

PREFACE

This booklet of Current Affairs is an attempt so as to help the Civil Services Aspirants in their process of learning, understanding and analyzing each and every aspect of the current issue in the easiest possible manner. In order to make the understanding of the current affairs a long lasting affair and to help students score good marks in the examination; a balance between factual content and analytical approach has been maintained in this booklet.

The booklet has been meticulously designed to suit the needs of Civil Service Aspirants appearing in IAS and State PSC examinations. In addition, it would benefit all those who are preparing for other competitive examinations or such individuals who are knowledge starving and have a passion to learn more.

Owing to nature of the booklet, the Nimbus Academy Team has prepared the material with the help of the facts and the information provided by various Ministries of Govt. of India and merging those with the concepts developed by the subject matter experts.

Reader's suggestions and feedback directed towards improvements are welcome and can be e-mailed at nimbusias@gmail.com

Nimbus Academy for IAS

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GENERAL STUDIES -1

GEOGRAPHY

SIACHEN GLACIER

Our new Defence Minister Rajnath Singh visits Siachen Glacier.

About Siachen :

- Siachen Glacier is the largest glacier outside the non-polar region.
- It lies in the **Karakoram Range system** which is a part of Trans-Himalayas.
- It also lies to the **south of the zone that separates Eurasian Plate with the Indian Plate**, which is the result of convergence boundary interaction in geographical terms.
- The word Siachen comes out of two words: "Sia" which means rose and "Chun" which means anything found in abundance according to "Balti" language. Therefore it represents the **place of roses**.
- It is the **highest battlefield in the world** and lies on LoC (Line of Control) between India and Pakistan. It has been continuously contested by Pakistan as its own part which has led to militarisation of the glacier.
- After the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971, an agreement was signed in 1972, the **Shimla Agreement**, but the agreement failed to clearly mention who controls the glacier.
- In 1984, the Pakistan army tried to enter the glacier, forcing India to launch a military operation known as "**Operation Meghdoot**" to counter the Pakistani troops' observation post at the Saltoro Range. Frequent skirmishes did occur between 1984 to 2003. A ceasefire agreement was signed between India and Pakistan in 2003.
- The glacier is the source of many rivers including **Nubra River**, a tributary of Shyok, which is a tributary of the Indus River.
- Siachen Glacier also hosts the **world's highest helipad built by India at Point Sonam**, to supply its troops. India also installed the world's highest telephone booth on the glacier.
- The region is also a home to rare species of snow leopard, brown bear etc which may be affected by military presence. This has led to talks in international forums about creating a **"Peace Park"** in the area and demilitarise it.

SIACHEN STATS 76-KM GLACIER

lies in the eastern Karakoram, northeast of Point NJ9842 where the Line of Control (LoC) ends. It is divided into three sectors, each controlled by a battalion (about 1,000 men).



MOUNT ETNA

- Mount Etna is the largest active volcano in Europe and one of the world's most frequently erupting volcanoes. It is also the volcano with the longest record of continuous eruption.
- Located near the east coast of the island of Sicily in Italy, Mount Etna is 10,900 feet tall.
- The mountain's largest feature is the **Valle del Bove (Valley of the Ox)**, a large horseshoe-shaped caldera on the eastern slope.
- Etna sits on the active fault between the African plate and the Ionian microplate, which are both being subducted together beneath the Eurasian plate.
- In June 2013, it was added to the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.
- Due to its history of recent activity and nearby population, Mount Etna has been designated a Decade Volcano by the United Nations

Pacific ring of fire :

Mount Sinabung volcano, in Sumatra Island, western Indonesia, recently erupted. It had erupted in 2010 for the first time in past 400 years.

Indonesia is located along the **Ring of Fire region**, an area where most of the world's volcanic eruptions occur. The Ring of Fire has seen a large amount of activity in recent days, but Indonesia has been hit hard due to its position on a large grid of tectonic plates, as Indonesia is at the **meeting point of three major continental plates – the Pacific, the Eurasian and the Indo-Australian plates** – and the much smaller Philippine plate. As a result, several volcanoes on the Indonesian islands are prone to erupting. In Indonesia is home to roughly 400 volcanoes, out of which 127 are currently active, accounting for about a third of the world's active volcanoes.

About the Ring of Fire:

The Ring of Fire is the result from **subduction of oceanic tectonic plates beneath lighter continental plates**. The area where these tectonic plates meet is called a subduction zone.

The Ring of Fire is a Pacific region, also known as the **circum-Pacific belt**, hosts about 450 volcanoes, including **three of the world's four most active volcanoes** – Mount St. Helens in the USA, Mount Fuji in Japan and Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines. Around **90% of the world's earthquakes occur in the Ring of Fire, and 80% of the world's largest earthquakes**.

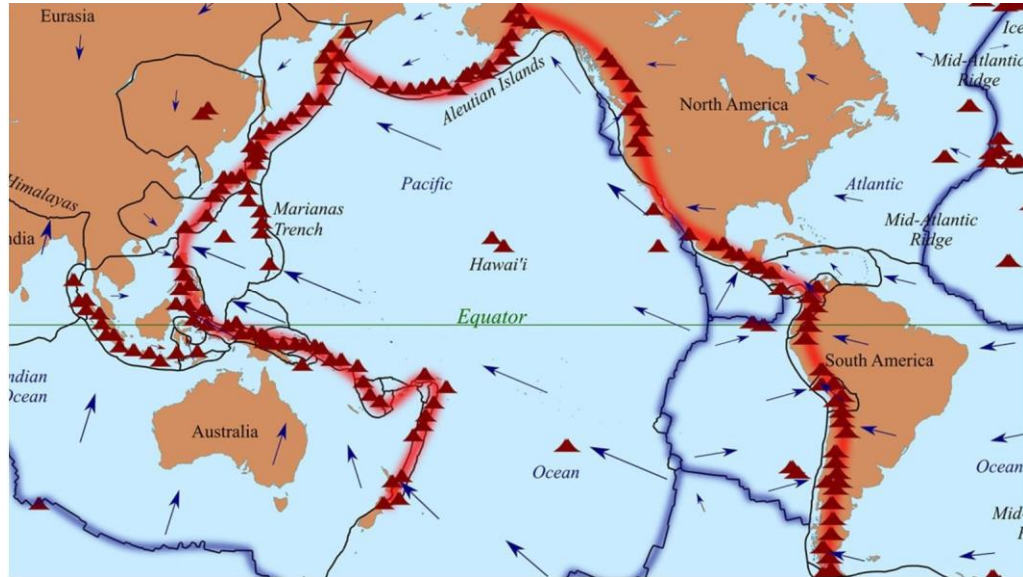
Geographical extension:

- It stretches along the Pacific Ocean coastlines, where the Pacific Plate grinds against other, smaller tectonic plates that form the Earth's crust – such as the Philippine Sea plate and the Cocos and Nazca Plates that line the edge of the Pacific Ocean.
- The ring is about 40,000 kilometre horse-shoe-shaped extends from New Zealand to Chile, passing through the coasts of Asia and the Americas on the way.
- The people most at risk from activity in the Ring of Fire are in the US west coast, Chile, Japan and island nations including the Solomon Islands. These areas are most at risk because they lie on so-called subduction zones – which are boundaries that mark the collision between two of the planet's tectonic plates.

Why does the Ring of Fire trigger earthquakes?

- The world's deepest earthquakes happen in subduction zone areas as tectonic plates scrape against each other – and the Ring of Fire has the world's biggest concentration of subduction zones.

- As energy is released from the earth's molten core, it forces tectonic plates to move and they crash up against each other, causing friction. The friction causes a build-up of energy and when this energy is finally released it causes an earthquake. If this happens at sea it can cause devastating tsunamis.
- Tectonic plates usually only move on average a few centimetres each year, but when an earthquake strikes, they speed up massively and can move at several metres per second.



Mount Agung volcano erupted recently

Mount Agung or Gunung Agung is a currently active volcano in Bali, Indonesia. Gunung Agung stratovolcano is the highest point on Bali. It dominates the surrounding area, influencing the climate, especially rainfall patterns.

KAILASH MANASAROVAR YATRA

- Kailash Mansarovar Yatra (KMY) is known for its religious importance, cultural significance and arduous nature. The annual pilgrimage holds religious **importance for Hindus, Jains and Buddhists**.
- The Yatra is **organized by the government of India in close cooperation with the Government of the People's Republic of China**. State Governments of Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Delhi, and Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam Limited (KMVN) are other major Indian partners of the Ministry in organizing the Yatra.
- Mansarovar Lake** is located at an altitude of 14,950 ft (4,558 m) is said to be the **highest freshwater lake in the world**. It is located in the Tibet Autonomous Region, China, 940 kilometres from Lhasa. To the west of it is **Lake Rakshastal** and **to the north is Mount Kailash**.
- Nathu La** is a mountain pass in the Himalayas. It connects the Indian state of Sikkim with China's Tibet Autonomous Region. It is also one of the four officially agreed BPM (Border Personnel Meeting) points between the Indian Army and People's Liberation Army of China for regular consultations and interactions between the two armies, which helps in defusing stand-offs.

ART & CULTURE

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES

The **Orchha town of Madhya Pradesh** has been included in **tentative list of the World Heritage Sites** of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

About Orchha Town:

- It is Situated on the banks of the **river Betwa, in Niwari district of Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh**.
- The town is famous for its rich and ancient architecture of **Chaturbhuj Temple, Orchha Fort Complex, Raja Mahal, two elevated minarets – Saavan and Bhadon; and four palaces – Jahangir Palace, Rai Praveen Mahal, Raja Mahal, and Sheesh Mahal, ‘Sri Ram Raja Mandir’**.
- **‘Sri Ram Raja Mandir’ is the only place in India where the Lord Ram is worshipped as a King, not as a deity.**

About UNESCO world heritage site:

A UNESCO World Heritage Site is a place that is **listed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as of special cultural or physical significance**.

The list is **maintained by the international World Heritage Programme** administered by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, comprising of **21 UNESCO member states which are elected by the General Assembly**.

The World Heritage Sites remains part of the **legal territory of the state** wherein the site is located and UNESCO considers it in the interest of the international community to preserve each site.

