

MONTHLY

FACTLY

EXCLUSIVE CURRENT AFFAIRS FOR

PRELIMS

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ForumIAS

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1. SIXTH SCHEDULE

News:

- In Meghalaya, a sub-committee on the amendment to the Sixth Schedule constituted by the State government has decided to recommend to the Standing Committee of Parliament the removal of the word “unrepresented tribes” from the provisions of the sixth schedule. This may jeopardize the representation of minor tribes from the tribal advisory council.
- The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) recommended that Ladakh should be declared as a tribal area under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

Facts:

About Meghalaya:

- There are three autonomous councils in the state of Meghalaya on the names of the three major matrilineal communities — Garo, Khasi, and Jaintia.
- The minority tribes include the Hajong, Koch, Rabha, Bodo-Kachari and Mann. They are clubbed as ‘unrepresented tribe’ for nomination in the Meghalaya’s autonomous tribal council. At present, members of such minor tribes are nominated to the autonomous district councils.
- The State government’s move (removal of the word “unrepresented tribes” from the provisions of the sixth schedule) will deprive them of the opportunity to be represented in the autonomous district councils.

About Ladakh:

The NCST has recommended tribal area status for the newly created union territory of Ladakh due to the following reasons:

- It is estimated that total tribal population in Ladakh region is more than 97%. Some of the schedule tribe of the region are – Beda, Changpa, Garra, Mon etc.
- The NCST has also noted that people in Ladakh region had certain agrarian rights including right on land which restricted people from other parts of the country to purchase or acquire land in Ladakh prior to the creation of Union Territory of Ladakh.
- Similarly, the Ladakh region has several distinct cultural heritages by communities which need to be preserved and promoted.

Additional Facts:

Sixth Schedule of the Constitution (Art 244 (2))

The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution deals with the administration of the tribal areas in the four northeastern states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram.

- Areas under Sixth Schedule:**

STATES	TRIBAL AREAS
Assam	The North Cachar Hills District The Karbi Anglong District The Bodoland Territorial Areas District
Meghalaya	Khasi Hills District.

	Jaintia Hills District. The Garo Hills District.
Tripura	Tripura Tribal Areas District
Mizoram	The Chakma District. The Mara District. The Lai District

- The various features of the administration of the sixth schedule areas are as follows:
 - **Autonomous Districts:**
 - The tribal areas in the four states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram have been constituted as autonomous districts. These areas are within the executive authority of state concerned.
 - **District Councils:**
 - Each autonomous district has a district council consisting of 30 members, of whom four are nominated by the governor and the remaining 26 are elected on the basis of adult franchise.
 - The elected members hold office for a term of five years (unless the council is dissolved earlier) and nominated members hold office during the pleasure of the governor.
 - **Autonomous Regions:**
 - If there are different tribes in an autonomous district, the governor can divide the district into several autonomous regions. Each autonomous region also has a separate regional council.
 - **Functions of district and regional councils**
 - The district and regional council are provided with certain **legislative and judicial powers**.
 - They administer the areas under their jurisdiction. They can make laws on certain specified matters like land, forests, canal water, shifting cultivation, village administration, the inheritance of property, marriage and divorce, social customs and so on. **But all such laws require the assent of the governor.**
 - The district and regional councils within their territorial jurisdictions can constitute village councils or courts for trial of suits and cases between the tribes. They hear appeals from them. The jurisdiction of the high court over these suits and cases is specified by the governor.
 - The district council can establish, construct or manage primary schools, dispensaries, markets, ferries, fisheries, roads and so on in the district. It can also make regulations for the control of money lending and trading by non-tribals. **But such regulations require the assent of the governor.**
 - The district and regional councils are empowered to assess and collect land revenue and to impose certain specified taxes.

Role of Governor:

- The governor is empowered to organise and re-organise the autonomous districts. Thus, he can increase or decrease their areas or change their names or define their boundaries and so on.

- The governor can appoint a **commission** to examine and report on any matter relating to the administration of the autonomous districts or regions. He may dissolve a district or regional council on the recommendation of the commission.
- The acts of Parliament or the state legislature do not apply to autonomous districts and autonomous regions or apply with specified modifications and exceptions.

Legislation of	Power of Direction	
	Assam	Tripura, Meghalaya, Mizoram
Parliament	Governor	President
State Legislature	Governor	Governor

Difference between Fifth Schedule and Sixth Schedule:

S. No.	<i>Fifth Schedule (Art 244 (1))</i>	<i>Sixth Schedule (Art 244(2))</i>
1	Executive Power of Union extend in schedule areas with respect to administration in 5 th Schedule	Sixth Schedule Tribal Areas remain within the executive authority of the state.
2	It provides for the creation of Tribal Advisory Council	It provides for the creation of District and Regional Councils with certain legislative and judicial powers
3	The tribal people have more or less adopted the culture of the majority of the people in whose midst they live.	The tribes mentioned in the 6th schedule have not assimilated the lifestyle of other people of these states. Hence, they are considered as 'Anthropological specimen' and a sufficient amount of autonomy is provided.

National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (STs):

- NCST is a constitutional body as it is directly established by Article 338-A of the Constitution. It was established by amending Article 338 of the Constitution and inserting a new Article 338-A through 89th Constitutional Amendment Act of 2003.
- The 89th Constitutional Amendment Act of 2003 bifurcated the erstwhile combined National Commission for SCs and STs into National Commission for SCs and National Commission for STs.
- The National Commission for STs came into existence in 2004. It consists of a **chairperson**, a **vice-chairperson** and **three** other members. They are **appointed** by the **President** by warrant under his hand and seal. Their **conditions of service** and tenure of office are also determined by the **President**.

Functions:

1. **Investigate & Monitor** matters relating to Safeguards provided for STs under the Constitution or under other laws or under Govt. order. While investigating any matter Commission shall have all the powers of a civil court.
2. **Inquire** into specific complaints relating to Rights & Safeguards of STs;

3. **Advise** in the Planning Process relating to Socio-economic development of STs,
4. **Evaluate** the progress of their development under the Union and any State;
5. **Submit a report** to the President annually and at such other times as the Commission may deem fit,
6. To discharge such other functions the President may by rule specify, subject to the provisions of any law made by Parliament,
7. Other functions of NCST in relation to the protection, welfare and development & advancement of the Scheduled Tribes, namely:

The Constitution (125th Amendment) Bill, 2019

Introduced in Rajya sabha in Feb, 2019. Now the bill is referred to a parliamentary standing committee

Proposed Amendments in 6th Schedule:

1. The amendments proposed provide for elected village municipal councils
2. The village councils will be empowered to prepare plans for economic development and social justice including those related to agriculture, minor irrigation, land improvement, implementation of land reforms, water management, animal husbandry, rural electrification, small scale industries, and social forestry
3. The finance commission will be given the mandate to recommend the devolution of financial resources to these autonomous councils. At present, The Autonomous Councils are dependent on grants from Central ministries and the State government for specific projects.
4. Provides reservation of one-third of the seats for women in the village and municipal councils

2. FOREIGN CONTRIBUTION REGULATION ACT

News: The Ministry of Home Affairs has notified changes in Foreign Contribution (Regulations) Rules - 2011.

Facts:

The new rules has made the following changes:

- Every member of an NGO must now, under oath, through an affidavit, certify that they have never been involved in “diverting” foreign funds or propagating “sedition” or “advocating violent means”. Earlier, the applicant or director-level person had to give this declaration but now all members of the NGO need to give this declaration.
- Any individual receiving a personal gift valued up to Rs 1 lakh (in a Financial year) need not inform the government about it anymore. Earlier, the value was fixed at Rs. 25,000.
- (Each functionary and member of any NGO seeking FCRA registration will have to file an **affidavit** declaring that the individual has not been involved in any act of ‘Religious conversion’ or prosecuted for inciting ‘communal disharmony’)
- If any individual from an NGO is hospitalized during a foreign visit, he/she has to intimate the government within one month. (Earlier 60 days)

ADDITIONAL FACTS:

Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act - 1976

It was enacted to regulate the receipt and usage of foreign contribution/foreign hospitality by certain persons or associations in India. This act was repealed in 2010. A new Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act – 2000 was enacted. It is an improvement over the repealed Act as more stringent provisions have been provided in order to prevent misutilisation of the foreign contribution received by the associations.

The Act is regulated by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Salient Features of FCRA - 2010	
Regulation of foreign contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prohibits acceptance and use of foreign contribution or foreign hospitality by certain specified categories of persons. (A candidate for election, judge, journalist, columnist, newspaper publication, cartoonist and others.) Any organization of a political nature and any association or company engaged in the production and broadcast of audio or audiovisual news or current affairs programme have been placed in the category prohibited to accept foreign contribution. Regulates the inflow to and usage of foreign contributions by NGOs by prescribing a mechanism to accept, use and report usage of the same.
Defines 'foreign contribution'	'Foreign contribution' under the Act includes currency, articles other than gift for personal use and securities received from foreign source.
Acceptance of foreign funds	The Act permits NGOs with definite cultural, economic, educational, religious or social programme to accept foreign contribution after obtaining a certificate of registration or prior permission under the Act.
Registration and prior approval under FCRA	<p>The Act has prescribed the following conditions to get registered under it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An NGO must be in existence for at least three years and must have undertaken reasonable activity in its field for which the foreign contribution is proposed to be utilized. It must have spent at least INR 1,000,000 over three years preceding the date of its application on its activities. The validity of the registration certificate for a period of five years and must be renewed after that. NGOs not eligible for registration can seek prior approval from FCRA for receiving foreign funding.
New Provision in FCRA, 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No person who receives foreign contribution as per provisions of FCRA, shall transfer to another person unless that person is also authorized to receive foreign contribution as per rules made by the Central Government Foreign contribution shall be utilized for the purpose for which it has been received and such contribution can be used for administrative expenses up to 50% of such contribution received in a financial year. However, administrative expenses exceeding fifty percent of the contribution to be defrayed with the prior approval of the Central Government. Registration granted can be suspended or canceled for violation of the provisions of the Act. Also provides for management of foreign contribution and assets created out of such contribution of persons whose certificates have been cancelled.
Periodic Approval	FCRA, 2010 provides that the certificate granted shall be valid for a period of five years and the prior permission shall be valid for the specific purpose or specific

amount of foreign contribution for which permission was granted. Earlier there was no need of periodic approval.
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Related: FEMA (Foreign exchange management Act), monitored by the Ministry of Finance.

3. NATIONAL POPULATION REGISTER

News: Union Home Minister while announcing about 2021 census mentioned about the need to maintain National Population Register.

Facts:

NPR

- The NPR is a list of “usual residents of the country”.
- It is being prepared at the local (Village/sub-Town), sub-District, District, State and National level under provisions of the Citizenship Act 1955 and the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003.
- According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, a “usual resident of the country” is one who has been residing in a local area for at least the last six months or intends to stay in a particular location for the next six months.
- It is to be conducted alongside Census-2021 by the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner under the Home ministry.

OBJECTIVE:

The objective of the NPR is to create a comprehensive identity database of every usual resident in the country. It is mandatory for every usual resident of India to register in the NPR. Only Assam will not be included, given the recently completed NRC.

COMPONENTS:

- The NPR will collect the following data:
 - Demographic data: It would include 15 different categories of demographic data, ranging from name and place of birth to education and occupation.
 - Biometric data: Biometric data it will depend on Aadhaar, for which it will seek Aadhaar details of the residents.
- Under NPR, a resident identity card (RIC) will be issued to individuals over the age of 18. This will be a chip-embedded smart card containing the demographic and biometric attributes of each individual.
- The UID number will also be printed on the card.

What is the controversy around the NPR?

- It has come in the backdrop of the NRC exercise leaving out 19 lakh people. Thus, it has raised anxieties among the people.
- The government’s insistence of implementing NRC across the country has further led to doubts that the idea of citizenship may be changed in the country.
- Further, many critics have expressed that the NPR project would facilitate conducting a nationwide NRC because while conducting a nationwide NRC, authorities could go about verifying the citizens on the NPR.

- The debates on Aadhar and right to privacy has not yet reached a culmination. In this context, NPR has been intended to collect much more personal data.

ADDITIONAL FACTS:

BACKGROUND:

- After the Kargil War, the committee headed by the late K Subrahmanyam flagged the need for colour-coded identity cards for citizens and non-citizens.
- The data for the NPR were first collected in 2010 along with the house listing phase of Census 2011. In 2015, this data was further updated by conducting a door-to-door survey.
- Rajasthan was the first state to attempt issuing ID cards for citizens, but in the absence of an enabling legal framework, the initiative could not achieve much success.

NPR vs NRC:

<i>NPR</i>	<i>NRC</i>
It is list of “usual residents of the country.”	It is a list of Indian citizens maintained by The Government of India. NRC was first prepared in 1951. Now, it is being updated in Assam state honoring the Assam Accord between AASU-AAGSP and GOI. Assam movement was led by All Assam Students Union (AASU) and All Assam Ganasangram Parishad (AAGSP)
It would record any resident (Indian or foreigner) staying in a locality for more than 6 months.	It is a citizenship enumeration drive.

4. NATIONAL RECRUITMENT AGENCY (NRA)

News: A new National Recruitment Agency (NRA) will be set up to streamline recruitment process on subordinate-rank posts in the government.

Facts:

About the NRA:

- The proposed agency is meant to streamline the recruitment process of subordinate-rank posts (Group B (Non-Gazetted), Group C (Non-Technical) and clerical posts) in the government along with various equivalent recruitments in public sector banks.
- It will conduct the preliminary exams presently being conducted by the Staff Selection Commission (SSC) and the Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (IBPS). Thus, it would reduce the burden of SSC and IBPS. It will then subsequently forward the list of qualifying candidates to the respective recruiting agencies to conduct the mains examinations.
- The basic aim is to have an organisation which will conduct common eligibility test (CET) for almost all competitive examinations.
- Once set up, NRA will work as a preliminary single-window agency to shortlist qualifying candidates from the bulk of applicants and forward the list to SSC, IBPS to hold the mains.
- However, the proposed agency will not be in charge of recruitment of Probationary Officers (PO) in banks.
- NRA will conduct Combined Graduate Level (CGL) examination, now being conducted by SSC.

ADDITIONAL FACTS:**Staff Selection Commission (SSC):**

- The Staff Selection Commission is an **attached office** of the Department of Personnel and Training under the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances.
- It was constituted as the Subordinate Services Commission in 1975 which was subsequently re-designated as Staff Selection Commission in 1977.
- SSC makes recruitment to various Group “B” and Group “C” posts in the various Ministries/Departments of the Government of India and in Subordinate Offices.

Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (IBPS):

- IBPS is an autonomous body that is mainly engaged in conducting competitive exams for recruitment to clerical and officer posts in the banking sector.
- It is registered under Societies Registration Act 1860 and a Public Trust under Bombay Public Trust Act 1950.

5. FRAMEWORK TO SUSTAIN INDIA’S 100% ODF STATUS**News:**

Union Jal Shakti Ministry’s Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS) has launched a 10-year national rural sanitation strategy (2019-29) to sustain India’s 100 percent Open Defecation Free (ODF).

Facts:

- The Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS) has prepared the strategy, in consultation with State Governments and other stakeholders.
- It lays down a framework to guide local governments, policy makers, implementers and other relevant stakeholders in their planning for ODF Plus.
- ODF Plus envisages that everyone uses the toilet and every village has access to solid and liquid waste management.
- The 10-year strategy focuses on the need for States/UTs to continue their efforts to sustain the gains of the mission through capacity strengthening, IEC (Information, education and communication), organic waste management, plastic waste management, grey water management and black water management.
- The strategy also speaks about potential collaborations with development partners, civil society and inter-government partnerships. It also highlights innovative models for sanitation financing.
- The Strategy includes:
 - Retrofitting of single pit toilets to twin pits or making provisions to empty pits every five years, repair of defunct ones, and construction of soak pits for septic tanks wherever not already present.
 - A district-level training management unit (TMU) will be set up to provide oversight and support to gram panchayats (GPs) so that they ensure the operation and maintenance of sanitation infrastructure. The GPs are also supposed to conduct rapid assessment of water and sanitation gaps.
 - The strategy suggests alternative self-financing by gradual leveraging of community resources in the form of tariffs for ODF plus activities.
 - The framework also talks about state-specific strategies on menstrual hygiene management, including menstrual waste management, which may be supported under the ODF plus strategy.

ADDITIONAL FACTS:**SWACHH BHARAT MISSION:**

- It is a cleanliness campaign initiated by Govt. of India in 2014. It seeks to achieve a Clean India by 2019, as a tribute to the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.
- It includes 2 sub-missions:
 - Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin)
 - Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban)
- Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) aims to improve the levels of cleanliness in rural areas through Solid and Liquid Waste Management activities and making villages Open Defecation Free (ODF) and clean. It is implemented by Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Jal Shakti Ministry
- Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) aims at elimination of open defecation, conversion of unsanitary toilets to pour flush toilets, eradication of manual scavenging, municipal solid waste management and bringing about a behavioural change in people regarding healthy sanitation practices. It is implemented by Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs
- Strategy:
 - Construction of both Individual household toilets and Community toilets.
 - Twin-Pit is the preferred technology in toilet construction.

When to declare an area as ODF, ODF +, ODF ++?

- ODF is defined by
 1. No visible faeces found in the environment/village;
 2. Every household as well as public/community institutions using safe technology option for disposal of faeces.

One of the main objectives of Swachh Bharat Mission was to make India open defecation-free by 2019.

- The SBM ODF+
- if, at any point of the day, not a single person is found defecating and/or urinating in the open, AND all community and public toilets are functional and well maintained.
- The SBM ODF++

Definition

if, at any point of the day, not a single person is found defecating and/ or urinating in the open, all community and public toilets are functional and well maintained, AND faecal sludge/septage and sewage is safely managed and treated, with no discharging and/or dumping of untreated faecal sludge/septage and sewage in drains, water bodies or open areas

The Gates Foundation has awarded Prime Minister Narendra Modi its annual 'Global Goalkeeper' Award for initiating policies to advance the cause of public health and the building of several million toilets under Swachh Bharat Mission.

6. FIRST EVER DIGITAL CENSUS**News:**

Union Minister for Home Affairs has said that the 2021 census exercise would be carried out digitally.

Facts:**CENSUS 2021**

- The data collected by the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India during the 2021 Census will be stored electronically.

- The Census 2021 will be conducted in 18 languages out of the 22 scheduled languages (under 8th schedule) and English.
- The Census data would be available by the year 2024-25 as the entire process would be conducted digitally and data crunching would be quicker.

CENSUS

- The census provides information on size, distribution demographic, socio-economic and other characteristics of the country's population.
- A systematic and modern population census in its present form was conducted non-synchronously between 1865 and 1872 in different parts of the country.
- However, the first synchronous census in India was held in 1881. Since then, censuses have been undertaken uninterruptedly once every ten years.
- Since 1949 the census has been conducted by the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.
- India's last census was carried out in 2011 when the country's population stood at 121 crore. The Indian Census is one of the largest administrative exercises undertaken in the world.

ADDITIONAL FACTS:

About Registrar General of India:

- Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India was founded in 1961 by the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- It was formed for arranging, conducting and analysing the results of the demographic surveys of India including Census of India and Linguistic Survey of India.

7. ACCESS TO THE INTERNET IS A BASIC RIGHT UNDER ART 21, SAYS KERALA HIGH COURT

News:

The Kerala High Court has held that the right to access the internet is a basic fundamental right.

