Monthly Current Affairs

OCTOBER 2018
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1. INDIAN MEDICAL COUNCIL (AMENDMENT) ORDINANCE, 2018 [HIGHLIGHTS]

Why in news?
The Indian Medical Council (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018 was promulgated by President. The objective with which this ordinance came into being was to amend the Indian Medical Council Act, 1956.

Highlights
- Supersession of the MCI: The 1956 Act provides for supersession of the MCI and its reconstitution within a period of three years. The Ordinance amends this provision to provide for the supersession of the MCI for a period of one year. In the interim period, the central government will constitute a Board of Governors, which will exercise the powers of the MCI.
- The Act provides for the Board of Governors to consist of up to seven members including persons of eminence in medical education, appointed by the central government. The central government will select one of these members as the Chairperson of the Board. The Ordinance amends this provision to allow for eminent administrators to be selected in the Board.
- Further, the Ordinance provides for the Board of Governors to be assisted by a Secretary General appointed by the central government.

Background
- Parliamentary Committee - There were some serious concerns with the functioning of the MCI.
- A 2016 Parliamentary Standing committee report noted that mere incremental alterations to MCI would not give the expected results.
- Supreme Court - In May 2016, the Supreme Court had set up a three-member oversight committee.
- With one year tenure, the committee, headed by former Chief Justice of India RM Lodha, was to guide the MCI in its functioning.
- The Lodha oversight committee, at the end of its term, submitted a report.
- It detailed how the MCI openly defied the oversight committee’s directives.
- Despite this, the Centre, instead of scrapping the MCI, in July 2017, proposed setting up a new oversight committee to the SC.

2. MAHATMA GANDHI INTERNATIONAL SANITATION CONVENTION

Why in news?
President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention organised by the Drinking Water and Sanitation Ministry to mark the beginning of the 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi.

Medical Council of India
MCI is a statutory body for establishing uniform and high standards of medical education in India. It grants recognition of medical qualifications, gives accreditation to medical schools, grants registration to medical practitioners, and monitors medical practice in India.
Background

- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been envisioned as "a bold, universal agreement to end poverty in all its dimensions and craft an equal, just and secure world – for people, planet, and prosperity by 2030".
- Realising the importance of water and sanitation towards the achievement of this vision has led to a dedicated SDG on water and sanitation – the SDG 6, which aims "to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all."
- India has taken massive strides towards achieving universal safe sanitation. The number of people practicing open defecation in rural India has gone down from 550 million in 2014 to less than 150 million today, through an intensive behaviour change campaign, the Swachh Bharat Mission, which has become a people's movement. India is on track to achieve open defecation free status by 2019, significantly contributing to the global achievement of SDG 6.

About MGISC

- The Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention (MGISC) will be a 4-day event that will bring together Sanitation Ministers and sector specialists from around the world.
- The Convention aims to share sanitation success stories and lessons from the participating countries and will culminate on October 2nd, 2018, with the launch of the Mahatma's 150th birth year celebrations in India, as SBM enters its final year of implementation.
- The Convention will include a field visit, plenary sessions, and technical sessions. A parallel exhibition of sanitation innovations will be held at the meeting venue.

3. COMMITTEE TO REVIEW THE COMPETITION ACT

Why in news?
The Government has constituted a Competition Law Review Committee to review the Competition Act to ensure that the legislation is in sync with the changing business environment.

Key points

- the committee will review the competition regulations in view of changing business environment and bring necessary changes, if required. It will also look into international best practices in competition field, especially anti-trust laws, merger guidelines and handling cross border competition issues.
- Other regulatory regimes, institutional mechanism and government policies, which overlap with the Competition Act, will also be studied by the committee. The committee will submit the report within three months of the date of its first meeting, the release said.

The Competition Act, 2002

- The Competition Act, 2002 was passed by the Parliament in the year 2002, to which the President accorded assent in January, 2003. It was subsequently amended by the Competition (Amendment) Act, 2007.
- In accordance with the provisions of the Amendment Act, the Competition Commission of India and the Competition Appellate Tribunal have been established. The Competition Commission of India is now fully functional with a Chairperson and six members. The provisions of the Competition Act relating to anti-competitive agreements and abuse of dominant position were notified on May 20, 2009.
- The objectives of the Act are sought to be achieved through the Competition Commission of India (CCI), which has been established by the Central Government with effect from 14th October 2003. CCI consists of a Chairperson and 6 Members appointed by the Central Government.
SC EXTENDS ‘CREAMY LAYER’ TO SCS & STS

Why in news?
In a landmark decision, the Supreme Court held that the concept of creamy layer shall be applicable in reservation in promotions for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Highlights
- A five-judge bench presided over by Chief Justice Dipak Misra ruled that a constitutional court is empowered to strike down any reservation for creamy layer among the most backward classes.
- The bench said that the Presidential Lists under Articles 341 or 342 of the Constitution may include any group or community as SC or ST but the principle of creamy layer can be applied by a court on the touchstone of equality within the same group or sub-group.

About the verdict
- “When it comes to the creamy layer principle, it is important to note that this principle sounds in Articles 14 and 16(1), as unequals within the same class are being treated equally with other members of that class,” the bench added.
- The court did not agree with a contention of the central government that the concept of a creamy layer cannot be applied to SC/ST grouping.
- Applying the principle of harmonious interpretation, the court said Parliament will have complete freedom to include or exclude persons from the Presidential Lists based on relevant factors.
- The court also declined a plea by the Union government that reservation for SCs and STs should be in proportion to their total population in promotional posts.

creamy layer
- The creamy layer (income) criteria were defined as annual family income from all sources more than 100,000 rupees per annum in 1993, and revised to ₹ 2.5 lakh (2004), then ₹ 4.5 lakh (2008), Rs 6 lakh (2013) and Rs 8 lakh (2017). In October 2015, the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) proposed that a person belonging to OBC with an annual family income of up to Rs 15 lakh should be considered as the minimum ceiling for OBC.
- The Supreme Court of India defined the "creamy layer," quoting an Indian governmental office memorandum dated 8 September 1993. The term was originally introduced in the context of reservation of jobs for certain groups in 1992. The Supreme Court has said that the benefit of reservation should not be given to OBC children of constitutional functionaries—such as the President, Judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts, employees of central and state bureaucracies above a certain level, public sector employees, and members of the armed forces and paramilitary personnel above the rank of colonel (SCs, STs, and the unreserved are exempt now).
- The children of persons engaged in trade, industry and professions such as a doctor, lawyer, chartered accountant, income tax consultant, financial or management consultant, dental surgeon, engineer, computer specialist, film artists and other film professional, author, playwright, sports person, sports professional, media professional or any other vocations of like status whose annual income is more than ₹ 800,000 (Rs 8 lakh) for a period of three consecutive years are also excluded.

5. DRAFT MARICULTURE POLICY

Why in news?
A draft national policy on mariculture has mooted mariculture zones by demarcating special areas in the sea for activities such as cage farming, bivalve farming, pen culture, seaweed culture, hatcheries and nurseries based on scientific criteria.

Highlights
- The draft policy was formulated by an expert committee formed by the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) with Director of Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), as Chairman.
- The policy has also suggested farming of genetically modified (GM) species in closed mariculture systems.
- The document is now publicly available for comments from all stakeholders and interested groups.
- According to the policy, satellite remote sensing data and GIS will be used to identify potential zones for mariculture on the basis of scientific evaluation of environmental parameters suitable for various types of farming avoiding conflict with other users and protecting the livelihoods of local fishing communities. Sea areas identified in this manner will be designated as mariculture technology parks by the respective States.
- Marine protected areas, ecologically sensitive areas such as coral reefs, mangroves, seagrass beds, and other coastal areas with strategic interest will not be considered for mariculture zones. In a bid to support fish breeding, culture, packaging and trade, the policy proposes encouraging the establishment of off-shore technology parks and coastal embankment systems.
- The policy advises the government to formulate financial assistance programmes, including prioritised lending schemes, subsidised credit and investment subsidies, to promote mariculture.

6. ROHINGYAS

Why in news
India deported seven Rohingya immigrants, who have been staying in Assam illegally, to their country of origin Myanmar, in a first such move with regard to the people from the Rakhine province of the neighbouring country.
Key points

- The illegal immigrants were detained in 2012 and since then they were lodged in Cachar Central Jail in Assam’s Silchar.
- Consular access had been given to Myanmar diplomats, who confirmed the identity of the immigrants.
- Earlier, the Supreme Court had allowed their deportation to Myanmar, saying they were found by the competent court as illegal immigrants and have been accepted by their country of origin as citizens.
- The bench rejected the plea made by one of the Rohingyas, who had filed an application seeking to restrain the Centre from deporting the seven Rohingyas lodged in a detention centre at Silchar in Assam to Myanmar.
- The Centre informed the court that Myanmar has issued a certificate of identity to the seven Rohingyas along with one month visa to facilitate their deportation.

Concerns

- India still remains a non-signatory to 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol, which help define the legal obligation of states to protect refugees.
- It remains the duty of a state, especially one with a democratic ethos like India’s, to keep its doors open for people in distress.
- No asylum policy till now.
- Our data on refugees remain significantly deficient, preventing analysis on refugee flow and their parlous existence.
- We hence fail on various counts associated with resettlement and rehabilitation, with many refugees remaining unregistered.
- Such paucity of data also leads to misrepresentation and exaggeration in national and local media.

7. NRC FOR TRIPURA

Why in news?
The Supreme court sought a response from the Centre on a petition seeking the implementation of the National Register for Citizens (NRC) to identify illegal immigrants in Tripura.

Highlights

- The Supreme court sought a response from the Centre on a petition seeking the implementation of the National Register for Citizens (NRC) to identify illegal immigrants in Tripura.
- The petitioners submit that it is very necessary to update the NRC in Tripura, detect the illegal immigrants / non-citizens of India, delete them from the voters list and also deport them from India so that the socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural equilibrium in Tripura is restored.
- Tripura, an erstwhile princely state was tribal dominated but the indigenous population were reduced to a minority due to influx of immigrants, the petition added.
- The apex court’s move came two days after the Ministry of Home Affairs said no decision had been taken on the issue of NRC revision in the state.

NRC in Assam

- On July 30, the Centre had published a second draft NRC list of Assam in which out of 3.29 crore people, the names of 2.89 crore were included. The first draft of the NRC for Assam was published on the intervening night of December 31 and January 1.
Assam, which has faced influx of people from Bangladesh since the early 20th century, is the only state having an NRC, which was first prepared in 1951.

8. SECTION 151 A OF THE REPRESENTATION OF PEOPLE ACT

Why in News?
Amidst murmurs in political circles that the Lok Sabha bypolls in Karnataka to three seats was “unnecessary”, the Election Commission has cited Section 151 A of the Representation of People Act, which mandated it.

Section 151A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951:
- Section 151A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 mandates the Election Commission to fill the casual vacancies in the Houses of Parliament and State Legislatures through bye elections within six months from the date of occurrence of the vacancy, provided that the remainder of the term of a member in relation to a vacancy is one year or more.
- Time limit for filling vacancies referred to in sections 147, 149, 150 and 151.— Notwithstanding anything contained in section 147, section 149, section 150 and section 151, a bye-election for filling any vacancy referred to in any of the said sections shall be held within a period of six months from the date of the occurrence of the vacancy.

Background:
Experts have written to the President questioning the rationale behind holding by-elections close to general elections. President Ram Nath Kovind has been requested to withdraw notification of the by-election. They have questioned EC’s move as the announcement of by-elections to parliamentary constituencies were only in Karnataka while there are vacant constituencies in Andhra Pradesh too.

Representation of Peoples Act 1951
Representation of Peoples Act 1951 is an act enacted by the Indian provincial parliament before first general elections. The People’s Representation act provides for the actual conduct of elections in India. The act also deals with details like qualification and disqualification of members of both houses of Parliament (ie Loksabha and Rajyasabha) and the state legislatures (ie. State Legislative Assembly and State Legislative Council).

9. NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (NCVET)

Why in news?
The Union Cabinet has approved the merger of the existing regulatory institutions in the skills space -- National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT) and the National Skill Development Agency (NSDA) -- into the National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET). The new body will regulate the functioning of entities engaged in vocational education and training, both long-term and short-term and establish minimum standards for the functioning of such entities.

Key facts
- The primary functions of NCVET will include recognition and regulation of awarding bodies, assessment bodies and skill related information providers; approval of qualifications developed by awarding bodies and Sector Skill Councils (SSCs); indirect regulation of

Highlights of RPA Act 1951
- Actual conduct of elections.
- Administrative machinery for conducting elections.
- Poll.
- Election offences.
- Election disputes.
- By-elections.
- Registration of political parties.
vocational training institutes through awarding bodies and assessment agencies; research and information dissemination and grievance redressal.

- According to the Union Government, the Council would be headed by a Chairperson and will have Executive and Non-Executive Members.
- Since NCVET is proposed to be set up through merger of two existing bodies, the existing infrastructure and resources will be utilized for the most part.
- In the past, most of the country's skill training needs were met through courses offered by the Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and under the Modular Employable Scheme (MES), regulated by NCVT.
- An attempt towards some measure of regulation was made with the establishment of the National Skill Development Agency (NSDA) in 2013, to coordinate and harmonize the skill development efforts of the government and the private sector. The primary role of NSDA has been to anchor and operationalize the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) to ensure that quality and standards meet sector specific requirements.

10. **MAKE II SCHEME**

**Why in news?**
The Department of Defence Production under the Ministry of Defence has cleared 31 projects and has given them in-principle approval under the Make-II scheme.

**Make’ Procedure has following two sub-categories:**

- **Make-I** (Government Funded): Projects under ‘Make-I’ sub-category will involve Government funding of 90%, released in a phased manner and based on the progress of the scheme, as per terms agreed between MoD and the vendor.
- **Make-II** (Industry Funded): Projects under 'Make-II' category will involve prototype development of equipment/system/platform or their upgrades or their sub-systems/sub-assembly/assemblies/components, primarily for import substitution/innovative solutions, for which no Government funding will be provided for prototype development purposes.

**Key points**

- Make-II is an industry-funded scheme. It offers easier clearance and faster scaling-up of production. Make-II has seen faster development than any of the ‘Make projects’ that have happened so far,
- Another scheme — **SPARK** (Support for Prototype & Research Kick-start) — supports development of prototypes after selection under various programmes.
- For this, we have funds up to ₹1.5 crore per project funded and handheld by iDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence). Here the money is disbursed in a phased manner with milestone achievements.
- iDEX has identified 11 areas to get new ideas and solutions to speed up productions — protection system with inbuilt sensors, see-through armour, active
protection system, and secure hardware based offline encryption device, advanced technology-based desalination system and bilge oily water system etc.

11. THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2018

Why in news?
The Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Bill, 2018 was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Minister of State for Home Affairs, Mr. Hansraj Ahir, on August 9, 2018. The Bill amends the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993. The Act provides for a National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), State Human Rights Commissions (SHRC), as well as Human Rights Courts.

Key points
- The Act provides for two persons having knowledge of human rights to be appointed as members of the NHRC. The Bill amends this to allow three members to be appointed, of which at least one will be a woman. Under the Act, chairpersons of various commissions such as the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, and National Commission for Women are members of the NHRC. The Bill provides for including the chairpersons of the National Commission for Backward Classes, the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights, and the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities as members of the NHRC.
- Chairperson of SHRC: Under the Act, the chairperson of a SHRC is a person who has been a Chief Justice of a High Court. The Bill amends this to provide that a person who has been Chief Justice or Judge of a High Court will be chairperson of a SHRC.
- Term of office: The Act states that the chairperson and members of the NHRC and SHRC will hold office for five years or till the age of seventy years, whichever is earlier. The Bill reduces the term of office to three years or till the age of seventy years, whichever is earlier. The Bill also allows for the reappointment of chairpersons of the NHRC and SHRCs.
- Union Territories: The Bill provides that the central government may confer on a SHRC human rights functions being discharged by Union Territories. Functions relating to human rights in the case of Delhi will be dealt with by the NHRC.

12. IWAI TO LAUNCH RO-RO SERVICE TO MAJULI ISLAND IN ASSAM

Why in news?
The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) is set to launch a Roll on-Roll off (Ro-Ro) service in Assam from Neamati to Manjuli island.

Key points
- This service will reduce the road route distance of 423 km that trucks take from Neamati to Majuli Island via Tezpur Road Bridge to only 12.7 km with the use of river route.
- Majuli is one of the biggest riverine islands in the world located on river Brahmaputra and faces serious challenges of connectivity. It has 144 villages with a population of over 1,50,000.
- The IWAI has procured a new vessel MV Bhupen Hazarika at a cost of Rs 9.46 crore for the new service Roll-on/roll-off (RORO or ro-ro) service

Roll-on/roll-off (RORO or ro-ro) ships are vessels designed to carry wheeled cargo, such as cars, trucks, semi-trailer trucks, trailers, and railroad cars, that are driven on and off the ship on their own wheels or using a platform vehicle, such as a self-propelled modular transporter. This is in contrast to lift-on/lift-off (LoLo) vessels, which use a crane to load and unload cargo.
and is providing the needed terminal infrastructure too

- The 46.5-metre-long, 13.3-metre-wide vessel has the carrying capacity of eight trucks and 100 passengers
- The IWAI is also planning to procure more such Ro-Ro vessels for use on river Brahmaputra.

Need for (Ro-Ro) service

- Currently, there are only four road bridges across river Brahmaputra - at Jogighopa, Guwahati, Tezpur and Sadiya for connectivity between southern and northern parts of Assam.
- People residing on either side of the river need to cross the river using conventional ferry service at various locations for their day to day needs.
- Earlier, IWAI had started a similar Ro-Ro service between Dhubri and Hatsingimari which reduced the travel distance by 190 km. A permanent Ro-Ro terminal was constructed at Dhubri for the purpose.

13. MHA CLARIFIES CITIZENSHIP STATUS OF GORKHAS LIVING IN ASSAM

Why in news?
The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has issued a clarification to the Assam government on the citizenship status of members of the Gorkha Community living in the State as per the Foreigners Act, 1946.

Centre’s clarification

- This comes following the representation from the All Assam Gorkha Students’ Union to Home Minister Rajnath Singh recently, as some cases of members of the Gorkha community living in Assam were referred to the Foreigners Tribunals.
- In a communication to the government of Assam, the MHA has listed various provisions to obviate the difficulties faced by Gorkhas in the matter of Indian citizenship. The MHA stated that the members of the Gorkha community who were Indian citizens at the time of commencement of the Constitution, or those who are Indian citizens by birth, or those who have acquired Indian citizenship by registration or naturalization in accordance with the provisions of The Citizenship Act, 1955 are not “foreigners” in terms of section 2 (a) of The Foreigners Act, 1946 as well as The Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939, therefore, such cases will not be referred to the Foreigners Tribunals.
- It further emphasised that any adult of the Gorkha community holding Nepalese nationality and who has arrived in India by land or air over the Nepal border even without a passport or visa and staying in India for any length of time shall not be treated as an illegal migrant if he/she is in possession of an identity document, namely the Nepalese Passport, Nepalese Citizenship Certificate, voter Identification card issued by the Election Commission of Nepal, limited validity photo-identity certificate issued by Nepalese Mission in India when deemed necessary.
- It added that the cases of members of Gorkha community falling within the parameters mentioned earlier should not be referred to the Foreigner Tribunals for deciding whether the person is a "foreigner" within the meaning of The Foreigners Act, 1946.
- The ministry also clarified that only those individuals, who have come from specified territories i.e. territories included in Bangladesh immediately before commencement of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 1985, to the State of Assam, and are not Indian citizens, can be referred to the Foreigners tribunals.
14. PROCEDURE OF RENAMING OF THE STATE IN INDIA

Why in news?
West Bengal government’s move to rename WB as “Bangla” has hit a roadblock after concerns that the new name may sound like Bangladesh, and it would be difficult to differentiate the two at international forums.

Background:
In 2016, the West Bengal Assembly passed a resolution to change the name of West Bengal to Bangla in Bengali, Bengal in English and Bangal in Hindi.

Rationale behind renaming:
- The state government first proposed the renaming in 2016. West Bengal parliamentary affairs minister Partha Chatterjee had then argued for the change saying bureaucrats and politicians from the state often complain that they are asked to speak at the end of every national-level meeting in Delhi. This was because the speakers’ lists at such meeting are prepared according to alphabetical order of the states they represent. If West Bengal gets the new name, it will leapfrog from bottom of the list to the top of the pecking order.
- The renaming will help the state appear at the fourth spot after Arunachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Assam in the alphabetic order of the states.
- The procedure of renaming of the state can be initiated by either the Parliament or the State Legislators and the procedure is as follows:
  - The renaming of a state requires Parliamentary approval under Article 3 and 4 of the Constitution.
  - A bill for renaming a state may be introduced in the Parliament on the recommendation of the President.
  - Before the introduction of the bill, the President shall send the bill to the respective state assembly for expressing their views within a stipulated time. The views of the state assembly are not binding, neither on the President nor on the Parliament.
  - On the expiry of the period, the bill will be sent to the Parliament for deliberation. The bill in order to take the force of a law must be passed by a simple majority.
  - The bill is sent for approval to the President. After the approval of the said bill, the bill becomes a law and the name of the state stands modified.
  - Initiation by a State: If any fresh proposal comes from states to the Home Ministry, it will prepare a note for the Union Cabinet for an amendment to the Schedule 1 of the Constitution. Thereafter, a Constitution Amendment Bill will be introduced in Parliament, which has to approve it with a simple majority, before the President gives his assent to it.

15. LARGE VACANCIES FOR JUDGES IN LOWER COURTS

Why in news?
Describing as "unacceptable" the existence of 5,133 vacancies of judges in "Higher Judicial Service" and "Lower Judicial Service", the Supreme Court sought the response of the State governments and the High Courts whether the time for the ongoing recruitment of 4,180 judicial officers could be shortened.

Highlights
Over three crore cases lie pending in lower courts.
The Supreme Court asked the High Courts’ registries to provide the Secretary-General, Supreme Court, with information, such as when the recruitment process had commenced; whether it is expected to be completed within the schedule formulated by the Supreme Court in the Malik Mazhar Sultan vs U.P. Public Service Commission & Ors judgment; when the appointments would
be made; whether the time expected to be taken to complete the ongoing process/processes can be shortened and so on.

Malik Mazhur case
A seven-month schedule for recruitment has been formulated by the top court in the Malik Mazhar Sultan case. If the time taken exceeds the schedule fixed by this Court, the reasons thereof should be furnished by the Registries of such High Courts/concerned authorities of the State where the recruitment is done through the Public Service Commission(s) which are in default.

16. BEHAVE LIKE A TRUE STATE, CJI TELLS ASSAM, CENTRE

Why in news?
The State of Assam and the Centre should behave like a “true State” in the Aristotlian sense, said Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi while hearing the Assam NRC case.