Criteria for Selection of a site:

The Site must be an already classified landmark, unique in some respect as a geographically and historically identifiable place having special cultural or physical significance (such as an ancient ruin or historical structure, building, city, complex, desert, forest, island, lake, monument, mountain, or wilderness area). It may signify a remarkable accomplishment of humanity, and serve as evidence of our intellectual history on the planet.

Legal status of designated sites:

UNESCO designation as a World Heritage Site provides prima facie evidence that such culturally sensitive sites are legally protected pursuant to the Law of War, under the **Geneva Convention**, its articles, protocols and customs, together with other treaties including the **Hague Convention** for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and international law.

What are endangered sites?

- A site may be added to the List of World Heritage in Danger if there are conditions that threaten the characteristics for which the landmark or area was inscribed on the World Heritage List. Such problems may involve armed conflict and war, natural disasters, pollution, poaching, or uncontrolled urbanization or human development.
- This danger list is intended to increase international awareness of the threats and to encourage counteractive measures. Threats to a site can be either proven imminent threats or potential dangers that could have adverse effects on a site.

The state of conservation for each site on the danger list is reviewed on a yearly basis, after which the committee may request additional measures, delete the property from the list if the threats have ceased or consider deletion from both the List of World Heritage in Danger and the World Heritage List.

THE STATE GOVERNMENT OF RAJASTHAN HAS MADE SEVERAL CHANGES TO SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS

The modifications relate to historical events and personalities.

1) **Veer Savarkar :**

Savarkar addressed as 'Vinayak Damodar Savarkar'. It describes how Savarkar, troubled by the torture inflicted on him in the Cellular Jail by the British, called himself a 'son of Portugal' in his second mercy petition on November 14, 1911. He sent four mercy petitions to the British. Following his freedom, it says Savarkar worked towards establishing India as a 'Hindu nation' and gave the call to 'militarise Hindudom' (sic). Savarkar opposed the Quit India movement in 1942 and the creation of Pakistan in 1946. After the murder of Gandhi on January 30, 1948, he was tried on charges of conspiring for murder and aiding Godse, but he was acquitted from the case.

Also on May 28, 2019, birth anniversary of **Veer Savarkar** was observed.

Contributions of Veer Savarkar to the Indian freedom movement:

- In Pune, Savarkar founded the "**Abhinav Bharat Society**".
- He was also involved in **the Swadeshi movement** and later joined Tilak's **Swaraj Party**. His instigating patriotic speeches and activities incensed the British Government. As a result the British Government withdrew his B.A. degree.
- In June 1906, Veer Savarkar, left for London to become Barrister. However, once in London, he united and inflamed the Indian students in England against British rule in India. He founded the **Free India Society**. The Society celebrated important dates on the Indian calendar including festivals, freedom movement landmarks, and was dedicated to furthering discussion about Indian freedom. He believed and advocated the use of arms to free India from the British and created a network of Indians in England, equipped with weapons.
- In 1908, brought out an authentic informative researched work on The Great Indian Revolt, which the British termed as "**Sepoy Mutiny**" of 1857. The book was called "**The Indian War of Independence 1857**". The British government immediately enforced a ban on the publication in both Britain and India. Later, it was published by **Madame Bhikaiji Cama** in Holland, and was smuggled into India to reach revolutionaries working across the country against British rule.
- When the then British Collector of Nasik, A.M.T. Jackson was shot by a youth, Veer Savarkar finally fell under the net of the British authorities. He was implicated in the murder citing his connections with India House. Savarkar was arrested in London on March 13, 1910 and sent to India.
- In 1920, many prominent freedom fighters including Vithalbhai Patel, Mahatma Gandhi and Bal Gangadhar Tilak demanded the release of Savarkar. On May 2, 1921, Savarkar was moved to Ratnagiri jail, and from there to the Yeravada jail.
- In Ratnagiri jail Savarkar wrote the book '**Hindutva: who is hindu?**'
- He was **a president of Hindu Mahasabha** from 1937 to 1943. When congress ministries offered resignation on 22nd oct 1939, Hindu mahasabha under his leadership cooperated with Muslim league to form government in provinces like Sindh, Bengal and NWFP.
- He popularised the slogan 'Hinduize all Politics and Militarize Hindudom'.

2) The Haldighati battle between Maharana Pratap and Akbar in Class 10 Social Science book

About Maharana Pratap:

Maharana Pratap was a king of Mewar, Rajasthan.

He is recognised for resisting the attempts of the Mughal ruler Akbar to conquer his territory. Unlike the other neighbouring Rajput rulers, Maharana Pratap repeatedly refused to submit to the Mughals and continued fighting courageously till his last breath.

Maharana Pratap was born on May 9, 1540, in Kumbhalgarh Fort to Jaiwanta Bai and Udai Singh II.

In 1567, the Mughal forces attacked Mewar's capital, Chittor and laid siege to the fort. The then ruler of Mewar decided Udai Singh left the capital and shifted his family to Gogunda. A temporary government of the kingdom of Mewar was set up by Udai Singh and his courtiers in Gogunda.

In 1572, after the demise of Udai Singh Pratap succeeded his father to the throne.

Six diplomatic missions were sent by Akbar in 1573 but were turned down by Maharana Pratap. The last of these missions was led by Akbar's brother-in-law Raja Maan Singh (of Amer). When the efforts of signing a peace treaty failed, Akbar made up his mind to face the mighty Mughal army.

The Battle of Haldighati between the Rajput forces led by Asaf Khan I and the Mughal forces led by Maan Singh on June 18, 1576.

Maharana Pratap was badly wounded but escaped to the nearby hills where his favorite horse Chetak died. Though Mughals were able to claim several parts of Mewar, including Gogunda and the nearby areas except some regions of Aravallis, but they were unable to oust Maharana Pratap who continued to harass the Mughals through guerrilla tactics.

In the wake of Mirza Hakim's incursion into Punjab and rebellions in Bihar and Bengal, Akbar diverted his attention to deal with these problems later Akbar moved to Lahore in 1585 and stayed there to keep an eye on the situation in the north-west for next twelve years. During this period no Mughal expedition was sent to Mewar. Pratap took advantage of this situation and regained control over western Mewar, including Gogunda, Kumbhalgarh and Udaipur. He built a new capital at Chavand, near Dungarpur.

Maharana Pratap died on 29th January, 1597, at the age of 56, as a result of injuries sustained during his incessant struggle against the Mughal Empire.

His eldest son, Amar Singh I, succeeded him to the throne of Mewar.

KASHMIR ANNUAL KHEER BHAWANI MELA

Hundreds gather in Kashmir for annual Kheer Bhawani mela.

The Kheer Bhawani mela is one of the biggest religious functions of the Kashmiri Pandits.

It has become a symbol of communal harmony as Muslims in the locality make all the arrangements for the devotees, including setting up of stalls for flowers and other offerings.

SAMADHI BUDDHA STATUE

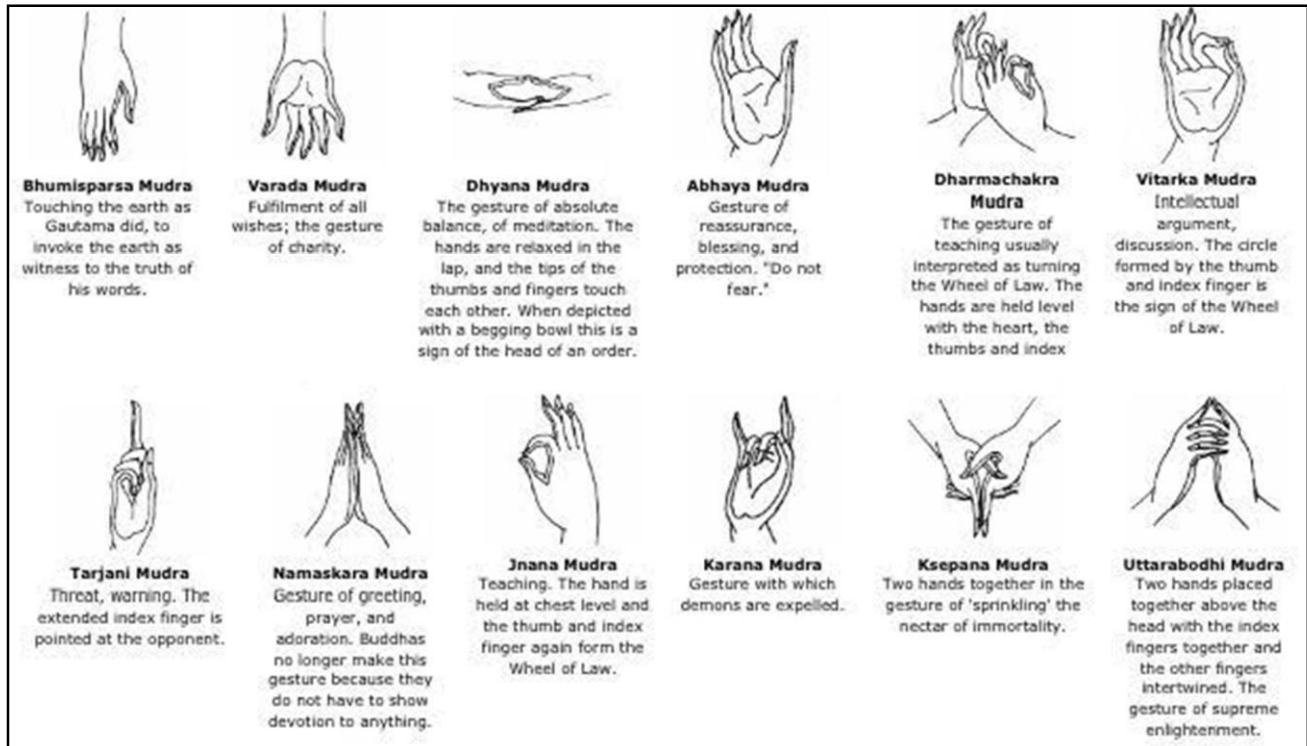


Sri Lankan President Mr. Sirisena presented PM Modi a replica of the 'Samadhi Buddha Statue', hand-carved in white teak.

The Samadhi Buddha is a famous statue situated at **Mahamevnāwa Park in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka**. The Buddha is depicted in the position of the **Dhyana Mudra**, the posture of meditation associated with his **first Enlightenment**. This statue is 7 feet 3 inches in height and carved from dolomite marble.