Facts:

- In **Faheema Shirin vs State of Kerala**, the High Court made this observation while ordering the principal of a college in Kerala to re-admit a student who had been expelled from the college hostel for using her mobile phone beyond the restricted hours.
- The Kerala High Court declared the right to Internet access is a fundamental right and forms part of the right to privacy and the right to education under Article 21 of the Constitution. So, it is important to recognise the right to Internet access as an independent right.
- The Supreme court had said that the fundamental freedom of expression under Article 19(1)(a) can be reasonably restricted only for the purposes mentioned in Article 19(2) and the restriction must be justified on the anvil of necessity and not the quack of convenience or expediency.
- The court also pointed out that the Human Rights Council of the United Nations had said that the right of access to Internet is a fundamental freedom and a tool to ensure right to education.

ADDITIONAL FACTS:

- Article 19 guarantees to all citizens the six rights. These are:
 - (i) Right to freedom of speech and expression.
 - (ii) Right to assemble peaceably and without arms.
 - (iii) Right to form associations or unions or co-operative societies.

- (iv) Right to move freely throughout the territory of India.
- (v) Right to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India.
- (vi) Right to practice any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade or business.

Originally, Article 19 contained seven rights. But, the right to acquire, hold and dispose of property was deleted by the 44th Amendment Act of 1978.

- **Article 19(2):** The State can impose reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the freedom of speech and expression on the grounds of sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality, contempt of court, defamation, and incitement to an offence.
- **Article 21** declares that no person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law. This right is available to both citizens and non-citizens.

Maneka Gandhi vs UOI, 1978 :

Issue: Interpretation of 'personal liberty' of a person and the limitation upon the power of the legislature.

The Court ruled that the mere existence of an enabling law was not enough to restrain personal liberty. Such a law must also be "just, fair and reasonable."

- **United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC):** It is an Inter-governmental body of the United Nations through which States discuss human rights conditions in the UN Member States. UNHRC aims to promote and protect human rights around the world.
- The UNHRC has 47 members elected for staggered three-year terms on a regional group basis. The headquarters of UNHRC is in Geneva, Switzerland.

1. NIRVIK SCHEME

News: Ministry of Commerce and Industry through Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC) has introduced a new Export Credit Insurance Scheme (ESIC) called **NIRVIK** to enhance loan availability and ease the lending process.

Facts:

About the scheme:

- Under this scheme, **the ECGC would provide insurance cover to those banks which give loans to the exporters of goods and services**
- The insurance cover guaranteed by ECGC has been enhanced to **90%** from earlier provision of 60% insurance cover -- the additional outgo due to this increased cover, if any, will be supported by the government
- The increased cover will ensure that foreign and rupee export credit interest rates are below 4% and 8 % respectively for the exporters.
- **The insurance cover will include both pre and post-shipment credit**
- The scheme has a timeline of **5 years**

Benefits of the scheme:

- It will enhance accessibility and affordability of credit for exporters.
- This scheme will help make Indian exports competitive, make ECGC procedures exporter friendly
- It will benefit MSME exporters.
- The insurance cover is also expected to bring down the cost of credit due to capital relief, less provision requirement and liquidity due to quick settlement of claims.

Additional information:

Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC):

- ECGC is a premier export credit risk insurance agency of the Government of India. It is a fully government-owned company that was established in 1957 to promote exports by providing credit insurance services. It is headquartered at Mumbai.
- It has representatives from the Government, the RBI, insurance and export community
- It is controlled by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- It provides a range of credit risk insurance cover to the exporters against loss in export of goods and services
- It offers **Export Credit Insurance cover to banks and financial institutions** to enable exporters to obtain better facilities from them
- It provides **Overseas Investment Insurance** to **Indian companies** investing in Joint Ventures abroad in the form of equity or loan
- The ECGC provides Export Credit Insurance to Banks (ECIB) to protect the banks from losses on account of export credit at the Pre and Post-Shipment stage

2. TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2019

News: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has released its Trade and Development Report 2019.

Facts:**About the report:**

- The report has forecasted India's growth as moderate to 6% in 2019 from 7.4% in 2018. It will be due to **lower-than-targeted tax collections** and **limited public spending**.
- The report stated that the two fastest growing economies in the world (i.e. India and China) are showing signs of a loss of growth momentum.
- Public Banks in India have loan portfolios at 1% – 2% of its GDP (China – 13.4%, Korea 10.5%). This is too low for the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals
- The report has stated that there are ample job opportunities in Clean energy and Green Sectors in India

Key Recommendation of Report:

- The report has recommended for the adoption of a **unitary taxation system for Multinational Enterprises (MNEs)**. This approach is needed as the current international corporate taxation norms consider affiliates of MNEs as independent entities and treat taxable transactions between different entities of MNEs as unrelated. This unitary taxation system would simplify the global taxation system and is expected to increase tax revenues for all countries.
- The report also highlighted the fact that the profits of MNEs are generated collectively at the group level. Hence, unitary taxation should be applied by combining it with a global minimum effective corporate tax rate on all MNE profits.
- The report has listed down a series of measures that would give the lead in financing a **Global Green New Deal** to the public sector and calls on the international community to find the political will to advance such an agenda.

Additional information:**UNCTAD:**

- UNCTAD is a permanent intergovernmental body established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1964.
- It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland and is a part of the UN Secretariat.
- It was formed specifically to handle the problems of developing countries dealing with trade, investment and development issues.
- The various other reports published by UNCTAD are (a) World Economic Situation and Prospects Report (b) Trade and Development Report (c) World Investment Report (d) The Least Developed Countries Report, (e) Information and Economy Report (f) Technology and Innovation Report and (g) Commodities and Development Report.

About Global Green New Deal (GGND):

- It refers to a mix of policy actions that would stimulate economic recovery and at the same time improve the sustainability of Indian economy.
- This report was commissioned by UNEP in response to the multiple global crises of 2008 – fuel, food and financial.
- It calls on governments to allocate a significant share of stimulus funding to green sectors and sets out three objectives:
 - economic recovery;
 - poverty eradication; and
 - Reduced carbon emissions and ecosystem degradation.

3. PROMPT CORRECTIVE ACTION (PCA)

News: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has initiated Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) against Lakshmi Vilas Bank (LVB).

Facts:

What is Prompt corrective action (PCA):

- PCA is a framework under which banks with weak financial metrics are put under watch by the RBI.
- The RBI introduced the PCA framework in 2002 as a structured early-intervention mechanism for banks that become under-capitalised due to poor asset quality, or vulnerable due to loss of profitability. The framework was reviewed in 2017.
- It aims to check the problem of Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) in the Indian banking sector. PCA helps RBI monitor key performance indicators of banks and take corrective measures to restore the financial health of a bank.
- The PCA framework is **applicable only to commercial banks** and not extended to co-operative banks, non-banking financial companies (NBFCs).

When is PCA invoked?

- The thresholds applied by RBI for invoking PCA are linked to 3 parameters – CRAR (Capital to Risk weighted Assets Ratio), asset quality (net non-performing assets) and profitability (return on assets)
- The PCA is invoked under the following circumstances:
 - If NPAs rise above 10% (Asset Quality Review),
 - If the Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) falls below 9%,
 - If the Return on Assets (RoA) falls below 0.25% (i.e. low profitability) etc.
- The banks have to follow an action-plan based on each trigger point. RBI can impose several restrictions on the bank such as reducing capital expenditure other than technological upgradation, making dividend payments, borrowing from other banks.

Types of restrictions:

- There are two types of restrictions - mandatory and discretionary restrictions.
- The restrictions on dividends, branch expansion, director's compensation are mandatory while discretionary restrictions could include curbs on lending and deposits
- RBI may also place restrictions on credit by PCA banks to unrated borrowers or those with high risks but it **doesn't invoke a complete ban on their lending**.
- RBI may also impose restrictions on the bank on borrowings from interbank market.
- Further, the banks may also not be allowed to enter into new lines of business.

Additional information:

NPA: As per the Reserve Bank of India, the banks shall recognise stress in the loan accounts by classifying them into Special Mention Accounts (SMA), as follows:

SMA categories	Sub-categories	Basis for classification – Principal or interest payment or any other amount wholly or partly overdue between
SMA-0		1-30 days

SMA-1	31-60 days
SMA-2	61-90 days

If a loan or advance for which the principal or interest payment remains overdue for a period of 90 days or more, it is termed as Non-performing Asset (NPA).

In case of Agriculture Loans, the NPAs are defined as follows:

- Short duration crop: Interest not paid for 2 crop seasons and
- Long duration crops: Interest not paid for 1 Crop season.

The NPAs are further classified into the following:

- Substandard assets: Assets which have remained NPA for a period less than or equal to 12 months.
- Doubtful assets: Assets which have remained in the substandard category for a period of 12 months.
- Loss assets: Loss asset is considered uncollectible and of such little value that its continuance as a bankable asset is not warranted, although there may be some salvage or recovery value.

Stressed Assets: Stressed assets comprises of NPAs, restructured loans and written off assets.

Restructured loans are the assets/loans which have been restructured by giving a longer duration for repayment, lowering interest or by converting them to equity.

Written off assets are the assets/loans which aren't counted as dues but recovery efforts are continued at branch level. It is done by banks to clean up their balance books.

4. BHARAT – 22 ETF

News: Government has decided to launch the fourth tranche of Bharat-22 Exchange traded fund (ETF) on October 3, 2019.

Facts:

About Bharat-22 ETF:

- Bharat 22 is an ETF that will track the performance of 22 stocks of Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSE), Public Sector Banks (PSB's) and strategic holding of SUUTI (Specified Undertaking of Unit Trust of India).
- The 22 stocks are diversified across six sectors such as (a) basic materials (b) energy (c) finance (d) FMCG (e) industrials and (f) utilities.
- Bharat-22 ETF is managed by the ICICI Prudential AMC.
- Bharat – 22 ETF is the second ETF launched by Ministry of Finance (after CPSE ETF)

Additional Facts:

What are Exchange traded fund (ETF)?

- Exchange Traded Funds (ETF) are **index funds** that are listed and traded on stock exchanges just like regular shares.
- They are a basket of stocks with assigned weights that reflect the composition of an index.
- The ETFs trading value is based on the net asset value of the underlying stocks that it represents.
- The ETF aims to help speed up the government's disinvestment programme.

5. WORLD DIGITAL COMPETITIVENESS RANKINGS

News: The World Digital Competitiveness Ranking (WDCR) 2019 report was released by the IMD World Competitiveness Center.

Facts:

About World Digital Competitiveness report:

- The report is prepared by the Switzerland-based **International Institute for Management and Development (IMD)**'s World Competitiveness Center (WCC).
- It measures the **capacity and readiness** of 63 nations to **adopt and explore digital technologies** as a key driver for economic transformation in business, government and wider society.

The countries are ranked based on three factors which are:

- Knowledge - the capacity to understand and learn the new technologies,
- Technology - the competence to develop new digital innovations
- Future Readiness- the preparedness for the coming developments.

Key takeaways from the report:

- The US was ranked as the world's most digitally competitive economy, followed by Singapore in second place.
- India has jumped four places from 48th place in 2018 to **44th rank in 2019**
- India has improved its ranking by 4 places mainly due to positive results in talent, training and education as well as the enhancement of technological infrastructure.
- The country has improved overall in all factors such as knowledge, technology and future-readiness as compared to the previous year's ranking.
- Top 5 countries in World Digital Competitiveness Ranking 2019 are 1) United States 2) Singapore 3) Sweden 4) Denmark 5) Switzerland.

6. ADVANCE PRICING AGREEMENT

News: The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has entered into 26 Advance Pricing Agreements (APAs) in the first 5 months of the financial year (April to August, 2019).

Facts:

About Advance Pricing Agreements (APAs):

- APA is an agreement between a taxpayer and tax authority determining the transfer pricing methodology for pricing the taxpayer's international transactions for future years.
- APA helps taxpayers to voluntarily resolve actual or potential transfer pricing disputes in a proactive, cooperative manner as an alternative to the traditional examination process.

Types of APAs:

- Unilateral APA involves only the taxpayer and the tax authority of the country where the taxpayer is located.
- Bilateral APA (BAPA) involves the taxpayer, associated enterprise (AE) of the taxpayer in the foreign country, tax authority of the country where the taxpayer is located and the foreign tax authority

- Multilateral APA (MAPA) involves the taxpayer, two or more AEs of the taxpayer in different foreign countries, tax authority of the country where the taxpayer is located, and the tax authorities of AEs.

Importance of APAs

- It gives certainty to taxpayers;
- It helps to reduce disputes and litigation;
- It helps to enhance tax revenues
- It makes the country an attractive destination for foreign investments and
- It helps to improve ease of doing business.
- These agreements would also lower complaints and litigation costs as they would be binding on both the taxpayer as well as the government.

Additional information:

About Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT):

- CBDT is a statutory authority setup under the Central Board of Revenue Act, 1963. It is a part of the Department of Revenue in the Ministry of Finance.
- CBDT provides inputs for policy and planning of direct taxes in India and is also responsible for the administration of direct tax laws through the Income Tax Department.

7. EXTERNAL BENCHMARKS BASED LENDING MUST – RBI

News: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has made it mandatory for banks to link all new floating rate personal or retail loans (housing, auto etc.) and floating rate loans to MSMEs to an external benchmark rate from October 1st, 2019.

Facts:

- The RBI has given the options to banks for external benchmark rates which are (a) RBI repo rate (b) 91-day T-bill yield (c) 182-day T-bill yield or (d) any other benchmark market interest rate produced by the Financial Benchmarks India Pvt. Ltd.
- At present, interest rates on loans are linked to a bank's marginal cost of lending rate (MCLR). Prior to MCLR, it was Base rate method and Benchmark Prime lending rate. All these rates are internal benchmark rates. Banks have been allowed to use RBI's policy rate among other market-driven options to calculate lending rates.
- The biggest problem with the current system is the lack of required transmission of policy rates by the banks to the borrowers.

Why this move by RBI:

- It has been observed that due to various reasons, the transmission of policy rate changes to the lending rate of banks under the current MCLR framework has not been satisfactory
- The RBI has initiated this move for faster monetary policy transmission

Additional Information:

Repo rate

- Repo stands for 'Repurchasing Option'. It refers to the rate at which commercial banks borrow money from the RBI.

T-bills

- T-bills or treasury bills are short term securities issued on behalf of the government by the RBI and are used in managing short term liquidity needs of the government.
- T-bills are issued at a discount and are redeemed at par.

Marginal Cost of lending rate (MCLR)

- The marginal cost of funds-based lending rate (MCLR) refers to the minimum interest rate of a bank below which it cannot lend except in some cases allowed by the RBI. It is an internal benchmark or reference rate for the bank.
- This rate is based on four components namely (a) marginal cost of funds, (b) negative carry on account of cash reserve ratio c) operating costs and (d) tenor premium.

Monetary Policy Transmission

- This process of repo rate translates to interest rate across the banking system is called “monetary policy transmission”.
- The policy action consists of measures such as: changing the interest rate at which the central bank borrows or lends “reserves” (Rupees) on an overnight basis with commercial banks.
- Thus, monetary policy transmission is the entire process starting from the change in the policy rate (repo rate) by the central bank to various money market rates (e.g- inter-bank lending rates, to bank deposit rates, bank lending rates) to households and firms, to government and corporate bond yields and asset prices (stock prices and house prices). It is expected to finally result in stable inflation and economic growth.

Actual Lending rates of banks

- In India, a large proportion of loans are based on the floating interest rates [Floating Interest rates means that the rates charged on the borrower keeps changing depending on a reset clause. The reset clause determines the period after which the interest rates of the banks are reset].
- The floating rates, in turn are linked to some benchmark rate. The benchmark rate varies over time depending upon changing macroeconomic conditions, financial conditions and the central bank’s policy rate. The benchmark rate may be of two types:
 - Internal benchmark: It is calculated based on factors which are in control of the banks (e.g- cost of funds, operational costs etc.) All the interest rate regimes of India have been based on an Internal benchmark (e.g-BPLR, MCLR etc).
 - External benchmark: It is calculated based on factors which are market-determined and are not under the control of banks.
- Banks, then charge a spread (based on factors such as credit risk) over the benchmark rate to determine the actual lending rate. Thus, Actual lending rate = Benchmark Rate + Spread

1. QUADRILATERAL SECURITY DIALOGUE (QUAD)

News: The foreign ministers of the Quadrilateral group (QUAD) of India, US, Australia and Japan met on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meeting.

Facts:

- This was the **first meeting of Foreign minister** of quad group. This upgradation in the dialogue level is significant as it demonstrates the leadership of all four countries in institutionalizing this gathering of like-minded Indo-Pacific partners.
- In the meeting, the 'Quad' countries reaffirmed their **commitment to shared values and cooperation on maritime security, infrastructure and connectivity in support of rules-based frameworks.**
- They discussed efforts to **maintain and promote an open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific.**

About the Quad group:

- Quad represents an informal strategic dialogue mechanism between the four countries i.e. India, the US, Australia and Japan. It started in 2007. This dialogue was interpreted by China as an alliance against its 'peaceful rise' and growth in Indo – Pacific. Thus, the group was later disbanded with the withdrawal of Australia. The group was later revived in 2017 (on the sidelines of 2017 ASEAN Summit).
- The guiding principles of the group are securing a rules-based global order, multi-polar world order, liberal trading system, freedom of navigation, Open and secure Sea lines of communication.

Significance for India:

- The Quad group provides **India a powerful platform to advance its interests in East Asia and strengthen Act East policy.**
- It will **deepen India's ties with the US, Australia and Japan** with benefits in diplomatic leverage and sharing of burden in defense.
- It will also provide **India significant chance in shaping US policies in Afghanistan-Pakistan to the benefit of India.**
- It will also help India and other three Nations to counter China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative. As India has refused to join OBOR it helps India to connect with other markets like Central Asian and South East Asian markets.
 - Help India to perform its task as 'Net Security Provider' in Indian ocean region
 - Contain the 'String of Pearl' policy of China which supposedly aims to contain India.
 - Contain Chinese aggressive stance in Indo-pacific region, particularly in South China Sea.
 - To promote Asia-Africa Growth Corridor, collaborative effort of India and Japan to improve Physical infrastructure and connectivity in the region.

2. FOURTH INDIAN OCEAN CONFERENCE – 2019

News: The 4th edition of Indian Ocean Conference (IOC) was held at Male, Maldives.