Highlights
The oral observation came on a hearing whether five documents – names in NRC, 1951; names in electoral roll up to March 24, 1971; citizenship certificate and refugee registration certificate; certified copies of pre-1971 electoral roll, particularly those issued from the State of Tripura; and ration card – can be used as proof by 40 lakh people excluded from the draft NRC to establish their Indian legacy during the ongoing claims and objections stage.

The Supreme Court, in the previous hearing, had said that these documents were “capable of being manufactured.

Purpose
The purpose of NRC update is to identify the illegal migrants residing in North eastern state, who entered Indian territories after the midnight of 24 March 1971 and to determine the citizenship of the applicants who have applied for inclusion of their names in the updated NRC.

Indian citizenship
- The conferment of a person, as a citizen of India, is governed by Articles 5 to 11 (Part II) of the Constitution of India.
- Article 9 of Indian Constitution says that a person who voluntarily acquires citizenship of any other country is no longer an Indian citizen.
- Also, according to The Passports Act, a person has to surrender his/her Indian passport and voter card and other Indian ID cards must not be used after another country’s citizenship is obtained. It is a punishable offence if the person fails to surrender the passport.
- In India, the Citizenship Act, 1995 prescribes five ways of acquiring citizenship: Birth, Descent, Registration, Naturalization and Incorporation of the territory.

17. CABINET APPROVES MOU BETWEEN THE INSTITUTE OF CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS OF INDIA AND CERTIFIED PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS AFGHANISTAN (CPA AFGHANISTAN)

Why in news?
The Union Cabinet has approved the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) and Certified Professional Accountants Afghanistan (CPA Afghanistan).
Highlights:
The MoU will establish mutual co-operation framework in the areas of Capacity Building of “Afghanistan Accountancy Board (AAB)”, strengthening the IT Capacity and Quality Assurance in Afghanistan through facilitating Knowledge Transfer; Students and Members Exchange Programs; Conduct of Seminars, Conferences and Joint Activities mutually beneficial to both the parties.

Targets:
- Students and members exchange programs from their respective jurisdictions so as to update them on the emerging developments in the areas of accounting profession either in the form of study tours or as may be mutually decided by both the Institutions;
- Providing updates on the development of the accountancy profession in India, and promote international good professional practices;
- Strengthening the quality assurance setup in Afghanistan through facilitating knowledge transfer to help implement regime of necessary quality controls and periodic reviews in Afghanistan.

Major impact:
- India and Afghanistan share a very strong partnership based on historical and cultural links. In the recent past, the partnership between the two countries has touched new heights when India’s Afghanistan policy shifted to a more confident and multi-dimensional approach by opening Investment in Afghanistan's nascent democracy and economy; strengthening Kabul's defence capability and promoting regional connectivity and integration.
- Afghanistan will help India and ICAI to facilitate indirect employment generation for Indian CAs through recognition and acceptability amongst Afghanistan employers. It is also believed that the relationship developed between the two countries over the past few years is strategic in nature and is of mutual benefit.

About ICAI:
- The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) is a statutory body established by an Act of Parliament of India, ‘The Chartered Accountants Act, 1949’, to regulate the profession of Chartered Accountancy in India. ICAI is the second largest professional Accounting & Finance body in the world.
- ICAI is the only licensing cum regulating body of the financial audit and accountancy profession in India.
- It recommends the accounting standards to be followed by companies in India to National Advisory Committee on Accounting Standards (NACAS).
- ICAI is solely responsible for setting the Standards on Auditing (SAs)to be followed in the audit of financial statements in India.
- ICAI is one of the founder members of the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC), South Asian Federation of Accountants (SAFA), and Confederation of Asian and Pacific Accountants (CAPA)

18. APPELLATE TRIBUNALS AGAINST BENAMI TRANSACTIONS

Why in news?
The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister has approved the appointment of Adjudicating Authority and establishment of Appellate Tribunal under Prohibition of Benami Property Transactions Act(PBPT), 1988.

Highlights:
- Appointment of an Adjudicating Authority, along with the three additional Benches and to establish the Appellate Tribunal under the PBPT Act;
• To provide the officers and employees to Adjudicating Authority, Benches of the Adjudicating Authority and Appellate Tribunal by diverting the existing posts at the same level/rank from the Income Tax Deptt./Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT);
• The Adjudicating Authority and Appellate Tribunal shall sit in the National Capital Territory of Delhi (NCTD). Benches of Adjudicating Authority may sit in Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai, and the necessary notification in this regard shall be issued after making consultation with the Chairperson of the proposed Adjudicating Authority.

Benefits:
• The approval will result in effective and better administration of cases referred to the Adjudicating Authority and speedy disposal of appeals filed against the order of the Adjudicating Authority before the Appellate Tribunal.
• Appointment of the Adjudicating Authority would provide first stage review of administrative action under the PBPT Act.
• Establishment of the proposed Appellate Tribunal would provide an appellate mechanism for the order passed by the Adjudicating Authority under the PBPT Act.

19. OFFICE OF PROFIT

Why in news?
President R N Kovind has dismissed a petition seeking disqualification of 27 AAP MLAs from Delhi on grounds of having held ‘office of profit’ as chairpersons of patient welfare committees (Rogi Kalyan Samiti) constituted by Delhi government.

Background:
• The decision was based on an opinion tendered by the Election Commission in July, stating that the said office was exempt from purview of ‘office of profit’ under provisions of the Delhi MLAs (Removal of Disqualification) Act, 1997.
• Government of NCT of Delhi, in its submission to EC, had made it clear that Rogi Kalyan Samitis were constituted by it and that their chairpersons were not entitled to any remuneration and would therefore fall under the exemption granted by item 14 of the Schedule of the Delhi MLAs (Removal of Disqualification) Act.
• The Act provides for exemption of office of chairman, vice-chairman and members of the hospital advisory committee, Delhi, from purview of “office of profit”.

What is an ‘office of profit’?
• If an MLA or an MP holds a government office and receives benefits from it, then that office is termed as an “office of profit”.
• A person will be disqualified if he holds an office of profit under the central or state government, other than an office declared not to disqualify its holder by a law passed by Parliament or state legislature.
• What are the basic criteria to disqualify an MP or MLA?
• Basic disqualification criteria for an MP are laid down in Article 102 of the Constitution, and for an MLA in Article 191. They can be disqualified for:
  a) Holding an office of profit under government of India or state government;
  b) Being of unsound mind;
  c) Being an undischarged insolvent;
  d) Not being an Indian citizen or for acquiring citizenship of another country.
What is the underlying principle for including ‘office of profit’ as criterion for disqualification?
Makers of the Constitution wanted that legislators should not feel obligated to the Executive in any way, which could influence them while discharging legislative functions. In other words, an MP or MLA should be free to carry out her duties without any kind of governmental pressure.

20. NATIONAL CONSUMER DISPUTES REDRESSAL COMMISSION (NCDRC)

Why in news?
The Department of Consumer Affairs, Government of India along with National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) jointly organized a Conference at VigyanBhawan New Delhi to review the functioning of the State Commissions and District Fora

Highlights
• The Conference is being held to discuss the issues relating to the functioning of the Consumer Fora such as pendency of case and filling up of vacancies in the post of President and Members of the Commissions.
• The Conference is being held at a crucial time, when the Government has introduced a new Consumer Protection Bill, 2018 in the Lok Sabha repealing the Consumer Protection Act of 1986 with substantial changes for meeting the emerging challenges faced by consumers in the new markets.

NCDRC
• The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC), India is a quasi-judicial commission in India which was set up in 1988 under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986. Its head office is in New Delhi.
• The commission is headed by a sitting or retired judge of the Supreme Court of India.
• The present head is Justice R K AGRAWAL, former judge of the Supreme Court of India

21. ELECTORAL BOND SCHEME

Why in news?
The Government of India has notified the Electoral Bond Scheme 2018 vide Gazette Notification No. 20 dated 02nd January 2018. As per provisions of the Scheme, Electoral Bonds may be purchased by a person, who is a citizen of India or incorporated or established in India.

Highlights
• Only the Political Parties registered under Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 and which secured not less than one per cent of the votes polled in the last General Election to the House of the People or the Legislative Assembly of the State, shall be eligible to receive the Electoral Bonds.
• It will be available in multiples of Rs1,000, Rs10,000, Rs1 lakh, Rs10 lakh and Rs1 crore.
• The Electoral Bonds shall be encashed by an eligible Political Party only through a Bank account with the Authorized Bank.
• State Bank of India (SBI) has been authorised to issue and encash Electoral Bonds through its 29 Authorised Branches.

Terms and Conditions
• It may be noted that Electoral Bonds shall be valid for fifteen calendar days from the date of issue.
• No payment shall be made to any payee Political Party if the Electoral Bond is deposited after expiry of the validity period.
• The Electoral Bond deposited by an eligible Political Party in its account shall be credited on the same day.

**Electoral bond**
- An electoral bond is designed to be a bearer instrument like a Promissory Note — in effect, it will be similar to a bank note that is payable to the bearer on demand and free of interest. It can be purchased by any citizen of India or a body incorporated in India.
- The bonds will be issued in multiples of ₹1,000, ₹10,000, ₹1 lakh, ₹10 lakh and ₹1 crore and will be available at specified branches of State Bank of India. They can be bought by the donor with a KYC-compliant account. Donors can donate the bonds to their party of choice which can then be cashed in via the party's verified account within 15 days.

### 22. VIGILANCE AWARENESS WEEK

**Why in news?**
The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare will observe the Vigilance Awareness Week from 29th October to 3rd November, 2018 as per the directions of Central Vigilance Commission (CVC), Government of India.
The theme of the vigilance awareness this year is “Eradicate Corruption- Make a New India.”

**CVC:**
- It is the apex vigilance institution. It was created via executive resolution (based on the recommendations of Santhanam committee) in 1964 but was conferred with statutory status in 2003. It submits its report to the President of India.
- Presently, the body consists of central vigilance commissioner along with 2 vigilance commissioners.
- They are appointed by the President of India on the recommendations of a committee consisting of Prime Minister, Union Home Minister and Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha (if there is no LoP then the leader of the single largest Opposition party in the Lok Sabha).
- Their term is 4 years or 65 years, whichever is earlier.
- The Central Vigilance Commissioner or any Vigilance Commissioner can be removed from his office only by order of the President on the ground of proved misbehavior or incapacity after the Supreme Court, on a reference made to it by the President, has, on inquiry,
- reported that the Central Vigilance Commissioner or any Vigilance Commissioner, as the case may be, ought to be removed.

### 23. AWARD SCHEME UNDER Saubhagya

**Why in news?**
Minister of State for Power and New & Renewable Energy announced an award scheme under Saubhagya to felicitate the DISCOMs / Power Department of the States and their employees for achieving 100 per cent household electrification in their area of operations.

**3 types of Saubhagya award plan**
Award will be presented in 3 categories. These categories are:
(i) DISCOMs / Power Departments of Special Category States (which includes seven North Eastern States, Sikkim, J&K and Uttarakhand);
(ii) DISCOMs / Power Departments of other than Special Category States (which includes Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Telengana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal) having more than 5 Lakh un-electrified households and
(iii) DISCOMs / Power Departments of other than Special Category States having less than 5 Lakh un-electrified households.

Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (Saubhagya)
- Primary Minister Narendra Modi released Rs 16320-Crore ‘Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana’- Saubhagya on September 25, 2017 to mark the start anniversary of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya.
- The plan aims to accomplish the target of universal domestic electrification in the state by March 31, 2019.
- The scheme envisages furnishing very last mile connectivity and electric power connections to all remaining homes in rural as well as city locations.
- With the assist of Condition Electric power Departments and DISCOMs, more than 1.65 crore homes have previously been related because the start of scheme.
- The Eligibility for no cost electrical power will be recognized by way of Caste Census of 2011 and on the foundation of Socio-Economic.
- The Households that do not slide beneath the free standards of this scheme will be provided electric power at a sum of Rs 500.
- To recognize and sign up beneficiaries beneath the Saubhagya scheme, a cell app will be employed.
- Homes in distant locations like hilly or tribal regions wherever giving electrical energy is not feasible, will be delivered with photo voltaic electricity packs of 200 to 300 Wp (Watt peak).
- The Rural Electrification Company Limited (REC) has been appointed as the nodal company for the implementation of the Saubhagya scheme.

24. CHIEF MINISTER’S URBAN LEADERS FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

Why in news?
The Delhi government announced a fellowship programme that seeks to attract young leaders across the country to work with it on addressing some of the most pressing urban challenges.

Highlights
- The fellowship provides a unique opportunity to young leaders across India to work within the Delhi government to address some of the most pressing urban challenges in India, the advertisement reads.
It also seeks to attract youth who are passionate about public service and are willing to work for two years.

Fellows will be assigned to work with ministers or senior officials across various departments of the Delhi government such as education, health, water, transport, art and culture.

Remuneration of Rs 1.25 lakh per month will be provided to Fellows (20 positions) an Rs 75,000 per month to Associate Fellows (10 positions).
1. UNHRC

Why in news?
The United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council has advanced justice for victims of grave crimes in Myanmar by creating an international body to help prepare case files for future criminal proceedings.

Highlights
- The UNHRC’s 47 members voted a resolution by 37-3 with seven abstentions. China, the Philippines and Burundi voted against the resolution drafted by the European Union and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.
- The resolution mandates the new body to “collect, consolidate, preserve and analyze evidence of the most serious international crimes” in Myanmar since 2011 and to “prepare files to facilitate and expedite fair and independent criminal proceedings

UN Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar
The resolution follows the report in August by the UN Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, which found that Myanmar’s security forces committed war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide against ethnic Rohingya in Rakhine State.
The report also examined abuses by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army and by government forces and ethnic armed groups in Shan and Kachin States.

United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)
- UNHRC is an inter-governmental body within United Nations system. It is responsible for strengthening promotion and protection of human rights around globe and for addressing situations of human rights violations and make recommendations on them.
- It was created by UNGA on 15 March 2006 by adopting resolution 60/251 to promote human rights globally.
- It had replaced former UN Commission on Human Rights.
- It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.

Members:
- UNHRC is made up of 47 UN member states which are elected by UN General Assembly (UNGA) with specific number of seats allocated for each region of the globe.
- The term of each seat is three years, and no member may occupy a seat for more than two consecutive terms.

2. EXERCISE YUDH ABHYAS 2018

Why in news?
India and United States joint military exercise Yudh Abhyas 2018 commenced at Chaubattia, Uttarakhand. It was the fourteenth edition of exercise in Yudh Abhyas series which started in 2004 under US Army Pacific Partnership Program.

Key points
- The exercise curriculum was progressively planned where the participants were initially made to get familiar with each other’s organizational structure, weapons, equipment, confidence training and tactical drills. Subsequently, the training advances to joint tactical exercises wherein the battle drills of both the armies were coherently unleashed.
• The training was culminated with a final validation exercise in which troops of both countries jointly carried out an operation against terrorists in a fictitious but realistic setting.
• Over the years the two countries have decided to progressively increase the scope and content of this joint exercise. Exercise Yudh Abhyas 2018 witnessed a Division Headquarter based Command Post Exercise, an Infantry Battalion carrying out Field Training Exercise and discussions on issues of mutual interest by experts of both countries.
• Both armies have vast experience in active counter insurgency & counter terrorism operations and sharing each other’s tactics & drills in such diverse environment is of immense value.

3. A NEW UNITED STATES-MEXICO-CANADA AGREEMENT

Why in news?
United States, Mexico and Canada announced the completion of negotiations toward a new United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA).

Highlights
• The outcomes preserve key elements of this trading relationship and incorporate new and updated provisions that seek to address 21st-century trade issues and promote opportunities for the nearly half a billion people who call North America home.
• In 1994, the United States, Mexico and Canada created the largest free trade region in the world with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), generating economic growth and helping to raise the standard of living for the people of all three member countries.
• By strengthening the rules and procedures governing trade and investment, this agreement has proved to be a solid foundation for building Canada’s prosperity and has set a valuable example of the benefits of trade liberalization for the rest of the world. The new United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement will serve to reinforce Canada’s strong economic ties with the United States and Mexico.

Indias concerns
• India has long opposed the introduction of labour and environmental standards in trade negotiations in the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Alas, these are prominent in USMCA, and show the direction in which the US will push India. For cars, the free trade rules will apply only if the local content is 75% (up from the old 62%).
• Moreover, 40% of this local value addition must be in factories paying $16 an hour or more. This will reduce the low wage advantage that Mexico currently enjoys, and Trump hopes it will lead to the relocation of some auto factories from Mexico to the US. India is much poorer than Mexico and can plead against the imposition of a minimum wage of $16 an hour on Indian factories exporting to the US. But India must prepare for a day when the US demands for some minimum wage stipulations. That can only make Indian exports even less competitive than they are today.
• The new agreement warns members against signing any free trade pact with ‘non-market economies’, meaning China. That aims to prevent cheap Chinese goods entering through third countries. India is currently negotiating to join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a free-trade agreement covering China, the 10 members of the Association of the South-East Asian Nations (Asean), South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. The external affairs ministry is keen on India joining this pact, but the finance ministry has grave reservations.
The naysayers can now cite USMCA provisions as reason to avoid RCEP. Membership of a free-trade pact that includes China may leave India exposed to adverse action by the US.

The new agreement forces Canada to open its highly protected dairy sector. The old Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiated by Barack Obama, but scrapped by Trump, provided for 3.25% of Canada's dairy market to be opened to US exports. USMCA increases that by a smidgen to 3.6%.

The US has complained bitterly about high Indian protection for dairy products. It has threatened to abolish preferential tariffs it gives India under the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP), unless India lowers its import barriers on US dairy products. India's main barrier is religion-related. It argues that US dairy farmers feed animal products to their cows, that milk produced in this manner offends Indian religious sensibilities, and so must not be imported. Whether such arguments will be pass muster with a bully like Trump, who has whipped Canada into line, remains to be seen.

4. IBSAMAR V

Why in news?

The sixth edition of IBSAMAR, a joint multi-national maritime exercise between Indian, Brazilian and South African Navies was held at Simons Town, South Africa. The aim of this maritime exercise is to undertake collective training for participating navies, building interoperability and mutual understanding as well as sharing of best practices.

Highlights

- The Indian Navy was represented in IBSAMAR VI by Guided Missile Frigate Tarkash, Guided Missile Destroyer Kolkata, Long Range Maritime Patrol Aircraft P8I, Seaking and Chetak helicopters as well as a MARCOS contingent.
- The last edition of IBSAMAR (IBSAMAR V) was conducted off Goa.
- This edition exercise included both harbour and sea phases with various navigation and seamanship evolutions, force protection exercises, surface weapons firing, antipiracy exercise, anti-air and anti-submarine exercise and flying operations were also conducted. Apart from professional activities, sports and social engagements were also conducted.

About IBSAMAR

- IBSAMAR are a series of naval exercises between the navies of India, Brazil, South Africa.
- The aim of the exercise is to undertake collective training for participating navies, building interoperability and mutual understanding as well as sharing of best practices.
- The first exercise took place in 2008.

5. MARRAKESH TREATY

Why in news

The European Union has joined WIPO's Marrakesh Treaty in a big expansion in membership for the accord, which eases the creation and transfer across national boundaries of texts specially adapted for use by visually impaired people.
Key points

- The EU’s ratification marks a major advancement for visually impaired people living inside the European Union as well as in other Marrakesh Treaty contracting parties, allowing them to enjoy texts in accessible formats currently available in any country that has implemented the provisions of the Treaty.
- Only a small fraction, between one and five percent, of all literature is accessible to blind and visually impaired people.
- The European Union joined the Marrakesh Treaty during the 2018 WIPO Assemblies meetings, held between September 24-October 2, 2018 in Geneva. The Treaty enters into force for the European Union on January 1, 2019.

Marrakesh Treaty

- With the ratification of European Union, the treaty now expands to 70 countries.
- India was among the earliest to ratify the Marrakesh treaty in June 2014.
- The governments that are party to the Marrakesh treaty are obliged to adopt laws authorising the conversion of books into accessible formats such as braille, e-text, audio and large print by designated organisations.
- They are also allowed to exchange these alternative formats across national borders without clearance by copyright owners.

6. INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

Why in news?
The United Nations’ highest court on ordered the United States to lift sanctions on Iran that affect imports of humanitarian goods and products and services linked to the safety of civil aviation.

The ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is legally binding, but it remains to be seen if the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump will comply.

About the verdict

- Iran alleges that the sanctions breach a 1955 bilateral agreement known as the Treaty of Amity that regulates and promotes economic and consular ties between the two countries.
- In a preliminary ruling, the court said that Washington must “remove, by means of its choosing, any impediments arising from” the reimposition of sanctions to the export to Iran of medicine and medical devices, food and agricultural commodities and spare parts and equipment necessary to ensure the safety of civil aviation.
- The U.S. is expected to challenge the court’s jurisdiction in a future hearing.
The court said that the Trump administration must “ensure that licences and necessary authorizations are granted” and payments not restricted if they are linked to the humanitarian and aviation goods.

International Court of Justice

The International Court of Justice is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. Its seat is at the Peace Palace in The Hague (Netherlands). It began work in 1946, when it replaced the Permanent Court of International Justice which had functioned in the Peace Palace since 1922. It operates under a Statute largely similar to that of its predecessor, which is an integral part of the Charter of the United Nations.

Functions of the Court

The Court has a dual role: to settle in accordance with international law the legal disputes submitted to it by States, and to give advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by duly authorized international organs and agencies.

Composition

The Court is composed of 15 judges elected to nine-year terms of office by the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council sitting independently of each other. It may not include more than one judge of any nationality. Elections are held every three years for one-third of the seats, and retiring judges may be re-elected. India has renominated its serving candidate at the (ICJ).

7. DECLARATION ON RENEWABLE ENERGY

Why in news?

As many as 21 countries in the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) adopted the Delhi Declaration on Renewable Energy in the IORA.

Key points

- The Declaration aims for collaboration among IORA member states in meeting the growing demand for renewable energy in the Indian Ocean littorals.
- It calls for development of a common renewable energy agenda for the Indian Ocean region and promote regional capacity building.
- As per the declaration adopted, IORA member nations will collaborate with the member nations to exchange knowledge and share views and potential interests in the renewable energy sector;
- The MoU signed between IORA and ISA (International Solar Alliance) with a focus on joint capacity-building programs, research & development activities in solar energy and exchange of best practices.
- IORA member countries also resolved to collaborate with the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA).
- IORA member nations and IRENA will undertake the expansion of the Global Renewable Energy Atlas, the world’s largest-ever joint renewable resource data project, coordinated by IRENA.

