle) - Mexico's Highest civilian honour for foreigners.

24. **LIBRA:** Facebook is developing a crypto currency called LIBRA.

25. **New Start Treaty**: The New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty), signed in 2010, is a nuclear arms reduction treaty between the United States and the Russian Federation.

26. **Mukhyamantri Vridhajan Pension Yojana:** It is an old age pension scheme of Bihar government

27. **Sarbat Sehat Bima Yojana**: It is a universal health insurance scheme of Punjab government.

28. **goAML**: It is a new anti-money laundering platform launched by UAE Central Bank's Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU). The platform will help facilitate law enforcement authorities in the receipt, analysis and dissemination of suspicious transactions including money laundering

29. **Premium Residency scheme**: Saudi Arabia has launched Premium Residency scheme. The scheme offers a permanent residency for 800,000 Saudi riyals and a one-year renewable residency costing 100,000 Saudi riyals.

30. **National Strategy for Well-being, 2031**: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has adopted the National Strategy for Well-being, 2031 which aims to make the UAE a world leader in quality of life through a number of strategic objectives and initiatives.

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