Facts:

- The theme of IOC 2019 was "**Securing the Indian Ocean Region: Traditional and Non-Traditional Challenges**".
- The Conference was organized by India Foundation (based in New Delhi), in association with Government of Maldives and S Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) in Singapore.
- The three broad themes discussed during the conference are listed below: -
 - **Marine Ecology:** Climate Change, Global warming and consequent rise of Sea Levels, Pollution, Sustainable harnessing of Oceanic Resources, hazardous levels of pollution of the seas leading to depletion of marine livestock, and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing
 - **Terrorism:** Rising Specter of Terrorism in Indian Ocean Region, Marine Terrorism
 - **Navigational Security:** Freedom of Navigation, UNCLOS and its effective implementation, Natural and Manmade hazards to Navigation, Piracy
- The first edition of the conference was hosted in Singapore in 2016 followed by two successive editions in Sri Lanka (2017) and Vietnam (2019)

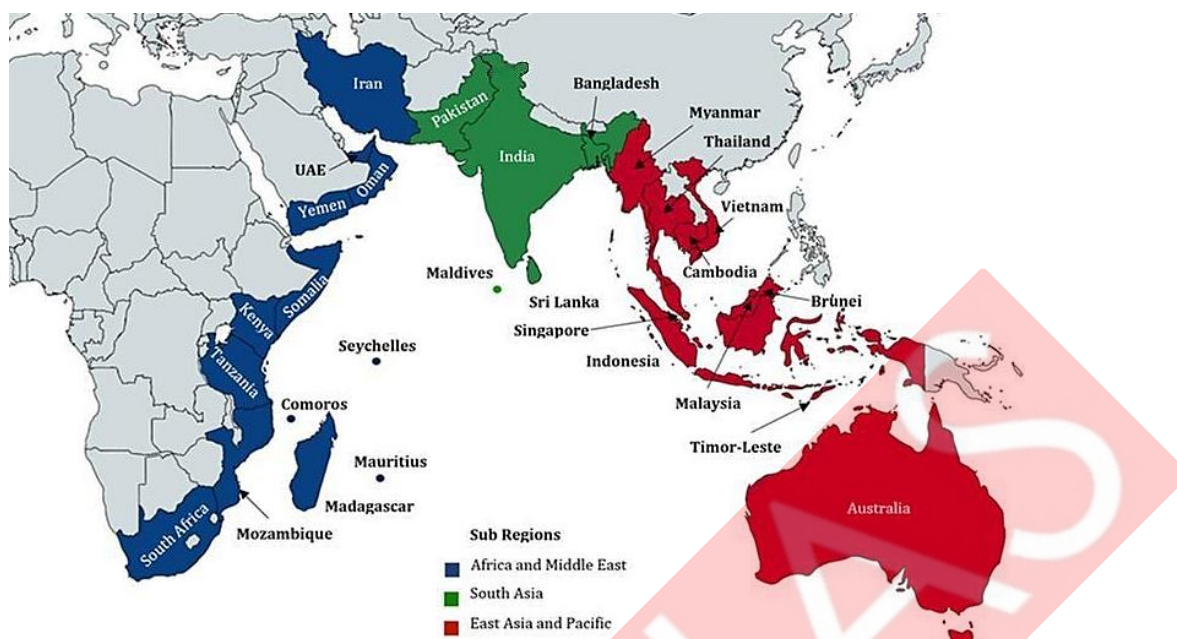
The conference was chaired by Srilankan PM

Indian Ocean Region:

- It consists of 28 states, spanning 3 continents and covers 17.5% of global land area.
- Out of 28 countries, 21 countries are part of Indian Ocean Rim Association.

Importance of Indian Ocean Region to India:

- **Strategically:** The region links the north Atlantic and Indo-pacific region. India is placed strategically to exploit its location to become **the net security provider** in the region against symmetric (Chinese expansion) and asymmetric threats (piracy, climate change, ethnic conflicts. etc).
- **Economically:** 40% of the world's offshore oil production takes place in the Indian Ocean basin. 15% of the world's total fishing are done in Indian Ocean region.
The region also has mineral resources in the form of coastal sediments (titanium, zirconium, tin, zinc, and copper.), polymetallic nodules (nickel, cobalt, and iron, and massive sulphide deposits of manganese, copper, iron, zinc, silver, and gold present in sizeable quantities on the sea bed) and rare earth metals (though their extraction is not always commercially feasible.).
95% of India's trade by volume and 68% of trade by value come via the Indian Ocean.
- **Politically:** Engaging the multiple stakeholders including the major powers to formulate a free and open Indo - pacific region based on consensus-based rule of law.



Other Indian initiatives related to Indian Ocean

- **Political and cultural engagement:** Indian Ocean rim association (IORA), East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Regional Forum, BIMSTEC and Mekong Ganga Cooperation, Asia Africa growth corridor, Project Mausam.
- **Strategic engagement:** Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), Quadrilateral Strategic Dialogue (QUAD), Indo-Pacific regional dialogue, infrastructure (Chabahar port in Iran, Duqm port in Oman) and logistic arrangements of India with US, France and Singapore. ADMM+ (ASEAN Defence Ministers Meet +)
- **Economic engagement:** SAGAR, Blue economy.

3. G-4 FOR UNSC REFORM

News: The foreign ministers of G4 countries issued a statement, pressing for finality on the procedure for the UNSC reforms within the current session of the UNGA.

Facts:

About G-4

- **G-4 comprises of India, Brazil, Germany and Japan.** Each of these countries support each other's membership to the permanent seat in UNSC. The G4 group was formed in 2004
- **G4 campaigns for U.N. Reforms**, including more representation for developing countries, both in the permanent and non-permanent categories, in the UNSC
- All of the G4 countries have been elected several times as non-permanent members in the UNSC since its inception.
- However, the G4's bids are often opposed by the Uniting for Consensus movement, and particularly their economic competitors or political rivals.

Contours for UNSC reform:

UN reform encompasses five key issues:

- Categories of membership including permanent and non-permanent members.
- The question of the veto presently held only by P5 members

- Regional representation – no representation of Africa and Latin America and over representation of Europe.
- The size of an enlarged Council and its working methods,
- The Security Council-General Assembly relationship.

Arguments for India's membership

- India is world's largest democracy and its geopolitical contributions to the world.
- India's growing economy and its influence in the world economy.
- India has grown militarily to be a regional power. India has 2nd largest standing army.
- India is the largest cumulative contributor to UN peacekeeping Operations.
- It has also been a responsible nuclear power, which adheres to the rule of law and contributed to the management of global commons.

Additional Facts:

- The UNSC has been reformed only once in 1963 when 4 non-permanent members were added.
- Since 1993, the UN General Assembly has debated Council reform but has not been able to reach agreement, primarily due to institutional inertia and resistance by the P5 nations.
- G4's bidding has been challenged by the 'uniting of consensus movement' or coffee club.

About 'Uniting of consensus movement'

- Uniting for Consensus (UfC) is a movement, nicknamed the **Coffee Club** that developed in the 1990s in opposition to the possible expansion of permanent seats in the United Nations Security Council. Under the leadership of Italy, it aims to counter the bids for permanent seats proposed by G4 nations (Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan) and is calling for a consensus before any decision is reached on the form and size of the Security Council.

'Coffee Club' Includes Italy, Pakistan, Argentina, South Korea, Turkey, Spain, Canada and Mexico.

4. CARRIBEAN COMMUNITY AND COMMON MARKET

News: Prime Minister Narendra Modi met the leaders of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) during the **first-ever India-CARICOM leaders' summit**, on the sidelines of 74th UN General Assembly session.

Facts:

- The meet focused on fighting climate change and increasing India's participation with the grouping.
- During the summit, The Prime Minister announced a \$14 million grant for community development projects and another \$150 million line of credit for solar, renewable energy and climate change-related projects.



About CARICOM

- Formed in 1973, The CARICOM grouping has 15 nations and dependencies as full members and five associate members.
- It is an economic and political community that works jointly to shape policies for the region and encourage economic growth and trade.
- The forum rests on four main pillars: **economic integration; foreign policy coordination; human and social development; and security.**

India's interest in Caribbean countries:

- **Political:** India's engagement is based on building its profile in international arena especially within the UN, which functions based on sovereign equality. Valuable engagement will help in garnering votes in multilateral institutions.
- **Economic:** India is trying to find new markets to supplement its export driven economic growth. CARICOM economies which are dependent on trade are a perfect match.
- **Other:** Partnering for new issues including challenges to island nation's development project, climate change.

Additional Facts:

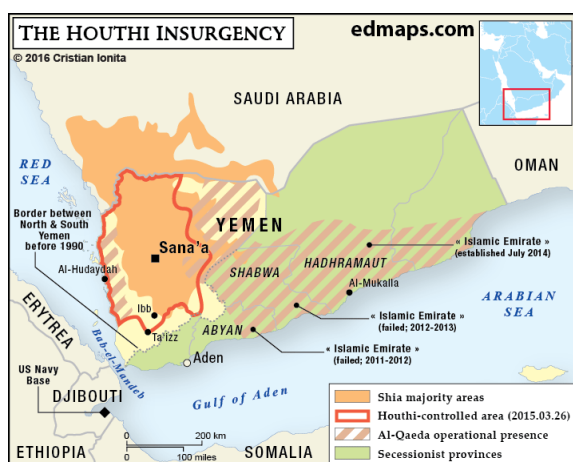
- **Common Market:** Group formed by countries within a geographical area to promote duty free trade and movement of labour and capital amongst its members. Ex- European community
- The first foreign minister led India- Caribbean meet was initiated in 2005, ever since their relations have grown economically.

5. ATTACK ON SAUDI ARABIA OIL FACILITY

News: Yemen based Shia Houthi rebels attacked two major oil processing facilities in Saudi Arabia.

Facts:

- Two oil processing facilities in Saudi Arabia – Abqaiq and Khurais have been attacked using drones.
- The Iran aligned Houthi rebels in Yemen have claimed the responsibility.
- The immediate impact of the attack is that oil production is cut by 5.7 million barrels a day. (This is estimated to be more than 5 per cent of the global oil supply).
- The sudden disruption resulted in the highest spike (nearly 20%) in Brent crude prices in more than a decade.
- Saudi supplies 10 per cent of global world supply and is the world's largest crude oil exporter.



Impact on India:

- India imports 80% of its oil demand. Changes in the oil prices adversely affects its forex and domestic inflation. A 10\$ rise in crude oil price increased the import bill by 15 Billion dollars.
- India imports 2/3rd of its oil from West Asia and Saudi Arabia is the second largest supplier of oil to India.
- International oil supplies are already under stress due to crisis in Venezuela, Libya, Nigeria and the American sanctions on Iran.

- Rise in oil prices may lead to rise in inflation which may reduce the demand in the market. It may negatively impact other sectors such as aviation, manufacturing, logistics etc.
 - It may also lead to rise in Fiscal and current account deficit of India.
 - In-case of any conflict between Saudi and Iran, it will be difficult for India to take any sides.
- India Needs Saudi: Energy security, Investment in infrastructure
 India Needs Iran: Chabahar port, access to Afghanistan and Central Asia, Energy import

Additional Facts regarding Yemen Civil War.

- Yemen civil war started in 2015.
- It is a tussle between two factions who have claimed to constitute the legitimate civil government.
- One faction is the Shia Houthi rebels loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh and the second faction is led by present President Mansour Hadi.
- The roots of the conflict is the Arab Spring which led to authoritarian Abdullah Saleh giving up power to Mansour Hadi. The latter failure to tackle corruption, food security led to the militant uprising backed by Iran.
- In response to Iran's support, Saudi Arabia along with 8 other countries intervened in favor of Hadi through air campaigns.
- A ceasefire was brokered recently in Hodeida city which later was disrupted.

Saudi-Iran rivalry

- The roots of Saudi – Iran conflict lies in the Iranian revolution of 1979 which instilled fear of popular uprising in the psyche of Saudi monarchy and establishment
- In response, the Saudi formed the GCC for political and economic stability.
- The killing of Iranian pilgrims in Mecca, the arab spring and the recent civil war in Yemen and Syria have fueled the conflict between Saudi and Iran.

6. INDIA-ASEAN: REVIEW OF FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IN GOODS

News: India and ASEAN have agreed to review their free trade agreement in goods to make it more business friendly and boost economic ties.

Facts:

- India – ASEAN FTA in Goods have come into force from January 2010. It has resulted in phased reduction of duties and has promoted trade and investment.

- Trade between India and ASEAN stood at \$82 billion in 2018 which is around 11% of India's total trade.
- Bilateral trade has increased at a compound average growth rate of 12% every year.

India's Concern with ASEAN Free Trade Agreement

- India's trade deficit with ASEAN countries has widened significantly since the FTA has been implemented.
- As per NITI Aayog's report - India's trade deficit with ASEAN doubled from \$5 billion in 2011 to \$10 billion in 2017 to \$22 billion in 2019.
- One of the reasons for the growing deficit is the low utilization of the FTA route by Indian exporters to ASEAN countries because of difficulties faced in negotiating the rules. For example- Rubber and palm oil imports from ASEAN countries have made it a tough ordeal for the local manufacturers. Further, India has been unable to reap its competitive advantage in the service sector.
- Free trade has also affected manufacturing jobs and has run contrary to Make in India.
- Thus, the review of the India-ASEAN FTA could help improve utilisation in India by making the pact simpler and more user-friendly

Additional Facts:

About India-ASEAN trade relations:

- In 1992, India became ASEAN's sectoral dialogue partner, full Dialogue Partner in 1995 and a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1996.
- In 2003, a Framework Agreement – the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) was signed to provide an institutional framework to enable economic cooperation;
- 2017 marked 25 years of dialogue partnership between India and ASEAN and five years of the strategic partnership.
- India has also engaged with ASEAN at both regional and sub-regional levels by signing economic cooperation agreements with its different members.

About ASEAN:

ASEAN, is a geo-political and economic organization with 10 member countries, formed in August 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. The membership was expanded to include Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Vietnam.

India-ASEAN:

India is part of ASEAN led initiative such as East Asia Forum, ADMM+. Recently India opted out of RCEP agreement.

7. INDIAN PM VISIT TO RUSSIA: ACT EAST TO ACT FAR EAST POLICY

News: Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid an official visit to Russia to attend 20th India-Russia annual summit held in Vladivostok. He also participated in the 5th meeting of the eastern economic forum as Chief Guest.

Facts:

Key Outcomes of 20th India – Russia Annual Summit

- Both countries have set a target of bilateral trade of \$30 billion by 2025. They agreed to enhance industrial cooperation, create new technological and investment partnership.

- Both Sides expressed their interest in expanding the participation of Russian business under "Make in India" program and that of Indian companies in investment projects in Russia.
- Both sides agreed to intensify joint work towards eliminating barriers in mutual trade, including protective measures, customs and administrative barriers, to further consider reducing restrictive measures through bilateral dialogue.
- Both sides agreed to improve the structure of trade in goods and services, environment for entrepreneurial activities and investment, harmonize and refine relevant import and export procedures, streamline and standardize technical, sanitary and phytosanitary requirements.

Eastern Economic Forum (EEF)

- Eastern economic forum is a Russian initiative started in 2015.
- The aim is to support the economic development of Russia's Far East by encouraging foreign investment and to expand international cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.
- It serves as a forum for the discussion of key issues facing the world economy, regional integration and new economic sectors to drive economic growth.
- The forum partners business dialogue with regional institutions/countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Ex- ASEAN

5th meeting of the eastern economic forum

- It is the first time that Indian Prime Minister attended the Eastern Economic Forum.
- India extended 1 Billion dollars line of credit for the development of Russia's Far East.
- India and Russia agreed for a sea link between Vladivostok, the capital of Russian Far East and Chennai. This will reduce the transport time from existing 40 days to 24 days. It will also provide India with an alternate to the Suez Route on which it currently depends for trade with Europe.

Russia Far – East Region

- This region comprises of the eastern Russian territory between Lake Baikal in eastern Siberia and the Pacific Ocean. It comprises roughly a third of Russia's territory.

Importance of Russian Far East region

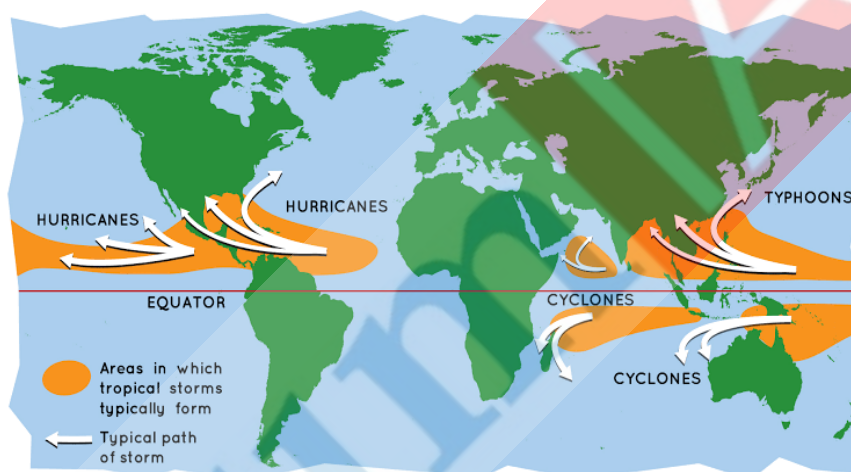
- **Strategic:**
 - There has been a geopolitical shift towards Indo-Pacific region and Far East region has become a part of the geopolitical construct.
 - There is also concern regarding the excessive dependence of Chinese investment and fear of demographic change in favour of Chinese population in the region.
 - Far East engagement augers well with India's act east policy which envisages the political, economic and strategic engagement of all countries geographically located east of India.
- **Economic:**
 - Russia's far eastern region is resource rich, underdeveloped and is sparsely populated. This provides an opportunity for Indian investment and broadening economic engagement.
 - It is rich in oil, natural gas, timber, gold and diamond among other resources.
 - Indian workers could benefit from employment in labor-intensive sectors like ship-building and mining in the Russian Far East.

1. HURRICANE DORIAN

News: Hurricane Dorian made a landfall at Abacos Islands in the Bahamas. Hurricane Dorian is a **Category 5 hurricane** –the highest on the **Saffir-Simpson scale**, with a wind speed of around 285 kilometres/hour at landfall.

Facts:

- **About Hurricanes:**
 - They are Tropical cyclones occurring in the **Atlantic Ocean and the northeastern Pacific Ocean**. To qualify as a hurricane, a storm must have sustained winds of 74 mph or more (more than 119 Km/h)
 - Hurricanes typically form between 5 to 15 degrees latitude north and south of the equator.



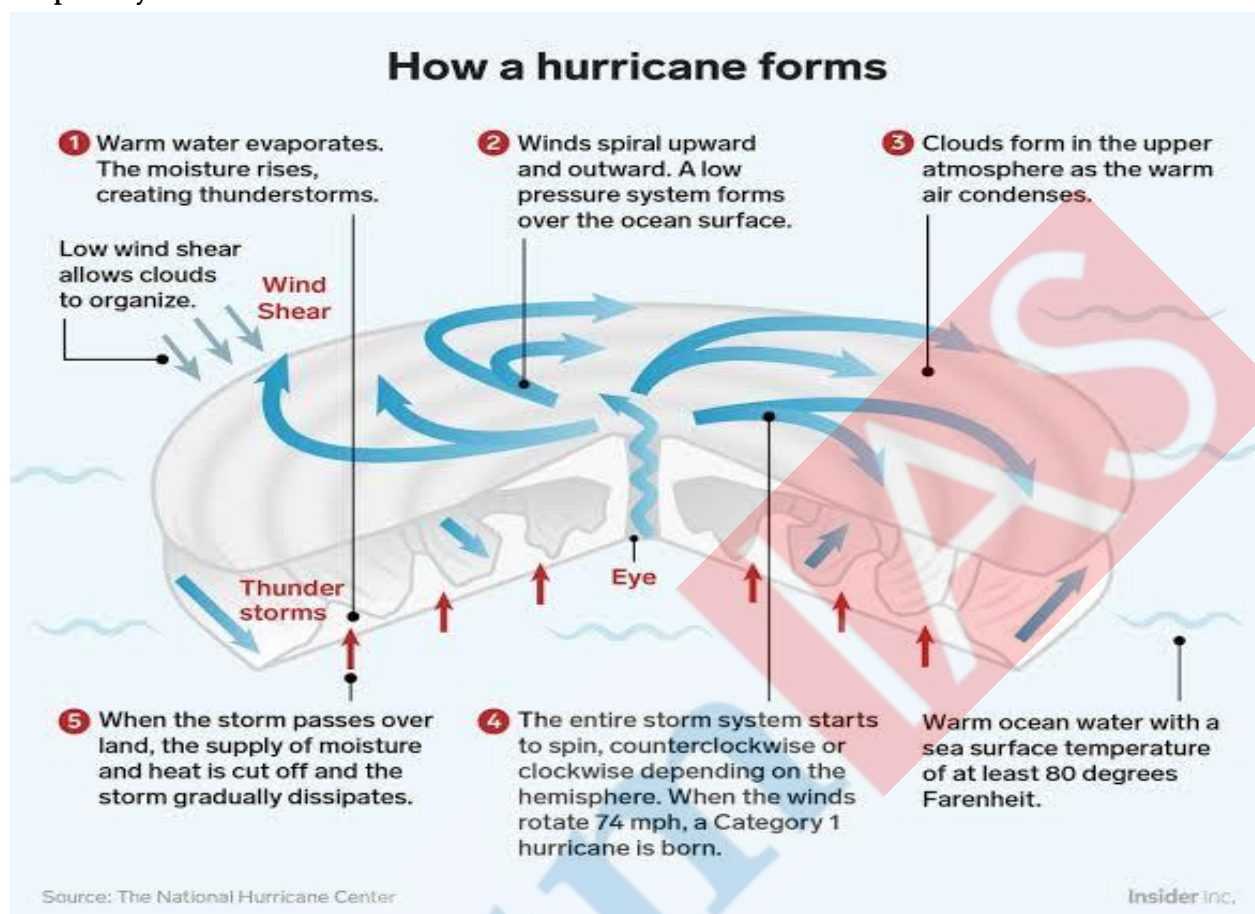
Categorization of Hurricanes:

The Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale rates hurricanes on the basis of their sustained wind speeds on a scale of 1 to 5. This scale estimates potential property damage.