Sanctions

- On Iran buying/acquiring US dollars;
- On Iran’s trade in gold/precious metals;
- On direct or indirect sale or supply from or to Iran of graphite, aluminum, steel, coal, software for integrating industrial processes;
- On “significant transactions” related to purchase or sale of Iranian rials, or maintenance of “significant funds or accounts” in rials outside Iran;
- On buying or facilitating the issuance of Iranian sovereign debt; and
- On Iran’s automotive sector.
Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

- The Indian Ocean Rim Association was set up with the objective of strengthening regional cooperation and sustainable development within the Indian Ocean Region with 21 Member States and 7 Dialogue Partners.
- India, Australia, Iran IR, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, South Africa, Mozambique, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Bangladesh, Singapore, Mauritius, Madagascar, UAE, Yemen, Seychelles, Somalia, Comoros and Oman are members of IORA.
- The last Renewable Energy Ministerial Meeting was held on January 21, 2014 in Abu Dhabi, UAE. During the meeting of IORA Council of Ministers held in October 2016 in Bali, Indonesia, it was decided that the next conference will be held in India.

8. SAHYAG HOP TAC

Why in news?
The first-ever joint naval exercise of Coast Guards of India and Vietnam “Sahyog HOP TAC-2018” was conducted in the Bay of Bengal off the Chennai coast, Tamil Nadu.

Highlights
- The Sahyog HOP TAC-2018 naval exercise main aim was to strengthen the working compatibility between coast guards of India and Vietnam navies.
- The Sahyog HOP TAC-2018 naval exercise envisaged the possibility of the hijacking of an oil tanker and subsequent rescue of its crew in coordinated anti-piracy joint operation as well as preventive efforts for marine environment protection.
- The Sahyog HOP TAC-2018 naval exercise also included interdiction of pirated vessels, coordinated joint boarding operation and external fire-fighting to salvage burning ships.
- The Sahyog HOP TAC-2018 naval exercise saw the participation of Indian Coast Guard ships Shaurya, Arvnesh and interceptor boat C-431 along with Dornier aircraft and Chetak helicopter. It also witnessed the participation of Sagar Manjusa vessel of National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT).

9. UN CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

Why in news?
Pankaj Sharma has been appointed as ambassador and India’s permanent representative to United Nations Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.
Key points

- UN Conference on Disarmament (CD) is not formally United Nations (UN) organization. It is linked to UN through personal representative of UN Secretary-General.
- The CD was formed in 1979 as the single multilateral disarmament negotiation forum of the international community, after agreement was reached among Member States during the first special session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) devoted to disarmament (1978). The CD is the successor to the Ten-Nation Committee on Disarmament (TNDC), Geneva, 1960; the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament (ENDC), Geneva, 1962-68; and the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (CCD), Geneva, 1969-78.
- The CD has a special relationship with the United Nations. It adopts its own rules of procedure and its own agenda, taking into account the recommendations made by the UNGA and the proposals presented by its members, although its secretary is appointed by the UN Secretary-General. It reports to the General Assembly annually or more frequently, as appropriate. The budget of the CD is included in that of the United Nations, the CD meets on UN premises and is serviced by UN personnel. The Conference conducts its work by consensus. The CD has a permanent agenda agreed upon in 1978 at the first special session of the UNGA devoted to disarmament.
- The CD and its predecessors have negotiated multilateral arms control, nonproliferation, and disarmament agreements such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Environmental Modification and Seabed treaties, the Biological and Toxic Weapons Convention (BTWC), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

10. JIMEX-18

Why in news?
The 3rd edition of Japan-India Maritime Exercise (JIMEX) commenced at Visakhapatnam on following the arrival of Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force (JMSDF) ships Kaga and Inazuma in the Andhra Pradesh port city, the Indian Navy said.

Key points

- The exercise to be held till 15 October aims to "enhance interoperability, improve understanding and imbibe the best practices" followed by the two forces.
- Kaga is an Izumo-class helicopter destroyer while Inazuma is a guided missile destroyer these tare taking part in the exercise
- The Indian Navy is represented by three indigenously designed and built warships and a fleet tanker.
- The drill will include a 'harbour phase' and a 'sea phase' of four days each.
- The sea phase will include anti-submarine warfare exercises, VBSS (Visit, Board, Search and Seizure) drills, gun firings, cross-deck helo operations and coordinated operations in anti-submarine/anti-air threat scenarios
- The last edition of JIMEX was conducted in December 2013 off the Chennai coast. The JMSDF is a regular participant in the Malabar series of exercises between Indian and US navies.
- The India and Japanese navies have been working in close coordination in anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden for the past few years.
11. INDIA-RUSSIA ANNUAL SUMMIT

Why in news?
After wide-ranging talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Vladimir Putin, Indian and Russia signed the USD 5 billion **S-400 air defence system** deal in New Delhi. Modi and Putin also signed eight pacts, including cooperation on India's ambitious human space mission project Gaganyaan, at the 19th India-Russia annual bilateral summit. The signing of defence deal between the two countries comes amid the US warning.

The sharpening of tensions between Russia and the United States, and the US' unilateral actions, such as Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), is likely to impact India which shares long-standing diplomatic relations with both Russia and the US.

S-400 Triumf
- S-400 Triumf is one of the world’s most advanced air defence systems that can simultaneously track numerous incoming objects — all kinds of aircraft, missiles and UAVs — in a radius of a few hundred kilometres and launch appropriate missiles to neutralise them.
- It is now bang in the middle of the ongoing stand-off between Russia and Western nations. Among the countries under pressure from the U.S. not to buy this weapon is India.
- The system is a large complex of radars, control systems and different types of missiles.
- The highly automated S-400 has radars that can pick up an incoming object up to a 1,000 kilometres away, track several dozen incoming objects simultaneously, distribute the targets to appropriate missile systems and ensure a high success rate.
- The command post detects, tracks and identifies the target.
- Then the tracked object is taken over by manned anti-aircraft missile systems of the complex, which launch the counter attack.
- The development of S-400 (NATO name SA-21 Growler) was started towards the end of the Soviet Union in the 1980s and was disrupted by the collapse of the Communist bloc in 1991.
- The system is specifically designed to detect and destroy an array of targets — strategic bombers; aircraft used for electronic warfare, early warning, and reconnaissance; fighter jets such as F-16 and F-22; and incoming missiles such as Tomahawk.
- Russian forces have deployed at least half-a-dozen S-400 regiments, at least two of them are for the protection of Moscow.
- Russia has also deployed at least two S-400 systems in Syria, much to the concern of observers who fear the system could contribute to a global conflict breaking out in Syria.
12. SOUTH-EAST ASIA REGULATORY NETWORK (SEARN)

Why in news?
Information Sharing Platform Gateway for South-East Asia Regulatory Network (SEARN) developed by Centre for Development of Advanced Computing has been launched. It will promote regulatory and health collaboration among the countries of the South-East Asia Region.

Objective
The main objective of the 2nd World Conference 2018 is to take forward the recommendations from the 1st World Conference 2017 and build on the work done for access to medical products in the context of SDGs (including trade agreements) in line with GPW 13 of WHO, foster new approaches in innovation landscape for medical products and health technologies for accelerating research and innovation and identify knowledge, information and policy options on the interface of international trade and health to achieve SDG 2030 goals.

Background:
In the South-East Asia region in WHO, India is actively contributing & providing support for the SEARN to guarantee access to high-quality medical products.

13. COPE INDIA EXERCISE

Why in news?
India, Japan and the U.S. are set to elevate the bilateral ‘Cope India’ air exercise to a trilateral format. The three countries already conduct naval war games under the expanded Malabar naval exercise.

Highlights
- The U.S. had proposed a trilateral air exercise between India, Japan and the U.S.
- The Cope India exercise will be elevated to a trilateral level in phases
- The next edition is scheduled to be held in December for which the Final Planning Conference to finalise the modalities of the exercise is scheduled next week in Kalaikunda [West Bengal].
- It was agreed that Japan will send observers for the next round of Cope India exercises between India and U.S. to be hosted by the Indian Air Force.
- Cope India was first conducted in 2004 and has grown in scope with the involvement of fighter aircraft and force multipliers such as Airborne Warning And Control System (AWACS), but has been held only intermittently.
- The level of interoperability in the exercises, both bilateral and trilateral, is expected to go up with India recently signing the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) with the U.S.. In addition.
- There is also commonality of platforms, for instance, all the three Air Forces operate the C-130 transport aircraft.
• This elevation of the air exercise is similar to the Malabar naval exercise. Malabar began in 1992 as a bilateral naval exercise between India and the U.S. and has over time grown in scope and complexity.
• In 2015, it was expanded into a trilateral format with the inclusion of Japan.
• With increased focus on the Indo-Pacific, the U.S. has been keen on increased engagement in a trilateral format.

14. FUSION ENERGY CONFERENCE (FEC 2018)

Why in news?
Innovative concepts on using nuclear fusion as a source of energy were discussed at the 27th Fusion Energy Conference in Gandhinagar.

Aim: to provide a forum for the discussion of key physics and technology issues as well as innovative concepts of direct relevance to the use of nuclear fusion as a source of energy

Highlights
• The six-day event was organised by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and hosted by the Department of Atomic Energy and Gandhinagar-based Institute of Plasma Research.
• The conference will discuss the new challenges being faced by the fusion community in the light of a number of next-step fusion devices.
• Scientists from different countries collaborate to develop next-step fusion devices such as the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) in Cadarache, France, and the Wendelstein 7-X stellarator in Greifswald, Germany.
• The conference aims to serve as a platform for sharing the results of research and development efforts in both national and international fusion experiments that have been shaped by these new priorities, and to thereby help in pinpointing worldwide advances in fusion theory, experiments, technology, engineering, safety and socio-economics.

IAEA
➢ The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is an international organization that seeks to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons.
➢ The IAEA was established as an autonomous organisation on 29 July 1957. Though established independently of the United Nations through its own international treaty, the IAEA Statute, the IAEA reports to both the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council.
➢ The IAEA has its headquarters in Vienna, Austria. The IAEA has two "Regional Safeguards Offices" which are located in Toronto, Canada, and in Tokyo, Japan. The IAEA also has two liaison offices which are located in New York City, United States, and in Geneva, Switzerland. In addition, the IAEA has three laboratories located in Vienna and Seibersdorf, Austria, and in Monaco.

15. SITTWE PORT

Why in news?
India and Myanmar signed an important MoU for the appointment of a private Port Operator for the Operation and Maintenance of Sittwe Port, Paletwa Inland Water Terminal and associated facilities included in the Kaladan Multi Model Transit Transport Project in implementation of India’s Act East Policy.
Sittwe port
- Sittwe Port is a deepwater port constructed by India in 2016 at Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine State in Myanmar, on the Bay of Bengal.
- Situated at the mouth of the Kaladan River, the USD 120 Million port is being financed by India as a part of the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, a collaboration between India and Myanmar.
- The project is aimed at developing transport infrastructure in southwestern Myanmar and northeastern India.

Kaladan multi modal project
- The Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project is a project that will connect the eastern Indian seaport of Kolkata with Sittwe seaport in Rakhine State, Myanmar by sea.
- In Myanmar, it will then link Sittwe seaport to Paletwa, Chin State via the Kaladan river boat route, and then from Paletwa by road to Mizoram state in Northeast India.

Significance
- It will provide a strategic link to the North-East and will help in reducing pressure on the Siliguri Corridor.
- It will serve the economic, commercial and strategic interests of India.
- It will contribute to the development of Myanmar, and its economic integration with India.

16. U.S. TO PULL OUT OF RUSSIA MISSILE PACT

Why in news?
U.S. President Donald Trump confirmed that the U.S. would pull out of the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty with Russia, a crucial Cold War-era treaty banning the development, testing and possession of short and medium range ground-launched nuclear missiles with a range of 500-5,000 km.

Highlights
- The treaty, signed in 1987, was central to ending the arms race between the two superpowers, and protected America’s NATO allies in Europe from Soviet missile attacks.
- At issue is Russia’s alleged development and deployment of the Novator 9M729 missile, also known as the SSC-8 that could strike Europe at short notice.
- The U.S. administration, under Obama raised the issue of Russia testing a ground-launched cruise missile with Russian President Vladimir Putin in 2014.
- The Russians denied the allegations and raised counter-allegations of the U.S. installing missile defence systems in Europe.
- While the two countries failed to find a resolution using the dispute resolution mechanism in the treaty, the U.S. continued to remain party to the treaty under pressure from its European allies.

INF treaty
17. CABINET APPROVES MOU AMONGST BRICS NATIONS REGARDING COOPERATION IN THE SOCIAL AND LABOUR SPHERE

Why in news?
The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister has given its ex-post facto approval for the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) among Brazil, Russian Federation, India, China, South Africa, regarding Cooperation in the Social and Labour Sphere. The MoU was signed during BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers (LEM) Meeting.

Highlights
- In the MoU, the parties including India have agreed to cooperate and hold mutual events in the prominent areas viz. labour legislation and enforcement, protection of workers' rights with focus on vulnerable groups, Employment and labour market policies, Professional education, skills and training and Social protection.
- The member countries may utilize the BRICS Network of Labour Research Institutes and BRICS Social Security Cooperation Framework for cooperation on Social Security and other labour issues. The Memorandum is not an International Treaty and does not create rights and obligations for the parties governed by international law.

Major Impact:
- The MoU provides a mechanism for cooperation, collaboration and maximum synergy amongst BRICS member countries with the common objective of inclusive growth and shared prosperity in the new industrial revolution.
- This would facilitate member countries to share knowledge and also implement joint programmes on matter of Labour and Employment, Social Security and Social dialogue. This would also ensure networking of international Training Centre of International Labour Organisation (ILO) with the BRICS Network of Labour Institutes which includes V.V. Giri National Labour Institute of India.
- This network would specifically focus on the theme of youth employment and research on new forms of employment. This network will also explore new learning technologies, including virtual network to deepen cooperation, exchange of information and capacity building.
- The BRICS Social Security cooperation framework will deepen social security cooperation among BRICS nations and would facilitate cooperation for improvement of social security systems and social security agreements among member countries.

BRICS
- BRICS is the acronym coined for an association of five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.
- Originally the first four were grouped as "BRIC" (or "the BRICs"), before the induction of South Africa in 2010.
- The BRICS members are known for their significant influence on regional affairs; all are members of G20.
- Since 2009, the BRICS nations have met annually at formal summits. China hosted the 9th BRICS summit in Xiamen on September 2017, while South Africa hosted the most recent 10th BRICS summit in July 2018.

18. CURRENCY SWAP AGREEMENT

Why in news?
Japan and India entered into a $75-billion currency swap arrangement that will bolster the country's firepower as it battles a steep drop in the rupee’s value.
Highlights

- This New Swap Agreement should aid in bringing greater stability to foreign exchange & capital markets in India,
- The facility will serve as a second line of defence for the rupee after the $393.5 billion of foreign exchange reserves that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has at its disposal. Under the arrangement, India can acquire dollars from Japan in exchange for rupees
- Conversely, Japan can also seek dollars from India in exchange for yen. The arrangement will be used only when required, and will help meet short-term liquidity mismatches. India has taken several steps to contain its current account deficit, which could swell to an estimated 2.8% of GDP, and is seen as the root cause of rupee volatility.
- It has relaxed the framework for external commercial borrowings and masala bonds (rupee-denominated paper sold overseas), reviewed certain restrictions on foreign portfolio investments in debt, raised customs duty to curtail imports of non-essential items and allowed oil marketing companies to fund standing working capital through long-term external borrowings.

19. REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP (RCEP)

Why in news?
The Ministers from the 16 RCEP Participating Countries (RPCs) attended the 6th RCEP Intersessional Ministerial Meeting held in Singapore. The Ministers reviewed the developments since the 6th RCEP Ministerial Meeting on 30-31 August 2018 in Singapore. From Indian side, Minister of State (MoS) for Commerce & Industry and Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution had attended the meeting.

Highlights

- The Ministers welcomed the intensification of market access negotiations. While appreciating some narrowing of gaps, the Ministers emphasised the need for further improvements.
- The Ministers noted the progress in the negotiations of other chapters on rules, and urged all RCEP Participating Countries to continue to exert all efforts toward meeting the targets set out in the Package of Year-End Deliverables.
- The Ministers provided guidance on specific issues elevated by the Trade Negotiating Committee. From Indian side, Minister of State (MoS) for Commerce & Industry and Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution C. R. Chaudhary had attended the meeting.

India’s Concerns with member countries:

- Greater access to Chinese goods may have impact on the Indian manufacturing sector. India has already got massive trade deficit with China.
- There are demands by other RCEP countries for lowering customs duties on a number of products and greater access to the market than India has been willing to provide.
Way forward:
- Despite all the concerns, India must take into account the significance of RCEP and not move out of RCEP negotiations.
- Before signing a trade agreement like RCEP, India should review and assess its existing FTAs in terms of benefits to various stakeholders like agriculture, industry and consumers and also examine changing trade patterns.
- RCEP should be signed keeping in mind that it the terms are mutually reciprocal and the focus should be on products and services which have the maximum export potential.

20. TRI-SERVICE MILITARY EXERCISE

Why in news?
India and France are in discussions for a bilateral tri-service military exercise to take forward the strategic cooperation while also exploring ways to operationalise the logistics agreement.

Highlights
- This will be India’s third such joint exercise. The first joint tri-service exercise was held with Russia in October last year and has finalised one with the U.S. to be held next year.
- India and France signed a logistics pact in March this year which gives access to their militaries to each other’s bases for logistics support. While the agreement gives India access to French military bases all over the world on a “reciprocal basis,” of particular interest for New Delhi are the three French bases in the Indian Ocean — Reunion Island, Djibouti and Abu Dhabi.
- These three bases would give the Indian Navy and the Air Force operational turnaround to the far end of the Indian Ocean, improving its monitoring and surveillance of the region, in the backdrop of increased Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- India has signed a series of logistics agreements recently beginning with the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) with the U.S., which will increase its operational footprint in the IOR.
1. SEBI ALLOWS FOREIGN ENTITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN COMMODITY DERIVATIVES MARKET

Why in news?
Capital markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has allowed foreign entities to participate in commodity derivatives market of stock exchanges for hedging their exposures.

Highlights
- Currently, foreign entities are not permitted to directly participate in the Indian commodity derivatives market, even if they import/export various commodities from/to India.
- As per the regulator, such entities by virtue of their actual exposure to the various commodities in Indian market are valuable stakeholders in the value chain of such commodities, and are also exposed to price uncertainty of Indian commodity markets. Therefore, these entities should be enabled to hedge their price risk in the country's commodity derivatives market.
- Sebi declared it has decided to permit foreign entities having actual exposure to Indian commodity markets to participate in the commodity derivative segment of recognised stock exchanges for hedging their exposure". Such foreign entities will be known as Eligible Foreign Entities (EFEs).

Significance
The move will increase liquidity, especially in those commodities like mustard seeds, guar gum, guar seed and cardamom that are not traded in other international exchanges.

Commodities market
- A commodity market is a market that trades in primary economic sector rather than manufactured products.
- Soft commodities are agricultural products such as wheat, coffee, cocoa, fruit and sugar. Hard commodities are mined, such as gold and oil.
- Investors access about 50 major commodity markets worldwide with purely financial transactions increasingly outnumbering physical trades in which goods are delivered.

2. NBFCS: STRONGER ASSET LIABILITY NORMS COMING

Why in news?
The on-going crisis in IL&FS has made Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to consider tightening the norms of asset-liability management (ALM) of non-banking finance companies (NBFCs).

Highlights
- The RBI observed that those entities were relying heavily on short-term funds for lending to long-term projects.
- All the financial firms to place greater reliance on equity and other mode of long term finance for funding of long- term assets rather than relying excessively on short-term wholesale paper, chasing lower marginal cost of funding in order to retain or acquire market share.
3. RUN - LLP, E-GOVERNANCE INITIATIVES TO FACILITATE EODB

Why in news?
With the initiatives launched by Ministry of Corporate Affairs, one can start business by incorporating a company through an on-line process without visiting any Government office.
- This was achieved in January, 2016 by establishing Central Registry Centre (CRC) for on-line incorporation of the company and reserving its unique name.
- Two on-line forms that were introduced for the purpose are Simplified Proforma for Incorporating Company Electronically (SPICE) and Reserve Unique Name (RUN).

What is a Limited Liability Company?
- A limited liability company is a corporate structure whereby the members of the company are not personally liable for the company’s debts or liabilities.
- They are hybrid entities that combine the characteristics of a corporation and a partnership or sole proprietorship.
- In these the liability of each partner is limited to his share as written in the agreement.

RUN-LLP (Reserve Unique Name – Limited Liability Partnership)
- The Ministry of Corporate Affairs has contributed significantly towards ‘Ease of Doing Business’ in the country with a new initiative.
- A company can now be incorporated in less than two days along with allotment of PAN, TAN, DIN and Unique Name through the online process.
- It has launched process re-engineering by making incorporation of Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) through a complete online system.
- It is web service titled RUN-LLP (Reserve Unique Name – Limited Liability Partnership).
- Name can be allotted to LLP through an e-form titled “FiLiP (Form for incorporation of Limited Liability Partnership).

4. UDYAM ABHILASHA

Why in news?
Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), had launched a National Level Entrepreneurship Awareness Campaign, Udyam Abhilasha in 115 Aspirational Districts identified by NITI Aayog.
- The campaign would create and strengthen cadre of more than 800 trainers to provide entrepreneurship training to the aspiring youths across these districts.
- SIDBI has partnered with CSC e-Governance Services India Limited, a Special Purpose Vehicle, (CSC SPV) set up by the Ministry of Electronics & IT, Govt. of India for implementing the campaign.
SIDBI is also taking-up with stakeholders including Banks, NABARD, NBFCs, SFBs, District Industries Centres, State Govt. etc. to be a part of this campaign and ensure multifold impact.

Objectives of the Campaign
- to inspire rural youth in Aspirational districts to be entrepreneurs by assisting them to set up their own enterprise,
- to impart trainings through digital medium across the country,
- to create business opportunities for CSC VLEs,
- to focus on women aspirants in these Aspirational districts to encourage women entrepreneurship and
- to assist participants to become bankable and avail credit facility from banks to set up their own enterprise.

Role of Village Level entrepreneurs
- CSC VLEs would play role of catalyst for these aspiring entrepreneurs.
- Apart from training, VLEs would also provide handholding support to the aspirants to establish new units by assisting them in availing loans for their enterprise.
- They will help making youth aware about various initiatives of Government of India like Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, SUJ etc.

Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)
- It is the Principal Financial Institution for the Promotion, Financing, Development and Coordination of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) sector.
- SIDBI meets the financial and developmental needs of the MSME sector with a Credit+ approach to make it strong, vibrant and globally competitive.
- SIDBI, under its revamped strategy SIDBI 2.0, has adopted the theme of ease of access to MSEs and being Impact Multiplier & Digital Aggregator.

5. GLOBAL SKILLS PARK

Why in news?
Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of India signed a $150 million Loan Agreement in today to establish a Global Skills Park (GSP) in Madhya Pradesh.