Various Mudras Associated with Buddha:

1. **Abhaya:** No Fear.
2. **Dhyana:** Meditation.
3. **Namaskara:** Greeting and Adoration.
4. **Bhumisparasa:** Calling the Earth To Witness the Truth.
5. **Varada:** Compassion, Sincerity, and Wish -Granting.
6. **Karana:** Banishing and Expelling Negativity.
7. **Tarjani:** Threat and warning mudra.
8. **Dharmachakra:** Wheel of Dharma (Cosmic Order).
9. **Uttarabodhi:** Supreme Enlightenment.
10. **Vitarka:** Teaching Transmission.
11. **Ksepana:** sprinkling the nectar of immortality.
12. **Jnana:** teaching.



AWARDS AND PRIZES

MAN BOOKER INTERNATIONAL PRIZE

Context : *Jokha Alharthi* , an author from Oman won the prestigious Man Booker International Prize for her **Arabic novel “Celestial Bodies”** .She became the first Arabic language writer to win this award.

Alharthi will share her prize money with her **UK-based translator named Marilyn Booth** .

About Man Booker International Prize

- It is an international literary award sponsored by the ‘Man Group’, which is the same organisation that gives Man Booker Prize for fiction. It is counterpart to Man Booker Prize for English -language novels.
- It is **an annual award, given for a single work of fiction in any language** . It is open to books in any language that have been translated into English and published in the United Kingdom in the last year.
- It carries a cash prize of 50,000 pounds (or US \$64,000) for winning title, which is shared equally between author and translator.

JNANPITH AWARD

Renowned English fiction writer Amitav Ghosh was recently felicitated with **54th Jnanpith Award** . He is the **1st English language writer to become a Jnanpith laureate** .

The Jnanpith Award is one of the prestigious literary honours in the country. The award was **instituted in 1961** .

Eligibility : Any Indian citizen who writes in any of the official languages of India is eligible for the honour . Initially English language was not considered for the Award but after 49th Jnanpith Award, **English language was added to the list of languages for consideration** .

SAHITYA AKADEMI ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF BAL SAHITYA PURASKAR, YUVA PURASKAR

Sahitya Akademi, India's national academy of letters, has announced a list of 22 winners of the **Bal Sahitya Puraskar** and 23 recipients of the **Yuva Puraskar** for this year.

While the **Bal Puraskar will be conferred upon the winners on the Children's Day** , the day for the Yuva Puraskar is yet to be decided.

About Bal Sahitya Puraskar: The Awards relate to **books 1st published during five years period immediately before the year Award is conferred** , which means between 1 January 2013 and 31 December 2017. However, during initial 10 years (from 2010 to 2019) award may also be given to an author based on his/ her total contribution to Children Literature.

About Yuva Puraskar: This Award relates to **books published by an author who is 35 years of age and below as on 1st January of the year of award** .

AKSHAYA PATRA

Akshaya Patra, a Bengaluru -based non -profit organisation (NGO) running one of the world's largest school meals project in India was recently awarded **BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) World Service Global Champion Award for the programme** .

- Funded by **International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON)** , Akshaya Patra is a Bengaluru -based not -for -profit organisation that works with the government on **mid -day meal schemes** . It has a state -of-the -art kitchen in Vrindavan.
- Today, Akshaya Patra is **the world's largest (not -for -profit run) Mid -Day Meal Programme** serving wholesome food every school day to over 1.76 million children from 14,702 schools across 12 states in India.
- **About BBC World Service Global Champion Award:** It is awarded to recognise a person or project who is changing the way world produces, processes, consumes or thinks about food for the better.

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WEEKEND BATCH

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SUNDAY

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SOCIETY

ILO REPORT ON WOMEN IN BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT

The *International Labour Organization (ILO)* recently released its second global report, titled *Women in Business and Management: The business case for change*.

Key findings of the report:

- A critical mass of **30 per cent women** is needed by the enterprises in order to reap the benefits of gender diversity.
- Almost half of the surveyed enterprises reported women holding less than 30 per cent of entry-level management positions.
- In 60 per cent of companies, fewer than 30 per cent of senior managers and top executives are women.
- Across the world, men are still more likely to participate in the labour market than women. The average global labour force participation rate of women in 2018 stood at 48.5 per cent, while that of men was 75 per cent. This equates to a 26.5 percentage point gender gap in labour force participation.
- Just for Asia and the Pacific, the average female labour force participation rate has declined from 52.9 in 1991 to 45.3 per cent in 2018, dropping by 7.6 percentage points.

Benefits associated with gender-inclusive cultures:

- Enterprises with gender-inclusive cultures “are over 60 per cent more likely to have improved profits and productivity”. Such businesses are “9 per cent more likely to have improved business performance”.
- A study by the World Economic Forum has predicted that “if the global gender gap in labour market participation is closed by 25 per cent by 2025, an additional \$5.3 trillion would be added to GDP globally”.

Conclusion:

In an era of skill shortages, women represent a formidable talent pool that companies aren't making enough of. Smart companies who want to be successful in the global economy should make genuine gender diversity a key ingredient of their business strategy. Representative business organizations and employer and business membership organizations must take a lead, promoting both effective policies and genuine implementation.

SDG GENDER INDEX

The 2019 edition of *SDG Gender Index* has been released.

About the SDG Gender Index:

- Developed by *Equal Measures 2030*, a joint effort of regional and global organisations including African Women's Development and Communication Network, Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation etc.
- It **accounts for 14 out of 17 SDGs** (sustainable development goals) that cover aspects such as poverty, health, education, literacy, political representation and equality at the workplace.
- A **score of 100 reflects** the achievement of gender equality in relation to the targets set for each indicator. It means, for example, that 100% of girls complete secondary education, or that there is around 50-50 parity for women and men in Parliament. A score of 50 signifies that a country is about halfway to meeting a goal.

India specific findings:

- India is ranked 95th among 129 countries.
- India's highest goal scores are on health (79.9), hunger & nutrition (76.2), and energy (71.8).
- Its lowest goal scores are on partnerships (18.3, in the bottom 10 countries worldwide), industry, infrastructure and innovation (38.1), and climate (43.4).
- On indicators that define such goals, India scored 95.3 on the percentage of female students enrolled in primary education who are overage.
- Some of India's lowest scores on indicators include the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments. On seats held by women in the Supreme Court (4%), India has a score of 18.2.
- Gender-based violence
- On gender-based violence, indicators include proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 18 (27.3%).

Global findings:

- The world is far from achieving gender equality with 1.4 billion girls and women living in countries that get a "very poor" grade.
- The global average score of the 129 countries — which represent 95% of the world's girls and women — is 65.7 out of 100 ("poor" in the index).
- Altogether, 2.8 billion girls and women live in countries that get either a "very poor" (59 and below) or "poor" score (60-69) on gender equality.
- Just 8% of the world's population of girls and women live in countries that received a "good" gender equality score (80-89) and no country achieved an "excellent" overall score of 90 or above.

ABUJA MARIA'S AND OTHER PVTGS

The **Chhattisgarh** government is processing habitat rights for **Abujh Marias**, a **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG)**.

Key facts:

- Since **Abujh Marias is a PVTG community**, they are entitled to the **habitat rights** under FRA.
- Abujhmarh, where this tribe lives, is considered by the government to be one of the last remaining strongholds of Left-wing extremism.
- Abujh Marias have their **own governance structure**.
- The **Abujhmarh forest** is spread over 1,500 square miles in the Bastar region of Chhattisgarh.

The FRA has a provision that says, "In view of the differential vulnerability of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) among the forest dwellers, the District Level Committee should play a pro-active role in ensuring that all PVTGs receive habitat rights in consultation with the concerned PVTGs' traditional institutions of these groups, after filing claims before the **gram sabha**".

Habitat is defined under the act as, "the area comprising the customary habitat and such other habitats in reserved forests and protected forests of primitive tribal groups and pre-agricultural communities and other forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes."

ABOUT 'PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TRIBAL GROUPS (PVTGS)'

PVTGs are more vulnerable among the tribal groups. In 1975, the Government of India initiated to identify the most vulnerable tribal groups as a separate category called PVTGs and declared 52 such groups, while in 1993 an additional 23 groups were added to the category, making it a total of **75 PVTGs out of 705**.

Scheduled Tribes, spread over 18 states and one Union Territory (A& N Islands) in the country (2011 census).

Among the 75 listed PVTG's the **highest number are found in Odisha (13), followed by Andhra Pradesh (12).**

Ministry of Tribal affairs runs a special scheme exclusively for the welfare of the PVTG's.

Under the scheme, **Conservation -cum -Development (CCD)/Annual Plans are to be prepared by each State/UT for their PVTGs based on their need assessment**, which are then appraised and approved by the Project Appraisal Committee of the Ministry.

Priority is also assigned to PVTGs under the schemes of **Special Central Assistance (SCA) to Tribal Sub - Scheme (TSS), Grants under Article 275(1) of the Constitution, Grants-in-aid to Voluntary Organisations working for the welfare of Schedule Tribes and Strengthening of Education among ST Girls in Low Literacy Districts**.

The criteria for determination of PVTGs is:

- A pre -agriculture level of technology.
- A stagnant or declining population.
- Extremely low literacy.
- A subsistence level of economy.

WORLD HISTORY

75th ANNIVERSARY OF BATTLE OF NORMANDY

Juneteenth:

Juneteenth is considered the oldest known celebration commemorating **the ending of slavery in the United States**.

- It was originally celebrated on June 19, the day that Union soldiers in 1865 told enslaved African Americans in Galveston, Texas, that the Civil War had ended and they were free.
- The celebration started with the freed slaves of Galveston, Texas. Although the Emancipation Proclamation freed the slaves in the South in 1863, it could not be enforced in many places until after the end of the Civil War in 1865.
- The **term Juneteenth is a blend of the words June and nineteenth**. The holiday has also been called Juneteenth Independence Day or Freedom Day.

My name is Arshiya Sharma (HAS - 18th Rank - ETO)
 The entire journey of my preparation has been guided by nimbus. The institute and the administration helped in every step of the way. The prelims and mains test series, the mock interviews and the all time available guidance of the teachers helped me get where I am today.
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Thank You
 Arshiya



ARSHIYA SHARMA

**HAS-2018
 RANK-18**

GENERAL STUDIES -2

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

CENTRAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION (CBI)

Reversing his predecessor's orders, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has allowed the **Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)** to go ahead with investigations and raids in the State without prior permission of the State government.