<i>Category</i>	<i>Wind Speeds</i>	<i>Damage caused</i>
Category 1	119-153 Km/h	Minor Damage
Category 2	154-177 Km/h	Extensive damage
Category 3 (major)	178-208 km/h	Devastating
Category 4 (major)	209-251 km/h	Catastrophic damage
Category 5 (major)	252 km/h or higher	The absolute worst and can level houses and destroy buildings

Additional Information:

Tropical Cyclones:



- Tropical cyclones are storms that originate and intensify over warm tropical oceans. They are intense low-pressure areas with very strong winds circulating around it in anti-clockwise direction in the Northern Hemisphere and clockwise in the Southern Hemisphere.
- The central calm region of the storm is called the "Eye". The Eye is surrounded by **Eye wall** which is the region with heaviest precipitation and strongest winds
- Tropical Cyclones are known by different names in different regions:
 - Cyclones in Indian Ocean
 - Hurricanes in Atlantic
 - Typhoons in Western Pacific in South China Sea
 - Willy-Willies in Western Australia
- **Necessary Conditions for development of a tropical cyclone and Formation:**
 - Continuous supply of abundant warm and moist air
 - Sea Surface Temperature should be around 27°C
 - Enough Coriolis force to sustain a low-pressure center - for that certain amount of latitudinal distance from the Equator is necessary. They originate in two distinct latitude zones, between 4° and 22° S and between 4° and 35° N. They are absent in the equatorial zone between 4° S and 4° N. Most tropical cyclones are spawned on the poleward side of the region known as the intertropical convergence zone (ITCZ).
 - Pre-existence of weak tropical disturbances
 - Presence of anticyclonic circulation at the height of 9 to 15km above the surface

- Low vertical wind shear between the surface and the upper troposphere. (Vertical wind shear is the magnitude of wind change with height).

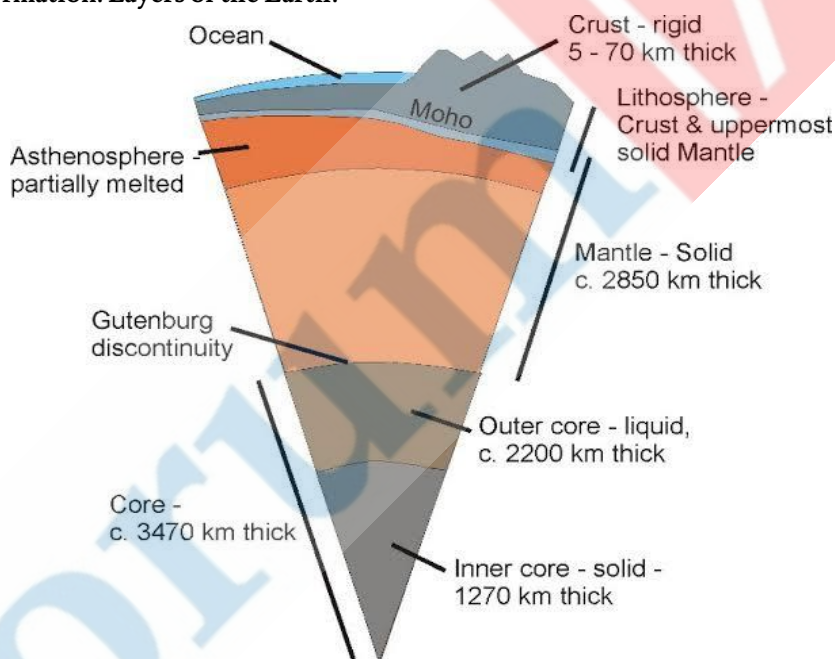
2. GOLDSCHMIDTITE

News: A **new mineral**, named Goldschmidtite, has been discovered inside a diamond unearthed from a mine in South Africa.

Facts:

- The mineral has been found in Earth's Mantle (A part of the Interior of the Earth) which covers 80% of earth's volume.
- It has high concentrations of niobium, potassium and the rare earth elements lanthanum and cerium.
- The found single grain is dark green in colour and opaque.
- The mineral has been named after the Norwegian scientist Victor Moritz Goldschmidt who is considered as the founder of Modern Geochemist.

Additional Information: Layers of the Earth:



Crust:

- It is the outermost layer of the earth
- It is generally defined as the part of the earth above the Mohorovicic (Moho) discontinuity
- It is rigid and represents less than 1% of the earth's total volume
- It is divided into continental crust and oceanic crust.

<i>Continental Crust</i>	<i>Oceanic Crust</i>
1. Thicker than the oceanic crust. Thickness: about 35km	1. Thinner . Thickness: about 5km

2. Main mineral constituents: silica and alumina.
Thus called **Sial** (Si- Silica, Al- Alumina)

2. Main mineral constituents: silica and magnesium.
Thus called **Sima** (Si- Silica, Ma-Magnesium)

Mantle:

- It lies between the Moho discontinuity and the core
- It extends up to a depth of 2900km
- It consists of very hot and dense rock- The mantle is formed of silicate minerals
- The mantle is divided into two sub-zones: **Upper Mantle** and **Lower Mantle**
- The upper mantle extends from about 200km to 700km depth
- The Lower mantle extends from 700km to 2900km depth

Core:

- It is the deepest zone of the earth
- It extends from the lower boundary of the mantle to the centre of the earth
- The mantle-core boundary is determined by the Gutenberg discontinuity
- It is mainly made up of nickel and iron. Thus, called **nife** (ni-nickel, fe- ferrous)
- The central core has very high temperature and pressure
- The core is further divided into 2 sub-zones: **Outer Core** and **Inner Core**
- The Inner core is solid while the outer core is liquid

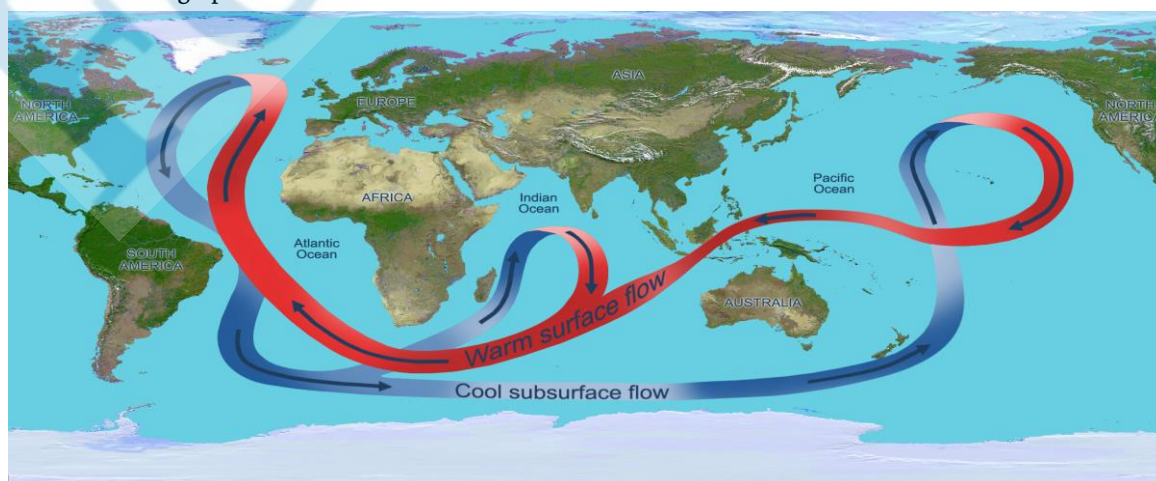
Seismic Discontinuities

Discontinuities are simply the zones of transition between two different layers of the Earth

- The contact zone between the Earth's crust and the mantle is called the Mohorovicic or **Moho discontinuity**.
- The **Gutenberg discontinuity** separates the mantle from the core.
- The **Conrad discontinuity** lies between the upper and lower crust and indicates a discontinuity in density.
- **Repiti Discontinuity** lies between the Upper and lower Mantle.
- **Lehmann discontinuity** is the zone of transition between the inner and outer core.

3. ATLANTIC MERIDIONAL OVERTURNING CURRENT (AMOC)

News: A new study has suggested that the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Current (AMOC) is getting help from the warming up of Indian Ocean.



Facts:**About AMOC**

- The Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC), also referred to as the “Atlantic conveyor belt”, is a large system of ocean currents that carry warm water from the tropics northwards into the North Atlantic. It extends from the Southern Ocean to the northern North Atlantic.
- It is driven by differences in temperature and salt content – the water’s density.
- As warm water flows northwards in the Atlantic, it cools, while evaporation increases its salt content. The low temperature and high salt content makes the water denser and this dense water sinks deep into the ocean. The cold, dense water deep below slowly spreads southward. Eventually, it gets pulled back to the surface and warms again and the circulation is complete.
- Significance of AMOC - Atlantic Meridional Overturning Current (AMOC) ensures that the oceans are continually mixed, and heat and energy are distributed around Earth.

NOTE - Slow down of AMOC had taken place 15,000 to 17,000 years ago which caused harsh winters in Europe, with more storms or a drier Sahel in Africa due to the downward shift of the tropical rain belt.

About the study:

- For thousands of years, Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) has remained stable. But for the last 15 years, scientists have said that AMOC may be slowing which could have drastic consequences on global climate. (Though, it isn't clear whether the slowdown of AMOC is caused by global warming alone or it is a short-term anomaly related to natural ocean variability).
- However, the study has found that the rising temperatures in the Indian Ocean can help to boost the AMOC and delay slow down. The study has said that warming in the Indian Ocean generates additional precipitation which in turn draws more air from other parts of the world, including the Atlantic.
- The higher level of precipitation in the Indian Ocean will reduce precipitation in the Atlantic and increase salinity in the waters. This saltier water in the Atlantic will get cold much quicker than usual and sink faster. The above process would act as a jump start for AMOC intensifying the circulation.

4. JALDOOT

News: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (in association with MSRTC (Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation). has launched “Jaldoot” initiative.

Facts:**About Jaldoot:**

- Jaldoot is a unique initiative that is designed to **take the message of water conservation to the masses.**
- Under this initiative, a bus has been designed to create the **Jaldoot : A Travelling Exhibition on Jalshakti Abhiyan.**
- The exhibition shall consist of various **information display panels and audio-visual components** among others to create awareness on water conservation efforts.

Additional information:**Jal Shakti Abhiyan:**

- Jal Shakti Abhiyan is a time-bound, mission mode, water conservation and irrigation efficiency campaign for water security in India.

- It aims at making water conservation and promotion of irrigation efficiency a 'jan andolan' (public campaign) through asset creation and communication campaigns in rural India.
- The campaign focuses on **five key aspects** which includes:
 - Water conservation and rainwater harvesting,
 - Renovation of traditional and other water bodies,
 - Renovation of bore well recharge structures,
 - Watershed development and
 - Intensive afforestation.

5. NATIONAL WATER MISSION AWARDS- 2019

News: Union Minister for Jal Shakti has presented the National Water Mission Awards- 2019.

Facts:

National water mission award:

- The water mission awards is an initiative of National Water Mission (NWM), Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation, Ministry of Jal Shakti.
- The award seeks to recognize **excellence in water conservation, efficient water use and sustainable water management practices**.
- The awards are given in **ten categories** defined under five goals of National water mission (NWM).

National water mission:

- The National water mission is one of the eight missions launched under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) for combating the threats of global warming.
- The main objective of the Water Mission is conservation of water, minimizing wastage and ensuring its more equitable distribution both across and within states through integrated water resources development and management.
- **Five Goals:**
 - Comprehensive water data base in public domain and assessment of the impact of climate change on water resources,
 - Promotion of citizen and state actions for water conservation, augmentation and preservation
 - Focused attention to vulnerable areas including over-exploited areas
 - Increasing water use efficiency by 20%
 - Promotion of basin level integrated water resources management.

About NAPCC -

- Launched in 2008 to generate awareness among public representatives, various government agencies, industry and community about the threats posed by the climate change and the steps to counter them.
- Consists of Eight Missions -
 - National Solar Mission
 - National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency
 - National Mission on Sustainable Habitat
 - National Water Mission
 - National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem
 - National Mission for A Green India

- National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture
- National Mission on Strategic Knowledge for Climate Change

6. World Ozone Day

News: World Ozone Day (International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer) was celebrated on 16th September.

Facts:

World Ozone day

- In 1994, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 16 September the International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer. It commemorates the date of the signing of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer
- The theme for the year 2019 is '**32 Years and Healing**'. It celebrates over three decades of international cooperation to protect the ozone layer and the climate under the Montreal Protocol.

Montreal Protocol (under Vienna Convention)

- On September 16, 1987, the United Nations and 45 other countries had signed the Montreal Protocol on substances that deplete the Ozone layer.
- The purpose of the Montreal Protocol is to protect the Ozone layer by reducing the production of Ozone Depleting Substances.
- The protocol was further strengthened with the ratification of the legally binding **Kigali Agreement** at the 28th Meeting of the Parties in 2016 in Kigali, Rwanda. It seeks to phase out the production of Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) that are potent greenhouse gases by the late 2040s.

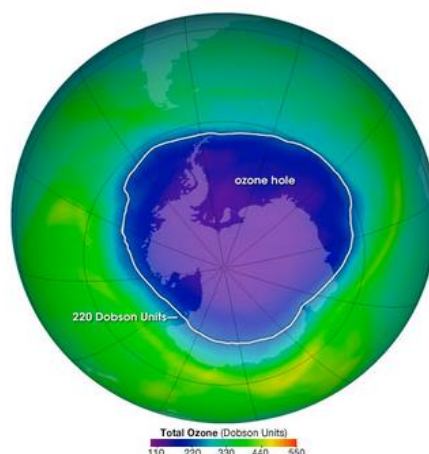
Additional Information:

Ozone Layer:

- Ozone layer, also called ozonosphere is a layer in the stratosphere lying between roughly 15 - 35 km above Earth's surface, containing relatively high concentrations of ozone molecules (O₃). It is protects life on Earth from the harmful effects of UV radiation from the Sun.

Ozone Hole:

The ozone hole is not technically a "hole" where no ozone is present, but is actually a region of exceptionally depleted ozone in the stratosphere over the Antarctic that happens at the beginning of Southern Hemisphere spring (August–October). From an aircraft field mission over Antarctica we also know that a total column ozone level of less than 220 Dobson Units is a result of catalyzed ozone loss from chlorine and bromine compounds. For these reasons, we use 220 Dobson Units as the boundary of the region representing ozone loss.



7. NATIONAL CENTRE FOR CLEAN COAL R&D OPENED

News: Minister of Science & Technology has inaugurated the National Centre for Clean Coal Research and Development and has also formally launched the Interdisciplinary Centre for Energy Research (ICER).

Facts:

National Centre for Clean Coal Research and Development:

- The centre has been established as a national consortium on clean coal research and development at Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru.
- The centre is aimed at addressing several **critical R&D challenges towards the development of clean coal technologies** in tandem with developing supercritical power plant technologies both at material and system level.

Interdisciplinary Centre for Energy Research (ICER):

- The Interdisciplinary Centre for Energy Research (ICER) was inaugurated in 2012 at Indian Institute of Science (IISc).
- The centre is a first of a kind in India, equipped with modern facilities to **conduct a wide spectrum of energy research** through knowledge network of elite researchers.
- The centre is focused on developing **sustainable technologies for renewable energy, combustion, concentrated solar power, novel energy storage technologies, hydrogen, biofuels and biomass**.
- ICER also plans to expand its activities in several energy-related areas with an emphasis on process and material development in collaboration with the manufacturing industry.

8. GANGA DATA COLLECTOR

News: Wildlife Institute of India (WII) has launched a **mobile application** named “Ganga Data Collector”.

Facts:

About Ganga data collector:

- The application aims to provide field researchers with a complete data entry solution to monitor the aquatic population in the Ganga River.
- The application has been launched under the Biodiversity and Ganga Conservation project initiated by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) of Union Ministry of Jal Shakti.
- The application will be used by scientists of WII, Ganga Praharis and staff of the forest department in the 11 states of the Ganga Basin for faster collection of more authentic and accurate data related to water quality and aquatic life in Ganga.

Additional information:**Namami Gange:**

- It was launched in 2014. It is an Integrated Conservation Mission under Ministry of Jal Shakti. Aim: achieve effective abatement of pollution, conservation and rejuvenation of National River Ganga.
- **Main Pillars:**
 - Sewerage Treatment Infrastructure,
 - River-Surface Cleaning,
 - Afforestation,
 - Industrial Effluent Monitoring,
 - River-Front Development,
 - Biodiversity,
 - Ganga Gram and
 - Public Awareness

Institutional structure for policy and implementation:

A **5-tier structure** was put forward by National Council for River Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management) Act, 2016

- **National Ganga Council:**
 - It has been established as an Authority under National Council for River Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management) Act, 2016
 - It functions under **chairmanship of Prime Minister of India**
 - It is responsible for superintendence, direction, development and control of River Ganga and the river basin, for prevention, control and abatement of environmental pollution in river Ganga and to ensure continuous adequate flow of water.
- **Empowered Task Force (ETF) on river Ganga:**
 - It functions under the chairmanship of Union Minister of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation.
 - It ensures that states, ministries, departments have an action plan with specific activities, milestones, and timeliness for implementing the programme.
- **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)**
 - It has been established as an Authority under National Council for River Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management) Act, 2016.
 - It is the implementing agency of the Namami Gange Programme at the national level.
- **State Ganga Committees** oversee the implementation of the programme in respective states.
- **District Ganga Committees** in every specified district through which river Ganga and its tributaries pass.

Ganga Prahari:

- Ganga Praharis are self-motivated and trained **volunteers from among the local communities** working for **biodiversity conservation and cleanliness** of the Ganga River.
- They are roped-in by Wildlife Institute of India (WII) as part of the “Biodiversity Conservation and Ganga Rejuvenation” project.
- The Ganga Praharis will be the role models in inspiring other members of the community to join hands in the efforts for conservation of the biodiversity of river Ganga. Thus, each Prahari shall work on the model of ‘Each One Make Ten’.