Global Skills Park (GSP)
- It is the First Multi-Skills Park in India, to enhance the quality of Technical and Vocational Education And Training (TVET) System in the State and create a more skilled workforce.
- The Project will help improve the quality and relevance of the State’s TVET programs.
- It will help impart advanced job-ready skills training of international standards that can meet the employment needs of the State’s emerging sectors.
- The Project will engage international TVET partners to support advanced training at the GSP who will bring global best practices in TVET management, training infrastructure, industry cooperation, and quality assurance.

About the GSP campus
- The new GSP campus, which will be established in Bhopal will consist of core Advanced Training Institutes including the Center for Occupational Skills Acquisition and the Center for Advanced Agricultural Training as well as other support services.
- The sole aim is focussed on entrepreneurship, training of trainers, and skill-related research.
- The campus will have training facilities focusing on skills for manufacturing, service, and advanced agricultural jobs, benefitting about 20,000 trainees and trainers.
• The Project will also help in modernizing 10 industrial training institutes across the state by renovating training infrastructure and upgrading skills courses to align with industry and market needs

6. SEZ POLICY (2005)

Why in news?
The SEZ Policy Review Committee has its final round of consultations with the members under the chairmanship of the Commerce Secretary. The Committee was of the opinion that SEZ should now transform into “Employment and Economic Enclaves” (3Es).

Why such Policy Review?
• The objective of the Committee was to evaluate the SEZ policy framed in 2000 and suggest measures to make the policy WTO compatible.
• It is aimed to give suggestions which will encourage manufacturing and services sector and lead to maximizing utilization of vacant land in SEZs.
• It further aims to create seamlessness between SEZ policy and other schemes like Costal Economic Zone, Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor, National Industrial Manufacturing Zone, Food Parks and Textile Parks.

Broadening the scope of SEZs
• The changes in the macro-economic environment in India required a re-look at the SEZ Policy framework so that focus is on enabling generation of 100 million jobs in the manufacturing sector.
• It will enable manufacturing competitiveness within the framework of WTO rules, bringing in services sectors like health care, financial and legal services, repair and design services under SEZs.

Special Economic Zones (SEZ)
• SEZs are set up under Special Economic Zones Act, 2005 as duty free enclave and shall be deemed to be foreign territory for the purposes of trade operations and duties and tariffs in India.
• SEZ units are deemed to be outside the customs territory of India.
• Goods and services coming into SEZs from the domestic tariff area or DTA are treated as exports from India and goods and services rendered from the SEZ to the DTA are treated as imports into India.

The facilities at SEZ include:
• Duty free import/domestic procurement of goods for development, operation and maintenance of SEZ units
• **100% Income Tax exemption on export income for SEZ units under Section 10AA of the Income Tax Act** for first 5 years, 50% for next 5 years thereafter and 50% of the ploughed back export profit for next 5 years.
• Exemption from minimum alternate tax under section **115JB of the Income Tax Act**.
• External commercial borrowing by SEZ units upto US $ 500 million in a year without any maturity restriction through recognized banking channels.
• **Exemption from Central Sales Tax.**
• **Exemption from Service Tax.**
• Single window clearance for Central and State level approvals.
• Exemption from State sales tax and other levies as extended by the respective State Governments.
Setting up an SEZ
- The developer submits the proposal for establishment of SEZ to the concerned State Government.
- The State Government has to forward the proposal with its recommendation within 45 days from the date of receipt of such proposal to the Board of Approval.
- The applicant also has the option to submit the proposal directly to the Board of Approval.

7. ESIC WINS 'ISSA GOOD PRACTICE AWARD, ASIA & THE PACIFIC 2018'

Why in news?
The Employees’ State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) has won the ‘ISSA Good Practice Award’ for Administrative Solution for Coverage Extension at the “Regional Social Security Forum for Asia and the Pacific” held at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
The award recognizes the measures taken by ESIC for extension of coverage-SPREE (Scheme for Promoting Registration of Employers and Employees), reduced rate of contribution rates for 24 months in newly implemented areas and raising the wage limit for coverage under the ESI Act, etc.

Employees’ State Insurance Corporation (ESIC)
- ESIC is autonomous corporation under Union Ministry of Labour and Employment, which manages employee’s state insurance i.e. self-financing social security and health insurance scheme for Indian workers.
- It is statutory body established under Employees State Insurance Act, 1948.
- It is headquartered in New Delhi. ESIC hosts ISSA Liaison Office for South Asia in New Delhi. This liaison office coordinates with member countries and social security institutions in Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Iran on activities of ISSA related to social security.

International Social Security Association(ISSA)
- The ISSA is the principal international organization for Social Security Organizations, Govts. and Departments of Social Security.
- The ISSA was founded in 1927 under the auspices of the International Labour Organization (ILO), Geneva.
- It promotes excellence in social security administration through professional guidelines, expert knowledge, services and support to enable its Members to develop dynamic social security systems.
- The ESI Corporation hosts ISSA Liaison Office for South Asia at New Delhi. The Liaison Office coordinates with the Member countries and Social Security Institutions in Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Iran on activities of ISSA related to social security.

8. NATIONAL POLICY ON ELECTRONICS 2018

Why in news?
The government has released the draft of the National Electronics Policy 2018, aiming for a turnover of $400 billion in domestic electronics manufacturing by 2025, along with promoting ease-of-doing business for the entire electronic system design and manufacturing or ESDM sector.

Highlights
- The policy targets production of one billion mobile handsets by 2025, valued at $190 billion including export of 600 million mobile handsets valued at $110 billion.
- The policy aims to also push the startup ecosystem in emerging technology areas such as 5G, Internet of Things, artificial intelligence and machine learning, and their applications in areas such as defence, agriculture, health, smart cities and automation.
• Being exportled, it is also targeting to develop core competencies in all the sub-sectors of electronics, including electronic components and semiconductors, telecommunication equipment, medical electronics, defence electronics, automotive electronics, industrial electronics, strategic electronics, etc. and fabless chip design.

• It also proposed “replacing the M-SIPS (Modified Special Incentive Package Scheme) with schemes that are easier to implement such as interest subsidy and credit default guarantee, etc., in order to encourage new units and expansion of existing units in electronics manufacturing sector”.

Modified Special Incentive Package Scheme (MSIPS) for DeitY

- It is a Special incentive package to promote large-scale manufacturing in the Electronic System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM) sector.
- Under M-SIPS, the Government will provide subsidy of 20 percent on capital investments in special economic zones (SEZs) and 25 percent on capital investments in non-SEZs for individual companies.
- It also provides for re-imbursement of CVD/excise for capital equipment for the non-SEZ units. For high technology and high capital investment units, like fabs, re-imbursement of central taxes and duties is also provided. The incentives are available for investments made in a project within a period of 10 years from the date of approval.

9. INDIA RANKS 115 IN WORLD BANK HUMAN CAPITAL INDEX, GOVT REJECTS FINDINGS

Why in news?
The World Bank released its first report on Human Capital Index (HCI), which placed India at the 115th position, lower than Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Bangladesh.

Highlights
- Singapore topped the poll after it was highly rated for its universal healthcare system, education exams results and life expectancy figures, as per the HCI released by the World Bank.
- The report ranked 157 economies on parameters like child mortality, health and education.
- Poor investment in human capital puts a threat on productivity of the India’s future workforce, the World Bank said revealing that India’s human capital productivity will be half of what Singapore citizens will achieve.
- Overall, India was ranked 115 among 157 countries. That’s much below its Asian peers, including China ranked 46, Indonesia (87), Malaysia (55). Singapore was ranked number one in the world followed by Japan, Hong Kong and Finland.
- A child born in India today will be only 44% as productive when she grows up as she could be if she enjoyed complete education and full health, according to the report. Only 96% of the Indians born today will have the probability to survive to age five indicative of how India is still struggling to control infant mortality in a big way.
- The report, which took into account the human capital investments and outcomes, almost reiterated that Indian children are not learning enough in schools. Factoring in what children actually learn, expected years of school is only 5.8 years, effectively putting to question the
impact of the Right to Education Act, 2009, that promises eight years of compulsory
education to all Indians.

- Across India, 83% of all 15-year-olds will survive until age 60, the World Bank said. Talking
about the health parameters, it said only 62 out of 100 children are not stunted, putting 38% of
kids at the risk of cognitive and physical limitations that can last a lifetime.

**Governments response**

- HCI score for India does not reflect the key initiatives that are being taken for developing
human capital in the country.
- The Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan has been launched to focus on access and quality of education
for the benefit of 197 million school children.
- Through the Ayushman Bharat Programme, India has now launched the world’s largest
Health Insurance initiative providing 500 million citizens with adequate health coverage, and
transforming 150,000 Health Centres into Wellness Centres to provide comprehensive
primary healthcare services
- In pursuing with the agenda of financial inclusion, the Pradhan Mantri Jandhan Yojana has
provided access to formal banking services to over 328 million persons. The share of account
ownership among rural adults has more than doubled from 33 per cent in 2011 to 79 per
cent in 2017, significantly bridging the rural-urban gap
- The Government of India, therefore, has decided to ignore the HCI and will continue to
undertake its path breaking programme for human capital development aiming to rapidly
transforming quality and ease of life for all its children

**Human Capital Project (HCP):**

- It is a programme launched by world bank
- The HCP programme is claimed to be a program of advocacy, measurement, and analytical
work to raise awareness and increase demand for interventions to build human capital.
- There are three components of HCP - a cross-country human capital measurement metric
called the Human Capital Index (HCI), a programme of measurement and research to inform
policy action, and a programme of support for country strategies to accelerate investment in
human capital.

### 10. PANEL FOR ADOPTING UN MODEL ON CROSS-BORDER INSOLVENCY

**Why in news?**
The Insolvency Law Committee (ILC), tasked with suggesting
amendments to the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code of India,
has recommended that India adopt the United Nations’
model to handle cross-border insolvency cases.

**Highlights**

- The Insolvency Law Committee (ILC), tasked with suggesting
amendments to the Insolvency and bankruptcy code

**Insolvency and bankruptcy code**

- The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC) is the
bankruptcy law of India which seeks to consolidate the
existing framework by creating a single law for insolvency
and bankruptcy.
- The bankruptcy code is a one stop solution for resolving
insolvencies which at present is a long process and does not
offer an economically viable arrangement.
- A strong insolvency framework where the cost and the time
incurred is minimised in attaining liquidation has been long
overdue in India.
- The code will be able to protect the interests of small
investors and make the process of doing business a less
cumbersome process.
Bankruptcy Code of India, has recommended that India adopt the United Nations’ model to handle cross-border insolvency cases.

- The committee has also recommended a few carve-outs to ensure that there is no inconsistency between the domestic insolvency framework and the proposed cross border insolvency framework.
- The UNCITRAL Model Law has been adopted in 44 countries and, therefore, forms part of international best practices in dealing with cross border insolvency issues,

**Need for such a decision**

- The necessity of having a cross-border insolvency framework under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code arises from the fact that many Indian companies have a global footprint and many foreign companies have a presence in multiple countries, including India.
- The advantages of the model law are the precedence given to domestic proceedings and protection of public interest.
- The other advantages include greater confidence generation among foreign investors, adequate flexibility for seamless integration with the domestic insolvency law and a robust mechanism for international cooperation

**Key features**

- Insolvency Resolution: The Code outlines separate insolvency resolution processes for individuals, companies and partnership firms.
- The process may be initiated by either the debtor or the creditors. A maximum time limit, for completion of the insolvency resolution process, has been set for corporates and individuals.
- For companies, the process will have to be completed in 180 days, which may be extended by 90 days, if a majority of the creditors agree.
- For start-ups (other than partnership firms), small companies and other companies (with asset less than Rs. 1 crore), resolution process would be completed within 90 days of initiation of request which may be extended by 45 days.
- Insolvency regulator: The Code establishes the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India, to oversee the insolvency proceedings in the country and regulate the entities registered under it. The Board will have 10 members, including representatives from the Ministries of Finance and Law, and the Reserve Bank of India.
- Insolvency professionals: The insolvency process will be managed by licensed professionals. These professionals will also control the assets of the debtor during the insolvency process.
- Bankruptcy and Insolvency Adjudicator: The Code proposes two separate tribunals to oversee the process of insolvency resolution, for individuals and companies:
  1. The National Company Law Tribunal for Companies and Limited Liability Partnership firms
  2. The Debt Recovery Tribunal for individuals and partnerships.

### 11. DIRECT TAX BASE WIDENS SHARPLY OVER 4 YEARS, COMPLIANCE RISES

**Why in news?**
The direct tax base has significantly widened in the last few years, according to new back series data released by the government.
Highlights

- The data showed a growth of more than 80% in the number of returns filed in the last four financial years from 3.79 crore in financial year (FY) 2013-14 to 6.85 crore (these figures include revised returns) in FY 2017-18.
- Further, the number of persons filing income tax returns also increased by about 65% during this period from 3.31 crore in FY 2013-14 to 5.44 crore in FY 2017-18.
- The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has further released time-series data as updated up to FY 2017-18 and income-distribution data for assessment year (AY) 2016-17 and AY 2017-18.

Reasons for the increase

- The effect of demonetisation
- The increase in the use of information being collected digitally and being used by the tax department.
- The movement towards digital assessment and decrease in the number of cases being picked up for scrutiny,
- The ease of getting refund, majorly by small and medium taxpayers.

Taxes in India

- **Direct Tax**
  
  Direct tax is a type of tax where the incidence and impact of taxation fall on the same entity. In the case of direct tax, the burden can’t be shifted by the taxpayer to someone else. These are largely taxes on income or wealth. Income tax, corporation tax, property tax, inheritance tax and gift tax are examples of direct tax.

- **Indirect tax**
  
  Indirect tax is a type of tax where the incidence and impact of taxation does not fall on the same entity. In the case of indirect tax, the burden of tax can be shifted by the taxpayer to someone else. Indirect tax has the effect to raising the price of the products on which they are imposed. Customs duty, central excise, service tax and value added tax are examples of indirect tax.

12. INVEST INDIA

Why in news?

Invest India, the country’s investment promotion body, has won the UN Award for excellence in promoting investments in sustainable development.

Highlights

- Invest India received the award for excellence in servicing and supporting a major global wind turbines company in the establishment of a blade manufacturing plant in India while committing to train local staff and produce 1 gigawatt of renewable energy
- Implementation of the project is expected to reduce India’s wind energy cost significantly,

Invest India

- As the national investment promotion and facilitation agency, Invest India focuses on sector-specific investor targeting and development of new partnerships to enable sustainable investments in India.
- In addition to a core team that focuses on sustainable investments, Invest India also partners with substantial investment promotion agencies and multilateral organizations.
- Invest India also actively works with several Indian states to build capacity as well as bring in global best practices in investment targeting, promotion and facilitation areas.
Invest India is set up as a non-profit venture under the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.

**UN investment promotion awards**
- Held since 2002, the United Nations Investment Promotion Awards celebrate the exchange of best practice in investment promotion. The Awards will be presented to investment promotion agencies for excellence in promoting investment in the SDGs.
- The awards are given annually by United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) since 2002 as part of its investment promotion and facilitation programme.
- It honours investment promotion agencies (IPAs) and their governments for their achievements.
- It also seeks to showcase best practices in attracting investment into Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)-related projects that can inspire investment promotion practitioners in developing and developed countries.

### 13. CABINET NOD FOR INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SKILLS

**Why in news?**
The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister approved the for setting up of Indian Institute of Skills (IISs) at different locations across the country in Public Private Partnership (PPP).

**Important highlights**
- It will be explored for promotion of IIS at select locations based on demand and available infrastructure.
- It will augment the global competitiveness of key sectors of Indian economy by providing high quality skill training.
- It applied research education and a direct and meaningful connection with industry.
- It will provide the opportunity to aspiring youth across the country to have access to highly skilled training.
- It enhance the scope of accountability through its linkage with industry and global competitiveness across sectors.
- By leveraging advantages of private sector enterprise and public capital in terms of Government land, it would create new institutes of expertise, knowledge and competitiveness.

### 14. A.P. RANKED FIRST, WITH 10.5% GROWTH

**Why in news?**
Andhra Pradesh has achieved the number one rank in the country with an average growth of 10.5% during the last four years. It has surpassed many developed States such as Maharashtra and Gujarat following a “focused approach” and setting high targets for itself.

**Highlights**
- According to the State Planning Department, the average growth in the country stood at 7.3% during the last four years.
- Probably, Andhra Pradesh is the only State to clock the double-digit growth rate. While Telangana has slipped to the second place, Maharashtra is ranked sixth. Punjab is placed 14th and Karnataka third.
- The growth in Andhra Pradesh was 9.2% in 2014-15, the year of bifurcation. Later, it was ranked second. In the subsequent year, it achieved a double-digit growth of 10.6% though
its rank had slipped to the 4th place. Since then, the State has been achieving double-digit growth rates.

- Gujarat, which is considered the most developed State, registered a growth of 10.5% in 2014-15. But it slipped to 10.1 in 2016-17. The data pertaining to 2017-18 is not available.
- Telangana, which registered 6.8% growth in 2014-15 could achieve 10.4% in 2017-18, officials said.

### 15. FINANCIAL STABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (FSDC)

#### Why in news?
The Nineteenth Meeting of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) under the Chairmanship of the Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs, reviewed the current global and domestic economic situation and financial sector performance.

#### Highlights
- The Council discussed at length the issue of real interest rate, current liquidity situation, including segmental liquidity position in NBFCs and mutual fund space. The Council decided that the Regulators and the Government would keep a close watch on the developing situation and take all necessary measures.
- FSDC took note of the developments regarding strengthening of Cyber Security in Financial Sector including progress made towards setting up of a Computer Emergency Response Team in the Financial Sector (CERT-Fin) under a Statutory Framework. The Council also deliberated on the need for identifying and securing critical information infrastructure in financial sector.
- The Council also deliberated on the issues and challenges of Crypto Assets/Currency and was briefed about the deliberations in the High-level Committee chaired by the Secretary (Economic Affairs) to devise an appropriate legal framework to ban use of private crypto currencies in India and encouraging the use of Distributed Ledger Technology, as announced in the Budget 2018-19.
- Other issues discussed include market developments and financial stability implications of the use of RegTech and SupTech by Financial Firms and Regulatory and Supervisory Authorities, and implementing the Recommendations of the Sumit Bose Committee Report on measures, such as, promoting appropriate disclosure regime for financial distribution costs.
- The Council also took note of the activities undertaken by the FSDC Sub-Committee Chaired by Governor, RBI and the action taken by Members on the decisions taken in earlier Meetings of the Council.

#### FSDC
- Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) is an apex-level body constituted by the government of India. The idea to create such a super regulatory body was first mooted by the Raghuram Rajan Committee in 2008.
- An apex-level FSDC is not a statutory body. The recent global economic meltdown has put pressure on governments and institutions across the globe to regulate their economic assets. This council is seen as India’s initiative to be better conditioned to prevent such incidents in future.
- The new body envisages to strengthen and institutionalise the mechanism of maintaining financial stability, financial sector development, inter-regulatory coordination along with monitoring macro-prudential regulation of economy. No funds are separately allocated to the council for undertaking its activities.
16. INDIA’S 1ST CONTAINER MOVEMENT ON INLAND WATERWAYS BEGINS

Why in news?
Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) will transport container cargo belonging to the food and beverage giant PepsiCo (India) from Kolkata to Varanasi on river Ganga (National Waterway-1).

Highlights
- This would be the country’s first container movement on inland vessel post-independence, and a milestone moment in the history of India’s IWT sector. PepsiCo (India) will move 16 containers – equivalent to 16 truckloads filled with food and snacks in the vessel MV RN Tagore which will reach Varanasi in 9-10 days. MV RN Tagore will make its return journey with fertilizers belonging to IFFCO that will be procured from its Phulpur plant near Allahabad.
- The government is developing NW-1 (River Ganga) under JMVP from Haldia to Varanasi (1390 Km) with the technical and financial assistance of the World Bank at an estimated cost of Rs 5369 crore. The project would enable commercial navigation of vessels with capacity of 1500-2,000 DWT.

About Inland Waterways Authority of India
- The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) came into existence on 27th October 1986 for development and regulation of inland waterways for shipping and navigation. The Authority primarily undertakes projects for development and maintenance of IWT infrastructure on national waterways through grant received from Ministry of Shipping. The head office of the Authority is at Noida.
- The Authority also has its regional offices at Patna, Kolkata, Guwahati and Kochi and sub-offices at Allahabad, Varanasi, Bhaglapur, Farakka, Hemnagar, Dibrugarh (Assam), Kollam, Bhubaneswar (Odisha) and Vijaywada (A.P.)
- India has about 14,500 km of navigable waterways which comprise of rivers, canals, backwaters, creeks, etc. About 55 million tones of cargo is being moved annually by Inland Water Transport (IWT), a fuel-efficient and environment-friendly mode. Its operations are currently restricted to a few stretches in the Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly rivers, the Brahmaputra, the Barak river, the rivers in Goa, the backwaters in Kerala, inland waters in Mumbai and the deltaic regions of the Godavari – Krishna rivers. Besides these organized operations by mechanized vessels, country boats of various capacities also operate in various rivers and canals. and substantial quantum of cargo and passengers are transported in this unorganized sector as well.

17. IMF QUOTA, GFSN

Why in news?
Stressing on the need to strengthen institutions like IMF to tackle financial crisis, India’s Economic Affairs Secretary Mr. Garg called for quota reforms so that share of emerging nations increases in line with their growing economic position.
IMF Quotas

- The IMF is a quota-based institution. Quotas are the building blocks of the IMF’s financial and governance structure.
- An individual member country’s quota broadly reflects its relative position in the world economy.
- Quotas are denominated in Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), the IMF’s unit of account.

Global Financial Safety Net (GFSN)

- The GFSN is comprised mainly of countries’ own reserves and external public sources of insurance and financing.
- The safety net seeks to provide countries with insurance against crises, financing when shocks hit, and incentives for sound macroeconomic policies.
- It consists of four layers: countries can self-insure against external shocks using foreign reserves or fiscal space at national level.
- At the bilateral level, there are swap lines concluded bilaterally among countries. At regional level, the protection comes from Regional Financing Arrangements.
- And finally, the IMF provides a global financial backstop.

18. NCR RASTA, YATRI RASTA

Why in news?
The North Central Railways (NCR) has launched two mobile apps, ‘NCR RASTA’ and ‘Yatri RASTA’, for its employees and passengers, respectively, for locating assets and stations.

- Both these apps are aimed at fulfilling the twin objectives of passenger service and asset maintenance.
- They were developed by the IT department of the NCR, headed by Chief Manager (IT).

NCR RASTA

- NCR Rasta stands for Railway assets Summarized Tracking Application.
- The app is for the use of railway officers and staff and has exact mapping of all railway assets.
- It will enable railway staff to reach desired asset using Google Navigation in case of any emergency.