Background:

The Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal governments, had last year, withdrawn "general consent" to the CBI for investigating cases in their respective states. The state governments said they had lost faith in the CBI in the backdrop of its internal turmoil marked by the open war among the agency's top officers. They had also alleged that the Centre is using the CBI to unfairly target Opposition parties.

What is general consent?

Unlike the National Investigation Agency (NIA), which is governed by its own NIA Act and has jurisdiction across the country, **the CBI is governed by the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act** that makes consent of a state government mandatory for conducting investigation in that state.

There are two kinds of consent:

Case-specific and general – Given that the CBI has jurisdiction only over central government departments and employees, it can investigate a case involving state government employees or a violent crime in a given state only after that state government gives its consent.

"General consent" is **normally given to help the CBI seamlessly conduct its investigation into cases of corruption against central government employees in the concerned state**. Almost all states have given such consent. Otherwise, the CBI would require consent in every case.

What does withdrawal mean?

It means the CBI will not be able to register any fresh case involving a central government official or a private person stationed in these two states without getting case-specific consent. Withdrawal of consent simply means that CBI officers will lose all powers of a police officer as soon as they enter the state unless the state government has allowed them.

Under what provision can general consent been withdrawn?

In exercise of power conferred by **Section 6 of the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946**, the state governments can withdraw the general consent accorded. Section 6 of the Act says, "Nothing contained in Section 5 (which deals with jurisdiction of CBI) shall be deemed to enable any member of the Delhi Special Police Establishment to exercise powers and jurisdiction in any area in a State, not being a Union Territory or Railway, area, without the consent of the Government of that State."

Can withdrawal mean that the CBI can no longer probe any case?

No. The CBI would still have the power to investigate old cases registered when general consent existed. Also, cases registered anywhere else in the country, but involving people stationed in states which have withdrawn consent, would allow CBI's jurisdiction to extend to these states.

What can the CBI do in such instances?

The CBI can always get a search warrant from a local court in the state and conduct searches. In case the search requires a surprise element, there is CrPC Section 166, which allows a police officer of one jurisdiction to ask an officer of another to carry out searches on his behalf. And if the first officer feels that the searches by the latter may lead to loss of evidence, the section allows the first officer to conduct searches himself after giving a notice to the latter.

What happens in fresh cases?

- Withdrawal of consent will only bar the CBI from registering a case within the jurisdiction of states which have withdrawn consent. However, the CBI could still file cases in Delhi and continue to probe people inside such states.
- An October 11, 2018, order of the Delhi High Court makes it clear that the agency can probe anyone in a state that has withdrawn "general consent" if the case is not registered in that state. The order was given with regard to a case of corruption in Chhattisgarh, which also gives consent on a case-to-case basis. The court ordered that the CBI could probe the case without prior consent of the Chhattisgarh government since it was registered in Delhi.

THE GOVERNMENT RECONSTITUTED EIGHT KEY CABINET COMMITTEES UNDER THE TRANSACTION OF BUSINESS RULES

The Cabinet Committees are **extra -constitutional** in nature and are nowhere mentioned in the Constitution. These committees are organized to reduce the workload of the Cabinet.

Types and Composition of Cabinet Committees:

Standing Cabinet Committee: These are permanent in nature with a specific job. The Cabinet Ministers are called its '**members**' while the people without the rank of Cabinet Committee are called '**special invitees**'.

Ad-hoc Cabinet Committee: These are **temporary** in nature and are formed time to time to deal with specific tasks.

Composition:

- The composition of a Cabinet Committee varies from 3 to 8 people.
- Even Ministers who are not the part of the Cabinet can be added to a Cabinet Committee.
- Usually, each cabinet committee has at least one Cabinet Minister.
- **The members of the Cabinet Committee can be from both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha.**

What are these Cabinet Committees for?

Government of India Transaction of Business Rules, 1961 emerging out of **Article 77(3) of the Constitution** states: "The President shall make rules for the more convenient transaction of the business of the Government of India, and for the allocation among Ministers of the said business."

The Rules mandate the **minister-in-charge of a department (ministry) to dispose of "all business allotted to a department under" him or her**. However, "when the subject of a case concerns more than one department", no decision can be taken "until all such departments have concurred, or, failing such concurrence, a decision thereon has been taken by or under the authority of the Cabinet".

Who constitutes and assigns functions to these committees?

The **Prime Minister constitutes Standing Committees of the Cabinet** and sets out the specific functions assigned to them. He can add or reduce the number of committees.

Ad hoc committees of ministers, including Groups of Ministers, may be appointed by the Cabinet or by the Prime Minister for specific matters.

The Union government has released the composition of eight Cabinet Committees, including **two new ones** — on **Investment** and **Employment and Skill Development**.

Overview of the committees:

Cabinet Committee on Appointments -

The committee makes appointments to posts of the three service chiefs, Director General of Military Operations, chiefs of all Air and Army Commands, Director General of Defence Intelligence Agency, Scientific Advisor to the Defence Minister, Director General of Armed Forces Medical Services, Director General of Ordnance Factories, Director General of Defence Estates, Controller General of Defence Accounts, Director of Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, Solicitor-General, Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, Chairman and Members of the Railway Board, Chief Vigilance Officers in Public Sector Undertakings and Secretariat posts of and above the rank of Joint Secretary in the Central Government. This Committee decides on all important empanelments and shift of officers serving on Central deputation.

Cabinet Committee on Accommodation:

The Cabinet Committee on Accommodation determines the guidelines or rules with regard to the allotment of government accommodation. It also takes a call on the allotment of government accommodation to non-eligible persons and organisations as also the rent to be charged from them. It can consider the allotment of accommodation from the General Pool to Members of Parliament. It can consider proposals for shifting existing Central Government Offices to locations outside the capital.

Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs:

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs is supposed to review economic trends, problems and prospects “for evolving a consistent and integrated economic policy”, coordinate all activities requiring policy decisions at the highest level, deal with fixation of prices of agricultural produce and prices of essential commodities. It considers proposals for investment of more than Rs 1,000 crore, deal with industrial licensing policies and review rural development and the Public Distribution System.

Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs:

The Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs draws the schedule for Parliament sessions and monitors the progress of government business in Parliament. It scrutinises non-government business and decides which official Bills and resolutions are to be presented.

Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs:

The Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs addresses problems related to Centre-state relations. It also examines economic and political issues that require a wider perspective but have no internal or external security implications. It is also known as the ‘**Super Cabinet**’

Cabinet Committee on Security:

The Cabinet Committee on Security deals with issues relating to law and order, internal security and policy matters concerning foreign affairs with internal or external security implications. It also goes into economic and political issues related to national security. It considers all cases involving capital defence expenditure more than Rs 1,000 crore. It considers issues related to the Department of Defence Production and the Department of Defence Research and Development, Services Capital Acquisition plans and schemes for procurement of security-related equipment.

Cabinet Committee on Investment:

The Cabinet Committee on Investment will “identify key projects required to be implemented on a time-bound basis”, **involving investments of Rs 1,000 crore or more, or any other critical projects**, as may be specified by it, with regard to infrastructure and manufacturing. It will prescribe time limits for giving requisite approvals and clearances by the ministries concerned in identified sectors. It will also monitor the progress of such projects.

Cabinet Committee on Employment:

The Cabinet Committee on Employment and Skill Development is supposed to provide “direction to all policies, programmes, schemes and initiatives for skill development aimed at increasing the employability of the workforce for effectively meeting the emerging requirements of the rapidly growing economy and maximising the benefits of demographic dividend”. It is required to enhance workforce participation, foster employment growth and identification, and work towards removal of gaps between requirement and availability of skills in various sectors. **The panel will set targets** for expeditious implementation of all skill development initiatives by the ministries and to periodically review the progress in this regard.

REGISTRATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES UNDER SECTION 29A OF THE RP ACT, 1951

The Election Commission of India has declared the **National People's Party** as a national party. This made the NPP, formed in 2013, **the first from the north-eastern region** to earn the tag.

The NPP is recognised as **a State party** in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya and Nagaland.

Registration of political parties:

Registration of Political parties is governed by the provisions of **Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951**. A party seeking registration under the said Section with the Commission has to submit an application to the Commission within a period of 30 days following the date of its formation as per guidelines prescribed by the Election Commission of India in exercise of the powers conferred by **Article 324** of the Commission of India and Section 29A of the **Representation of the People Act, 1951**.

To be eligible for a 'National Political Party of India,' the Election Commission has set the following criteria:

1. It secures at least six percent of the valid votes polled in any four or more states, at a general election to the House of the People or, to the State Legislative Assembly; and
2. In addition, it wins at least four seats in the House of the People from any State or States. OR
3. It wins at least two percent seats in the House of the People (i.e., 11 seats in the existing House having 543 members), and these members are elected from at least three different States.

To be eligible for a 'State Political Party,' the Election Commission has set the following criteria:

1. It secures at least six percent of the valid votes polled in the State at a general election, either to the House of the People or to the Legislative Assembly of the State concerned; and
2. In addition, it wins at least two seats in the Legislative Assembly of the State concerned. OR
3. It wins at least three percent (3%) of the total number of seats in the Legislative Assembly of the State, or at least three seats in the Assembly, whichever is more.

Benefits:

- If a party is recognised as a State Party, it is entitled for exclusive allotment of its **reserved symbol** to the candidates set up by it in the State in which it is so recognised, and if a party is recognised as a

'National Party' it is entitled for exclusive allotment of its reserved symbol to the candidates set up by it throughout India.

- Recognised 'State' and 'National' parties need only **one proposer** for filing the nomination and are also entitled for **two sets of electoral rolls** free of cost at the time of revision of rolls and their candidates get one copy of electoral roll free of cost during General Elections.
- They also get **broadcast/telecast facilities** over Akashvani/Doordarshan during general elections.
- Political parties are entitled to nominate "**Star Campaigners**" during General Elections. A recognized National or State party can have a maximum of 40 "Star campaigners" and a registered unrecognised party can nominate a maximum of 20 'Star Campaigners'.
- The **travel expenses of star campaigners are not to be accounted** for in the election expense accounts of candidates of their party.