Wildlife Institute of India (WII)

- WII is an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change, Government of India. It was established through a government order. It is registered as a society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860
- It was established in 1982. The institute is based in Dehradun, Uttarakhand.
- It is an internationally acclaimed Institution which offers training programs, academic courses and advisory in wildlife research and management.

9. 'ANGAN' - INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ENERGY EFFICIENCY

News: An international conference **ANGAN (Augmenting Nature by Green Affordable New-habitat)** focussed on **Energy Efficiency in the building sector** has started

Facts:**About the conference:**

- The Conference is organised by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), Ministry of Power, Government of India in collaboration with GIZ under the Indo German Technical Cooperation.
- The conference will be attended by experts from 16 countries who will discuss various options and technologies for energy efficient buildings
- It will provide a platform to deliberate on (a) interdependence between organizations (b) systemic sustainability and (c) feedback loops for better resource efficiency.

Additional information:**About BEE:**

- The BEE is a statutory body under the Ministry of Power, Government of India.
- It was set up under the provisions of Energy Conservation Act, 2001.
- Its mission is to assist in developing policies with the primary objective of reducing energy intensity of the Indian Economy.
- BEE coordinates with designated consumers, designated agencies and other organizations. It recognizes, identify and utilize the existing resources and infrastructure in performing the functions assigned to it under the Energy Conservation Act.

10. UNCCD COP14

News: The 14th edition of the Conference of Parties (COP-14) to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) was held from 2nd to 13th September 2019.

Facts:

- **India** for the first time is hosted session of the Conference of Parties (COP-14) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). It was held in Greater Noida.
- India has also taken over the COP Presidency from China for the next two years till 2021.
- **Theme for COP14 to UNCCD** was: '**Restore land, Sustain future**'.

Key Takeaways from UNCCD COP14:

1. **New Delhi Declaration:** It is a common resolve of parties to the convention on how to stop land from being degraded and how to quickly restore existing degraded land. Countries also pledged to make the Sustainable Development Goal target (15.3) of achieving "**land degradation neutrality**" (LDN), a national target for action.

2. **Drought Toolbox:** It serves as a platform for developing national drought plans and taking a proactive approach to drought management. The UNCCD developed the Toolbox under the Drought Initiative.
3. **Coalition on Sand and Dust Storms:** It is an international coalition for action on sand and dust storms (SDS). Among other activities, the coalition will develop an SDS source base map with the goal of improving monitoring and response to these storms.
4. **"Sustainability, Stability and Security" (3S) Initiative:** It is an inter-governmental action launched by Morocco and Senegal to address the root causes of instability in Africa – in particular migration and conflict related to the degradation of natural resources – through an innovative approach.
5. **Release of Report on Soil Organic Carbon (SOC)** titled “*Realising the Carbon Benefits of Sustainable Land Management Practices: Guidelines for Estimation of Soil Organic Carbon in the Context of Land Degradation Neutrality Planning and Monitoring*”: It was released by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)’s Committee on Science and Technology (CST). The report emphasises the **importance of SOC in preventing land degradation and desertification**. It also provides guidelines to help countries identify suitable locally-relevant sustainable land management practices to maintain or enhance SOC.
6. **Youth Caucus on Desertification and Land:** The Global Youth Caucus on Desertification and Land is a formal constituency to the UNCCD. The forum, in partnership with UNCCD Secretariat convened the first Desertification Youth Forum in conjunction with COP14 to UNCCD.

Four key messages from COP14 to UNCCD

- Land restoration is the cheapest solution to climate change and biodiversity loss;
- Land restoration makes business sense if regulations and incentives to reward investment are in place;
- Drought preparedness and response are critical in the face of climate change; and
- To put people first is to ensure gender balance, engage youth, and secure land rights.

Additional Information:

About UNCCD

- The UNCCD is one of the three Rio Conventions — along with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).
- It is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management. It was established in 1994 and entered into force in 1996. It has 197 parties.
- UNCCD seeks to work towards maintaining and restoring land and soil productivity and mitigating the effects of drought.

Concepts:

Land Degradation and Desertification

- **Land degradation** is any reduction or loss in the biological or economic productive capacity of the land resource base
- **Desertification** is not the natural expansion of existing deserts but the degradation of land in arid, semi-arid, and dry sub-humid areas. It is a gradual process of soil productivity loss and the thinning

out of the vegetative cover because of human activities and climatic variations such as prolonged droughts and floods.

Soil Organic carbon (SOC):

- It is defined as the soil material of living origin (e.g. plants, microbes, soil biota) at varying stages of decomposition.
- It acts as a key resource for energy and nutrients, and affects many soil properties such as hydrology, structure, and habitat.
- It is the largest carbon pool in the terrestrial biosphere

Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)

- According to UNCCD, LDN is defined as a state where the amount and quality of land resources necessary to support ecosystem functions and services and enhance food security, remains stable or increases within specified temporal and spatial scales and ecosystems
- There are three global indicators for LDN:
 - Land cover (land cover change)
 - Land productivity (net primary productivity)
 - Carbon stocks (soil organic carbon.)
- **India's target** for LDN is 30 million hectares by 2030.

II. FOREST PLUS 2.0

News: The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Indian Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) of India have jointly launched the “**Forest-PLUS 2.0: forests for water and prosperity**” program.

Facts:

About Forest Plus 2.0

- It is a five-year programme initiated in December 2018 after Forest-PLUS completed its five years in 2017.
- Under the joint program, USAID will provide technical assistance to MoEFCC to improve management of forested landscapes in **Gaya** in Bihar, **Thiruvananthapuram** in Kerala and **Medak** in Telangana.
- The programme will focus on **developing tools and techniques** to bolster ecosystem management and harnessing ecosystem services **in forest landscape management**.
- **Targets:**
 - 1,20,000 hectares of land under improved management
 - New, inclusive economic activity worth \$12 million
 - Measurable benefits accrued to 800,000 households
 - Three incentive mechanisms demonstrated in managing landscapes for ecosystem services
- To achieve these targets, the programme has **three focal points of actions** –
 - **Developing tools for multiple services in forests management** - The tools consist of innovative apps for automating forest planning processes, model forest management plans.
 - **Developing incentive-based instruments for leveraging finance**- For example, a payment mechanism where a municipality or industry would pay upstream forest communities to use water flowing down because of improved forest management.

- **Unlocking economic opportunities for forest-** dependent people by modelling and setting up conservation enterprises and mobilising investment from the private sector.

Additional Information:

Forest Plus:

- It was launched in 2012. It focused on capacity building to help India participate in Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+).
- It included four pilot projects in Sikkim, Rampur, Shivamogga and Hoshangabad.
- Under these, field tests, innovative tools and approaches for Indian forest management were developed.
- Promotion of bio-briquettes in Sikkim, introduction of solar heating systems in Rampur and development of an agroforestry model in Hoshangabad were some of the achievements of this programme.

REDD+

- REDD stands for: Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation. It is a collaborative programme of Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
- REDD+ extends REDD by adding Sustainable Forest Management, Conservation of Forests and Enhancement of carbon sinks. It was included under the **Bali Action Plan** adopted at CoP 13th in 2007.
- The aim of REDD+ is to encourage developing countries to contribute to **climate change mitigation** efforts by:
 - reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) by **slowing, halting and reversing forest loss** and degradation; and
 - Increasing removal of GHGs from the earth's atmosphere through the conservation, **management and expansion of forests**.
- REDD+ underscores the full rights and respect of indigenous and other forest dependent communities. It calls activities that will help in sustainable livelihood of indigenous communities and also lead to biodiversity conservation.

1. WATER FOUND FOR THE FIRST TIME ON POTENTIALLY HABITABLE PLANET

News: Data from the Hubble Space Telescope have revealed **water vapour in the atmosphere** of an **exoplanet** called **K2-18b**. The discovery is the first successful atmospheric detection for an exoplanet orbiting in its star's **habitable zone** (at a distance where water can exist in liquid form).

Facts:

About K2-18b

- It is an exoplanet eight times the mass of Earth. The planet orbits dwarf star K2-18. K2-18 is located about 110 light years from Earth in the Leo constellation in the Milky Way.
- The planet was first discovered in 2015 by NASA's Kepler space telescope.

Additional Information:

Exoplanets: planets outside the solar system are called exoplanets. The first exoplanet was discovered in 1992, orbiting a pulsar (a neutron star that emits electromagnetic radiation)

Dwarf star: A dwarf star is a star of relatively small size and low luminosity.

Hubble Space Telescope:

- The Hubble Space Telescope (HST) is the world's first **space-based optical** telescope that was launched into **low Earth orbit** in 1990. It still remains operational.
- It has been named after astronomer Edwin Hubble.
- It is one of NASA's Great Observatories. NASA's series of Great Observatories satellites are four large, powerful space-based astronomical telescopes. The telescopes other than Hubble include the Compton Gamma Ray Observatory, the Chandra X-ray Observatory, and the Spitzer Space Telescope

Kepler Space Telescope: It was an **observatory in space** launched by NASA to discover **Earth-size planets** orbiting other stars. It was launched in 2009 and decommissioned in 2018.

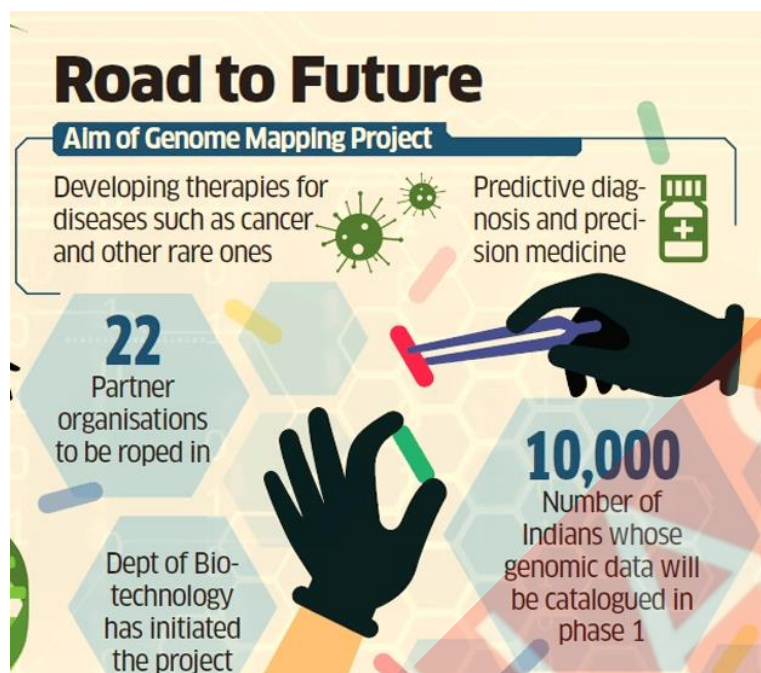
2. GENOMIC GRID FOR INDIA-SPECIFIC CANCER RESEARCH

News: Government has planned to set up a **National Genomic Grid** to study **genomic data of cancer patients** from India.

Facts:

About Genomic Grid:

- The National Genomic Grid will be formed in line with the National Cancer Tissue Biobank (NCTB).
- The grid will have **four parts** corresponding to eastern, western, northern and southern parts of India.



Objective of the Grid:

- The grid will collect samples from cancer patients to study genomic factors influencing cancer and identifying the right treatment modalities for the Indian population.
- The grid will also aims to make cancer treatment viable for people of different economic classes.

Additional information:

National Cancer Tissue Biobank (NCTB):

- National Cancer Tissue Biobank (NCTB) is a state-of-the-art non-profit **community-based tissue biobank**.
- It is a **joint initiative** of Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India and Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IITM).
- It is the first of its kind facility in India and is aimed at **providing researchers with high quality of cancer tissues and the patient data** in order to facilitate cancer research that will lead to improvements in cancer diagnosis and treatment.

Genome India Initiative:

- India has planned to roll out Genome India Initiative. It is a **genome mapping project** spearheaded by **Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology**.
- Under the project, DBT has planned to scan nearly 20,000 Indian genomes to **develop diagnostic tests that can be used to test for cancer**.
- The scanning will take place over the next five years, in a two-phase exercise. The programme is expected to be launched in October 2019
- The **first phase** of exercise will involve sequencing the complete genomes of nearly 10,000 Indians from different parts of India and capture the biological diversity of India.
- In the **second phase**, genome sequencing will be done of about 10,000 diseased individuals. The data sets would be compared using machine learning techniques to identify genes that can predict cancer risk.

- The data generated would be made accessible to researchers anywhere for analysis. This would be through a proposed National Biological Data Centre envisaged in a policy called the 'Biological Data Storage, Access and Sharing Policy'.

3. UMMID INITIATIVE:

News: The Union Minister for Science & Technology has launched the UMMID initiative.

Facts:

About UMMID:

- UMMID stands for **Unique Methods of Management and treatment of Inherited Disorders**.
- **Aim:** UMMID initiative aims to
 - To establish **NIDAN** (National Inherited Diseases Administration) Kendras to provide counselling, prenatal testing and diagnosis, management, and multidisciplinary care in Government Hospitals wherein the influx of patients is more. As a part of UMMID, in the first phase, five NIDAN Kendras have been established.
 - To produce skilled clinicians in Human Genetics, and
 - To undertake screening of pregnant women and newborn babies for inherited genetic diseases in hospitals at aspirational districts.
- **Implementing Agency:** Department of Biotechnology (DBT) under the Ministry of Science and Technology.
- UMMID is in line with the National Health Policy 2017, which aims to shift focus from "sick-care" to "wellness".

4. RANITIDINE

News: Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) has started looking into the concerns of **potential cancer-causing substances** contaminating **popular acidity drug ranitidine**.

Facts:

About Ranitidine

- Ranitidine is an over-the-counter prescription antacid used in the treatment of acid reflux and peptic ulcer diseases.
- It is commonly prescribed medicine for countering acidity and also on the World Health Organisation's 'Model List of Essential Medicines'.
- However, it has been found that some Ranitidine medicines contain a Nitrosamine Impurity called N-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA) at low levels which are considered as Carcinogenic.
- It is a prescription drug included in **Schedule H** (Schedule H drugs are ones which cannot be purchased over the counter without the prescription of a qualified doctor).

N-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA)

- N-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA) has been classified by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) as probably carcinogenic to humans.
- It is an **environmental contaminant** found in **water and food**.
- It is the same impurity that the US FDA had investigated in blood pressure drug valsartan and losartan over the last year.

Additional information:**About CDSCO:**

- The Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) is the national **regulatory body for Indian pharmaceuticals and medical device**
- CDSCO functions under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940. It comes under Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
- CDSCO is responsible for
 - approval of New Drugs
 - Conduct of Clinical Trials,
 - laying down the standards for Drugs
 - control over the quality of imported Drugs in the country and
 - Coordination of the activities of State Drug Control Organizations by providing expert advice with a view to bring about uniformity in the enforcement of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.

5. INTERNATIONAL ASTRONOMICAL UNION NAMES MINOR PLANET AFTER PANDIT JASRAJ

News: International Astronomical Union (IAU) has named a **minor planet** after Indian musician Pandit Jasraj. He's the first **Indian musician** to receive this honour.

Facts:

- Minor planet 2006 VP32 (number -300128), has been named 'Panditjasraj.'
- The minor planet is an asteroid. It traverses the cosmos between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter.
- It was discovered on November 11, 2006 by the Catalina Sky Survey, whose telescopes are based in Arizona in the United States.

Additional Information:**Minor Planets:**

- Minor planet is a term used to refer to a celestial object that is not a planet or a comet which orbits the Sun.
- Minor planets can be dwarf planets, asteroids, Trojans, centaurs, Kuiper belt objects, and other trans-Neptunian objects.
- **Ceres**, found in 1801, was the **first minor planet** discovered. It is a **dwarf planet**.
- As of September, there are 5, 41,131 numbered minor planets of a total of 79, 70, 78 observed bodies, with the rest being unnumbered minor planets.

<i>Celestial Object</i>	<i>Description</i>
Dwarf Planets	It is a planetary-mass object that does not dominate its region of space (as a true planet does) and is not a satellite. Ex: Pluto, Eris
Asteroid	They are small, rocky objects that orbit the sun. They are smaller than a planet, but they are larger than meteoroids.

Trojan	It is a small celestial body that shares the orbit of a larger one. Trojans can share the orbits of planets or large moons.
Centaurs	They are small Solar System bodies with a semi-major axis between those of the outer planets.
Kuiper Belt Object	Objects found in the Kuiper Belt. Kuiper belt, also called the Edgeworth–Kuiper belt, is a circumstellar disc in the outer Solar System, extending from the orbit of Neptune (at 30 AU) to approximately 50 AU from the Sun.

International Astronomical Union:

- It is an international association of professional astronomers.
- Its mission is to promote and safeguard the science of astronomy in all its aspects, including research, communication, education and development, through international cooperation.
- It was founded in 1919. It is headquartered in Paris, France.

Pandit Jasraj:

- Pandit Jasraj (b. 1930) is an exponent of Indian classical vocal music belonging to the Mewati gharana. He has created a novel form of jugalbandi called Jshrangi.
- He is a recipient of Padma Vibhushan and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award.

6. PROJECT NETRA

News: The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has initiated the 'Project NETRA'.

Facts:

About Project NETRA:

- NETRA stands for Network for Space Object Tracking and Analysis.
- It is an early warning system in space to detect debris and to safeguard India's functional satellites in low-earth orbits.
- Under NETRA, ISRO plans to put up many observational facilities such as
 - connected radars
 - telescopes
 - data processing units and
 - Space Situational Awareness Control Centre.
- These facilities can spot, track and catalogue objects as small as 10 cm, up to a range of 3,400 km and equal to a space orbit of around 2,000 km.

Significance of NETRA:

- This will improve India's space situational awareness and allow it to become self-dependent.
- This will ensure that India will no longer have to depend on data from the North America Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD).
- NORAD is an initiative of the U.S. and Canada that shares selective space debris data with many countries.

Additional information:**Space situational and awareness centre:**

- ISRO has set up the Space Situational Awareness Control Centre in Bengaluru.
- The control centre hosts a range of activities related to the **protection of Indian space assets** from inactive satellites, pieces of orbiting objects, near earth asteroids and adverse space weather conditions.
- It also assimilates the tracking data of inactive satellites from indigenous observation facilities and generates useful information from bare observations through analysis.

Space Debris

- Space debris encompasses both **natural (meteoroid)** and **artificial (man-made)** particles. **Meteoroids** are in orbit about the sun, while most artificial debris is in orbit about the Earth. Hence, the **latter** is more commonly referred to as **orbital debris**.
- Orbital Debris consists of dead satellites, spent rocket motors, nuts and bolts etc.

7. PARAQUAT HERBICIDE

News: Doctors in Odisha's has urged the **Odisha** government to ban paraquat herbicide that has killed around 170 people in the last two years.

Facts:**About Paraquat:**

- Paraquat is a toxic chemical that is widely used as an herbicide (plant killer), primarily for weed and grass control.
- The herbicide has been **banned in 32 countries** including Switzerland, where herbicide producing company Syngenta is based.
- Paraquat also figures on the list of 99 pesticides and herbicides that the Supreme Court is hearing to ban in an ongoing case. So far in India, only **Kerala has banned the herbicide**.
- However, Paraquat is **yet to be listed** in the prior informed consent (PIC) of the **Rotterdam Convention**.

Additional information:**About Rotterdam convention:**

- The Rotterdam Convention was adopted on 10 September, **1998** in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. The Convention entered into force in 2004.
- The convention is also known as the Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade.
- **India is a party** to the convention with 161 other parties.
- The convention aims to promote shared responsibilities in relation to **importation of hazardous chemicals**.
- The convention provides open exchange of information and calls on exporters of hazardous chemicals to use proper labeling, include directions on safe handling and inform purchasers of any known restrictions or bans.
- Further, the signatory nations can decide whether to allow or ban the importation of chemicals listed in the treaty and exporting countries are obliged to make sure that producers within their jurisdiction comply.