Yatri RASTA

- Yatri Rasta stands for Railway Approach to Station Tracking Application
- The app will allow general public to locate the railway stations easily.
- It is already available for smartphones running on Android and can be downloaded free of cost from Google Play Store.

19. BIHAR’S FAMOUS SHAHI LITCHI HAS GOT GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION (GI) TAG

Why in news?
Bihar’s famous shahi litchi has got geographical indication (gi) tag

- The lychee crop, which is available from May to June, is mainly cultivated in the districts of Muzaffarpur and surrounding districts.
- Cultivation of litchi covers approximately an area of about 25,800 hectares producing about 300,000 tonnes every year.
- India’s share in the world litchi market amounts to less than 1%.
- The names of the litchi produced in Muzaffarpur are Shahi and China.
Geographical Indications in India

- A Geographical Indication is used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin.
- Such a name conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness which is essentially attributable to its origin in that defined geographical locality.
- This tag is valid for a period of 10 years following which it can be renewed.
- Recently the Union Minister of Commerce and Industry has launched the logo and tagline for the Geographical Indications (GI) of India.
- The first product to get a GI tag in India was the Darjeeling tea in 2004. There are a total of 325 products from India that carry this indication.
- Darjeeling Tea, Mahabaleshwar Strawberry, Blue Pottery of Jaipur, Banarasi Sarees and Tirupati Laddus are some of the GIs.
- The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 (GI Act) is a sui generis Act for protection of GI in India.
- India, as a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), enacted the Act to comply with the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
- Geographical Indications protection is granted through the TRIPS Agreement. See also the Paris Convention, the Madrid Agreement, the Lisbon Agreement, the Geneva Act.

20. CARNOT PRIZE

Why in news?
Minister of Railways and Coal will receive the University of Pennsylvania’s top prize in energy policy for his leadership in reforming India’s power sector through various initiatives.

Carnot Prize
- The Carnot Prize is intended to honour those leading revolutions in energy policy to further progress and prosperity.
- The ministry is being recognised for directing a fast-track effort to electrify 18,000 villages in remote parts of India, helping bridge the country’s vast energy divide.
- The Carnot Prize is named in memory of French scientist Sadi Carnot, who in 1824 published Reflections on the Motive Power of Fire, which is recognised as the first statement of what, is now known as the second law of thermodynamics.
- Carnot recognised that the power of the steam engine would produce a great revolution in human development.

Recognizing Indian efforts
- The 2018 Carnot Prize is a recognition of India’s efforts, as the nation charts the path towards eliminating energy poverty with sustainable energy solutions.
- The rural electrification drive gave a significant breakthrough to the mission of ‘24x7 Affordable, Environment Friendly Power for all’, as India eliminated decades of darkness in more than 19,000 villages April, 2018.
- With the Saubhagya Programme, the last-mile connectivity to every household in the villages is being fast tracked, with 51% of the 3.1 crore rural households electrified.
• The massive thrust to green energy is reflected in India’s 175 GW target by 2022, being the world’s largest renewable expansion programme with 72 GW already achieved.
• As solar and wind energy market prices achieve parity in India with record low tariffs, renewables are set to become the mainstay of development in the coming years.
• With the vision of “one world, one sun, one grid” of PM Modi India is playing its role as a committed solar leader through steady progress on all green energy goals.
• In the last four years, energy efficiency has become a people’s movement in India, making the Government’s UJALA scheme the world’s largest LED distribution programme.
• Along with private sector participation, 130 crore LED bulbs have been distributed, making India brighter and cleaner.

21. DHUBRI-PHULBARI BRIDGE

Why in news?
India’s longest river bridge will be built across the Brahmaputra, connecting Dhubri in Assam to Phulbari in Meghalaya, and will cut road travel by 203km as also travel time.

• The 19.3km, four-lane bridge will be built by 2026-27.
• The construction of any bridge across the Brahmaputra takes time since construction work can be carried out only for six months in a year.
• It will be built by the government’s highway construction wing, the National Highways and Industrial Development Corporation Ltd.
• Japanese funding agency JICA has approved a loan for this project as a part of a road infrastructure improvement package in the north-east.

Benefits of the bridge
• The new bridge will complete the missing link of NH127B from Assam to Meghalaya. Currently, small boats run between Dhubri and Phulbari.
• It takes about two and a half hours to cross the river. It will hardly take 15-20 minutes to cross the river after the bridge becomes operational.
• It will push economic activities and development on both sides of the river.

India’s longest bridges

19.3 km
The proposed new bridge, between Dhubri and Phulbari.
At present, people cross the river either in small boats and by vehicles that have to take a detour of 100 km before climbing the Naranarayan bridge.

9.15 km
The country’s longest river bridge, as of now.
Between Dhola and Sadiya in Assam, it extends to 28.50 km if the approach roads on either side are included.
It reduces the distance from Rupai (Assam) to Roing (Arunachal Pradesh) by 165 km, and travel time from 6 hours to 1 hour.

6.2 km
In Arunachal Pradesh, over the river Dibang, opened this year.
Second only to Dhola-Sadiya bridge so far.

5.75 km
Patna-Hajipur, over the Ganga, next on the list of river bridges

5.6 km
Bandra Worli Sea Link in Mumbai, longest bridge over sea

4.94 km
To be opened this year, India’s longest rail-cum-road river bridge (the river bridges above are all road). This bridge, too, will be over the Brahmaputra, connecting Dibrugarh (Assam) to Pasighat (Arunachal).
ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. 59 PLANT SPECIES IN IUCN THREAT CATEGORIES

Why in news?
Recently, scientists identified the threat status of 59 Indian plant species based on criteria used by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), in the hope that this “streamlines” conservation efforts for the plants.

Highlights
- The extent and area of each plant’s geographical range was researched, which revealed that 10 species are critically endangered, 18 endangered, six vulnerable, five near threatened and one species each are data deficient and least concern.
- Palm Bentinkia Nicobarica: It is currently listed as endangered; however, the new study suggests it is critically endangered based on its distributional attributes (the palm is reported only from the Great Nicobar Island).

Possible Causes
- Based on population sizes and numbers of mature individuals remaining in the wild using field surveys revealed that habitat loss was a huge factor affecting many declining plant population
- Factors such as low seed viability could have caused declines in the wild too.

Significance of this report
- This would streamline conservation efforts for the plants.
- Funding agencies often consider the threat status of species provided in IUCN’s Red List (a catalogue of the world’s threatened species), to sponsor research and conservation activities to save them.

What is IUCN?
- IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, was established on 5 October 1948 in the French town of Fontainebleau.
- As the first global environmental union, it brought together governments and civil society organisations with a shared goal to protect nature.
- Its aim was to encourage international cooperation and provide scientific knowledge and tools to guide conservation action.

2. UN CHAMPIONS OF THE EARTH AWARD 2018

Why in news?
United Nations Environment has bestowed Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French president Emmanuel Macron with the 2018 ‘Champion of the Earth’ award for their leadership in promotion of solar energy.

Highlights
- Emmanuel Macron, President of France and Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, are recognized in the Policy Leadership category for their pioneering work in championing the International Solar Alliance and promoting new areas of levels of cooperation on environmental action, including Macron’s work on the Global Pact for the Environment and Modi’s unprecedented pledge to eliminate all single-use plastic in India by 2022.
- Cochin International Airport will take home the award for Entrepreneurial Vision, for its leadership in the use of sustainable energy. Cochin is showing the world that ever-expanding network of global movement doesn’t have to harm the environment. As the pace of society continues to increase, the world’s first fully solar-powered airport is proof
• positive that green business is good business.

Champions of the earth award

- The United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) established Champions of the Earth in 2005 as an annual awards programme to recognize outstanding environmental leaders from the public and private sectors, and from civil society.
- Five to seven laureates are selected annually.
- Each laureate is invited to an award ceremony to receive a trophy, give an acceptance speech and take part in a press conference. No financial awards are conferred.
- This awards programme is a successor to UNEP's Global 500 Roll of Honour

3. WORLD HABITAT DAY

Why in news?
World Habitat Day is designated on October 1 by the United Nations. It will remind us to take care of our surroundings for making a safer habitat that is suitable for all.

Theme: Municipal solid waste management for sustainable urban development.

Key facts

- Raise awareness that Municipal solid waste is a global challenge that needs to be addressed
- Facilitate policy dialogue and form partnerships
- Promote innovative solutions to municipal solid waste management
- Mobilise resources to address the municipal solid waste challenges

The Solid Waste Management has become a global issue in recent years. The amount of waste produced by individuals is growing daily and often costs local authorities a large proportion of their budget.

4. GIR LIONS’ DEATHS: DECODING THE DISTURBING CANINE DISTEMPER VIRUS

Why in news?
The Gujarat government is stunned by the deaths of 23 lions since September 12, 2018
The government initially insisted that the lions had died due to infighting for territorial domination, but now has sprung into action and launched not only rescue efforts but also called experts from outside, including London, and imported a vaccine from the United States.

What are the possible causes of these deaths?
The outbreak of Canine Distemper Virus (CDV) and tick-borne Babesiosis is now being considered the reason for these killings.

Background

- According to experts, the Gujarat government...
was warned in 2011, when experts analysed tissues from a 2007 Gir lion carcass.
- It found the presence of highly contagious Peste Des Petits Ruminants Virus (PPRV), which carries an 80%-100% chance of mortality.

5. GI TAG FOR ALPHonso FROM KONKAN

Why in news?
Alphonso from Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg, Palghar, Thane and Raigad districts of Maharashtra, is registered as Geographical Indication (GI).

Highlights
- The king of mangoes, Alphonso, better known as ‘Hapus’ in Maharashtra, is in demand in domestic and international markets not only for its taste but also for pleasant fragrance and vibrant colour.
- It has long been one of the world's most popular fruit and is exported to various countries including Japan, Korea and Europe. New markets such as USA and Australia have recently opened up.
- The first product to get a GI tag in India was the Darjeeling tea in 2004. There are a total of 325 products from India that carry this indication.

GI tag:
- A Geographical Indication or a GI is an indication used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin.
- Such a name conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness which is essentially attributable to its origin in that defined geographical locality.
- Darjeeling Tea, Mahabaleshwar Strawberry, Blue Pottery of Jaipur, Banarasi Sarees and Tirupati Laddus are some of the GIs.
- GI products can benefit the rural economy in remote areas, by supplementing the incomes of artisans, farmers, weavers and craftsmen.
6. NATIONAL DOLPHIN RESEARCH CENTRE (NDRC)

Why in news?
With the population of the endangered Gangetic river dolphin decreasing and its habitat changing, the awaited National Dolphin Research Centre (NDRC), India's and Asia's first is going to be established in Patna.

About gangetic dolphin:
- Gangetic river dolphin is India's national aquatic animal but frequently falls prey to poachers and is sometimes killed inadvertently after being trapped in plastic fishing nets and hit by mechanised boats.
- The mammals are being killed at an alarming rate with wildlife officials saying poachers covet them for their flesh, fat and oil.
- Mammal's presence signals a healthy river ecosystem. Dolphins prefer water that is at least 5-8 feet deep. They are usually found in turbulent waters where there is enough fish for them to feed on.
- Gangetic dolphins prefer deep water with adjoining shallow water. They live in a zone where there is little or no current that helps them save energy. If they sense danger, they can go into deep waters. The dolphins swim from the no-current zone to the edges to hunt for fish and return.
- Gangetic river dolphins fall under Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act and have been declared an endangered species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
- The Gangetic river dolphin is one of the four freshwater dolphin species in the world. The other three are found in the Yangtze river, the Indus river in Pakistan and the Amazon river.
- The Gangetic river species -- found in India, Bangladesh and Nepal -- is almost completely blind. It finds its way and prey using echoes -- with sound being everything for them to navigate, feed, escape danger, find mates, breed, nurse babies and play.

Threats
- The water level has been decreasing and the flow has slowed down. Besides, siltation is increasing in the river. All this is not favorable for dolphins.
- The Gangetic river dolphin is India’s national aquatic animal but frequently falls prey to poachers and is sometimes killed inadvertently after being trapped in plastic fishing nets and hit by mechanized boats.
- The mammals are being killed at an alarming rate with wildlife officials saying poachers covet them for their flesh, fat and oil.
7. TINY SPHERES TO TRAP WATER CONTAMINANTS DEVELOPED

Why in news?
Scientists have created tiny spheres that can catch and destroy bisphenol A (BPA), a synthetic chemical used to make plastics that often contaminates water.

Highlights
- BPA is commonly used to coat the insides of food cans, bottle tops and water supply lines, and was once a component of baby bottles. While BPA that seeps into food and drink is considered safe in low doses, prolonged exposure is suspected of affecting the health of children and contributing to high blood pressure.
- The micron-sized spheres resemble tiny flower-like collections of titanium dioxide petals.
- The supple petals provide plenty of surface area for researchers to anchor cyclodextrin — a benign sugar-based molecule often used in food and drugs.
- It has a two-faced structure, with a hydrophobic (water-avoiding) cavity and a hydrophilic (water-attracting) outer surface.
- BPA is hydrophobic and naturally attracted to the cavity. Once trapped, reactive oxygen species (ROS) produced by the spheres degrades BPA into harmless chemicals.
- In the lab, the researchers determined that 200 milligrams of the spheres per litre of contaminated water degraded 90 per cent of BPA in an hour, a process that would take more than twice as long with unenhanced titanium dioxide.
- The size of the particles is less than 100 nanometers. Because of their very small size, they're very difficult to recover from suspension in water.
- While a 100-nanometer particle is 1,000 times smaller than a human hair, the enhanced titanium dioxide is between 3 and 5 microns, only about 20 times smaller than the same hair.
- Use of low-pressure microfiltration with a membrane can be done to get these particles back for reuse. It saves a lot of energy.
- Since ROS also wears down cyclodextrin, the spheres begin to lose their trapping ability after about 400 hours of continued ultraviolet exposure. However, once recovered, they can be easily recharged.

8. EURASIAN OTTER

Why in news?
Eurasian otter is spotted in western ghats after a long gap of 70 years. While the species is widespread across Europe, northern Africa and several south Asian countries, it is not as frequently seen as smooth-coated or small-clawed otters in India.

About the otter
- The Eurasian otter (Lutra lutra), also known as the European otter, Eurasian river otter, common otter, and Old World otter, is a semiaquatic mammal native to Eurasia.
- The most widely distributed member of the otter subfamily (Lutrinae) of the weasel family (Mustelidae), it is found in the waterways and coasts of Europe, many parts of Asia, and parts of northern Africa.
- The Eurasian otter has a diet mainly of fish, and is strongly territorial. It is endangered in parts of its range, but recovering in others.

9. CYCLONE NAMING

Why in news?
Cyclone TITLI has hit shores of Odisha, leading to widespread damage.
How cyclones are named?

- Tropical cyclones are named to provide ease of communication between forecasters and the general public regarding forecasts and warnings. Since the storms can often last a week or even longer and more than one cyclone can be occurring in the same region at the same time, names can reduce the confusion about what storm is being described.
- Names were first used in World War II and were subsequently adopted by all regions. In most regions predetermined alphabetic lists of alternating male and female names are used. However, in the north-west Pacific the majority of names used are not personal names. While there are a few male and female names, majority are names of flowers, animals, birds, trees, foods or descriptive adjectives. By the mid-1960s names were used for all tropical storms except those in the North Indian Ocean. The names currently in use and those to be used in future years are listed. Various meteorological organisations have responsibility of naming them.
- The names of cyclones in Indian Seas are not allocated in alphabetical order, but are arranged by the name of the country which contributed the name. It is usual practice for a storm to be named when it reaches tropical storm strength (winds of 34 knots).

10. FOREST FIRES

Why in news?
A report titled “Strengthening Forest Fire Management in India”, jointly prepared by the MoEFCC and the World Bank, has been released.

Highlights

- Forest fires occur in around half of the country’s 647 districts every year states the report.
- Repeated fires in short succession are reducing diversity of species and harming natural regeneration, while posing a risk to over 92 million in India who live in areas of forest cover.
- Analysing patterns and trends the report highlights that central India has the largest area affected by fire.
- North-East accounts for 56% of burnt forest land during 2003-2016, followed by southern states and the North-East.
- However, North-eastern states account for the biggest share of fire detections, with at least 55% of fire incidents reported during 2003-2016.

Significance of the Report

- The findings are significant since preventing forest fires is crucial to meet Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) in order to limit global warming.
As per the Fifth Assessment Report of IPCC, forest fires globally contribute 2.5 billion to 4.0 billion tonnes of CO2 to carbon emissions every year. Tackling forest fires is even more important in India as the country has committed to bringing 33% of its geographical area under forest cover by 2030, as part of NDCs.

Way ahead
Forest fire management is part of our long-term vision for sustainable forest management. Forest fires can be controlled only by using an aggressive strategy. Apart from incentivizing communities and forest departments, there is also a need to bring a social movement across states to address the issue.

11. MOUNT ETNA

Why in news?
Gravity is pulling Mount Etna toward the sea, raising the possibility that the flank of the active volcano may someday suffer a catastrophic collapse.

Highlights
- Mount Etna is Europe's most restless volcano. This mountain has experienced active periods since at least around 6000 B.C. and is currently in an eruptive cycle that has been ongoing since September 2013.
- Researchers using satellite data and GPS measurements have also observed that Mount Etna's southeastern flank has been creeping seaward for at least 30 years. The slope moved an average of about a half-inch (14 millimeters) each year between 2001 and 2012 alone.
- The debate, has been whether this creep results from magma moving beneath and within the volcano or whether it results mostly from gravity. Mount Etna is constantly spewing material onto its slopes, and gravity pulls that new material downward.
- Mount Etna also has its "feet in the water." Its slopes continue below the Sicilian coast and into the Mediterranean. Until now, though, no one had measured how the flank was moving below sea level.

12. AIR QUALITY EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

Why in news?
Air Quality Early Warning System for Delhi was launched in Delhi by the Union Minister for Earth Sciences and Environment.

Highlights
- The System is designed to predict extreme air pollution events and give alerts to take necessary steps as per Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) of the Government of India.
- The air pollution system has been developed jointly by the scientists at Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune, India Meteorological Department and National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF).
- The system will help in proactively forewarning, 3-4 days in advance, any large scale air pollution events which may occur over the Delhi region.
- The warning system consists of a) real time observations of air quality over Delhi region and details about natural aerosols like dust (from dust storms) and particulate matter using different satellite data sets b) Predictions of air pollutants from two different air...
quality prediction systems based on state-of-the-art atmospheric chemistry transport models and c) Warning Messages and Alerts and Bulletins.

13. PUERTO RICO’S INSECTS AFFECTED BY CLIMATE CHANGE

Why in news?
After bees and birds, insects and other arthropods have also suffered massive losses, a study published from a Puerto Rico forest, citing the impact of climate change.

Highlights

- By placing sticky traps on the ground and in the forest canopy population of arthropods, which includes insects, caterpillars, and spiders were measured
- Dry weight biomass of arthropods captured in sweep samples had declined by four to eight times, and by 30 to 60 times in sticky traps
- This decline was accompanied by parallel reductions in insectivorous lizards, frogs, and birds
- According to the model used by the researchers, the blame lies principally with global warming. They reach this conclusion by noting Puerto Rico’s rising temperature over about 40 years.
- The mean maximum temperatures, recorded by a forest weather station, increased 2°C between 1978 and 2015. But the effect of climate change is not uniform.
- Another study had concluded that, except in tropical regions, an increase in temperature was going to stimulate the population of harmful insects.

14. ICFRE SIGNS TWO MOUS TO SPREAD AWARENESS ON FORESTS AND ENVIRONMENT

Why in news?
The Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE), Dehradun on October 15, 2018 signed two Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS) and Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS).

Aim: The main aim behind the agreements is to provide a platform for the school children to learn practical skills towards sustainable use of the resources.

Highlights

- The agreements were signed to launch ‘Prakriti’ programme, which aims to promote awareness about forests and environment and stimulate interest among the students of NVS and KVS in maintaining a balanced environment and for acquiring skills that reflect care and protection towards forests, environment and society.
- The two agreements have been signed for a period of 10 years. They aim to make the Indian youth more sensitive towards national and global issues of environment and thus, help them become responsible citizens.
- The agreements also aim to mobilise a cadre of youth for raising a peoples’ movement, which is committed to the conservation of forest and environment.

ICFRE

- The Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) is an autonomous council under the Union Environment Ministry.
- The council mainly guides, promotes and coordinates forestry research, extension and education at the national level through its nine institutes and five centres located across the country.
The collaboration will enable transfer of knowledge to students and teachers of NVS and KVS on environment, forest, environmental services and contemporary areas of forestry research through lectures and interactive sessions by ICFRE scientists.

Under the agreement, visits of students and teachers of NVS and KVS schools will also be arranged to the field and laboratories of ICFRE institutes for a first-hand experience.

Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS)
- The Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti is an autonomous organisation established under the Department of School Education and Literacy in the Ministry of Human Resource Development.
- The organisation was established to provide modern quality education to talented children, predominantly from rural areas, without regard to their family’s socio-economic condition.
- Currently, there are 660 functional residential schools under the Samiti.

Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS).
- The Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan was established in 1963 to provide uninterrupted education to the children of the transferable central government employees.
- The KVS established Kendriya Vidyalayas all over the country to impart quality education, promotion of national integration, adventure activities and physical education.
- The Sangathan has one of the world’s largest chains of schools. It runs around 1,183 schools in India and three abroad.

15. 3RD DECADAL INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF REEFS-2018

Why in news?
The International Conference on Status and Protection of Coral Reefs (STAPCOR — 2018) was inaugurated by the Ministry of Environment at Bangaram coral Island of Territory of Lakshadweep. Theme: of this international conference is ‘Reef for Life’.

Lakshadweep will establish an International Atoll Research Centre, with world class infrastructures for scientific research on corals.

Significance
- Strengthen awareness about ecological, economic, social and cultural value of coral reefs and associated ecosystems
- Improve understanding of the critical threats to reefs and generate both practical and innovative solutions to reduce these threats
- Generate urgent action to develop and implement effective management strategies for conservation and sustainable use of these ecosystems.

Status and Protection of Coral Reefs (STAPCOR)
- STAPCOR has been formed to study the effect of climate change and global warming along with Elnino on the corals lead to heavy bleaching internationally during the year 1998.
- This international conference held in every 10 years to review the status and progress of coral reefs all over the world.

16. BS norms

Why in news?
The Supreme Court banned the sale and registration of motor vehicles conforming to the emission standard Bharat Stage-IV in the entire country from April 1, 2020.

Highlights
- The country will have to shift to the cleaner Bharat- VI fuel from April 1, 2020.
Bharat Stage (BS) emission norms are standards instituted by the government to regulate output of air pollutants from motor vehicles.

The BS-IV norms have been enforced across the country since April 2017.

In 2016, the Centre had announced that the country would skip the BS-V norms altogether and adopt BS-VI norms by 2020.