RULE 49MA

The Election Commission may "revisit" the rule for prosecution of a voter for making a false complaint of malfunction of an electronic voting machine or a voter verifiable paper audit trail machine - Rule 49MA.

Background:

The Supreme Court, in April 2019, sought a response from the Election Commission on a plea seeking abolition of a provision in election rules that provides for prosecution of an elector if a complaint alleging malfunctioning of EVMs and VVPATs turns out to be false.

What is rule 49MA?

Rule 49MA is mentioned under 'The Conduct of Elections Rules'.

- **Under the rule**, where printer for paper trail is used, if an elector after having recorded his vote under rule 49M alleges that the paper slip generated by the printer has shown the name or symbol of a candidate other than the one he voted for, the presiding officer shall obtain a written declaration from the elector as to the allegation, after warning the elector about the consequence of making a false declaration.
- The rules outline that if after investigation, the allegation of EVM malfunctioning is found to be false or incorrect, then the complainant can be prosecuted under Section 177 of the Indian Penal Code for "furnishing false information".
- In such a case, **a jail term of six months or a fine of Rs 1,000 or both** is guaranteed.

Arguments against Rule 49MA:

- It is unconstitutional as **it criminalises reporting of malfunctioning of Electronic Voting Machines and Voter Verified Paper Audit Trails**.
- The obligation of proving an allegation cannot be on the voter when machines used for voting showed 'arbitrary deviant behaviour'.
- Putting the responsibility on the elector in cases of arbitrary deviant behaviour of machines used in the election process, infringes upon a citizen's right to freedom of expression under the Constitution.
- When an elector is asked to cast test vote as prescribed under Rule 49MA, he may not be able to reproduce the same result which he was complaining about, one more time in a sequence, because of the pre-programmed deviant behaviour of the electronic machines.
- Therefore, holding an elector accountable for deviant behaviours of EVMs and VVPATs could deter them from coming forth and making any complaint, which is essential for improving the process.

- Since only an elector could be a witness to the secrecy of his vote cast, it would violate **Article 20(3)** of the Constitution which says that no person accused of an offence shall be compelled to be a witness against himself.

LEADER OF OPPOSITION

Congress, with 52 MPs, has declined to stake claim for the position of *Leader of Opposition* in Parliament.

Background : Any party that has 55 members can get the post as recognised as such by the speaker/ chairman.

Who is the Leader of Opposition?

The LOP is *leader of the largest party that has not less than one-tenth of the total strength of the house*.

It is a statutory post defined in the *Salaries and Allowances of Leaders of Opposition in Parliament Act, 1977*.

Significance of the office:

- LoP is referred to as the '*shadow Prime Minister*'.
- She/ he is expected to be ready to take over if the government falls.
- The LoP also plays an important role in bringing cohesiveness and effectiveness to the opposition's functioning in policy and legislative work.
- LoP plays a crucial role in bringing bipartisanship and neutrality to the appointments in institutions of accountability and transparency – CVC, CBI, CIC, Lokpal etc.

What reforms are needed?

There arises a problem when no party in opposition secures 55 or more seats. In such situations, the numerically largest party in the opposition should have the right to have a leader recognised as leader of the opposition by the speaker.

Besides, the 10% formulation is inconsistent with the law '*the salary and allowances of leaders of opposition in Parliament Act, 1977*' which only says that the largest opposition party should get the post.

PRO-TEM SPEAKER

Virendra Kumar, BJP MP from Madhya Pradesh, will be the Pro-tem Speaker of the 17th Lok Sabha.

What is Pro-tem Speaker?

Pro-tem is a Latin phrase which translates to for the '*time being*' in English. So the Pro-tem Speaker is a temporary speaker appointed for a limited period of time.

The need for pro-tem speaker:

- The **speaker of the Lok Sabha/legislative assembly vacates the office immediately before the first meeting of the newly elected house**.
- Hence **President/governor appoints the pro-tem speaker to preside over the sittings of the house**.
- Usually the **senior most member is elected as the pro-tem speaker**.
- The **president/governor will administer the oath of the office** for the pro-tem speaker.
- The main duty of the pro-tem speaker is to administer the oath to the newly elected members. Pro-tem also enables the house to elect the new speaker.

- When the house elects the new speaker the office of the pro -tem speaker ceases to exist. Hence **the office of the pro -tem speaker is a temporary one which will be in existence for few days** .

Powers and Privileges:

The Bombay High Court in its 1994 judgement in the **Surendra Vasant S irsat case** holds that a pro -tem is Speaker of the House “for all purposes with all powers, privileges and immunities” until the Speaker is elected.

The Odisha High Court also agreed in the **Godavaris Misra versus Nandakisore Das, Speaker, Orissa Legislative Assembly case** when it said the “powers of the Speaker pro -tem are co -extensive with the powers of elected Speaker”.

The pro -tem speaker also has **same powers, privileges as that of the Speaker** .

AADHAAR AND OTHER LAWS (AMENDMENT) ORDINANCE, 2019

The Union Cabinet has approved “ **The Aadhaar and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2019** ” to replace the earlier ordinance.

- The move is aimed at making Aadhaar people friendly
- The amendments would enable **UIDAI to have a more robust mechanism to serve the public interest and restrain the misuse of Aadhaar** .
- Subsequent to this amendment, **no individual shall be compelled to provide proof of possession of Aadhaar number for the purpose of establishing his identity unless it is so provided by a law made by Parliament** .

The salient features of the amendments are as follows:

- Provides for **voluntary use** of Aadhaar number in physical or electronic form by authentication or offline verification with the **consent of Aadhaar number holder** .
- Provides for use of **twelve-digit Aadhaar number and its alternative virtual identity** to conceal the actual Aadhaar number of an individual.
- Gives an **option to children who are Aadhaar number holders to cancel their Aadhaar number on attaining the age of eighteen years** .
- Permits the entities to perform **authentication only when they are compliant with the standards of privacy** and security specified by the Authority; The **authentication is permitted under any law made by Parliament or is prescribed to be in the interest of State by the Central Government** .
- Allows the use of Aadhaar number for authentication on voluntary basis as **acceptable KYC document under the Telegraph Act, 1885 and the Prevention of Money -laundering Act, 2002** .
- Prevents denial of services** for refusing to, or being unable to, undergo a authentication.
- Provides for **establishment of Unique Identification Authority of India Fund** .
- Provides for **civil penalties** , its adjudication, appeal thereof in regard to violations of Aadhaar Act and provisions by entities in the Aadhaar ecosystem.

Background:

The Supreme Court in its judgement had held Aadhaar to be **constitutionally valid** . However, it read down/ struck down few sections of the Aadhaar Act and Regulations and gave several other directions in the interest of **protecting the fundamental rights to privacy** .

Consequently it was proposed to amend the Aadhaar Act, Indian Telegraph Act and the Prevention of Money Laundering Act in line with the Supreme Court directives and the report of **Justice B.N.Srikrishna (Retd.)**

committee on data protection, in order to ensure that personal data of Aadhaar holder remains protected against any misuse and Aadhaar scheme remains in conformity with the Constitution.

MUSLIM WOMEN (PROTECTION OF RIGHTS ON MARRIAGE), BILL 2019

The Union Cabinet has approved **the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill 2019**.

Benefits:

The proposed Bill will protect **the rights of married Muslim women and prevent divorce by the practice of instantaneous and irrevocable 'talaq -e-biddat' by their husbands**.

It provides the rights of subsistence allowance, custody of minor children to victims of triple talaq i.e. **talaq -e-biddat**.

Key provisions of the Bill:

The Bill makes **all declaration of talaq**, including in written or electronic form, to be void (i.e. not enforceable in law) and **illegal**.

Definition: It defines talaq as talaq -e-biddat or any other similar form of talaq pronounced by a Muslim man resulting in instant and irrevocable divorce.

Talaq-e-biddat refers to the practice under Muslim personal laws where pronouncement of the word 'talaq' thrice in one sitting by a Muslim man to his wife results in an instant and irrevocable divorce.

Offence and penalty: The Bill makes declaration of talaq a cognizable offence, attracting up to three years' imprisonment with a fine. (A cognizable offence is one for which a police officer may arrest an accused person without warrant.)

The offence will be cognizable only if information relating to the offence is given by: (i) the married woman (against whom talaq has been declared), or (ii) any person related to her by blood or marriage.

The Bill provides that the Magistrate may grant bail to the accused. The bail may be granted only after hearing the woman (against whom talaq has been pronounced), and if the Magistrate is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for granting bail.

The offence may be compounded by the Magistrate upon the request of the woman (against whom talaq has been declared). The terms and conditions of the compounding of the offence will be determined by the Magistrate. {Compounding refers to the procedure where the two sides agree to stop legal proceedings, and settle the dispute.}

Allo wance: A Muslim woman against whom talaq has been declared, is entitled to seek subsistence allowance from her husband for herself and for her dependent children. The amount of the allowance will be determined by the Magistrate.

Custody: A Muslim woman against whom such talaq has been declared, is entitled to seek custody of her minor children. The manner of custody will be determined by the Magistrate.

J & K PRESIDENT'S RULE

Union Cabinet approves extension of **President's Rule in J&K** for six months with effect from 3rd July, 2019. Resolution to be moved in the forthcoming Parliament session.

President's rule in J & K:

Since J&K has a separate Constitution, **Governor's rule is first imposed under Section 92 for six months** after an approval by the President. In case the Assembly is not dissolved within six months, **President's rule under Article 356 is extended to the State**.

Governor's rule is mentioned under **Article 370 section 92** – 'Provisions in case of failure of constitutional machinery in the State.'

Article 370 section 92: Provisions in case of failure of constitutional machinery in the State:

If at any time, the Governor is satisfied that a situation has arisen in which the Government of the State cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution, the Governor may by

Proclamation:

- Assume to himself all or any of the functions of the Government of the State and all or any of the powers vested in or exercisable by anybody or authority in the State.
- Make such incidental and consequential provisions as appear to the Governor to be necessary or desirable for giving effect to the objects of the Proclamation, including provisions for suspending in whole or in part the operation of any provision of this Constitution relating to anybody or authority in the State.