8. HEAD ON GENERATION (HOG) TECHNOLOGY

News: The Railway Ministry has announced that it would be upgrading all existing Linke Hofmann Busch (LHB) coaches with the Head on Generation (HOG) technology.

Facts:

About HOG technology:

- In HOG Technology, the power will be drawn from the overhead electric supply.
- The power supply from the overhead cable is 750 volts at single-phase, and a transformer with a winding of 945 kVA converts it to a 750 Volts 50 Hz output at 3-phase. This energy is then provided to the compartments

End on Generation technology (EOG):

- Under the EOG system, the train's 'hotel load' which is the load of air conditioning, lights, fans, and pantry is provided with electricity from two large diesel generator sets which supply 3-phase power at 750 Volts 50 Hz to the entire length of the train.

Benefits of HOG technology over EOG:

- In the End on Generation technology (EOG), power generator cars used to make huge noise and emit fumes which will no longer be there.
- In place of two such generator cars, HOG will have one standby silent generator car to be used for emergency.
- HOG technology has low Operating price per unit of electricity (Rs.6) as compared to the EOG system (Rs.22).
- HOG technology will have reduced number of generating equipment, low maintenance requirements, reduced dead weight as compared to EOG system.
- Further, the HOG system will also generate less air pollution and Noise pollution when compared to EOG system.

Additional information:

About LHB Coaches:

- Linke Hofmann Busch (LHB) coaches are the passenger coaches of Indian Railways that have been developed by Linke-Hofmann-Busch of Germany.
- These coaches are produced in the Rail Coach Factory in Kapurthala, Punjab.

9. NEW VARIETIES OF WHEAT

News: Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) has released a new variety of wheat named **Pusa Yashasvi**. Further, the Government of India is planning to launch a new hybrid wheat variety named **Karan Vandana** across the country.

Facts:

About Pusa Yashasvi:

- Pusa Yashasvi is also called as HD-3226.
- It has higher genetic yield potential as compared to other varieties of wheat.
- Pusa Yashasvi has a higher content of zinc, protein, and gluten which will contribute to the strength and elasticity of the dough.
- It is highly resistant against all major rust diseases such as yellow rust among others.

- It is also compliant to conservation agriculture.

About Karan Vandana

- It has been developed by the Indian Institute of Wheat and Barley Research (IIWBR) under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).
- It is also known as DBW-187. They are resistant to both yellow rust and white blast diseases.

Additional information:

Yellow rust:

- Yellow rust is a **fungal disease** which manifests as powdery yellow stripes on leaves.
- These stripes hinder photosynthesis make the grains shrivel and stunt growth of the plant.
- It is a serious disease which has been threatening wheat cultivation in the country the past few years.
- It is particularly found in wheat grown in cooler environments. All the wheat growing states like Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, the tarai region of Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and the low-lying areas of Jammu and Kashmir are susceptible to the disease.

Wheat Blast:

- Wheat Blast is also a **fungal disease**.
- It prevents maturation of the actual grain which affects reproduction by causing the host to produce fewer seeds.

About ICAR:

- The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) is an autonomous organisation under the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE), Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India.
- The Council is the apex body for coordinating, guiding and managing research and education in agriculture including horticulture, fisheries and animal sciences in the entire country.

About Indian Agricultural Research Institute:

- Commonly known as the Pusa Institute, is India's national Institute for agricultural research, education and extension. It was founded in 1905. It is located in Pusa, New Delhi.

10. FIRST INDIGENOUS FUEL CELL SYSTEM

News: President of India has unveiled the **first Indigenous High Temperature Fuel Cell System** on the occasion of CSIR Foundation Day.

Facts:

About the Indigenous fuel system:

- The system has been developed by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in partnership with Indian industries.
- It has been developed under India's flagship program named **New Millennium Indian Technology Leadership Initiative (NMITLI)**.

Working of the system:

- The 5.0 kW fuel cell system generates power in a green manner using methanol / bio-methane with heat and water as bi-products for further use.
- The system provides greater than 70% efficiency which otherwise may not be possible by other energy sources.
- The Fuel Cells developed under this system are based on High Temperature Proton Exchange Membrane (HTPEM) Technology.

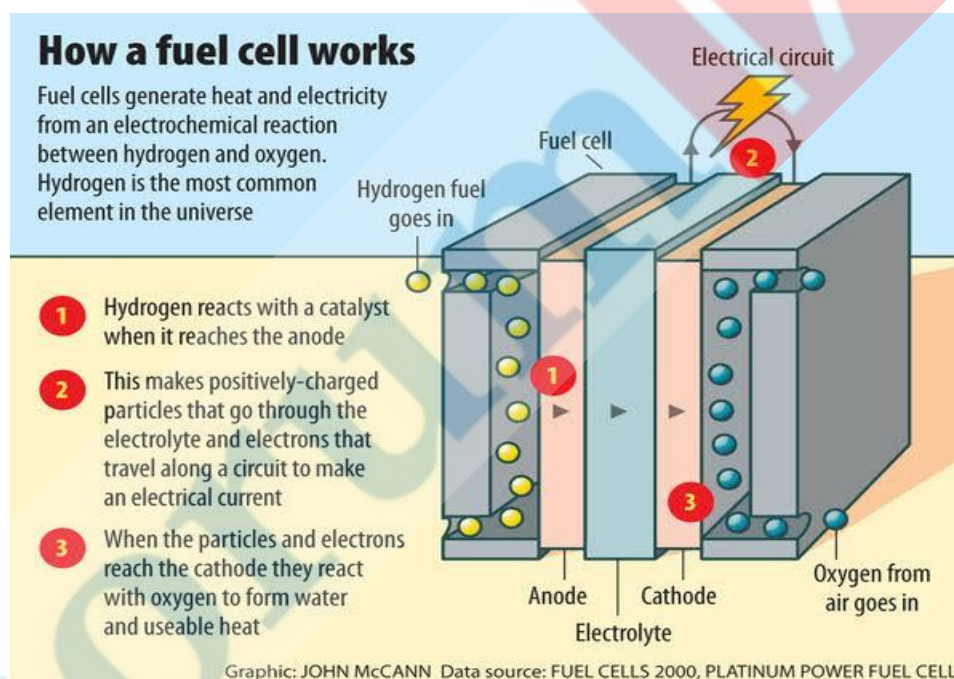
Applications of the system:

- This development would replace Diesel Generating (DG) sets and help reduce India's dependence on crude oil.
- This system will also meet the requirement of efficient, clean and reliable backup power generators that are demanded by telecom towers, remote locations, and strategic applications.

Additional information:

About Fuel Cells:

A fuel cell is a device that converts chemical energy (energy stored in molecular bonds) into electrical energy.



About HTPEM:

- High Temperature Proton exchange membrane (HTPEM) is the core of the fuel cells running above 150 °C.
- A PEM (Proton Exchange Membrane) cell uses hydrogen gas (H₂) and oxygen gas (O₂) as fuel. The products of the reaction in the cell are water, electricity, and heat.
- HTPEM offer several advantages such as
 - high proton conductivity,
 - low permeability to fuel
 - good chemical/thermal stability
 - good mechanical properties and
 - low cost.

- They are considered to be a promising technology for efficient power generation in the 21st century.

About NMITLI:

- New Millennium Indian Technology Leadership Initiative (NMITLI) is the largest Public-Private partnership effort within the R&D domain in the country.
- The responsibility of conceptualising, evolving and implementing the programme has been assigned to the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR).
- The programme seeks to catalyze innovation centred scientific and technological developments as a vehicle to attain for Indian industry a global leadership position, in selected niche areas.

About CSIR:

- CSIR was established by the Government of India in 1942 as an autonomous body under the Ministry of Science and Technology.
- It has emerged as the largest research and development organisation in India.

11. GLOBAL ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT HUB

News: India has joined the Global Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) Research and Development (R&D) Hub as a new member.

Facts:

About the Hub:

- The Global research and development hub on antimicrobial resistance was launched in May 2018 on the sidelines of the 71st session of the World Health Assembly.
- The hub consists of 16 members nations. It also has the European Commission, two philanthropic foundations as members and four international organisations as observers.
- The hub supports global priority setting and evidence-based decision making on the allocation of resources for AMR R&D through the identification of gaps, overlaps and potential for cross-sectoral collaboration and leveraging in AMR R&D.
- The operations of the hub are supported through a Secretariat, which is established in Berlin, Germany.

Significance for India:

- By partnering with the Global AMR R&D Hub, India can work with all partners to leverage their existing capabilities, resources and collectively focus on new R&D intervention to address drug-resistant infections.

Additional Information:

National Antimicrobial Resistance Hub:

- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has inaugurated India's first National Antimicrobial Resistance Hub in Kolkata.
- It has been developed by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) in association with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- The hub will aim to identify antibiotics that work best for diseases and frame a policy for antibiotic use that will prevent resistance.
- It will also carry out basic research and have a repository of viral strains that are being collected from all over the country.

- The Kolkata centre would also be the hub for research on antibiotic resistance, not only for the country but for the entire South Asia.

About antimicrobial resistance:

- Antimicrobial resistance is the ability of a microorganism like bacteria, fungi, viruses, and parasites to stop an antimicrobial such as antibiotics, antifungals, antivirals and antimalarial from working against it.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) recognises AMR as a serious threat to global public health.

Policy

1. INSTITUTION OF EMINENCE

News: The Ministry of Human Resource and Development has awarded the status of Institutions of Eminence to five public institutions.

Facts:

- **Institutions awarded with the status of Institutions of Eminence:**

1. IIT-Madras,
2. IIT-Kharagpur,
3. Delhi University,
4. Banaras Hindu University
5. University of Hyderabad

About Institution of Eminence (IoE) Scheme

- First announced in 2016 Budget speech, the Institution of Eminence scheme is a scheme of **Ministry of Human Resource Development** pertaining to Higher Education Institutions (HES) in India
- **Aim:** To develop 20 (10 public and 10 private) world-class teaching and research institutions in India
- **Objectives:**
 - To bring higher educational institutions selected as IoEs in the top 500 universities in the world rankings during the next 10 years and in top 100 rankings eventually overtime
 - To provide world class teaching and research facilities to Indian students within the country and enhance the general level of education.
 - To pay special attention to teaching and research in unique and emerging areas of knowledge
- **Regulatory framework:** It has been provided through
 - UGC (Declaration of Government Institutions as Institutions of Eminence) Guidelines, 2017 for public Institutions and
 - UGC (Institutions of Eminence Deemed to be Universities) Regulations, 2017 for private Institutions.

Key Benefits of Institutions of Eminence

- Government Institutions to get additional funding of up to 1000 Cr.
- Complete academic, administrative and financial autonomy
- Exemption from government approvals for academic collaborations with foreign HES (in top 500)
- Freedom to hire personnel from industry as faculty, and recruit faculty from outside India (25% limit of its faculty strength)
- Freedom to have own transparent merit-based system for admission of students.
- Will not be subjected to UGC Inspections

Current Status of scheme: Earlier 6 institutions were selected as IoEs:

- **Public Category**
 1. Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore
 2. IIT Delhi
 3. IIT Mumbai

- **Private Category**
 1. Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE), Manipal
 2. Birla Institute of Technology & Sciences (BITS), Pilani
 3. Jio Institute under the Greenfield category.
- These institutes were selected on the basis of recommendation by Empowered Expert Committee headed by former Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) **N Gopalaswami**.

2. TRANSFORMATION OF ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICT PROGRAMME

News: The National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) is visiting 117 Aspirational Districts across 28 states to hold public meetings on complaints affecting children pertaining to education, health and nutrition as well as lack of infrastructure.

Facts:

About Transformation of Aspirational Districts' programme

- The programme was launched in January 2018. It is coordinated by Niti Aayog with support from Central Ministries and the State Governments.
- **Aim:** Quickly and effectively transform underdeveloped districts. It seeks to focus on the strength of each district, identify easy achievable areas for immediate improvement, measure progress, and rank districts.
- **Features:**
- It is based on **three broad principles**:
 - Convergence (of Central & State Schemes),
 - Collaboration (of Central, State level 'Prabhari' Officers & District Collectors), and
 - Competition among districts driven by a mass Movement.
- The programme focuses on **5 main themes**:
 - Nutrition,
 - Education,
 - Agriculture & Water Resources,
 - Financial Inclusion & Skill Development, and
 - Basic Infrastructure.
- **Ranking:** Each district is ranked based on 49 Key performance indicators identified across the 5 core themes. The main objective of the rankings is to measure progress and rank districts to spur a sense of competition among states.
- **Funding:**
 - The programme relies on convergence of existing schemes for its funding.
 - In addition, funds and other resources made available by the private sector under Corporate Social Responsibility, and some local funds like the District Mineral Funds are utilised for critical gap funding.

Additional Information:

National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)

- It is a statutory body established in 2007 under the Protection of Child Rights Act (CPCR), 2005.
- It is under the administrative control of the Ministry of Women & Child Development.
- **Mandate:** to ensure that all laws, policies, programmes, and administrative mechanisms are in accordance with the child rights perspective as put forward in the Constitution of India and also the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

- It is a convention which puts forward civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children. It was signed in 1989 and became effective in 1990.
- It defines a child as a person in the 0 to 18 years age group.

3. PRADHAN MANTRI LAGHU VYAPARI MAAN-DHAN YOJANA

News: Prime Minister has launched the Pradhan Mantri Laghu Vyapari Maan-dhan Yojana 2019.

Facts:

About Pradhan Mantri Laghu Vyapari Maan-dhan Yojana

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

4. PRADHAN MANTRI KISAN MAN DHAN YOJANA

News: Prime Minister has launched Pradhan Mantri Kisan Man Dhan Yojana

Facts:

About Pradhan Mantri Kisan Man Dhan Yojana

- It is a scheme under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers welfare
- **Aim:** To provide social security to all landholding Small and Marginal Farmers.
- **Features:**
 - It is **voluntary and contributory** for farmers in the entry age group of 18 to 40 years.
 - A monthly pension of Rs. 3000/- will be provided to them on attaining the age of 60 years. The farmers will have to make a monthly contribution of Rs.55 to Rs.200, depending on their age of entry, in the Pension Fund till they reach the retirement date i.e. the age of 60 years.

- The Central Government will also make an equal contribution of the same amount in the pension fund.
- The **spouse is also eligible** to get a separate pension of Rs.3000/- upon making separate contributions to the Fund.
- In case of death of the farmer before retirement date, the spouse can continue in the scheme by paying the remaining contributions till the remaining age of the late farmer.
- If the spouse does not wish to continue, the total contribution made by the farmer along with interest will be paid to the spouse.
- If there is no spouse, then total contribution along with interest will be paid to the nominee.
- If the farmer dies after the retirement date, the spouse will receive 50% of the pension as Family Pension.
- **Implementation:**
 - The Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) is the Pension Fund Manager and responsible for Pension pay out.

5. PRADHAN MANTRI UJJWALA YOJANA

News: Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) has achieved the target of giving 8 crore free cooking gas (LPG) connections in nearly seven months ahead of schedule.

Facts:

About Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)

- Launched in 2016, Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana is a scheme of the **Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas**. It is the *first social sector scheme by this ministry*.
- **Aim:** To replace unclean cooking fuels used in the most underprivileged households with clean and more efficient LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas).
- **Objective of the scheme:**
 - Empower women and protect their health
 - Reduce the serious health hazards associated with cooking based on fossil fuel
 - Reduce the number of deaths in India due to unclean cooking fuel and
 - To prevent young children from significant number of acute respiratory illnesses caused due to indoor air pollution.
- **Beneficiary:**
 - Initially, the beneficiaries under PMUY were identified either from SECC list or from seven other identified categories.
 - All SC/STs households beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) (Gramin)
 - Beneficiaries of Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY)
 - Forest dwellers
 - Most Backward Classes (MBC)
 - Tea & Ex-Tea Garden Tribes
 - People residing in Islands
 - People residing in river island
 - Subsequently, the Government has extended the benefit to all left out poor families under PMUY subject to fulfilment of terms & conditions. The connections are issued in the name of women of the households

- **Target:** Initially the target was installation of 5 crore LPG connections by 2019. But the target was revised to 8 crore which was to be achieved by 2019-20.
- **Key features:**
 - Under the Scheme, a cash assistance of upto Rs 1600/- for providing new LPG connection is provided by the Central Government.
 - The beneficiary bears the cost of Hot Plate and purchase of first refill. The beneficiary has the option to take Hot Plate or purchase first refill or both on loan basis from OMCs at zero interest.
 - **LPG Panchayat** serves as a platform for interaction between those who received LPG cylinders under PMUY. It raises awareness among LPG users about proper use of clean fuel and its advantages.

6. SIDHIEE PORTAL

News: Union Minister for Micro Small and Medium Enterprises has launched **Knowledge Management Portal “SIDHIEE”**. The portal was launched at the National Conclave on Enhancing Energy Efficiency organized by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE).

Facts: SIDHIEE Portal

- The portal was launched under the Bureau of Energy Efficiency Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (BEE’s MSME) Programme.
- The portal will host useful information including fifty videos of multimedia tutorials for MSMEs for early adoption of energy-efficient technologies.

Additional Information:

About BEE:

- The BEE is a **statutory body** under the Ministry of Power, Government of India.
- It was set up under the provisions of **Energy Conservation Act, 2001**.
- Its mission is to assist in developing policies with the primary objective of reducing energy intensity of the Indian Economy.
- BEE coordinates with designated consumers, designated agencies and other organizations.
- It recognizes, identifies and utilizes the existing resources and infrastructure in performing the functions assigned to it under the Energy Conservation Act.

BEE Programmes for MSME sector:

- **BEE-SME SCHEME “National programme on Energy Efficiency and Technology Up gradation of SMEs”** : To accelerate uptake of Energy Efficiency in SME sector, BEE initiated the program in 2009. The programme is fully funded by the Government of India.
- **GEF-UNIDO-BEE Scheme “Promoting Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy in selected MSME clusters in India”**: Initiated in 2011, the project focuses on the development and promotion of a market environment for introducing energy efficiency (EE) and enhanced use of renewable energy (RE) technologies for process applications in 12 selected MSME clusters under five energy intensive MSME sub-sectors i.e. Brass, Ceramic, Dairy, Foundry and Hand tools.
- **GEF-WB-BEE Scheme “Financing Energy Efficiency at MSMEs”**:
 - It was conceptualized as a part of the GEF Programmatic Framework for Energy Efficiency in India.

- Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the World Bank through SIDBI and BEE implements the initiative to improve EE and reduce Green House Gas (GHG) emissions from MSMEs by utilizing increased commercial financing for EE.

7. MOCHI SWABHIMAAN INITIATIVE

News: Union Minister of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship announced the launch of Mochi Swabhimaan Initiative.

Facts:

About the initiative:

- Mochi Swabhimaan Initiative is a nationwide effort in which Leather Sector Skill Council (LSSC) will support the cobbler community who provide leather-based services, with **CSR funds**.
- This will ensure that they work in a dignified manner by bringing respect to their skills by giving them better working environment in the form of kiosks/umbrellas.

About Leather Sector Skill Council (LSSC):

- The Leather Sector Skill Council (LSSC) is a **non-profit organisation** dedicated to meet the demand for skilled workforce in the leather industry in India.
- LSSC was set up in 2012 as one of the key sector skill councils approved by National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC).
- It aims to facilitate a skilled ecosystem in the leather industry through capacity building for high productivity and compliance with global standards.