The apex court said there cannot be any compromise on the health of citizens and this has to take precedence over the “greed” of a few automobile manufacturers who want to stretch the timeline.

Advantages of BS VI norms

- NOx emission will come down by approximately 25% for the petrol engine and 68% for the diesel engines.
- The PM emission will see a substantial decrease of 80% in diesel engines.
- OBD will become mandatory for every vehicle and it will help monitor the pollution caused by the vehicle in real time.
- RDE (Real Driving Emission) will be introduced for the first time that will measure the emission in real-world conditions and not just under test conditions.
- Bharat Stage VI norms will also change the way particulate matter is measured. It will now be measured by number standard instead of mass standard thereby, regulating the fine particulate matter as well.

17. Odisha launches disaster alert system for its coast

Why in news?
Recently the Odisha government has launched the Early Warning Dissemination System, the first-of-its-kind technology in India, to simultaneously warn coastal communities and fisher folk about impending cyclone and tsunami through siren towers.

- **Early Warning Dissemination System:**
  - The EWDS, a collaborative effort of the Central and State governments, has been implemented under the assistance of World Bank.
  - It comprises technologies such as satellite-based mobile data voice terminals, digital mobile radio, mass messaging system and universal communication interface for interoperability.
  - The innovative warning system would alert people about disasters such as floods and cyclone.
  - Fishermen fishing in deep sea can also be reached via mass SMS on their mobile phones through EWDS.
  - It is a part of the last-mile connectivity programme under National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project and aims to inform the last man living near the sea in case of an impending cyclone.
  - Six coastal districts — Balasore, Bhadrak, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara, Puri and Ganjam — have been covered under the EWDS.
  - Sirens will go off from 122 towers installed along the 480-km-long coast of the State if a button is pressed in the State emergency centre in Bhubaneswar.

18. WWF RELEASED LIVING PLANET REPORT 2018

Why in news?
The Living Planet Report 2018 was recently released by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). This report discusses the terrible effects of human activities on wildlife.
• It has been reported in the report that after 1970, 60% of the total number of organisms and 87% in the vegetation has been observed due to human activities.

• Highlights
• This report of WWF reflects the effect of wildlife, marine life, lakes and personal activities on the environment.
• A new section has been included in this report which has been named as soil biodiversity. It has been said that the end of the wetlands is a matter of serious concern for India.
• In this report, the risks of wildlife for animals, the end of their natural habitat, excessive exploitation of resources, climate change, etc. have also been included.
• This report mainly points out the excessive loss of nature due to the harvesting of agriculture and forestry.
• According to the Indian Union of WWF, more than 4,000 species of species were researched across the globe, from 60% in the 1970s to 2014.
• This report also includes monitoring statistics of vertebrate species in particular. Which was taken from the database of information on mammals, birds, fish, almost 22,000 more than the population of reptiles and amphibians.

Living Planet report 2018
- The Living Planet Report is published every two years by the World Wide Fund for Nature since 1998. It is based on the Living Planet Index and ecological footprint calculations.
- The Living Planet Report is the world's leading, science-based analysis on the health of our planet and the impact of human activity. Humanity's demands exceed the Earth's capacity to sustain us.

WWF
The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) is an international non-governmental organization founded in 1961, working in the field of the wilderness preservation, and the reduction of human impact on the environment. It was formerly named the World Wildlife Fund, which remains its official name in Canada and the United States. The Living Planet Report is published every two years by WWF since 1998; it is based on a Living Planet Index and ecological footprint calculation.

19. GREEN CLIMATE FUND

Why in news?
The Green Climate Fund approved more than $1 billion in new projects and programs aimed at supporting climate action across developing nations while at the same time launching the Fund’s first replenishment.

Highlights
• 19 new projects have been awarded $1.04 billion by the GCF and, including co-financing, the projects are expected to see investment worth $4.2 billion worth of climate financing for low-emission, climate-resilient development.
• The new projects bring the Fund’s total portfolio of projects up to 93, worth over $4.6 billion in GCF resources.

About GCF:
• The Green Climate Fund (GCF) is a fund established within the framework of the UNFCCC as an operating entity of the Financial Mechanism to assist developing countries in adaptation and mitigation practices to counter climate change. The GCF is based in the
Incheon, South Korea. It is governed by a Board of 24 members and supported by a Secretariat.

- Launched in 2010 by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Green Climate Fund (GCF) was created in an effort to support the efforts of developing nations as they respond to climate change.
- The Fund is governed and supervised by a Board that will have full responsibility for funding decisions and that receives the guidance of the COP. The Fund is accountable to, and functions under the guidance of, the COP.

20. **LPG SET TO MAKE KERALA THE FIRST SMOKE-FREE STATE**

**Why in news?**
Kerala is now set to become the first smoke-free State in the country with public sector oil companies eyeing 100% LPG penetration.

**Highlights**
- The target has almost been achieved in most villages, mofussil towns and cities in the State. Kerala is one of the States with the highest penetration of LPG, which is transforming lifestyles.
- LPG consumption was 933.3 TMT (thousand tonnes) in the Kerala in 2017-18 and Indian Oil sold 4.25 lakh tonnes of LPG the previous fiscal. It is estimated that one crore tonnes of emissions, from poisonous gases like firewood cooking, have been contained and 25 lakh trees have been saved.
- With three bottling plants at Kochi, Kozhikode, and Kollam, LPG is being brought to 49.79 lakh customers through 308 distributors.
- LPG is being supplied beyond commercial considerations with the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana initiated by the Ministry of Petroleum aimed at providing 50 million free LPG connections to women in poor households.

21. **‘EARTH’S INNER CORE IS SOFTER THAN THOUGHT’**

**Why in news?**
The inner core of the earth is solid, and softer than previously thought, according to a study which could improve our understanding of how the planet was formed.

**Highlights**
- Researchers at The Australian National University came up with a way to detect shear waves, or “J waves” in the inner core — a type of wave which can only travel through solid objects. The inner core shares some similar elastic properties with gold and platinum.
- The inner core is like a time capsule, it will help to understand how the planet was formed, and how it evolves,
- Inner core shear waves are so tiny and feeble they can’t be observed directly,
- Detecting them has been considered the “Holy Grail” of global seismology since scientists first predicted the inner core was solid in the 1930s and 40s
- The understanding of the Earth’s inner core has direct consequences for the generation and maintenance of the geomagnetic field, and without that geomagnetic field there would be no life on the Earth’s surface.

**Inner core:**
The Earth's inner core is the Earth's innermost part. It is primarily a solid ball with a radius of about 1,220 kilometres (760 miles), which is about 70% of the Moon’s radius. It is composed of an iron–nickel alloy and some other elements. The temperature at the inner core's surface is
approximately 5,700 K (5,430 °C) or 9806 °F, which is about the temperature at the surface of the Sun.

**Thicknes**s: The Inner Core is about 1250 km thick and is the second smallest layer of the Earth. Although it is one of the smallest, the Inner Core is also the hottest layer.

**Composition:*** The Inner Core is a solid ball composed of an element named NiFe. Ni for Nickel and Fe for Ferrum also known as Iron.

**Temperature:*** The Inner Core is about 5000-6000 degrees Celsius. It melts all metal ores in the Outer Core causing it to turn into liquid magma.
1. HAYABUSA2 PROBEMASCOT ROBOT

Why in news
The Hayabusa2 probe launched the French-German Mobile Asteroid Surface Scout, or MASCOT towards the Ryugu asteroid’s surface.

- The 10-kg box-shaped MASCOT is loaded with sensors.
- It can take images at multiple wavelengths, investigate minerals with a microscope, gauge surface temperatures and measure magnetic fields.
- The MASCOT got separated from the spacecraft as planned and got safely landed.

Hayabusa2 Probe

- A Japanese probe launched a new observation robot towards an asteroid as it pursues a mission to shed light on the origins of the solar system.
- The Hayabusa2 is scheduled later this month to deploy an “impactor” that will explode above the asteroid, shooting a two-kilo copper object into it to blast a small crater on the surface.
- The probe will then hovers over the artificial crater and collect samples using an extended arm.

First Robot to land on Asteroid

- MASCOT’s launch comes 10 days after the Hayabusa2 dropped a pair of MINERVA-II micro-rovers on the Ryugu asteroid.
- It was the first time that moving, robotic observation device have been successfully landed on an asteroid.
- The rovers will take advantage of Ryugu’s low gravity to jump around on the surface travelling as far as 15 metres while airborne and staying in the air for as long as 15 minutes.
- It is aimed to survey the asteroid’s physical features with cameras and sensors.
- Unlike those machines, MASCOT will be largely immobile it will “jump” just once on its mission, and it can turn on its sides.
- The MASCOT has a maximum battery life of just 16 hours, and will transmit the data it collects to the Hayabusa2 before running out of power.

2. WORLD’S FIRST HYPERLOOP CAPSULE

Why in news?
Hyperloop Transportation Technologies Inc. unveiled its first full-scale passenger capsule, offering the world a peek at the future of travel.
• The capsule, 105 feet (32 meters) long and weighing 5 tons, was shown in Spain.
• Named as the Quintero One, the product is made almost entirely out of composite material.

Hyperloop Technology
• Hyperloop is a technology that gained popularity after billionaire Elon Musk touted it in 2013, prompting several companies to join the race to build a high-speed transportation system.
• It envisages moving passengers in capsules at speeds of more than 750 miles (1,200 kilometers) per hour through low-pressure tubes, in order to reduce friction.
• The technology will be able to propel trains faster than existing methods such as the Maglev, which uses a levitation technology to lift the train cars above a track to eliminate surface drag.

Hyperloop in India
• Billionaire Richard Branson’s Virgin Hyperloop One held discussions in India, aiming to offer passengers in the futuristic technology fares that are cheaper than local airlines.
• Branson has signed a preliminary agreement in Mumbai for a broad hyperloop framework and mooted a Mumbai-Pune system that would shrink travel time to 25 minutes and save about three hours.

3. GAGANYAAN

Why in news?
India hopes to send its first manned mission Gaganyaan in 2022.
• The Roscosmos State Corporation for Space Activities and Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will be working together on the Gaganyaan mission.
• A MoU was inked between ISRO and the Federal Space Agency of Russia ‘ROSCOSMOS’ for joint activities in the field of Human Spaceflight Programme.

Russian Courtesy
• The Russian side has offered a ride to Indian astronaut a short visit to International Space Station (ISS) on board a Soyuz spacecraft for a short training mission in 2022.
• Russia had agreed to supply ISRO with the Rover for the second moon mission but this has not come through and now ISRO is building its own Rover.DGS
• It was also decided to set up measurement data collection ground stations of the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System NavIC and the Russian Navigation Satellite System GLONASS in both countries.
• India-Russia space cooperation was very strong, with the Soviet Union being one of the three partners who helped India get off the ground with its space programme.
• The China factor has been a determining factor to the extent where India’s Chandrayaan 2 mission has been delayed significantly.

Training the Astronauts
• There have been debates about where India should train its astronauts.
• The options are of course the US and Russia and both have offered India all assistance in this regard.
• The ISS is a habitable artificial satellite in low Earth orbit.
• If successful, India would be the fourth nation to send a human in space after the US, Russia and China.

4. NEW HORIZON PROBE, KUPIER BELT

Why in news?
NASA’s New Horizons probe is on course to fly by the Kuiper Belt object nicknamed Ultima Thule, which is at a distance of 6.6 billion kilometers from Earth.
• This event will set the record for the most distant object ever visited by a spacecraft.
• The spacecraft has successfully performed the three and half-minute manoeuvre on October 3 to home in on its location.
• The manoeuvre slightly tweaked the spacecraft’s trajectory and bumped its speed by 2.1 metres per second keeping it on track to fly past Ultima officially named 2014 MU69 on January 1, 2019.
• This manoeuvre has led the farthest exploration in world more than a billion miles beyond Pluto.

Trajectory Correction Maneuver
• New Horizons itself was about 6.35 billion km from earth when it carried out trajectory correction maneuver (TCM), the farthest course-correction ever performed.
• This was the first Ultima targeting maneuver that used pictures taken by New Horizons itself to determine the spacecraft’s position relative to the Kuiper Belt object.
• The TCM is done by determining the current trajectories and its target, and then calculating the manoeuvring required to put the spacecraft at the desired aim point for the flyby 3,500 km from Ultima at closest approach.

New Horizon Probe
• New Horizons is an interplanetary space probe that was launched as a part of NASA’s New Frontiers program on January 19, 2006.
• The primary mission is to perform a flyby study of the Pluto system. The secondary mission to fly by and study one or more other Kuiper belt objects (KBOs).
• After completing flyby mission of Pluto, New Horizons has maneuvered for a flyby of KBO 2014 MU69. It expected to take place on January 1, 2019.
Kuiper Belt
- Kuiper belt is a region of the solar system beyond the planets, extending from the orbit of Neptune. It consist mainly small bodies or remnants from the solar system’s formation.
- It is similar to the asteroid belt, although it is far larger 20 times as wide and 200 times as massive.
- The Kuiper belt objects (KBO) are composed largely of frozen volatiles (termed ‘ices’), such as methane, ammonia and water.
- Kuiper belt is home to at least three dwarf planets Pluto, Haumea and Makemake.
- Pluto, discovered in 1930, is considered its largest member.

5. MICROSOFT INDIA SIGNS PACT WITH NITI FOR AI TOOLS IN AGRICULTURE, HEALTHCARE

Why in news?
Microsoft India has signed an agreement with Niti Aayog to deploy artificial intelligence (AI) technologies to address challenges in agriculture and healthcare, and promote adoption of local language computing, among others.

Highlights
- Microsoft India will support NITI Aayog by combining the cloud, AI, research and its vertical expertise for new initiatives and solutions across several core areas,
- Microsoft will also accelerate the use of AI for the development and adoption of local language computing, in addition to building capacity for AI among the workforce through education
- Under the agreement, Microsoft will provide Niti Aayog advanced AI-based solutions to address challenges in agriculture and healthcare including farm advisory services, healthcare screening models at Primary Health Centres, and building capacity for AI through education among others.
- Additionally, Microsoft will promote STEM education in the areas of AI studies and data sciences for young women in institutes identified by NITI Aayog.

Applications of AI
- Artificial intelligence continues to be a hot topic in the technology space as well as increasing its inception into other realms such as healthcare, business, and gaming. AI-powered chatbots in enterprises will also see an influx of people get more comfortable with how AI can actually benefit businesses versus, say, take away their jobs
- Current business communication is overloaded with content, channels, tools, and so-called solutions, depriving individuals (and companies) from hitting targets while also harming work-life balance. Artificial Intelligence will help businesses improve communication internally and externally by enabling individual personalization for each professional, allowing for enhanced focus and increased productivity.
Artificial Intelligence technology provides a competitive edge to e-commerce businesses and is becoming readily available to companies of any size or budget. Leveraging machine learning, AI software automatically tags, organizes and visually searches content by labeling features of the image or video.

6. DEEP SUBMERGENCE RESCUE VEHICLE (DSRV)

Why in news?
Enhancing its operational capabilities, Indian Navy has inducted its first deep submergence rescue vehicle. It can be deployed to rescue downed or disaster-struck submarines at high sea.

Deep Submergence Rescue Vehicle (DSRV)

- DSRVs are used for rescue of personnel in downed submarines.
- They are also deployed for various other missions including to lay cables on the sea bed.
- Some DSRV vessels are air transportable in very large military cargo.
- The DSRV which was inducted can be mobilized from the naval base in Mumbai to nearest mounting port by air, land and sea.
- The second DSRV is expected to be inducted at Visakhapatnam in 2019.

Importance of DSRV Deployment

- With induction of the DSRV, India has joined a select group of countries that have the capability to locate and rescue distressed submarines.
- At present, the US, China, Russia and a few other countries have the capabilities to deploy DSRVs.

7. ‘ASK DISHA’ (DIGITAL INTERACTION TO SEEK HELP ANYTIME)

Why in news?
IRCTC has launched the chat bot to answer various queries about ticket booking, cancellation and various value added services.

- It has been jointly developed by IRCTC and CoRover Private Limited, a Bangalore-based startup.
- It is a new artificial intelligence-enabled chat bot is a first of its kind initiative for any Indian government.
- It can be used by Indian Railways passengers to get their questions answered through the chat bot.

Features of Ask-Disha

- The new next-generation IRCTC e-ticketing website gets an average 4 million users per day.
- Hence the chat bot is included with 24*7 customer query support, quick response time to queries and multi-tasking.
- The chat bot is available on the right-hand side bottom corner of the IRCTC website.
- Once the user starts typing in a query, the chat bot auto suggests some options.
According to IRCTC the chat bot will “improve its knowledge” over a period of time, expanding its ambit of questions to ensure greater efficiency in catering to queries of users.

8. **ONEER TM**

**Why in news?**
The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, Indian Institute of Toxicology Research (CSIR-IITR) has developed a Drinking Water Disinfection System with trade name OneerTM.

- It is useful for continuous treatment of water and eliminates all disease causing pathogens such as virus, bacteria, fungi, protozoa and cyst.
- It provides safe drinking water to domestic and communities settings as per National and International standards prescribed for potable water (BIS, WHO etc.).
- It will provide access to safe and clean drinking water at a cost of just 2 Paise / Ltr.

**Importance of the development**
- A large proportion of India’s rural community is consuming water that does not meet the WHO drinking water quality standards.
- According to the World Health Organization, access to safe drinking-water is essential to health, a basic human right and a component of effective policy for health protection.
- The Community level model is of 450 LPH capacities which can be scaled up to 5000 to 1 lakh L/day; and is also maintenance and membrane free.
- The technology will be helpful especially for rural people since it can be solar powered and this development is in line with the ‘Make in India’ Mission.

9. **HYPERION SUPER-GALAXY**

**Why in news?**
Astronomers have discovered the largest and most massive galaxy super cluster yet found in the early universe. It was formed just over two billion years after the Big Bang.

**Hyperion**
- The galaxy proto-supercluster, nicknamed Hyperion, was identified using the VIMOS instrument on European Southern Observatory’s (ESO) Very Large Telescope in Chile.
- Located in the constellation of Sextans, Hyperion was identified by a novel technique to analyse the vast amount of data obtained from the VIMOS Ultra-Deep Survey.
- Hyperion has a calculated mass more than one million billion times that of the Sun, making it the largest and most massive structure to be found so early in the formation of the universe.
- Surprisingly the galaxy was evolved in very less time when the universe was relatively young.

**What makes Hyperion distinct?**
- Hyperion has a very complex structure, containing at least seven high-density regions connected by filaments of galaxies.
- Its size is comparable to superclusters closer to Earth, though it has a very different structure.
- Superclusters closer to Earth tend to be a much more concentrated distribution of mass with clear structural features.
• But in Hyperion, the mass is distributed much more uniformly in a series of connected blobs, populated by loose associations of galaxies.
• The contrast between Hyperion and less distant superclusters is most likely due to the fact that nearby superclusters have had billions of years for gravity to gather matter together into denser regions.
• Hyperion is expected to evolve into something similar to the immense structures in the local universe such as the superclusters making up the Sloan Great Wall or the Virgo Supercluster that contains our own galaxy, the Milky Way.

About VIMOS
- The Visible Multi-Object Spectrograph (VIMOS) is a wide field imager and a multi-object spectrograph installed at the ESO.
- The instrument is used for deep astronomical surveys and delivers visible images and spectra of up to 1,000 galaxies at a time.
- It can measure the distance to hundreds of galaxies at the same time, making it possible to map the position of galaxies within the forming supercluster in three dimensions.

10. CHINA IS PLANNING TO LAUNCH ITS OWN ‘ARTIFICIAL MOON’

Why in news?
China is planning to launch its own ‘artificial moon’ by 2020 to replace streetlamps and lower electricity costs in urban areas.

Illumination Satellites
• Chengdu, a city in southwestern Sichuan province, is developing “illumination satellites” which will shine eight times brighter than the real moon.
• The first man-made moon will launch from Xichang Satellite Launch Center in Sichuan, with three more to follow in 2022 if the first test goes well.
• Though the first launch will be experimental, the 2022 satellites will be the real deal with great civic and commercial potential.

Benefits
• By reflecting light from the sun, the satellites could replace streetlamps in urban areas for 50sq.km; saving an estimated USD 170 million a year in electricity costs for Chengdu.
• The extraterrestrial source of light could also help rescue efforts in disaster zones during blackouts, he added.
• Not a first of its kind experiment
• China is not the first country to try beaming sunlight back to Earth.
• In the 1990s, Russian scientists reportedly used giant mirrors to reflect light from space in an experimental project called Znamya or Banner.

Other missions by China
• As China’s space programme races to catch up with that of the United States and Russia, a number of ambitious projects are in the pipeline.
• These include the Chang’e-4 lunar probe named after the moon goddess in Chinese mythology – which aims to launch later this year.
• If it succeeds, it will be the first rover to explore the “dark side” of the moon.
11. MERCURY PLANETARY ORBITER (MPO), MERCURY MAGNETOSPHERIC ORBITER (MMO)

Why in news?
The European Space Agency (ESA) and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) has successfully sent two probes on a joint mission to Mercury, the closest planet to the Sun.

Launch
- An Ariane 5 rocket, launched from French Guyana, lifted an unmanned spacecraft, BepiColombo, which is carrying the two probes.
- The spacecraft separated and went into orbit for the 7-year trip to Mercury.

Details of the Mission
- It is the first European mission to Mercury, and the first to send two spacecraft to make complementary measurements of the planet and its environment at the same time.
- The orbiters are ESA’s Mercury Planetary Orbiter (MPO) and JAXA’s Mercury Magnetospheric Orbiter (MMO, or ‘Mio’).
- The ESA-built Mercury Transfer Module (MTM) will carry the orbiters to Mercury using a combination of solar electric propulsion and gravity assist flybys.

Venus en route
- The two orbiters will be able to operate some of their instruments during the cruise phase, to try and collect data at Venus.
- Moreover, some of the instruments designed to study Mercury in a particular way can be used in a completely different way at Venus, which has a thicker atmosphere.

Reaching Mercury
- A few months before reaching Mercury, the transfer module will be jettisoned, leaving the two science orbiters to be captured by Mercury’s gravity.
- MPO will separate and descend to its own orbit. Together the orbiters will make measurements.

Upcoming Challenges
- The Sun’s enormous gravity makes it difficult to place a spacecraft into a stable orbit around Mercury.
- The mission will have to ensure a controlled fall.
- The spacecraft has been specially designed for extreme temperatures.
1. WAGE COMPENSATION SCHEME FOR PREGNANT WOMEN

Why in news?
- Assam govt. has launched the Wage Compensation Scheme for Pregnant Women in tea gardens of the state.
- Under the scheme, each pregnant woman in tea gardens will get a sum of Rs 12,000 so that she can take better care of herself and her unborn baby without compromising the livelihood of her family.
- This initiative will be able to considerably bring down the mortality rate among the pregnant women of the tea community of the state.
- The high Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) among pregnant women in the tea garden areas due to anaemia and other diseases has been a major cause of concern.
- The pregnant women labourers in the tea gardens have to work through their pregnancy till the time of delivery due to crop cycle.
- All temporary, permanent or non-workers living within the tea garden areas will be eligible for the scheme.