Related key facts:

- Any such Proclamation may be **revoked or varied by a subsequent Proclamation**. Any such Proclamation whether varied under subsection (2) or not, **shall except where it is a Proclamation revoking a previous Proclamation, cease to operate on the expiration of six months** from the date on which it was first issued.
- If the Government or by a Proclamation under his section assumes, to himself any, of the powers of the Legislature to make his laws, **any law made by him in the exercise of that power shall, subject to, the terms thereof continue to have effect until two years have elapsed from the date on which the proclamation ceases to have effect, unless sooner**.
- No Proclamation under this section shall, except where it is a Proclamation revoking a previous Proclamation, be laid before each House of the Legislature as soon as it is convened.

What is President's Rule in the Indian context?

- The imposition of Article 356 of the Constitution on a State following the failure of constitutional machinery is called President's Rule in India. Once the President's Rule has been imposed on a state, the elected state government will be **temporarily dissolved, and the Governor, who is appointed by the government at the Centre, will replace the Chief Minister as the chief executive of the State**.
- The state will fall under **the direct control of the Union government, and the Governor will continue to be head the proceedings, representing the President of India** – who is the Head of the State.
- The imposition of the President's rule **requires the sanction of both the houses of Parliament**. If approved, it can go on for a period of six months. However, the imposition **cannot be extended for more than three years, and needs to be brought before the two houses every six months for approval**.

1. Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.
2. Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

NEW DELHI INTERNATIONAL ARBITRATION CENTRE BILL, 2019

Context : The Union Cabinet has approved the Bill **New Delhi International Arbitration Centre (NDIAC) Bill, 2019** for introduction in the ensuing session of Parliament.

Benefits:

- The benefits of institutionalized arbitration will accrue to Government and its agency and to the parties to a dispute.
- This shall be to the advantage of the public and the public institutions in terms of quality of expertise and costs incurred and will facilitate India becoming a hub for Institutional Arbitration.

Salient Features:

In order to facilitate the setting up of **NDIAC**, the Ordinance envisages the **transfer and vesting of the undertakings of the International Centre For Alternative Dispute Resolution (ICADR) in the Central Government. The Central Government will subsequently vest the undertakings in NDIAC.**

Composition:

- New Delhi International Arbitration Centre (NDIAC) will be **headed by a chairperson who has been a Judge of the Supreme Court or a Judge of a High Court or an eminent person, having special knowledge and experience in the conduct or administration of arbitration law or management, to be appointed by the Central Government in consultation with the Chief Justice of India**.
- There will be **two Full time or Part time Members** from amongst eminent persons having substantial knowledge and experience in institutional arbitration, both domestic and international.
- Also, **one representative of a recognised body of commerce and industry shall be chosen on rotational basis as Part time Member**.
- Secretary, Department of Legal Affairs, Financial Adviser nominated by the Department of Expenditure and Chief Executive Officer, NDIAC **shall be ex-officio Members**.

What is Arbitration?

Arbitration is a settlement of dispute between two parties to a contract by a **neutral third party** i.e. the arbitrator without resorting to court action. The process can be tailored to suit parties' particular needs. Arbitrators can be chosen for their expertise. It is confidential and can be speedier and cheaper than a court. There are limited grounds of appeal. Arbitral awards are binding and enforceable through courts.

Significance of ADR:

It is felt that a reliable and responsive alternative dispute resolution system is essential for rapidly developing countries like India. While business disputes need speedy resolution, litigation is the least favoured method for that. The Indian judicial system is marred by delays because of which businesses suffer as disputes are not resolved in a reasonable time period. Therefore, need for alternative dispute resolution processes like negotiation, mediation conciliation and arbitration is felt from time to time.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS/ISSUES

SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION (SCO)

The **Second Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Mass Media Forum** is being held at **Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan**.

The **first SCO Media Summit was held in Beijing on 1 June 2018**. This event was held under the motto **“Development of the “Shanghai Spirit” and opening of a new era in the mass media cooperation”**, where over 110 media outlets from 16 countries participated, including the SCO Member States, Observer States and Dialogue Partners.

About SCO:

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, also known as the **Shanghai Pact**, is a **Eurasian political, economic, and military organisation** which was founded in 2001 in Shanghai.

Founding members: China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The cooperation was renamed to Shanghai Cooperation Organisation after Uzbekistan joined the organisation in 2001.

The SCO's main goals are: strengthening mutual trust and neighbourliness among the member states; promoting their effective cooperation in politics, trade, the economy, research, technology and culture, as well as in education, energy, transport, tourism, environmental protection, and other areas; making joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region; and moving towards the establishment of a democratic, fair and rational new international political and economic order. currently:

Presently, the SCO comprises eight member states, namely the Republic of India, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the People's Republic of China, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan;

The SCO counts four observer states, namely the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Belarus, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Mongolia.

The SCO has six dialogue partners, namely the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Armenia, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, the Republic of Turkey, and the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.



BIMSTEC

By inviting leaders from the **BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi -Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) countries, Kyrgyz Republic and Mauritius** at his swearing -in ceremony on May 30, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made a carefully calibrated diplomatic move that signals a major outreach to India's neighbourhood from the Bay of Bengal to Central Asia, as well as the Indian diaspora across the world.

What is BIMSTEC?

In an effort to integrate the region, the grouping was **formed in 1997**, originally with **Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand, and later included Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan**. **BIMSTEC, which now includes five countries from South Asia and two from ASEAN, is a bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia. It includes all the major countries of South Asia, except Maldives, Afghanistan and Pakistan**.

Why the region matters?

- The Bay of Bengal is the **largest bay in the world**. Over one -fifth (22%) of the world's population live in the seven countries around it, and they have a combined GDP close to \$2.7 trillion.
- Despite economic challenges, all the countries in the region have been able to sustain **average annual rates of economic growth between 3.4% and 7.5% from 2012 to 2016**.
- The Bay also has vast **untapped natural resources**. One -fourth of the world's traded goods cross the Bay every year.

India's stake:

- As the region's largest economy, India has a lot at stake. **BIMSTEC connects not only South and Southeast Asia, but also the ecologies of the Great Himalayas and the Bay of Bengal**. For India, it is a **natural platform to fulfil our key foreign policy priorities of 'Neighborhood First' and 'Act East'**.
- For New Delhi, one key reason for engagement is in the vast potential that is unlocked with **stronger connectivity**. Almost 300 million people, or roughly one -quarter of India's population, live in the four coastal states adjacent to the Bay of Bengal (Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal). And, about 45 million people, who live in landlocked Northeastern states, will have the opportunity to connect via the Bay of Bengal to Bangladesh, Myanmar and Thailand, opening up possibilities in terms of development.
- From the **strategic perspective**, the Bay of Bengal, a funnel to the Malacca straits, has emerged a key theatre for an increasingly assertive China in maintaining its access route to the Indian Ocean.
- As **China mounts assertive activities in the Bay of Bengal** region, with increased submarine movement and ship visits in the Indian Ocean, it is in India's interest to consolidate its internal engagement among the BIMSTEC countries.

UN HABITAT

India has been elected to the Executive Board of the first UN -Habitat Assembly.

About UN Habitat:

- The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN -Habitat) is the **United Nations agency for human settlements and sustainable urban development**.

- It was established in 1978 as **an outcome of the First UN Conference on Human Settlements and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat I) held in Vancouver, Canada in 1976**.
- It is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all. It is a member of the United Nations Development Group.
- The mandate of UN-Habitat derives from the **Habitat Agenda**, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in Istanbul, Turkey, in 1996.
- **The twin goals of the Habitat Agenda are** adequate shelter for all and the development of sustainable human settlements in an urbanizing world.
- As an **inter-governmental policy making and decision making body**, the Governing Council of UN-Habitat seeks to promote integral and comprehensive approach to human settlements, assist the countries and regions in addressing human settlement problems and strengthen cooperation among all countries on human settlement issue.
- UN-Habitat **reports to the United Nations General Assembly**

UN WOMEN

United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG) recently appointed Indian-origin Anita Bhatia as Deputy Executive Director of **United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) for Resource Management, Sustainability and Partnerships**.

About UN Women: The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women:

It is the UN entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. It was established in 2010 to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

It merges and builds on the important work of four previously distinct parts of the UN system, which focused exclusively on gender equality and women's empowerment:

1. Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW).
2. International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW).
3. Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI).
4. United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

The main roles of UN Women are:

- To support inter-governmental bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms.
- To help Member States to implement these standards, standing ready to provide suitable technical and financial support to those countries that request it, and to forge effective partnerships with civil society.
- To hold the UN system accountable for its own commitments on gender equality, including regular monitoring of system-wide progress.

QUAD COUNTRIES TO FOCUS ON MARITIME SECURITY

Context : The fourth edition of the **Quadrilateral meet** among India, Japan, Australia and the United States, after it was revived in November 2017, was held recently **at Bangkok, Thailand**.

Outcomes of the meeting:

- India, Australia, Japan and the US have backed Asean-led mechanisms in efforts to create a rule-based regional architecture for the Indo-Pacific, where China is seeking to exert its influence.

- They held consultations on collective efforts to “advance a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific”.
- The meet also referred to efforts to “maintain universal respect for international law and freedom of navigation and overflight”.

The Quad:

- Regional coalition known as the ‘Quad’, **the quadrilateral formation includes Japan, India, United States and Australia**.
- All four nations find **a common ground of being the democratic nations and common interests of unhindered maritime trade and security**.
- The idea was **first mooted by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2007**. However, the idea couldn’t move ahead with Australia pulling out of it.

Significance Quad - grouping for the US:

- The US believes the Quad, as one of the elements of its larger Indo-Pacific strategy for “a free, open and rules-based order” in face of an aggressive and expansionist China in the region, should eventually evolve into a ministerial-level dialogue imbued with a strong military dimension.
- But Washington also recognizes that New Delhi for now remains opposed to any militarization of the Quad, which was revived after a decade as a joint secretary-level dialogue in November 2017, with its second meeting being held in June this year. India has also made it clear that the US should not “conflate” the Indo-Pacific with the Quad, stressing the centrality of Asean in the former.

Significance:

Quad is an opportunity for like-minded countries to share notes and collaborate on projects of mutual interest. All four countries share a vision of an open and free Indo-Pacific. Each is involved in development and economic projects as well as in promoting maritime domain awareness and maritime security.

The Quad grouping is one of the many avenues for interaction among India, Australia, Japan and the US and should not be seen in an exclusive context. Quad should not be seen in any comparative or in an exclusive context.