Additional information:

Statistics on Leather industry:

- India accounts for about 13% of the world's leather production.
- The leather industry contribute less than 1% to India's GDP and Footwear industry contributes about 2% to India's GDP.
- Indian leather industry has huge potential for exports. It can reach USD 9.0 billion by 2020, from the present level of USD 5.85 billion.
- Leather industry has the potential to create 2 million jobs in the next 5 years.

National Skill Development Corporation:

- Not for profit public limited company incorporated in July 2008, under the Companies Act, 1956
- It has been set up under the PPP model where the government owns 49% stakes via the Ministry of Skill Development
- Aims to promote skill development by catalyzing creation of large, quality and for-profit vocational institutions
- Provides funds for building scalable and profitable vocational training initiatives
- It is mandated to enable a support system which focuses on quality assurance, information systems and train the trainer academies directly or in partnerships
- It also develops appropriate models to enhance, support and coordinate private sector initiatives

8. NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR TECHNOLOGY (NEAT)

News: Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has announced a scheme named National Educational Alliance for Technology (NEAT).

Facts: About NEAT:

- **Aim:** The scheme aims to use **Artificial Intelligence** to make learning more personalized and customized solutions as per the requirements of the learner.
- **Features:**
 - Under the scheme, MHRD would create and maintain a National NEAT platform that would provide one-stop access to these technological solutions.
 - The ministry will also create a National Alliance with technology developing EdTech Companies through a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model.
 - EdTech companies would be responsible for developing solutions and manage the registration of learners through the NEAT portal.
 - They would be free to charge fees as per their policy. As their contribution towards the national cause, they would have to offer free coupons to the extent of 25% of the total registrations for their solution through NEAT portal.
 - MHRD would distribute the free coupons to ensure that the Adaptive Learning Solutions are freely available to a large number of socially/economically backward students
- **Implementing Agency:** All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) would be the implementing agency for the NEAT programme.

Additional information:

Artificial Intelligence: describes the action of machines accomplishing tasks that have historically required human intelligence. It includes technologies like machine learning, pattern recognition, big data, neural networks, self-algorithms etc.

About AICTE:

- The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) is a **statutory body** and a national-level council for technical education.
- It works under Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development.
- It was initially established in 1945 as an advisory body and later on in 1987 was given the statutory status by an Act of Parliament.
- AICTE is responsible for proper planning and coordinated development of the technical and management education system in India.
- It also accredits postgraduate and graduate programs under specific categories at Indian institutions as per its charter.

9. LEADERSHIP FOR ACADEMICIANS PROGRAM (LEAP)

News: Ministry of Human Resource Development has launched the 2019 edition of Leadership for Academicians Programme (LEAP).

Facts:**About LEAP:**

- LEAP is a three weeks leadership development training programme (2 weeks domestic and one week foreign training) for second level academic functionaries (eg. Vice Principals) in public funded **higher education** institutions under the **Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching (PMMNMTT)** Scheme. LEAP was launched in 2018.

- **Objective:** To prepare second tier academic heads that are potentially likely to assume leadership roles in the future.
- **Significance:** The programme would provide senior faculty with high academic credentials, the required leadership and managerial skills including skills of problem-solving, handling stress, team building work among others.
- **Implementation:** Through 15 NIRF top ranked Indian Institutions. The foreign Universities identified for the training are also within the top 100 in the world global rankings.

Additional information:

About National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF)

- The National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) was launched by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) in 2015. It provides ranking to institutions and universities across India.
- The different parameters taken into account for ranking are: a) Teaching, Learning and Resources b) Research, Professional Practice & Collaborative Performance, c) Graduation outcome d) Outreach and Inclusivity and e) perception of the institution by its stakeholders.
- The different categories for which rankings are given include Engineering, Management, Pharmacy, Medical, Architecture, Law, Universities and Colleges. The rankings are being published annually since 2016.

About Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching (PMMMNMTT) Scheme:

- It is a Central sector Scheme with All- India coverage. It was launched in 2014 and is under the aegis of Ministry of Human Resource and Development.
- **Goals:**
 - To ensure a coordinated approach to holistically address the various shortcomings relating to teachers and teaching across the educational spectrum.
 - To create and strengthen the institutional mechanisms (Schools of Education, Institutes of Academic leadership and Education Management, Subject based networks, Teaching-learning Centres etc.) at the Centre & in the States.
 - To empower teachers and faculty during through training, re-training, refresher and orientation programmes in generic skills, pedagogic skills, discipline specific content upgradation, ICT and technology enabled training etc.

10. ANNUAL REFRESHER PROGRAMME IN TEACHING (ARPIT)

News: Ministry of Human Resource and Development has launched the Annual Refresher Programme in Teaching (ARPIT), 2019.

Facts:

About ARPIT:

- Ministry of Human Resource and Development launched Annual Refresher Programme in Teaching (ARPIT) in 2018 under Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching (PMMMNMTT) Scheme.
- It is an initiative of **online professional development** of 15 lakh higher education faculty using the Massive Open Online Courses platform SWAYAM.

- **Beneficiaries:** The courses are meant for all in-service teachers and faculties in order to enhance their career prospects.
- **Courses:** The courses cover a diverse range of topics such as Indian culture & Heritage Studies, Pedagogical Innovations & Research Methodology among others.
- **Implementation:** 75 discipline-specific institutions have been identified and notified as National Resource Centers (NRCs) in the first phase. These institutions are tasked to prepare online training material with focus on latest developments in the discipline, new & emerging trends, pedagogical improvements and methodologies.

Additional information:

About SWAYAM:

- SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active–Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) is a programme initiated by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.
- It is designed to achieve the three cardinal principles of Education Policy namely access, equity and quality.
- The objective is to take the best teaching learning resources to all including the most disadvantaged. It seeks to bridge the digital divide for students who have remained untouched by the digital revolution and have not been able to join the mainstream of the knowledge economy.
- SWAYAM platform is developed by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and NPTEL, IIT Madras with the help of Google Inc. and Persistent Systems Ltd.
- SWAYAM is the portal that hosts Massive Open Online Courses available free of cost to anyone and everyone willing to access it
- Courses available here start from class 9 till post-graduation levels
- The courses available there are held in 4 quadrants :
 1. Video lectures
 2. Specially prepared reading material that can be downloaded/printed
 3. Self-assessment tests via tests and quizzes
 4. Online discussion forum for clearing doubts

11. JEEVAN KAUSHAL PROGRAMME

News: Ministry of Human Resource and Development has launched the **Curriculum for Life Skills** (Jeevan Kaushal) programme in the curriculum for **undergraduate courses** across India.

Facts:

- The Curriculum for Life Skills (JeevanKaushal) programme has been designed by the **University Grants Commission (UGC)**.
- **Aim:** inculcating **emotional and intellectual competencies** in higher education students and help them overcome stress and manage time effectively.
- The life skills programme will comprise of four courses namely
 - communication skills
 - professional skills
 - leadership skills and
 - Universal human values.
- The programme will also focus on teamwork, problem-solving and decision-making among others.

Additional information:**About UGC:**

- The University Grants Commission of India (UGC India) is a **statutory body** set up by the Indian Union government in accordance with the UGC Act, 1956 under Ministry of Human Resource Development
- It is charged with coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of higher education.
- UGC also provides recognition to universities in India and disburses funds to such recognised universities and colleges.

12. SCIENTIFIC SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY POLICY

News: Department of Science and Technology, Ministry of Science and Technology has released draft Scientific Social Responsibility Policy. If implemented, India will become the **first country** in the world to implement a Scientific Social Responsibility (SSR) Policy on the lines of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Facts:

- **What is Scientific Social Responsibility (SSR)?**
The draft defines SSR as the ethical obligation of knowledge workers in all fields of science and technology to voluntarily contribute their knowledge and resources to the widest spectrum of stakeholders in society, in a spirit of service and conscious reciprocity.
- **Aim of the policy:** to strengthen science and society linkages so as to make S&T ecosystem vibrant.
- **Objectives:**
 - Science-society connect: Facilitating inclusive and sustainable development by transferring the benefits of scientific work to meet existing and emerging societal needs
 - Science-science connect: Creating an enabling environment for the sharing of ideas and resources within the knowledge ecosystem.
 - Society-science connect: Collaborating with communities to identify problems and develop scientific and technological solutions.
 - Cultural change: Inculcating social responsibility among individuals and institutions practicing science; creating awareness about SSR within society; and infusing scientific temperament into day-to-day social existence and interaction.
- **Stakeholders:** It would involve four different categories of stakeholders: beneficiaries, implementers, assessors and supporters (BIAS).
- **Features of the Draft policy:**
 - Under the proposed policy, individual scientists or knowledge workers will be required to devote at least 10 person-days of SSR per year for exchanging scientific knowledge to society.
 - The draft policy has proposed to give credit to knowledge workers or scientists for individual SSR activities in their annual performance appraisal and evaluation.
 - No institution would be allowed to outsource or sub-contract their SSR activities and projects.
 - A central agency will be established at DST to implement the SSR. Other ministries would also be encouraged to make their own plans to implement SSR as per their mandate.
- **Benefits:**
 - Expansion of the domain of science and its benefits to the community.
 - Creation of an opportunity for cooperation and sharing of S&T resources in laboratories with other researchers in universities and colleges.
 - Training for skill development and upgrading scientific knowledge.

- Helping MSMEs, Startups and informal sector enterprises in increasing their overall productivity.
- Facilitating scientific intervention in rural innovation.
- Empowering women, disadvantaged and weaker sections of society through scientific intervention.
- Facilitating actions towards addressing Technology Vision 2035 Prerogatives and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the country such as water, ecology, health and livelihood

*Social***1. EAT RIGHT INDIA MOVEMENT**

News: The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has launched a campaign to promote Eat Right India Movement

Facts:**About Eat Right India Movement**

- The Eat Right India Movement was launched by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) in 2018. It is a preventive healthcare measure to trigger social and behavioural change
- **Aim:** The movement aims to improve public health in India and combat negative nutritional trends to fight lifestyle diseases.
The movement aims to cut down salt/sugar and oil consumption by 30% in three years.
- **Need for the Movement:** India's disease burden is shifting from communicable to non-communicable diseases and the burden of diet-related diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, and obesity is on the rise. Thus, it has become necessary to launch a campaign to sensitise people about healthy eating.

Salient Features:

- It is built on two broad pillars of 'Eat Healthy' and 'Eat Safe'.
- It collaborates with both the demand side and supply side.
 - On the demand side, it focuses on empowering citizens to make the right food choices.
 - On the supply side, it nudges food businesses to reformulate their products, provide better nutritional information to consumers and make investments in healthy food
- It brings together three ongoing initiatives of FSSAI:
 - **Safe and Nutritious Food Initiative** which focuses on social and behavioural change around food safety and nutrition at home, school, workplace and on-the-go
 - The **Eat Healthy Campaign** which focuses on reduction of high fat, sugar and salt foods in the diet
 - **Food Fortification** which on promoting five staple foods-wheat flour, rice, oil, milk and salt that are added with key vitamins and minerals to improve their nutritional content.
 - It has launched **trans-fat free logo** to spread awareness about improved dietary intake through it.
- The movement is aligned with the government's flagship public health programmes such as POSHAN Abhiyaan, Anemia Mukh Bharat, Ayushman Bharat Yojana and Swachh Bharat Mission.

Additional Information:**Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI):**

- Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is an autonomous body established in 2011 under Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. It is under the aegis of Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
- FSSAI is responsible for protecting and promoting public health through the regulation and supervision of food safety

2. MEASLES AND RUBELLA

News: Member Countries of the WHO South-East Asia Region (SEAR) have resolved to eliminate measles and rubella by 2023. Earlier the target set was 2020.

Facts:

- WHO SEAR member countries have adopted a “Strategic Plan for Measles and Rubella Elimination 2020-2024” at the 72nd session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia in Delhi. It lays down the road map and focus areas to achieve the elimination targets in the region.

The target can be achieved by the following steps :

1. By strengthening the immunisation systems for increasing and sustaining high level of population immunity against the two diseases at both the national and sub-national levels.
2. By ensuring a highly sensitive laboratory supported case-based surveillance system – better evidence for appropriate planning and response.
3. By mobilising political, societal and financial support to ensure the interruption of transmission of indigenous measles and rubella virus by 2023.

Additional Information:

Measles and Rubella

- Measles and Rubella (German measles) are contagious viral diseases which are spread by contact with an infected person through coughing and sneezing. Measles is caused by Rubeola virus and Rubella is caused by Rubella virus.
- Measles can cause serious complications, including blindness, encephalitis, severe diarrhoea, ear infection and pneumonia
- Measles and Rubella have similar symptoms. However, rubella is a milder viral infection than measles. Rubella infection in pregnant women may cause foetal death or congenital defects known as **congenital rubella syndrome (CRS)**
- Both of them can be entirely prevented with a two-dose of MMR (Measles, Mumps, and Rubella) vaccine.

Status of Measles and Rubella in India

- According to the latest Global Measles and Rubella Update, India reported 47,056 measles cases and 1,263 rubella cases during May 2018 and April 2019

Elimination Efforts:

India:

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

Global:

- **Global Vaccine Action Plan (2011-2020):** Under the Global Vaccine Action Plan, WHO has targeted to eliminate measles by 2020. It seeks to ensure a more equitable access to existing vaccines for people in all communities.
- **‘Measles Elimination and Rubella/CRS Control by 2020’:** In 2013, WHO SEAR initiated ‘Measles Elimination and Rubella/CRS Control by 2020’ which sought to curb and control measles and rubella through immunization, surveillance and developing and maintaining an accredited measles laboratory network.

WHO SEAR (South east asia region)

- It has 11 member countries- Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bhutan, DPR Korea, Myanmar, Maldives and Timor-Leste.

3. PROHIBITION OF E-CIGARETTES ORDINANCE, 2019

News: The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister has approved the Promulgation of the Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes (production, manufacture, import, export, transport, sale, distribution, storage and advertisement) Ordinance, 2019.

Facts:**About E-cigarettes:**

- Electronic cigarette is a handheld battery-powered vaporizer that simulates smoking, but without tobacco combustion. These do not burn or use tobacco leaves but instead vaporise nicotine liquid called “juice” which the user then inhales.
- E-cigarettes are the most common form of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS)
- Other examples: Heat Not Burn Products, e-Hookah and e-cigars and other similar devices.

Concerns associated with E-cigarettes:

- The solutions in E-cigarettes contain propylene glycol, nicotine etc pose significant health risks, including cancer.
- E-cigarettes have adverse impact that is comparable to cigarette smoking- damage the cardiovascular system, impaired respiratory immune cell function and severe respiratory disease.
- According to a WHO report, nicotine itself is not a carcinogen but it can function like a “tumour promoter” and seems to be involved in the biology of malignant disease, as well as of neuro-degeneration.
- Concerns about addiction in teens and young adults as e-cigarettes are often advertised as less harmful than conventional cigarettes.
- E-cigarettes contain **nicotine** and not tobacco thus they are not covered by the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003 (COTPA), which mandates stringent health warnings on the packaging and advertisements of tobacco products.

Prohibition of E-cigarettes Ordinance, 2019

- After the ban comes into force, any production, manufacturing, import, export, transport, sale (including online sale), distribution or advertisement (including online advertisement) of e-cigarettes/ENDS will be a cognizable offence.

- The offence will be punishable with imprisonment of up to one year, or fine up to ₹1 lakh, or both for the first offence; and imprisonment of up to three years and fine up to ₹5 lakh for a subsequent offence.
- Those found storing e-cigarettes will be punished with imprisonment up to 6 months or fine up to Rs 50,000 or both.
- Those who have existing stocks of e-cigarettes will have to declare and deposit them with the nearest police station on their own before the ordinance comes into effect
- The sub-inspector has been designated as the authorised officer to take action under the ordinance.

Significance of the ban:

- Will ensure effective and timely action against the trend of use of e-cigarettes especially among youth.
- Will complement government's efforts for tobacco control
- Will help in reduction of tobacco use and reduction in associated economic and disease burden.

Additional Information:

- In August 2018, the Indian health ministry had issued an advisory to all states and Union Territories (UTs) to stop the manufacture, sale and import of ENDS.
- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) in its white paper on Electronic Nicotine Delivery System (ENDS), published on the eve of World No Tobacco Day (31st may), has said that ENDS adversely affect almost all the human body systems. It has recommended a complete ban on e-cigarettes and other ENDS.
- According to WHO's Global Tobacco Epidemic 2017 report, nearly 30 countries have banned ENDS. Examples include Mauritius, Australia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Brazil, Mexico, Uruguay, Bahrain, Iran, Saudi Arabia and UAE.
- In India, 16 states and 1 UT has had already banned manufacture, import and sale of ENDS.
- ENDS are not covered under Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act, 2003.

4. INTERNATIONAL MIGRANT STOCK 2019

News: Union Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Population Division, has released International Migrant Stock 2019.

Facts:

Key takeaways from International Migrant Stock 2019:

- Number of international migrants in the world had reached an estimated 272 million 2019 — 51 million more than in 2010.
- The percentage of international migrants of the total global population has increased to 3.5% from 2.8% in 2000.
- Indian origin people (17.5 million) form the largest share of international migrants, followed by Mexico, China, Russia and Syria.
- The number of migrants living in India declined from 5.24 million in 2015 to an estimated 5.15 million in 2019. Bangladesh was the leading country of origin for migrants in India.
- The European region hosted the highest number of immigrants at 82 million in 2019, followed by North America (59 million) and Northern Africa and Western Asia (49 million).

- Among countries, the U.S. hosts the highest number of international migrants (51 million), about 19% of the global population.
- Between 2010 and 2017, the global number of refugees and asylum seekers increased by about 13 million.

Additional Information:

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA):

- It is part of the United Nations Secretariat and is responsible for the follow-up to major United Nations Summits and Conferences. It also takes care of the services to the United Nations Economic and Social Council.
- It assists countries around the world in agenda-setting and decision-making with the goal of meeting their economic, social and environmental challenges.
- It was established in 1948. It is headquartered in New York, USA.

5. MIS PORTAL UNDER ACCESSIBLE INDIA CAMPAIGN

News: Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) under Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has developed a Management Information System (MIS) for stakeholders of Accessible India Campaign (AIC).

Facts:

About MIS Portal:

- The MIS portal will bring all the nodal ministries and States/UTs on a single platform for monitoring the progress being made against each target of Accessible India Campaign (AIC).
- The portal will be useful in maintaining all the function on digital platform and capture data on a real-time basis.

Accessible India Campaign:

- Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) has formulated the Accessible India Campaign also known as Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan.
- It was launched on International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3rd December, 2015.
- The campaign is based on the principles of the Social Model of Disability, which means disability is caused by the way society is organised and not by the person's limitations and impairments
- The aim of the Campaign is to make a barrier free and conducive environment for Persons with Disabilities all over the country.
- The campaign targets three separate verticals for achieving universal accessibility namely
 - built up environment
 - transportation ecosystem and
 - Information & communication technology (ICT) ecosystem.
- The campaign is in line with Article 9 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) to which India is a signatory.

6. MALARIA ERADICATION

News: Lancet has released a report on Malaria eradication.

Facts:**About the report:**

- The report has held that with the right strategies and sufficient funding, it is possible to eradicate malaria as early as 2050.
- The report has noted that since 2000, global malaria incidence and death rates have declined by 36% and 60 % respectively. More than half of the world's countries are malaria-free.
- However, there are over 200 million cases of malaria reported each year, claiming nearly half a million lives. Malaria cases are rising in 55 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.
- The report also highlighted the inequity where 29 countries (27 in Africa) accounted for the large majority of new cases and 85% of global deaths in 2017.
- On the other hand, 38 countries had incidences of fewer than ten cases per 1,000 population in 2017 and reported just 5% of total malaria deaths.