Compensation Plans under the scheme
- As per the scheme, the first installment of Rs 2,000 will be provided during the Ante-Natal Check-up (ANC) registration within the first trimester.
- Second installment of Rs 4000 will be credited during the sixth month of the pregnancy and the third installment of Rs 3000 during delivery at a government-approved health institution.
- The fourth installment of Rs 3,000 will be credited during the sixth week post-delivery.
- Those who did not get Rs 2,500 which was deposited to eight lakh newly opened bank accounts in the tea garden areas will receive Rs 5,000 in December.
- Another Rs 2,500 will also be given to those who received a similar amount earlier.

2. FIRST GLOBAL GUIDELINES ON SANITATION AND HEALTH

Why in news?
In its first such guidelines, the WHO warned that world will not reach the goal of universal sanitation coverage by 2030 unless countries make comprehensive policy shifts and invest more funds.
- By adopting these new guidelines, countries can significantly reduce the diarrheal deaths due to unsafe water, sanitation and hygiene.
- WHO developed the new guidelines because current sanitation programmes are not achieving anticipated health gains.
- There is a lack of authoritative health-based guidance on sanitation.
Four Principal Recommendations

- Sanitation interventions should ensure entire communities have access to toilets that safely contain excreta.
- The full sanitation system should be undergo local health risk assessments to protect individuals and communities from exposure to excreta – whether this be from unsafe toilets, leaking storage or inadequate treatment.
- Sanitation should be integrated into regular local government-led planning and service provision to avert the higher costs associated with retrofitting sanitation and to ensure sustainability.
- The health sector should invest more and play a coordinating role in sanitation planning to protect public health.

3. ARTICLE 355, VERDICT ON THE RESERVATION IN PROMOTIONS

Why in news?
The Supreme court in its recent verdict in Jarnail Singh v. Lachhmi Narain Gupta held that the government need not collect quantifiable data to demonstrate backwardness of public employees belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (SC/STs) to provide reservations for them in promotions
- The core issue here was whether the ‘creamy layer’ among SC/STs should be barred from obtaining promotions through reservations
- The court set aside the requirement to collect quantifiable data that was stipulated by its 2006 verdict in M. Nagaraj v. Union of India
- It ignored the reasoning of a nine-judge bench in Indra Sawhney (1992) that any discussion on creamy layer “has no relevance” in the context of SC/STs

What’s the issue?
- The court merely removed the government’s responsibility to collect quantifiable data on backwardness but reasoned that the creamy layer test would be consistent with the equality principle
- The Supreme Court relies on using arguments pertinent only in the case of OBCs to decide litigation on SC/ST quotas

Why reservations for SC/ST?
- A close reading of relevant constitutional provisions and the verdict in Indra Sawhney make it clear that the SC/STs are given job reservations not because they are poor but because they are excluded
- The first part of Article 335 stipulates job reservations for SC/STs as a right of representation, not as a welfare measure

Need of creamy layer provision
- The creamy layer among SC/ST employees helps fulfil the second part of Article 335 that requires maintaining the “efficiency of administration”
- The presence of the creamy layer works as a safety valve
- The rationale behind the demand to prohibit elite or privileged sections from accessing quota posts is that these sections are as well qualified as general candidates, if not more, and numerous enough to warrant their removal
4. CONFERENCE ON ‘WOMEN IN DETENTION AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE’

Why in news?
The Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D), Ministry of Home Affairs is organising the First ever Regional Conference at Shimla on ‘Women in Detention and Access to Justice’.

- The BPR&D organizes the conferences on newly emerged issues.
- The Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women on this subject has made several recommendations.
- There is a need to deliberate upon some of the recommendations to devise strategies and programs for bettering conditions of Women Prisoners and upholding their FRs.
- The following themes have been identified for discussions and deliberations:
  - Reproductive Health Rights of Women Prisoners: National and International Legal Norms
  - Health Needs of Women Prisoners
  - Health, Skill, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Women Inmates and Their Children
  - Prison Reforms, Structural Managerial and Legal Issues with Focus on Women Inmates & Comparison to Global Norms
  - Neuro-Criminology Program for the Offender
  - Transforming Prisons

Aim of the Conference
- This conference is organised with a view to provide a platform for the prison personnel of all ranks at the national level.
- They are expected to share their candid views on various operational as well as administrative issues.
- It is aimed to identify best practices and standards in the working of Correctional Administration to meet new challenges in the present day’s context to bring out prison reforms in objective terms.
- Expected outcome of the conference will be to help in ensuring better implementation of Prison Reform and Rehabilitation Program in order to improve the conditions of Women Inmates and their Access to Justice.

5. RVY, DEVICES DISTRIBUTED UNDER RASHTRIYA VAYOSHRI YOJANA (RVY)

Why in news?
A Distribution camp for free of cost distribution of Aids and Assistive Living devises under Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY).

- It is a scheme of Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Department for Senior Citizen under BPL category.
- The event was organized by Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO), a PSU working under the aegis of Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

Background
In the Union Budget 2015-16, Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley had proposed formulation of a scheme for providing Physical Aids and Assisted-Living Devices to senior citizens belonging to BPL Category. Pursuant to this, “Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana” has been formulated. As per the Census figures of 2011, population of senior citizens in India is 10.38 crore. More than 70% of the population of senior citizens live in rural areas of the country. A sizeable percentage (5.2%) of the senior citizens suffers from some sort of disabilities related to old age.

Assistive Living Devices distributed to Sr. Citizens under RVY
1. Wheelchairs
2. Tetra/Tripod
3. BTE Hearing Aids
4. Crutches
5. Walking Sticks
6. Dentures
7. Spectacles

6. #METOO GEARING-IN IN INDIA

Why in news?
Over the last several days, a number of women in India have called out influential men — actors, stand-up comics, senior journalists for alleged sexual harassment. Some of these allegations relate to actions of then colleagues of the women.

Law against Sexual Harassment
- The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act (SHWWA) was passed in 2013.
- The rights of all women working or visiting any workplace, in any capacity, are protected under the Act.
- It defines sexual harassment, lays down the procedures for a complaint and inquiry, and the action to be taken. It broadens the Vishaka guidelines, which were already in place.

Vishaka guidelines
- These were laid down by the Supreme Court in a judgment in 1997.
- This was on a case filed by women’s rights groups, one of which was Vishaka.
- Legally binding, these defined sexual harassment and imposed three key obligations on institutions — prohibition, prevention, redress.
- The Supreme Court directed that they establish a Complaints Committee, which would look into matters of sexual harassment of women at the workplace.

2013 Act broadening the sense
- It mandates that every employer constitute an Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) at each office or branch with 10 or more employees.
- It lays down procedures and defines various aspects of sexual harassment.
- An aggrieved victim is a woman “of any age whether employed or not”, who “alleges to have been subjected to any act of sexual harassment”.
- Additionally, the Act mentions five circumstances that amount to sexual harassment — implied or explicit promise of preferential treatment in her employment; implied or explicit threat of detrimental treatment; implied or explicit threat about her present or future employment status; interference with her work or creating an offensive or hostile work environment; humiliating treatment likely to affect her health or safety.
7. **GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX**

**Why in news?**
India has been ranked at **103 out of 119** countries in the Global Hunger Index 2018, with hunger levels in the country categorized as “serious”.

- At least one in five Indian children under the age of five is wasted, says the report.
- The only country with a higher prevalence of child wasting is the war-torn nation of South Sudan.
- India’s ranking has dropped three places from last year, although the Index says its results are not accurately comparable from year to year and instead provides a few reference years for comparable data.

**About the report**
- The report terms hunger and forced migration for the severity worldwide.
- The report is a peer-reviewed publication released annually by Welthungerhilfe and Concern Worldwide.
- The International Food Policy Research Institute was also involved with the publication until this year.

**Four Main Indicators**
- The GHI scores are based on a formula that captures three dimensions of hunger—insufficient caloric intake, child undernutrition, and child mortality—using four component indicators:
  - **UNDERNOURISHMENT**: the share of the population that is under-nourished, reflecting insufficient caloric intake
  - **CHILD WASTING**: the share of children under the age of five who are wasted (low weight-for-height), reflecting acute undernutrition.
  - **CHILD STUNTING**: the share of children under the age of five who are stunted (low height-for-age), reflecting chronic undernutrition
  - **CHILD MORTALITY**: the mortality rate of children under the age of five

**India’s Overall Performance**
- India has shown improvement in three of the indicators over the comparable reference years.
- The percentage of undernourished people in the population has dropped from 18.2% in 2000 to 14.8% in 2018.
- The child mortality rate has halved from 9.2% to 4.3%, while child stunting has dropped from 54.2% to 38.4% over the same period.
- However, the prevalence of child wasting has actually worsened in comparison to previous reference years.
• It stood at 17.1% in 2000, and increased to 20% in 2005. In 2018, it stands at 21%. South Sudan’s child wasting prevalence is at 28%.

Other highlights of the report
• Child wasting is high across South Asia, constituting a “critical public health emergency”, according to UN organisations.
• The report notes that wasting rates are highest for infants aged 0 to 5 months, suggesting that attention to birth outcomes and breastfeeding is important.
• Also, child wasting in the region is associated with a low maternal body mass index, suggesting the need for a focus on the nutritional status of the mother during pregnancy.
• Factors that could reduce child stunting in South Asia include increased consumption of non-staple foods, access to sanitation, women’s education, access to safe water, gender equality, and national food availability.

8. TACKLING ZIKA VIRUS MENACE IN INDIA

Why in news?
In what is India’s first large outbreak of the Zika virus, afresh 100 cases have been detected so far Jaipur itself. A look at how the virus spreads and the big risk it involves — the possibility of babies being born with a defect

Zika
• Zika is a viral infection, spread by mosquitoes.
• The vector is the Aedes aegypti mosquito, which also spreads dengue and Chikungunya.
• First identified in Uganda in 1947 in monkeys, Zika was detected in humans five years later.
• Sporadic cases have been reported throughout the world since the 1960s, but the first outbreak happened only in 2007 in the Island of Yap in the Pacific.
• In 2015, a major outbreak in Brazil led to the revelation that Zika can be associated with microcephaly, a condition in which babies are born with small and underdeveloped brains.

Transmission of Zika Virus

• Infected people can transmit Zika sexually.
• Fears around Zika primarily involve microcephaly, especially when pregnant women are infected.
• Generally, the virus is not considered dangerous to anyone other than pregnant women.
Some countries that have had a Zika outbreak, including Brazil, reported a steep increase in Guillain-Barré syndrome — a neurological disorder that could lead to paralysis and death, according to WHO.

In 2017, following a study on Brazil’s confirmed cases, the US National Institutes of Health study estimated the fatality rate at 8.3%.

**Symptoms**
- Most people infected with the virus do not develop symptoms.
- When they are manifested, the symptoms are similar to those of flu, including fever, bodyache, headache etc.
- WHO says these symptoms can be treated with common pain and fever medicines, rest and plenty of water.
- If the symptoms worsen, people should seek medical advice.
- Additional symptoms can include the occasional rash like in dengue, while some patients also have conjunctivitis.
- The incubation period (the time from exposure to symptoms) of Zika virus disease is estimated to be 3-14 days.

**Preventive Measures against Zika**
- Mosquito control measures such as spraying of pesticides, use of repellents etc. are widely suggested.
- Because of the possibility of congenital abnormalities and sexual transmission, there is also focus on contraceptives.
- WHO requires countries to counsel sexually active men and women on the matter to minimize chances of conception at the time of an outbreak.

**9. CHILDREN’S SCHOOL BAGS (LIMITATION ON WEIGHT), BILL OF 2006**

**Why in news?**
The need for the excess weight that children carry on their backs has been debated for quite some time. Union HRD Ministry has constituted an Expert Group to formulate a draft policy on reducing the weight of school bags in proportion to the age and average weight of children.

**Reducing Children’s Burden**
The MHRD had issued an order on October 5 to formulate a policy on schoolbags on the lines of Children School Bags (Limitation on Weight) Bill of 2006, which never turned into a law.

Disposing of a writ petition in May 2018 the Madras HC had directed the Centre to formulate forthwith a nationwide policy on the permitted weight of backpack that could be carried by schoolchildren.

The Court had ruled that “neither are children weightlifters nor school bags load containers.

**Learning from States**
- Maharashtra and Telangana already have a policy in place stipulating that the weight of a schoolbag should not exceed 10% of the weight of the student.
- Maharashtra, while deciding the weight of the schoolbag, had considered the weight of books, geometry box, stationery, lunch boxes and even water bottles.

**Children’s School Bags (Limitation on Weight), Bill of 2006**
- The bill states that the weight of a school bag must not exceed more than 10% of the child’s bodyweight.
• It also directs respective State Governments to ensure that schools provide lockers for students, ensure that schools adhere to the standards of measurements for bags, and students use both straps for carrying bags.
• In addition, it states terms that require teachers to inform students of the books required a day prior, and the students should be taught how to pack bags so heavy loads can be kept close to the body.
• The 1993 report ‘Learning without burden’, submitted by the Yash Pal Committee appointed by the Ministry of Human Resource Development stated that young children should not be compelled to carry heavy bags to schools.

10. MAIN NAHIN HUM PORTAL AND APP

Why in news?
PM Modi has launched the “Main Nahin Hum” Portal and App for IT Professionals.

• It works on the theme “Self4Society”.
• The portal will enable IT professionals and organizations to bring together their efforts towards social causes, and service to society, on one platform.
• The portal is expected to help catalyse greater collaboration towards the service of the weaker sections of society, especially by leveraging the benefits of technology.
• It is also expected to generate wider participation of interested people who are motivated to work for the benefit of society.
1. **CHOTTU RAM**

**Why in news?**
Prime Minister unveiled a statue of Jat leader Sir Chhotu Ram (1881-1945) in Haryana, a state that had witnessed a violent Jat agitation three years ago. The 64-foot statue, at Chhotu Ram’s village of Garhi Sampla, Rohtak, is a result of the efforts of Union Steel Minister Birender Singh, a grandson of Sir Chhotu Ram.

**About Chottu Ram**
- Critics may call Chhotu Ram a caste leader, but he also sought to articulate the suffering of the peasantry. His basic thesis was that farming was the primary human activity.
- As a member of the pre-Partition Punjab Legislative Council, his first major achievement was the passage of the Punjab Land Revenue (Amendment) Act, 1929, which remains a landmark social legislation till date.
- The Punjab Agricultural Produce Markets Act was passed in 1939. Popularly called the Mandi Act, it provided for the constitution of market committees in notified areas, and helped free the farmer from exploitation.
- A grateful peasantry rewarded him with the titles of Deen-bandhu and Rahbar-e-Azam. The British honoured him with a knighthood in 1937.

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2. **TERRACOTTA ARTEFACTS UNEARTHED ON THE BANKS OF PAMPA RIVER**

**Why in news?**
Parts of terracotta artefacts of archaeological value from the banks of the Pampa river were unearthed at Aranmula, Kerala, buttressing the theory that a rich civilisation had once flourished along the river.

**Highlights**
- The sighting of the terracotta works hinted at an ancient civilisation in Pampa Valley. The terracotta pieces were parts of Naga images, a male bust, female face and ornaments.
- It is 1,000 to 2,000 years old.
- Aranmula finds mention in the 13th century text ‘Tirunizhalmala’ that hints at the presence of education centres in Aranmula.

**Terracotta:**
- Terracotta, terra cotta or terra-cotta a type of earthenware, is a clay-based unglazed or glazed ceramic, where the fired body is porous.
- Terracotta is the term normally used for sculpture made in earthenware, and also for various utilitarian uses including vessels (notably flower pots), water and waste water pipes, etc.
- The term is also used to refer to the natural brownish orange color of most terracotta, which varies considerably.

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3. **KOLKATA GPO MARKS 150 YEARS IN SERVICE OF CITY**

**Why in news?**
Under the 120-foot-high dome of Kolkata’s General Post Office (GPO), a special postal cover was released. The event marked 150 years of the GPO.
Highlights
- The construction of this building started in 1864.
- The building was designed by architect Walter B. Granville
- GPO is not only an iconic building of the city, but also the biggest working post office of the Kolkata Circle
- It is still a matter of debate whether the Old Fort, where the GPO stands today is the site of the “Black Hole Tragedy” of 1756.

4. 88 MILLION-YEAR-OLD ISLE AND CRATER TO BE GEOPARKS

Why in news?
In a first, an ancient circular lake created by a meteorite strike in Maharashtra and a hexagonal mosaic of basaltic rocks in an island off Udupi are poised to become global geoparks; under a Geological Survey of India (GSI) plan.

Highlights
- Lonar Lake in Maharashtra and St. Mary’s Island and Malpe beach in coastal Karnataka are the GSI’s candidates for UNESCO Global Geopark Network status.
- The Geopark tag is akin to that of a ‘World Heritage Site’ for historical monuments that can bring India’s famed geological features to the global stage
- Lonar lake is the only known meteorite crater in basaltic rock and is world famous, while St. Mary’s island is a unique phenomenon that has been preserved well
- St. Mary’s Island, declared a national geo-heritage site in 1975, is estimated to be an 88-million-year-old formation that goes back to a time when Greater India broke away from Madagascar.

5. VENKAIAH NAIDU INAUGURATES ‘WORLD PEACE’ MONUMENT

Why in news?
Vice-President inaugurated the world’s largest dome at the Maharashtra Institute of Technology (MIT)’s World Peace University (MIT-WPU) campus at Loni Kalbhor on the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

Highlights
- World Peace Monument’ dome, took nearly 13 years to be build. At 160 ft. in diameter and 263 ft tall, it is larger in area than the dome at St. Peter’s Basilica in Vatican City
- The dome is built atop the MIT World Peace Library and the World Peace Prayer Hall, which are named after the 13th century poet-saint and philosopher Dnyaneshwar — a pivotal figure of the Bhakti movement in Maharashtra.
- Each of the 24 massive columns in the dome stands 63 feet tall. The prayer hall can accommodate 3,500 people and is embellished with portraits of more than 50 accomplished men globally

6. STUDY THROWS LIGHT ON MEgalithIC SITE

Why in news?
A reappraisal of a megalithic site done by a research group of Yogi Vemana University of Kadapa at Morlabanda in Anantapur district has noticed 18 dolmenoid cists (burial places) surrounded by slab circles on a big granite hill also locally called ‘Panduvaraguddum’
Highlights
- The top of the hill has innumerable traces of megalithic habitational settlements as well as burials. There is a perennial spring from a natural water cistern which he believes might have provided water to those living in that area.
- one of the huge dolmenoid cist is surrounded by three slab circles and the outer two circles are flat topped and small in size resembling the pattern of Iralabanda-megalithic site in Chittoor district.
- The third inner circle consists a unique anthropomorphic statue (having human characteristics of 2.40 mts. X 1.85 mts. size) with a semi circular head without any sensory organs with a sharp protruding edge on both sides resembling shoulder.
- On the back side of this statue two half anthropomorphic statues are found resembling fore limbs.
- The remaining part of the circle has flat-topped slabs with alternate placing of long (6 feet) slabs like menhirs.

7. ALLAHABAD MAY BE RENAMED AS PRAYAGARAJ

Why in news?
The Uttar Pradesh government has begun moves to soon change the name of Allahabad to Prayagraj. The decision is a tribute to the Sangam city ahead of the 2019 Kumbh Mela.

Highlights
- The city's original name – Prayag, or "place of offerings" – comes from its position at the Sangam (confluence) of the Ganga, Yamuna and Sarasvati rivers.
- Allahabad was originally called Kaushambi (now a separate district) by the Kuru rulers of Hastinapur, who developed it as their capital. Since then, the city has been a political, cultural and administrative centre of the Doab region.
- In the early 17th century, Allahabad was a provincial capital in the Mughal Empire under the reign of Jahangir. Akbarnama mentions that the Mughal emperor Akbar founded a great city in Allahabad.
- `Abd al-Qadir Bada'un and Nizamuddin Ah
mad mention that Akbar laid the foundations of an imperial city there which was called Ilahabas or Ilahabad. He was said to be impressed by its strategic location and built a fort there, later renaming it Ilahabas by 1584 which was changed to Allahabad by Shah Jahan.

8. ANCIENT ROCKS IN INDIA GIVE CLUES TO EARLY LIFE

Why in news?
Researchers have found the oldest clue yet to the mystery of animal life in ancient rocks and oils, including those from India, dating back at least 100 million years before the famous Cambrian explosion of animal fossils.
Highlights

- Researchers have found the oldest clue yet to the mystery of animal life in ancient rocks and oils, including those from India, dating back at least 100 million years before the famous Cambrian explosion of animal fossils.
- The “Cambrian Explosion” refers to the sudden appearance in the fossil record of complex animals with mineralised skeletal remains 541 million years ago.
- Single-celled organisms that dominated the earth for billions of years before the dawn of complex, multi cellular life.
- Researchers at the University of California, Riverside in the U.S. tracked molecular signs of animal life, called biomarkers, as far back as 660-635 million years ago during the Neoproterozoic era.
- In ancient rocks and oils from India, Oman, Siberia, they found a steroid compound produced only by sponges, which are among the earliest forms of animal life.
- The biomarker which was identified is a steroid compound named 26-methylstigmastane (26-mes), has a unique structure that is currently only known to be synthesised by certain species of modern sponges called demosponges.

Biomarker

- A biomarker, or biological marker is a measurable indicator of some biological state or condition.
- Biomarkers are often measured and evaluated to examine normal biological processes, pathogenic processes, or pharmacologic responses to a therapeutic intervention.

9. 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF AZAD HIND GOVT

Why in news?

Prime Minister conducted a flag-hoisting ceremony at the Red Fort on 21 October 2018 to mark the 75th anniversary of the 'Azad Hind government' headed by Subhas Chandra Bose.

Azad Hind government

- The Provisional Government of Free India, or, more simply, Free India (Azad Hind), was an Indian provisional government established in occupied Singapore in 1943 and supported by the Empire of Japan, Nazi Germany, Italian Social Republic, and their allies.
- It was a part of a political movement originating in the 1940s outside India with the purpose of allying with the Axis powers to free India from British Rule. It was established by Indian nationalists-in-exile during the latter part of the Second World War in Singapore with monetary, military, and political assistance from Imperial Japan.
- Founded on 21 October 1943, the government was inspired by the concepts of Subhas Chandra Bose who was also the leader of the government and the Head of State of this Provisional Indian Government-in-exile.
- The government proclaimed authority over Indian civilian and military personnel in Southeast Asian British colonial territory and prospective authority over Indian territory to fall to the Japanese forces and the Indian National Army during the Japanese thrust towards India during the Second World War.
- The government of Azad Hind had its own currency, court and civil code, and in the eyes of some Indians its existence gave a greater legitimacy to the independence struggle against the British
10. SAFFRON MARIGOLD IS THE COLOUR OF SACRIFICE

Why in news?
The ubiquitous marigold will be the symbol of India’s sacrifices when the world marks the centenary of the end of the First World War on November 11.