ISLAMIC COOPERATION COUNTRIES (OIC)

The **14th summit of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)** was held in **Mecca, Saudi Arabia**. The agenda of meeting was **to address ‘current issues in Muslim world’ and ‘recent developments in a number of OIC member states**.

About the OIC:

- Organisation of Islamic Cooperation is an international organization **founded in 1969, consisting of 57 member states**.
- It is **the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations**.
- The organisation states that it is **“the collective voice of the Muslim world”** and works to “safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony”.
- The OIC has **permanent delegations to the United Nations and the European Union**.
- **Permanent Secretariat is in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia**.
- Like NAM again, the **OIC is a toothless tiger** when it comes to dealing with squabbles among member states.

Significance of OIC for India:

- OIC's growing economic and energy interdependence with India has become important in recent times.
- That India has one of the world's largest Muslim populations, of course, is the immediate explanation of the surprising invite for Swaraj to address the OIC.

GENERALISED SYSTEM OF PREFERENCES (GSP)

The United States of America (USA) President Donald Trump has terminated **India's designation as a beneficiary developing nation under the GSP (Generalized System of Preference)** trade program with effect from **5th June 2019**.

Why has it been terminated?

- Because India no longer complied with the statutory eligibility criteria.
- The trigger for the latest downturn in trade ties was India's new rules on e-commerce that restrict the way Amazon.com Inc. and Walmart -backed Flipkart do business in a rapidly growing online market set to touch \$200 billion by 2027.
- That, coming on top of a drive to force global card payments companies such as Mastercard and Visa to move their data to India and the imposition of higher tariffs on electronic products and smartphones, left a broader trade package the two sides were working on through last year in tatters.

Implications:

With this, India could lose a vital U.S. trade concession, under which it enjoys zero tariffs on \$5.6 billion of exports to the United States.

Generalised System of Preferences (GSP):

It is a U.S. trade program designed to promote economic growth in the developing world by **providing preferential duty-free entry** for up to 4,800 products from 129 designated beneficiary countries and territories.

What is the objective of GSP?

The objective of GSP was to give development support to poor countries by promoting exports from them into the developed countries. GSP promotes sustainable development in beneficiary countries by helping these countries to increase and diversify their trade with the United States.

Benefits of GSP:

- Indian exporters benefit indirectly – through the benefit that accrues to the importer by way of reduced tariff or duty free entry of eligible Indian products
- Reduction or removal of import duty on an Indian product makes it more competitive to the importer – other things (e.g. quality) being equal.
- This tariff preference helps new exporters to penetrate a market and established exporters to increase their market share and to improve upon the profit margins, in the donor country.

What is the difference between GSP and the usual trade arrangement under WTO?

- Under the normal trade laws, the WTO members must give equal preferences to trade partners. There should not be any discrimination between countries. This trade rule under the WTO is called the **Most Favored Nation (MFN) clause**.

- The MFN instructs non-discrimination that any favorable treatment to a particular country. At the same time, the WTO allows members to give special and differential treatment to from developing countries (like zero tariff imports). This is an exemption for MFN. The MSP given by developed countries including the US is an exception to MFN.

What is the impact of GSP withdrawal on India?

India exports nearly 50 products of the 94 products on which GSP benefits are stopped. The GSP removal will leave a reasonable impact on India as the country enjoyed preferential tariff on exports worth of nearly \$ 5.6 billion under the GSP route out of the total exports of \$48 bn in 2017-18.

Removal of GSP indicate a tough trade position by the US; especially for countries like India who benefited much from the scheme. India is the 11th largest trade surplus country for the US and India enjoyed an annual trade surplus of \$ 21 bn in 2017-18.

WHY LAKHS ARE PROTESTING ON THE STREETS IN HONG KONG

Huge protests in *Hong Kong*.

Reasons behind:

The protesters were marching against proposed changes in the law that would allow suspects accused of crimes such as murder and rape to be extradited to mainland China to face trial.

Once the law is changed, Hong Kong will also hand over to China individuals accused of crimes in Taiwan and Macau. **Macau, like Hong Kong, is a Chinese special administrative region with significant autonomy.**

China's response:

The government has said that the proposed amendments would "plug loopholes" that allow the city to be used by criminals. It has assured that courts in Hong Kong would make the final decision on extradition, that only certain categories of suspects would be liable, and that individuals accused of political and religious offences would not be extradited.

The protesters in Hong Kong are concerned mainly because :

China may use the changed law to target political opponents in Hong Kong.

Extradited suspects are likely to face torture. Also, they say, the change in the law will deal another blow to Hong Kong's already crumbling autonomy.



International response:

Human Rights Watch and the International Chamber of Commerce have warned against changing the law. A body of the US Congress has said it would make Hong Kong vulnerable to Chinese “political coercion”, and the UK and Canada have expressed concern over the potential impact on their citizens in Hong Kong. The EU has sent a diplomatic note.

Relationship of Hong Kong with respect to China:

The former British colony returned to Chinese rule in 1997, and is **semi-autonomous** under the “one country, two systems” principle. It has its own laws and courts, and allows its residents a range of civil liberties. Hong Kong does not have an extradition agreement with Beijing.

FINANCIAL ACTION TASK FORCE (FATF)

Background:

Pakistan was placed on the grey list by the FATF in June 2018 for failing to curb anti-terror financing. It has been scrambling in recent months to avoid being added to a list of countries deemed non-compliant with anti-money laundering and terrorist financing regulations by the Paris-based FATF, a measure that officials here fear could further hurt its economy.

Implications of this move

- Pakistani analysts say being put on the FATF watchlist could deal a blow to Pakistan's economy, making it harder for foreign investors and companies to do business in the country.
- It would be counterproductive to put Pakistan on the watch list as it would hurt its capability to fight terrorism. Also, being put back on the grey list would heighten Pakistan's risk profile and some financial institutions would be wary of transacting with Pakistani banks and counterparties.
- Being placed on the FATF watchlist carries no direct legal implications but brings extra scrutiny from regulators and financial institutions that can chill trade and investment and increase transaction costs.

About FATF

What is it? The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an **inter-governmental body established in 1989 on the initiative of the G7**. It is a “policy-making body” which works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in various areas. The FATF Secretariat is housed at the OECD headquarters in Paris.

Objectives : The objectives of the FATF are to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.

Functions : The FATF monitors the progress of its members in implementing necessary measures, reviews money laundering and terrorist financing techniques and counter-measures and promotes the adoption and implementation of appropriate measures globally. In collaboration with other international stakeholders, the FATF works to identify national-level vulnerabilities with the aim of protecting the international financial system from misuse.

What is blacklist and grey list?

FATF maintains two different lists of countries: those that have deficiencies in their AML/CTF regimes, but they commit to an action plan to address these loopholes, and those that do not end up doing enough. The former is commonly known as grey list and latter as blacklist.

Once a country is blacklisted, FATF calls on other countries to apply enhanced due diligence and counter measures, increasing the cost of doing business with the country and in some cases severing it altogether. As of now there are only two countries in the blacklist — Iran and North Korea — and seven on the grey list, including Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Syria and Yemen.

INFORMATION FUSION CENTRE (IFC) FOR THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION (IOR)

The *Indian Navy is hosting a Maritime Information Sharing Workshop 2019 edition* under the aegis of the *Information Fusion Centre -Indian Ocean Region (IFC -IOR)* at Gurugram, Haryana.

- The workshop aims to acquaint all participants about IFC -IOR and its information sharing mechanisms. It also aims to promote sharing of best practices in this field so as to yield better response to myriad security and safety challenges that IOR faces.

About IFC - IOR:

The IFC -IOR is being established with the vision of **strengthening maritime security in the region and beyond**, by building a common coherent maritime situation picture and acting as a maritime information hub for the region.

- The IFC has been established at the **Navy's Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC) in Gurugram**, which is the single point centre linking all the coastal radar chains to generate a seamless real-time picture of the nearly 7,500 -km coastline.
- Through this Centre, **information on "white shipping", or commercial shipping, will be exchanged** with countries in the region to improve maritime domain awareness in the Indian Ocean.

Significance and the need:

- The IOR has a diverse set of littorals and island nations, each with their unique needs, aspirations, interest and values.
- It is necessary to counter the Rise in **maritime piracy** in the region.
- IFR-IRO would also ensure that the entire region is benefited by **mutual collaboration and exchange of information** and understanding the concerns and threats which are prevalent in the region.

The Indian Ocean is important for the following reasons:

- It enjoys **a privileged location at the crossroads of global trade**, connecting the major engines of the international economy in the Northern Atlantic and Asia-Pacific. This is particularly important in an era in which global shipping has burgeoned.
- Indian Ocean is also **rich in natural resources**. 40% of the world's offshore oil production takes place in the Indian Ocean basin.
- **Fishing** in the Indian Ocean now accounts for almost 15% of the world's total.
- **Mineral resources** are equally important, with nodules containing nickel, cobalt, and iron, and massive sulphide deposits of manganese, copper, iron, zinc, silver, and gold present in sizeable quantities on the sea bed.
- Indian Ocean coastal sediments are also **important sources of titanium, zirconium, tin, zinc, and copper**. Additionally, various **rare earth elements** are present, even if their extraction is not always commercially feasible.

WINDRUSH SCHEME

UK Home Secretary has issued another personal apology for **the Windrush scandal**, involving migrants being wrongly denied their British citizenship rights, as a latest official update revealed that hundreds more Indians were caught up in the row.

About Wind rush Scheme?

The Windrush Scheme enables **Commonwealth citizens, their children, and some other long term residents of the UK to obtain documentation confirming their status free of charge**.

Who is eligible for support under the scheme?

1. A Commonwealth citizen who settled in the UK before 1 January 1973 or has right of abode.
2. A child of a Commonwealth citizen parent who settled before 1 January 1973, where you were born in the UK or arrived in the UK before the age of 18.
3. A person of any nationality who settled in the UK before 31 December 1988 and is settled in the UK.

Background:

The **Windrush generation** refers to **citizens of former British colonies who arrived before 1973**, when the rights of such Commonwealth citizens to live and work in Britain were substantially curtailed.

The name derives from the **ship MV Empire Windrush**, which on June 22, 1948, docked in Tilbury, Essex, bringing nearly 500 Jamaicans to the UK.