Recommendations: The report identifies three ways to accelerate the decline in malaria cases which are-

- Improve implementation of malaria control programmes globally.
- Develop and roll out innovative new tools to overcome the biological challenges to eradication.
- Malaria-endemic countries must be provided with the financial investment to fight malaria.

Additional information:

Malaria: It is caused by Plasmodium parasites that are transmitted to people through the bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes called malaria vectors

Note: WHO officially endorses disease-specific global awareness days for only four diseases viz. HIV -AIDS, TB, Malaria, and Hepatitis.

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 incidence of malaria.
- 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.

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 to eliminate malaria in 21 countries by 2020. India is not among the 21 countries under E-2020 initiative.

7. INDIA TB REPORT 2019

News: Government has released the India Tuberculosis (TB) Report 2019.

Facts:**Highlights of the report:**

- There has been a 16% increase in the number of TB cases in 2018 as compared to the previous year.
- India accounted for a quarter of the Global TB burden with an estimated 27 lakh new cases in 2018.
- The majority of the Tuberculosis affected individuals (89%) were in the age group 15-69.
- Uttar Pradesh accounted for 20% of all notifications of TB cases (187 cases/lakh population).
- The two UTs of Delhi and Chandigarh had the highest number of notified patients per lakh population at 417 and 468 respectively.

Additional Information:**About Tuberculosis (TB)**

- TB is an infectious airborne bacterial disease caused by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*.
- TB is a preventable and curable disease
- When TB infection becomes resistant to the first line of treatment — isoniazid and rifampicin, it is called Multi-drug resistant TB (MDR-TB). When the infection becomes resistant even to the second-line treatment it is called Extensively-drug resistant tuberculosis (XDR-TB)

Elimination Efforts:**India:**

- The Indian government has put forward **National Strategic Plan (NSP) for TB Elimination, 2017-2025**. The plan is a framework to provide guidance for the activities of various stakeholders to reduce the burden of TB mortality and morbidity.
- In 2018, the government launched the **TB Free India campaign** to take activities under NSP for TB Elimination. The campaign seeks to **eliminate TB in India by 2025**.
- **TB Harega Desh Jeetega' Campaign:** The campaign aims to improve and expand the reach of Tuberculosis care services across the country by 2022.
- **National TB Prevalence Survey:** 25 vans will be part of the prevalence survey, which will go to 625 clusters of the country and check for TB. This sample survey is to be completed by 2020. The survey will present national and state level data which will be used as a policy tool for further interventions.
- **Nikshay Poshan Yojana:** Launched in 2018, a direct benefit transfer (DBT) scheme to provide nutritional support to TB patients. Under the scheme, TB patients have been receiving Rs. 500 per month for the entire duration of treatment.

Global:

- **SDG 3.3:** It calls to eliminate TB by 2030
- **WHO End TB Strategy:** It aims to end the global TB epidemic, with targets to reduce TB deaths by 95% and to cut new cases by 90% between 2015 and 2035.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) has launched a joint initiative with the Global Fund and the Stop TB Partnership **"Find. Treat. All. #EndTB"**, with the aim to accelerate the TB response and ensure access to care, in line with WHO's overall drive towards **Universal Health Coverage**.
- **Global TB report :** Published by WHO every year since 1997
- **The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria:** It is an international financial organization designed to accelerate the end of AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria as epidemics. The organisation is a partnership between governments, civil society, the private sector and people affected by the diseases. It was formed in 2002. It is headquartered at Geneva, Switzerland. Recently,

India has announced a contribution of \$22 million to the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria for the 6th replenishment cycle (2020-22).

- **The UN Political Declaration on TB in 2018 includes 4 new global targets:**
 1. Treat 40 million people for TB disease in the 5-year period 2018-22 (7 million in 2018).
 2. Reach at least 30 million people with TB preventive treatment for latent TB infection in the 5-year period 2018-22.
 3. Mobilize at least US\$13 billion annually for universal access to TB diagnosis, treatment and care by 2022.
 4. Mobilize at least US\$2 billion annually for TB research.
- U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) has approved a new drug Pretomanid for treating drug-resistant tuberculosis — multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) and extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB). **Pretomanid** is the third new anti-TB drug approved for use by the FDA in more than 40 years. It will be one of the three-drugs in the regimen for drug approval by the European Medicines Agency (EMA).

8. NATIONAL RURAL SANITATION STRATEGY

News: The Government of India has declared India open defecation free (ODF) and claimed the success of Swachh Bharat Mission. Further, Jal Shakti Ministry's Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS) has launched a 10-year national rural sanitation strategy.

Facts:

About National rural sanitation strategy:

Aim: The strategy seeks to sustain India's 100% Open Defecation Free (ODF) status claimed by the Union government, on September 27, 2019.

Duration: The framework will be in place from 2019 to 2029.

Focus Areas:

- It will ensure that people sustain their usage of toilets.
- It will also focus on proper implementation of solid and liquid waste management (SLWM) — plastic waste, organic waste, grey water, and faecal sludge in rural areas.

Implementation:

- A district-level training management unit (TMU) will be set up. It will provide oversight and support to gram panchayats (GPs) so that they ensure the operation and maintenance of sanitation infrastructure.
- The GPs are also supposed to conduct rapid assessment of water and sanitation gaps.

Financing:

- Government funding is the primary source of financing.
- Further, there will be alternative self-financing by gradual leveraging of community resources in the form of tariffs for ODF plus activities.
- 60:40 financing model as being followed till now in Swachh Bharat.

Additional Information:

About Swachh Bharat Mission:

- It is a nationwide cleanliness campaign initiated by Govt. of India on 2nd October 2014.

- **Aim:** It seeks to achieve a Clean India by 2019, as a tribute to the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.
- **Objectives:**
 - Eliminate open defecation
 - Conversion of insanitary toilets to pour flush toilets,
 - Eradication of manual scavenging,
 - 100% collection and scientific processing/disposal reuse/recycle of Municipal Solid Waste,
 - To bring about a behavioural change in people regarding healthy sanitation practices,
 - Generate awareness among the citizens about sanitation and its linkages with public health.
 - Strengthening of urban local bodies to design, execute and operate systems,
 - To create enabling environment for private sector participation in Capital Expenditure and Operation & Maintenance (O&M) costs.
- **Components:**
 - Construction of Household Toilets,
 - Community and Public Toilets
 - Solid Waste Management
 - Information, Education & Communication (IEC) and Public Awareness,
 - Capacity Building and Administrative & Office Expenses (A&OE).
- **Sub-Missions:**
 - **Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin):** It aims to improve the levels of cleanliness in rural areas through Solid and Liquid Waste Management activities and making villages Open Defecation Free (ODF) and clean. It is implemented by Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Jal Shakti Ministry
 - **Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban):** It aims at elimination of open defecation, conversion of unsanitary toilets to pour flush toilets, eradication of manual scavenging, municipal solid waste management and bringing about a behavioural change in people regarding healthy sanitation practices. It is implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

Recent Developments under Swachh Bharat Mission:

Swachh Mahotsav 2019: Swachh Mahotsav was organised by the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti. On this occasion, President of India presented the Swachh Bharat Awards in various categories.

Swachh Bharat Awards 2019:

- Best Swachh Iconic Place was awarded to Vaishno Devi Shrine Board in Jammu and Kashmir and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CST), Mumbai.
- Swachh Award in Swachhta Action Plan category was awarded to the Ministry of Railways.
- Award for Open Defecation Free (ODF) and Behavior Change were given to Gujarat and Sikkim.

Swachhata Hi Seva (SHS) 2019

- Swachhta Hi Sewa' (Cleanliness is service) is a campaign launched in 2018 as a part of Swachh Bharat Mission.
- The Swachhata hi Sewa 2019 theme is 'plastic waste awareness and management'.
- Under the campaign there will be mass awareness generation activities on plastic waste management between September 11 and October 1, 2019.

Miscellaneous

1. THE GLOBAL LIVEABILITY INDEX 2019

News: The Economist Intelligence Unit has released its Global Liveability Index 2019

Facts:

About Global Liveability Index:

- The index assesses 140 cities around the world on the basis of the best or the worst living conditions.
- Each city is assessed on 30 qualitative and quantitative factors across five broad categories: a) stability, b) healthcare, c) culture and environment, d) education, and e) infrastructure
- Each factor in a city is rated as acceptable, tolerable, uncomfortable, undesirable or intolerable.
- Factor-wise scores are then compiled and weighted to provide a score of 1–100, where 1 is considered intolerable and 100 is considered ideal.

Key takeaways from the Global Liveability Index 2019

- Vienna (Austria) has been ranked the most liveable city followed by Melbourne (Australia), Sydney (Australia), Osaka (Japan) and Calgary (Canada)
- New Delhi has been ranked 118th as compared to 112th in 2018. The downgrade in rank has been due to problems linked to climate change (air pollution, water scarcity) and rising crimes. Mumbai has been ranked 119th.
- **Reasons for decline in liveability in Indian cities:**
 1. Abuses against journalists.
 2. Rise in Crime rates.
 3. Climatic changes.
 4. Constrained liveability conditions
- Among the BRICS countries, Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) ranked 89th, Moscow (Russia) ranked 68th, Beijing (China) ranked 76th.
- The world's least liveable cities were Damascus (Syria), Lagos (Nigeria), and Dhaka (Bangladesh)

2. DR. KALAM SMRITI INTERNATIONAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

News: Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been conferred the Dr Kalam Smriti International Excellence Award 2019 for her vision of a peaceful and prosperous South Asia and her contribution to fostering cooperation between India and Bangladesh.

Facts

About the award:

- The award has been instituted in the memory of former Indian President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam.
- The award is given every year to honour statesmen or leaders who have shown excellence in their fields to achieve the best for their countries.
- Earlier, the Presidents of the Maldives, Ghana and Mauritius had received the award since its introduction in 2015.
- The award is presented by Dale View, a non-governmental organisation registered under the Charitable Societies Act. It was created in 1978 in Kerala to bring about socio-economic development to rural areas through education.

3. DADASAHEB PHALKE AWARD

News: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has announced that Dadasaheb Phalke Award, 2019 will be presented to Amitabh Bachchan.

Facts:

About the award:

- The award was instituted by the government in 1969 in honour of Dadasaheb Phalke's contribution to Indian cinema. It is considered the highest honour in the Indian film fraternity.
- It is presented annually by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
- It is awarded for outstanding contribution to the growth and development of Indian cinema.

Dadasaheb Phalke

- He was an Indian producer, director, and screenwriter.
- He directed India's first full length feature film Raja Harishchandra (1913).
- He is known as "Father of Indian Cinema".

4. INDIA WATER WEEK-2019

News: President of India has inaugurated the 6th India Water Week-2019, at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi.

Facts:

About India water week:

- India Water Week is a forum where international and national experts, who are associated with water issues are invited to join in and share their views, opinions and solutions regarding the water crisis.
- The water week is organised by the Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Ministry of Jal Shakti.
- The theme of the India Water Week-2019 is 'Water Cooperation – Coping with 21st Century Challenges'.

5. SARDAR PATEL NATIONAL UNITY AWARD

News: The government has instituted Sardar Patel National Unity Award-the highest civilian award for contribution to the unity and integrity of India.

Facts:

About the award:

- The award will be announced annually on the occasion of the National Unity Day which is the birth anniversary of Sardar Patel on 31st October.
- An award committee would be constituted by the Prime Minister which would include the Cabinet Secretary, Principal Secretary to the PM, Secretary to the President, Home Secretary as Members and three-four eminent persons.
- The Award would consist of a medal and a citation. No monetary grant or cash award would be attached to this Award.
- Further, not more than three Awards would be given in a year.
- It would be conferred upon individuals and not institutions. It would also not be conferred posthumously except in very rare and highly deserving cases.

6. WORLD TOURISM DAY

News: United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) has chosen India, for the first time, as the host country to celebrate World Tourism Day 2019.

Facts:

- The United Nations World Tourism Day is celebrated on September 27.
- The day aims to foster awareness among the global community of tourism's social, cultural, political and economic value and the contribution the sector can make in reaching Sustainable Development Goals.
- The theme for 2019 tourism day is 'Tourism and Jobs: A better future for all'.
- The focus of UNWTO in 2019 is on jobs, as tourism generates 10% of world jobs. Hence, creating equitable employment is important to achieve social inclusion, peace and security.

Additional Information:

United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO):

- The UNWTO is the United Nations Specialised Agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism.
- It was established in 1975 with headquarters in Madrid, Spain.
- It encourages the implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism to maximize tourism's socio-economic contribution while minimizing its possible negative impacts.
- UNWTO's membership includes 158 countries, 6 Associate Member countries and over 500 affiliate Members representing the private sector, educational institutions, tourism associations and local tourism authorities

7. NCG VISHWAM CANCER CARE CONNECT

News: Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) chairman KN Vyas has launched the NCG Vishwam Cancer Care Connect here on the sidelines of 63rd general conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Facts:

- NCG-Vishwam envisages integration of hospitals and relevant cancer care institutes from partner countries with the National Cancer Grid (NCG) of India.

About National Cancer Grid

- It is a network of major cancer centers, research institutes, patient groups and charitable institutions across India.
- The mandate of NCG is to establish uniform standards of patient care for prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of cancer, providing specialized training and education in oncology and facilitating collaborative basic, translational and clinical research in cancer.
- It was established in 2012. It is managed by Tata Memorial Centre (TMC) and is funded by the Department of Atomic Energy, Government of India.

Additional information:

About IAEA:

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

- It seeks to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons.
- It is headquartered in Vienna, Austria. It has 171 member states with one vote per member.
- Though established as an autonomous organisation, the IAEA reports to both the United Nations General Assembly and the UN Security Council.

Reports by IAEA :

- Nuclear Technology Review
- Technical cooperation report

Programs by IAEA :

- Program of Action for Cancer Therapy (PACT).
- Human Health Program.
- Water Availability Enhancement Project.

1. **International Hrant Dink Award:** Meghalaya-based activist Agnes Kharshiing has received the 11th International Hrant Dink Award. She has publicized the rights violations suffered by women, and the stories of how these stories are covered up. Since 2009, Hrant Dink Award is presented annually by the Hrant Dink Foundation in memory of Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink. It is presented to individuals, organisations or groups that work for a world free from discrimination, racism and violence and who take personal risks for achieving those ideals.
2. **Vijayanagar:** Indian Air Force has inaugurated a resurfaced runway and advanced landing ground (ALG) in Vijayanagar, in Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh. ALG is important for ensuring quick mobilisation of troops and sending supplies to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China. The IAF had first commenced its operations in Vijayanagar during the India-China war. Vijayanagar is the eastern-most inhabited village in India. It is surrounded by Myanmar on three sides and the fourth side comprises stretches of Namdapha National Park.
3. **Right Livelihood Award:** Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg has won the Right Livelihood Award. The Right Livelihood Award was created in 1980 by Swedish-German philanthropist Jakob von Uexkull. The award is also known as the alternative Nobel Prize.
4. **Deaucha Panchami:** It is a coal block of Birbhum Coal Block Area in West Bengal. It is the World's second largest coal block and largest coal mine or coal block in Asia, due to the number of coal reserves. North Antelope Rochelle Mine in USA is the largest coal mine in the world.
5. **Helicopter Summit:** India's first ever helicopter summit was held in Dehradun, Uttarakhand. It was organised jointly by the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Uttarakhand government and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FICCI). The theme of the summit was based on expanding connectivity through helicopters.
6. **Swachh Bharat World University:** The Maharashtra government has decided to set up 'Swachh Bharat World University' in Wardha to mark Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary. Wardha has been selected to establish the university as Mahatma Gandhi's Sevagram Ashram is located here as also the Institute of Gandhian Studies (Gandhi Vichar Parishad). The University will focus on research studies in sanitation, cleanliness and environment.
7. **Asiatic Society of Mumbai:** Asiatic Society of Mumbai has elected the first woman president-Professor Vispi Balaporia. Asiatic Society is a learned society whose activities include conducting historical research, awarding historians, and running an institute of postgraduate studies. It was founded in 1804 as the Literary Society of Bombay by Sir James Mackintosh, a Scottish colonial administrator.
8. **Mt. Kun:** Situated at an elevation of 7,077 metres, Mount Kun is the second highest summit of the Nun-Kun mountain massif of Himalayas, located near the Suru Valley, on the Kargil-Zaskar road. Nun (7135 m) is the highest peak in the part of the Himalayan range lying on the Indian side of the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir. Indian army recently conducted a mountaineering expedition to Mt Kun.
9. **India international seafood show (IISS):** The 22nd edition of India international seafood show (IISS) will be held in Kochi, Kerala from 7 to 9 February 2020. It is a biennial show organized by the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) in association with the Seafood Exporters Association of India (SEAI).
10. **Nilgiri Tahr:** They are stocky goats endemic to Nilgiri Hills and southern portion of Western Ghats in Kerala and TamilNadu. They are found in the open montane grassland habitat of the South Western Ghats montane rain forests ecoregion. They are listed as **endangered** in the IUCN Red List. It is the state animal of Tamilnadu.

11. **PACEsetter Fund Program** – It was constituted by India and USA in 2015 to provide early stage grant funding to accelerate the commercialization of off grid clean energy products, systems and business models. The main purpose of the fund is to improve the viability of off-grid renewable energy businesses that sell small scale (less than 1 megawatt) clean energy systems to individuals and communities without access to grid-connected power or with limited/intermittent access.
12. **Terracotta Grinder** – It has been launched by Khadi and Village Industries Commission under its project **REPLAN (REducing PLAstic in Nature)**. It will grind the wasted and broken pottery items for reusing in pottery making. It will reduce the cost of production, and will help to solve the problem of shortage of clays for pottery making.
13. **Ramanujan Prize** – The Sastra Ramanujan Prize 2019 will be awarded to mathematician Adam Harper. The prize was instituted in 2005 by Sastra University, TamilNadu.
14. **Gandhi Solar Park** – Indian PM inaugurated Gandhi Solar Park and Gandhi Peace Garden at the UN headquarters. India has gifted solar panels (contribution of \$1 million) that have been installed on the roof of the UN Headquarters, **one panel each for every 193 UN member states**. Gandhi peace park is an innovative initiative under which 150 trees will be planted as part of a crowd-sourced project. People will adopt trees in memory of their loved ones.
15. **India's longest electrified rail tunnel** – India's longest electrified rail tunnel is situated between Cherlopalli and Rapuru stations in Andhra Pradesh.
16. **Pulikali** – It is a folk art (Tiger Dance) of Kerala. It is performed on the 4th day of Onam festival. Literal meaning of Pulikali is the 'play of the tigers' hence the performance revolve around the theme of tiger hunting. Performers painted like tigers and hunters in bright yellow, red, and black dance to the beats of instruments like Udukku and Thakil
17. **Nuakhai** – It is an annual harvest festival in Odisha. It is celebrated to welcome the season's new rice.
18. **Margadarshan and Margadarshak scheme** – These scheme has been launched by Union Human Resource Minister. They are initiatives of AICTE. Under Margdarshan scheme, institutions having good accreditation records or the top-performing institutions are selected to mentor relatively newer 10 to 12 potential institutions. Under Margdarshak scheme, mentor teachers or Margdarshak who are either serving or superannuated but willing and motivated with good knowledge of accreditation and who can devote adequate time to make required visits to these Institutions are identified.