Highlights
- In line with this, the ‘India Remembers’ project initiated by the USI proposed that the marigold flower join the poppy as a uniquely Indian symbol of remembrance.
- The marigold was chosen because it is easily and widely available and also because saffron is often seen as a colour of sacrifice.
- The India Remembers project is a joint endeavour of the USI and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) and a part of the ‘India and the Great War’ Centenary Commemoration project initiated by the USI in 2014 with the support of the Ministry of External Affairs and in close association with the British High Commission.
- The proposal was put up in 2016 and since then, the marigold has been widely promoted in all India-related commemorative events around the world. The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge laid a marigold wreath at India Gate during their India visit in April 2016.
- Since then, the marigold has also been used across the UK, along with the poppy, as part of community engagement projects that seek to highlight India’s contribution in the First World War, a diplomatic source said. Similarly, the Great War Indian War Memorial to be inaugurated at Villers-Guislain in France has a bronze marigold wreath as an integral part of its design.
- The First World War ended with the signing of the armistice on November 11, 1918. Since then, poppy was adopted as the symbol of remembrance as it grew widely in the Flanders fields in Europe where some of the major battles were fought. In India, the India Gate was built as the focal point to the Remembrance with the names of over 72,000 soldiers inscribed over it.
- The government and the Army have to formally adopt the marigold to make it an official effort.
1. GLOBAL GEOPARKS NETWORK

Why in news?
In a first, an ancient circular lake created by a meteorite strike in maharashtra and a hexagonal mosaic of basaltic rocks in an island off udupi are set to become global geoparks, under a geological survey of india (gsi) plan. Lonar lake in maharashtra and st. Mary’s island and malpe beach in coastal karnataka are the gsi’s candidates for unesco global geopark network status.

Requirements of global geoparks
• An aspiring global geopark must have a dedicated website, a corporate identity, comprehensive management plan, protection plans, finance, and partnerships for it to be accepted.
• The geopark tag is akin to that of a ‘world heritage site’ for historical monuments that can bring india’s famed geological features to the global stage.
• Lonar lake is the only known meteorite crater in basaltic rock and is world famous, while st. Mary’s island is a unique phenomenon that has been preserved well.
• Mary’s island, declared a national geo-heritage site in 1975, is estimated to be an 88-million-year-old formation that goes back to a time when greater india broke away from madagascar.

Global geoparks network
• The global geoparks network (ggn) is a unesco assisted network established in 1998.
• The ggn works in close synergy with another project under unesco’s ecological and earth sciences division—the man and biosphere (mab) world network of biosphere reserves.
• A set of criteria as established by unesco must first be met for a geopark, as nominated by the corresponding government, to be included in the ggn:
  • The existence of a management plan designed to foster socio-economic development that is sustainable (most likely to be based on agritourism and geotourism);
  • Demonstrate methods for conserving and enhancing geological heritage and provide means for teaching geoscientific disciplines and broader environmental issues;
  • Joint-proposals submitted by public authorities, local communities and private interests acting together, which demonstrate the best practices with respect to earth heritage conservation and its integration into sustainable development strategies.

2. MISSION GANGE

Why in news?
National mission for clean ganga (nmcg) has partnered with tata steel adventure foundation (tsaf) to launch a month-long rafting expedition of a team of 40 members.

• It will be led by the first indian woman to scale mount everest ms. Bachendri pal.
• The expedition will start from haridwar traversing a distance of around 1500 km encompassing 8 major towns including bijnor, farrukhabad, kanpur, allahabad, varanasi and buxar.
• It will conclude in patna in bihar.
• The expedition is aimed for public outreach to heighten the awareness for keeping cleaner ganga.
In the expedition team of 40 members, several are trained mountaineers. Seven of them have climbed Mount Everest.

The team during its stay in the towns will carry out cleanliness drives at ghats and surrounding areas by engaging and motivating more and more people.

3. DIGIYATRA INITIATIVE

Why in news?
A mere facial scan will soon enable air travellers to skip long queues and zip through various checkpoints at airports in the country.

- The centre is set to introduce the “digi yatra” facility to start with at the Hyderabad and Bengaluru airports in February 2019.
- The facility which is voluntary would require passengers to initially register themselves at a web portal by providing an identity proof.
- The travellers would then be required to undergo a one-time verification at an airport.
- Following which, the individual’s facial identity would be captured and mapped onto a newly created “digi yatra” profile and a distinct identification number would be generated.
- Passengers would then have to provide this identification number at the time of purchasing an air ticket, to avail the paperless access facility.
- The passenger’s travel history would be “purged” after the completion of a journey and that the “digi yatra” programme would comply with the European Union’s data protection regulation.

Scan a qr code

- The facility would enable travellers to enter the airport building by scanning a qr code on their mobile phones, after undergoing facial recognition.
- Once inside the airport, a passenger would be able to self check-in, drop baggage, pass through e-gates to access security and embarkation areas with just a facial scan, thus obviating the need to produce a boarding pass at every step.
- However the travellers would still have to undergo mandatory security checks including frisking.
- The web portal is scheduled to be ready by February 2019 and Hyderabad and Bengaluru airports would be the first to implement the digital processing of passengers.
- The facility would thereafter be also made available at four other airports of Kolkata, Varanasi, Vijayawada and Pune.

4. OPERATION SAMUDRA MAITRI, CAUSES OF THE TSUNAMI

Why in news?
India has launched a massive operation for humanitarian assistance to provide assistance to the earthquake and tsunami victims in Indonesia.

- It dispatched two aircraft and three naval ships carrying relief material to the country.
- The C-130J aircraft is carrying a medical team along with tents and equipments to set up a field hospital.
- The C-17 aircraft is carrying medicines, generators, tents and water to provide immediate assistance.
- Three Indian navy ships — INS Tir, INS Sujatha and INS Shardul — have also been mobilised to carry out humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR)
What caused Indonesia tsunami?

- A chain of geological events set off by the violent quake liquefied the loose soil and possibly caused an underwater landslide, triggering a tsunami wave that may have been intensified by the shape of the bay.
- The quake was likely caused by movement of the Palu-Koro fault which runs almost north to south down Sulawesi on a line through Palu’s narrow bay.
- The Palu-Koro is a strike-slip fault, where the two sides slide past each other horizontally, unlike a thrust fault which pushes one side over the other.
- A thrust quake is more likely to trigger a tsunami because its vertical motion pushes a column of seawater upwards, setting a wave in motion.
- The fault usually shifts by 30 to 40 mm a year, with the western side heading south while the eastern edge moves north.
- The shaky nature of this particular quake has triggered the liquefaction, by agitating the water to such an extent that mud bubbled up from underground, weakening foundations, and uprooting trees.

5. S-400 ‘TRIUMF’ MISSILE SYSTEMS

Why in news?
India and Russia concluded the contract for five S-400 ‘triumf’ missile systems, one of the biggest defence deals in recent times. The announcement of the deal could attract sanctions from the United States, was made in a joint statement issued by both sides.

S-400 triumf

The S-400 is known as Russia’s most advanced Long-range Surface-to-Air missile defence system, capable of destroying hostile strategic bombers, jets, missiles and drones at a range of 380-km.

Why does India need S-400?
- India needs to be well-equipped against neighboring threats.
- Pakistan has over 20 fighter squadrons, with upgraded F-16s, and inducting J-17 from China in large numbers. China has 1,700 fighters, including 800 4-gen fighters.
- A shortfall of fighter squadrons has severely affected IAF’s efforts to pose a challenge to the enemies.

6. SIKKIM HAS WON THE UN (FAO) FUTURE POLICY GOLD AWARD

Why in news?
Sikkim has won the UN Food and Agriculture Organization’s (FAO) Future Policy Gold Award for its achievement in becoming the world’s first totally organic agriculture state.

Aim of the Award
• The Future Policy Award celebrates policies that create better living conditions for current and future generations.
• The aim of the award is to raise global awareness for these exemplary policies and speed up policy action towards just, sustainable and peaceful societies.
• The Future Policy Award is the first award that celebrates policies rather than people on an international level.

Sikkim bags 2018 Award
• Nicknamed the “Oscar for best policies”, the award is co-organised with the FAO by The World Future Council (WFC) and IFOAM – Organics International.
• The award recognizes the world’s best laws and policies promoting agro ecology.
• Sikkim beat out 51 other nominees from around the world for the award.
• Brazil, Denmark, Quito and Ecuador shared the Silver award.
• Sikkim is the first organic state in the world and all of its farmland is certified organic, reads the award announcement.
• The state has totally banned the sale and use of chemical pesticides.

About Sikkim Organic Mission
• Starting with a political commitment to support organic farming in 2003, Sikkim designed in 2010 the Sikkim Organic Mission.
• It is a road map that clearly detailed all the measures necessary to achieve the target of becoming a fully organic state by 2015.
• At the time, officials reasoned that per hectare consumption of fertilizers in Sikkim was already among the lowest in the country (at 5.8 kg per hectare).
• Farmers had also traditionally never used chemicals in the cultivation of cardamom, one of Sikkim’s main cash crops.
• From 2003, the state began reducing the subsidy on chemical pesticides and fertilizers by 10 per cent every year and banned them completely in 2014.
• Their sale and use was made punishable by law with an imprisonment of up to three months or a fine of up to Rs 1 lakh or both.
• Roadmap of Sikkim’s transition to 100% organic state

7. AZAD HIND GOVT.

Why in news?
Hon’ble PM will unveil the plaque to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the formation of Azad Hind Government, at the Red Fort, Delhi.

Azad Hind Government
• The Provisional Government of Free India, or, more simply, Free India (Azad Hind), was an Indian provisional government established in occupied Singapore in 1943.

World Future Council
➢ The World Future Council (WFC) is an independent body formally founded in Hamburg, Germany on 10 May 2007.
➢ Formed to speak on behalf of policy solutions that serve the interests of future generations, it includes members active in governmental bodies, civil society, business, science and the arts.
➢ The WFC’s primary focus has been climate security, promoting laws such as the renewable energy Feed-in tariff.
➢ The WFC has special consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (UN-ECOSOC).
• S.C. Bose was the leader of Azad Hind Government (AHG) and also the Head of State of this Provisional Indian Government-in-exile.
• It was established by Indian nationalists-in-exile during the latter part of the Second World War in Singapore with monetary, military and political assistance from Imperial Japan.
• It was a part of the freedom movement, originating in 1940s outside India with a purpose of allying with Axis powers to free India from British rule.
• Pertinently, the role of Azad Hind Fauj or the Indian National Army (INA) had been crucial in bequeathing a much needed impetus to India’s struggle for Independence.

Administration of the AHG
• Azad Hind was recognised as a legitimate state by only a small number of countries limited solely to Axis powers and their allies.
• Azad Hind had diplomatic relations with nine countries: Nazi Germany, the Empire of Japan, Italian Social Republic, Independent State of Croatia and Wang Jingwei Government, Thailand, the State of Burma, Manchukuo and the Second Philippine Republic.

Territories under AHG
• AHG had been given a limited form of governmental jurisdiction over the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which had been captured by the Imperial Japanese Navy early on in the war.
• Once under the jurisdiction of Azad Hind, the islands formed the government’s first claims to territory.
• The islands themselves were renamed “Shaheed” and “Swaraj” respectively.

Collapse of AHG
• INA under the leadership of Bose got defeated severely at Rangoon due to lack of support of Japanese.
• Bose was suggested to leave Burma to continue his struggle for Indian independence and returned to Singapore before the fall of Rangoon.
• The AHG govt in the islands collapsed when the island garrisons of Japanese and Indian troops were defeated by British troops and the islands themselves retaken.
• The Provisional Government of Free India ceased to exist with the deaths of the Axis, the INA, and Bose in 1945.
• It was followed by the Famous Trials at Red Fort.

Importance of INA and AHG
• The true extent to which the AHG and INA activities weakened the very foundation of the British Empire in India was the sparking of mutiny among Indian Soldiers.
• The Royal Indian Navy Mutiny made the British realize that the support of the Indian armed forces could no longer be relied upon.

8. VISHWASHANTI AHIMSA SAMMELAN

Why in news?
The President of India has inaugurated the Vishwashanti Ahimsa Sammelan at Mangi Tungi, Nasik in Maharashtra. The event is being organised by the Bhagwan Shri Rishabhdev 108 Feet Vishalkai Digambar Jain Murti Nirman Committee.

• Humankind is exploiting nature indiscriminately. Ruthless consumption and accumulation of resources is increasing.
• Due to this, phenomena like climate change are emerging as challenges.
President highlighted the importance following the Jain Principles for a way out against emerging challenges.

**Rishabhdeva**
- He is the first Tirthankara of Jainism.
- The Vishnu Purana and Bhagvat Purana describe him as an incarnation of Vishnu.
- He along with Arishtamnani finds mention in Rig-Veda.
- He was followed by 23 other Tirthankars.
- The Sign of Rishbhdev is a Bull and achieved nirvana on the Kailasa Mountain of the Himalayas.

9. **SEOUL PEACE PRIZE**

**Why in news?**
The award recognizes PM Modi’s contribution to the growth of Indian and global economies, crediting ‘Modinomics’ for reducing social and economic disparity between the rich and the poor. The committee lauded PM’s initiatives to make the government cleaner through anti-corruption measures and demonetization. The committee also credited him for his contribution towards regional and global peace through a proactive Foreign Policy with countries around the world under the ‘Modi doctrine’ and the Act East policy.

**About the Seoul Peace Prize**
- The prize has been awarded to those who have made their mark through contributions to the harmony of mankind, reconciliation between nations and to world peace.
- Established in 1990, the Seoul Peace Prize was an effort to crystallise the Korean people’s yearning for peace on the Korean Peninsula and in the rest of the world.
- It was initially established to commemorate the success of the 24th Olympic Games held in Seoul, Republic of Korea – an event in which 160 nations from across the world took part, creating harmony and friendship and a worldwide atmosphere of peace and reconciliation.
- Previous winners of the award include former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and renowned international relief organizations like Doctors Without Borders and Oxfam.

**Modinomics**
The term Modinomics is often used to refer landmark economic reforms carried out under PM Modi. Few of them are mentioned below:
- Introduction and implementation of GST Framework
- Setting up of Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code
- Demonetization
- New hydrocarbon exploration licensing policy
- Trinity of JAM (Jan Dhan Yojana, Aadhaar and Mobile) etc.

10. **KRISHI KUMBH – 2018**

**Why in news?**
Union Agriculture & Farmers Welfare Ministry has inaugurated Krishi Kumbh 2018 organised in Lucknow

**Krishi Kumbh 2018**
- The government of Uttar Pradesh in association with the Government of India is organizing a mega Agriculture Expo called “Krishi Kumbh-2018”.
• It would comprise of the National level exhibition, technical sessions around the theme of doubling farmers income, Business Meet, and host of other engaging activities.
• The primary objective of event is to provide a common platform to farmers, farmers group, technical experts and entrepreneurs for seamless exchange of knowledge regarding agriculture and various allied services.
• The event aims at increasing the agriculture production by adopting advanced technologies and emphasis on sustainable and durable production technology.
• The event will also develop integrated communication system involving different stakeholders at village/district/state/ national/international level.

11. INS TARANGINI RETURNS AFTER VOYAGE ACROSS THE WORLD

Why in news?
The sail training ship of Indian Navy, INS Tarangini based at Kochi, returned after a seven month long sailing across the world.

Lokayan 18
• The Voyage named “Lokayan 18” was flagged off on 10 Apr 18 from Kochi in INS Tarangini.
• During the voyage, the ship has proudly ‘shown the flag’ and highlighted the diverse culture of India across 15 ports in 13 countries.
• The ship sailed across the Arabian Sea, Red Sea, Suez Canal, Mediterranean Sea, Strait of Gibraltar, North Atlantic Ocean, Bay of Biscay, English Channel and North Sea, right up to Norway before commencing her homeward passage back to Kochi.
• The ship also participated in the culminating event of the ‘Three Festival Tall Ships Regatta’ at Bordeaux, France.
• Over the years, INS Tarangini has been extensively deployed for long voyages away from her base port of Kochi, which includes one circumnavigation of the globe (2003-04) and three previous ‘Lokayans’ (2005, 2007 and 2015).

About INS Tarangini
INS Tarangini is a three masted ‘square rigged’ barque which carries a total of 20 sails.
• She is the First Sail Training Ship in Indian Navy and was commissioned on 11 Nov 1997.
• In her 21 years of glorious service, she has sailed over 2,20,000 nautical miles to date across the world’s oceans.
• She is the first of two Sail Training Ships in the First Training Squadron, the other being INS Sudarshini.
• The primary role of these Sail Training Ships is to develop character and professionalism, as well as inculcate the qualities of initiative, courage, resilience and spirit amongst the Sea Trainees.
• The ship also imparts practical training to them, primarily on navigation, sailing and seamanship.

12. STATUE OF UNITY

Why in news?
The Prime Minister will dedicate the world’s tallest statue, the “Statue of Unity”, to the Nation, today on October 31, 2018.

About Statue of Unity
- It is located facing the Narmada Dam, at Kevadiya in Gujarat
- The monument along with its surroundings occupies over 20,000 square metres, and is surrounded by a 12 square km artificial lake.
- It is the world’s tallest statue with the height of 182 metres (597 ft) designed by Ram V. Sutar and designed and executed by Larsen & Toubro.
- The total height of the statue from its base will be 240-metre consisting base level of 58 meters and statue of 182 meters.
- It is constructed with steel framing, reinforced cement concrete, and bronze cladding.
- The statue needed 75,000 cubic metres of concrete, 5,700 tonnes of steel structure, 18,500 tonnes of reinforced steel rods, 22,500 tonnes of bronze sheets for construction.
- Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Rashtriya Ekta Trust (SVPRET), a special purpose vehicle was established by the Government of Gujarat for its construction and the outreach programme was carried out across India starting December 2013.

14. GOVT. PROCUREMENT SCHEME FAILS TO ENSURE MSP FOR FARMERS

Why in news?
The PM-AASHA procurement scheme, announced with great fanfare last month as a means to ensure that farmers actually receive minimum support prices for their crops. However it will not make any difference to farmers in the current season. In the mandis, cereals, pulses and oilseeds are now selling well below MSP, in some cases barely above production costs.

Highlights
- The umbrella policy clubbed together an existing government procurement scheme with newly introduced options -- meant for oilseeds only -- of additional procurement by private traders or a cash payment scheme.
- Only Madhya Pradesh has opted for the cash payment component. No other state has readied the IT infrastructure needed to implement it
- The only difference is they can now use Central funds up to 25%, but that will not change anything for the farmer.
- No other state has readied the IT infrastructure needed to implement it.

PM-AASHA
- The Scheme is aimed at ensuring remunerative prices to the farmers for their produce as announced in the Union Budget for 2018.
- Government has already increased the MSP of kharif crops by following the principle of 1.5 times the cost of production.
- It was expected to increase the MSP which will be translated to farmer’s income by way of robust procurement mechanism in coordination with the State Governments.
- The new Umbrella Scheme includes the mechanism of ensuring remunerative prices to the farmers and is comprised of-Price Support Scheme (PSS), Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS), Pilot of Private Procurement & Stockist Scheme (PPPS).
The other existing schemes of Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD) for procurement of paddy, wheat and nutri-cereals/coarse grains and of Ministry of Textile for cotton and jute will be continued for providing MSP to farmers for these crops.

**15. INDIA’S LARGEST DRY DOCK AT COCHIN SHIPYARD:**

**Why in news?**
The Union Minister for Shipping, Road Transport & Highways, Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation and Kerala Chief Minister will lay the foundation for India’s largest Dry Dock at Cochin Shipyard in Kerala

**Highlights**
- The Dry Dock will give an impetus to “Make in India” initiative under Sagarmala and raise India’s share in global shipbuilding to 2 percent. India currently occupies 0.66 % share in global shipbuilding market.
- The dock will be designed to handle both ship building and repairs, and bear a load up to 600 T/m. It will be equipped with international safety standards.
- The dock will also have a water treatment plant and Green Belt Development. Equipped with this Dry Dock, Cochin Shipyard will be able to build specialized and technologically advanced large vessels like LNG Carriers, drill ships, jack up rigs, large dredgers, aircraft carriers for Indian Navy and high end research vessels. It will also help make Cochin a one stop maritime hub for all repair needs in South East Asia.

**16. MIGINGO ISLAND**

**Why in news?**
Migingo has been a source of tension between Uganda and Kenya, who have been unable to decide to whom it really belongs. This tussle has been continuing for more than a decade

**Where is it located?**
- Migingo Island is located on the border of Uganda and Kenya,
- Migingo — which is less than half the size of a standard soccer pitch — sits in Lake Victoria, the continent’s largest lake.

**17. WORLD’S LONGEST SEA CROSSING: HONG KONG-ZHUHAI BRIDGE OPENS**

**Why in news?**
Chinese President has officially opened the world’s longest sea crossing bridge, nine years after construction first began.

**Highlights**
- Including its access roads, the bridge spans 55km (34 miles) and connects Hong Kong to Macau and the mainland Chinese city of Zuhai.
- The bridge cost about $20bn (£15.3bn) and should have opened in 2016.
- Construction has been dogged by safety issues - at least 18 workers have died on the project,
- Designed to withstand earthquakes and typhoons, it was built using 400,000 tonnes of steel, enough to build 60 Eiffel Towers.
- About 30km of its total length crosses the sea of the Pearl River delta. To allow ships through, a 6.7km section in the middle dips into an undersea tunnel that runs between two artificial islands.
It is part of China’s plan to create a Greater Bay Area, including Hong Kong, Macau and nine other cities in southern China.

18. FOOD SECURITY IN INDIA

Why in news?
- The odisha will launch its own state food security scheme (sfss) which would be totally funded by the state government.
- Over 18 lakh poor and eligible people left out under national food security act, 2013 (nfsa) will receive their quota of 5 kg of rice at the rate of rupee 1 per kg

State food security scheme (sfss)
- The state government decided to launch its own food security scheme after the centre did not respond to odisha government’s request to add additional 25 lakh poor people under the nfsa.
- 25 lakh beneficiaries will be provided with cheap rice under the sfss.
- A total of 3,26,41,800 beneficiaries were included in the nfsa as per the 2011 census.
- Over 73 per cent of the target for sfss has been achieved by september 30 and rest will be covered by the second week of october.
- The state government on october 2, 2008 had launched the cheap rice scheme in odisha where beneficiaries were given rice at the rate of rs 2 per kg.
- Later in 2013, the price of cheap rice was reduced to rupee 1 a kg for people living below poverty line.