The **immigrants came at the invitation of the British government**, which was facing a labour shortage due to the destruction caused by World War II.

While **a large proportion of them were of Jamaican/Caribbean descent who came on the ship Windrush, Indians and other South Asians** were also affected by the UK government's handling of their immigration status.

What is happening to them?

- A scandal over the treatment of members of the Windrush generation has been mounting in recent months as a multitude of reports have come out about mostly elderly people being denied services, losing their jobs and even facing deportation.
- Many of the Windrush generation had arrived as children on their parents' passports. And although they have lived in Britain for many decades – paying taxes and insurance – they never formally became British citizens.
- Amid the tightening of the immigration rules, an estimated 50,000 long-term UK residents could now be facing problems.

GLOBAL PEACE INDEX 2019

Global Peace Index is released by Australian think tank **Institute for Economics & Peace**. The GPI was **founded by Steve Killelea**, an Australian technology entrepreneur and philanthropist.

- The report covers 99.7 per cent of the world's population and uses 23 qualitative and quantitative indicators from highly respected sources to compile the index.
- This year's report includes **new research on the possible effects of climate change on peace**.

It ranks countries according to their level of peacefulness based on **three thematic domains**:

1. The level of societal safety and security.
2. The extent of ongoing domestic and international conflict.
3. The degree of militarisation.

Performance of India:

- India's rank has slipped five places to **141** this year.
- **India's neighbours:** In South Asia, Bhutan topped the index with 15th rank, followed by Sri Lanka 72, Nepal 76 and Bangladesh 101. The neighbouring country Pakistan has been ranked 153rd on the index.
- India together with Philippines, Japan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, China, Indonesia, Vietnam and Pakistan are the nine countries with the **highest risk of multiple climate hazards**. The country has the **7th highest overall natural hazard score**.
- India, the US, China, Saudi Arabia, and Russia are the **top five countries with the largest total military expenditure**.
- According to the report, **South Asia's score for every indicator in ongoing conflict is less peaceful than the global average, with four out of six deteriorating last year**. Only deaths from internal conflict improved, with fewer fatalities in Pakistan, Afghanistan and India than the year prior.
- The score for **internal conflicts fought** had the highest rating at five in both India and Pakistan. China, Bangladesh, and India, score in the bottom half of the GPI and have significant exposure to climate hazards, with 393 million people in high climate hazard areas.

Performance of other countries:

- **Iceland** remains the most peaceful country in the world, a position it has held since 2008.
- It is joined at the top of the Global Peace Index (GPI) by New Zealand, Austria, Portugal, and Denmark.
- **Afghanistan** is now the least peaceful country in the world, replacing Syria, which is now the second least peaceful. South Sudan, Yemen, and Iraq comprise the remaining five least peaceful countries.

Key observations:

- While **global peacefulness improved for the first time in five years**, as per the index findings, the world remains less peaceful than a decade ago.
- Since 2008 **global peacefulness has deteriorated by 3.78 per cent**.
- State sponsored terror has declined markedly over the last decade, with 62 countries improving their scores while only 42 deteriorated. However, incarceration shows the opposite trend with 95 countries increasing the incarceration rate compared to 65 that improved.

KIMBERLEY PROCESS

The **Intersessional meeting of Kimberley Process (KP)** is being hosted by India in Mumbai. India is currently the Chair of **Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS)** since 1st January 2018. It was handed Chairmanship by the European Union during KPCS Plenary 2018, which was held in Brussels, Belgium.

India is founding member of KPCS.

What is the Kimberley Process?

The Kimberley Process is an **international certification scheme that regulates trade in rough diamonds**. It aims to prevent the flow of conflict diamonds, while helping to protect legitimate trade in rough diamonds.

The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) outlines the **rules** that govern the trade in rough diamonds.

The KP is **not, strictly speaking, an international organisation**: it has **no permanent offices or permanent staff**. It relies on the contributions – **under the principle of 'burden-sharing'** – of participants, supported by industry and civil society observers. **Neither can the KP be considered as an international agreement from a legal perspective, as it is implemented through the national legislations of its participants**.

What are Conflict diamonds?

Conflict Diamonds” means rough diamonds used by rebel movements or their allies to finance conflict aimed at undermining legitimate governments. It is **also described in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions**.

Who is involved?

The Kimberley Process (KP) is open to all countries that are willing and able to implement its requirements. The KP has **55 participants, representing 82 countries, including the European Union** and its Member States counting as a single participant. KP members account for approximately 99.8% of the global production of rough diamonds.

In addition, **the World Diamond Council, representing the international diamond industry, and civil society organisations, such as Partnership -Africa Canada, participate in the KP and have played a major role since its outset**.

How does the Kimberley Process work?






















- The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) imposes extensive requirements on its members to enable them to certify shipments of rough diamonds as 'conflict-free' and prevent conflict diamonds from entering the legitimate trade.
- Under the terms of the KPCS, participating states must put in place national legislation and institutions; export, import and internal controls; and also commit to transparency and the exchange of statistical data.
- Participants can only legally trade with other participants who have also met the minimum requirements of the scheme, and international shipments of rough diamonds must be accompanied by a KP certificate guaranteeing that they are conflict-free.

Rough diamond trading under the KPCS:

As per the Scheme, each shipment of rough diamonds being exported and imported by crossing an international border be transported in a tamper proof container and accompanied by a validated Kimberley Process Certificate. The shipment can only be exported to a co-participant country in the KPCS. No uncertified shipments of rough diamonds are permitted to enter a participant country.

IAS | HAS | PCS | HCS

OUR PROUD FINAL SELECTIONS

 <small>Sourabh Sahasrabudhe (IAS Rank-124, 2017)</small>	 <small>Parag C. Chopra (IAS-2017)</small>	 <small>Vishnu Kumar (IAS-2017)</small>	 <small>Vishnu Kumar (IAS-2017)</small>	 <small>Vishnu Kumar (IAS-2017)</small>	 <small>Dhruv Singh (IAS-2017)</small>	 <small>Neharika Khurana (IAS-2017)</small>	 <small>Rishabh (IAS-2017)</small>	 <small>Shreyas Mathur (IAS-2017)</small>	 <small>Bhavya (IAS-2017)</small>	 <small>Rishabh (IAS-2017)</small>	 <small>Karan (IAS-2017)</small>
 <small>PRIYA NAGTA RANK-3 (HAS) ROLL NO. 11803796</small>	 <small>NISHA AZAD TEHSILDAR ROLL NO. 11810093</small>	 <small>ARSHIYA SHARMA ETO ROLL NO. 11810590</small>	 <small>VINOD KUMAR ETO ROLL NO. 12051797</small>	 <small>ASHWANI KASHYAP ETO ROLL NO. 11011880</small>	 <small>RISHAB KUMAR ETO ROLL NO. 12000636</small>	 <small>SANJAY VERMA AUDIT INSPECTOR (CO-OP SOCIETY)</small>	 <small>KANWAR YUDHABIR SINGH AUDIT INSPECTOR (CO-OP SOCIETY)</small>	 <small>UMESH SARAO AUDIT INSPECTOR (CO-OP SOCIETY)</small>			

GENERAL STUDIES -3

ECONOMY

NANDAN NILEKANI -LED PANEL ON DIGITAL PAYMENTS

Nandan Nilekani -led **panel on digital payments** has submitted its recommendations.

Background:

The five -member high -level panel headed by Aadhar architect and former Infosys chairman Nilekani was constituted earlier this year by the central bank tasked to submit a comprehensive report holding consultations with all the major stakeholders to strengthen the digital payments industry which has seen a ten -fold growth in the last five years.

Key recommendations:

- **Targets** : It has set a target for the government and regulators to achieve a ten -fold volume growth in digital payments over the next three years through customer -friendly pricing mechanisms and broadening access infrastructure.
- **Measures to increase the outreach**: Banks need to ensure that no user is more than 5 kms away from a banking access point and if such areas are found, these must be considered 'shadow areas' and a local vendor be made a banking correspondent (BC) as he deals in money and stays there.
- **Measures to less -cash economy**: removing transaction charges on digital payments made to government, inducing a competitive Merchant Discount Rates (MDR) pricing structure and easing KYC costs to banks are amongst the key recommendations put forward by the committee.
- **Role of the government**: committee has put the onus on government to be at the forefront of the transition by taking steps such as removing transaction charges on all digital payments made by customers to the government. The committee recommends that the Government, being the single largest participant in payments, take the lead on all aspects of digitization of payments.
- Committee has also asked RBI to set an **interchange rate for transaction** between customers and leave the MDR on competitive market pricing which would reduce the transaction cost for customers.
- Special impetus on **digitising mass volume channels** such as recurring bill payments, toll and ticket payments at public facilities and digital onboarding of khirana store merchants has also been recommended by the panel in order to achieve the targeted growth.
- The panel has also asked the government to set up **special risk mitigation and complaint registering digital portals**. A special data monitoring mechanism to garner granular district level data on consumer trends and payment behaviour has also been suggested by the committee for targeted intervention to improve the existing infrastructure.

RBI ISSUES REVISED NORMS TO DEAL WITH STRESSED ASSETS

Following the quashing of its 'revised framework for resolution of stressed assets' by the Supreme Court in April, the Reserve Bank of India has issued a '**prudential framework for resolution of stressed assets**'.

Highlights of the latest norms:

- The new framework gives lenders a breather from the **one-day default rule** whereby they had to draw up a resolution plan (RP) for implementation within 180 days of the first default.

- It gives lenders (scheduled commercial banks, all -India financial institutions and small finance banks) **30 days to review the borrower account on default**.
- During this review period, lenders may decide on the **resolution strategy**, including the nature of the RP and the approach for its implementation.
- Lenders may also choose to **initiate legal proceedings** for insolvency or recovery.
- The new circular is **also applicable to** small finance banks and systemically important non -deposit taking non -banking financial companies (NBFCs) and deposit -taking NBFCs.
- In cases where the RP is to be implemented, all lenders have to enter into an **inter -creditor agreement (ICA)** for the resolution of stressed assets during the review period to provide for ground rules for finalisation and implementation of the RP in respect of borrowers with credit facilities from more than one lender.
- **Under the ICA**, any decision agreed to by the lenders representing 75 per cent of total outstanding credit facilities by value and 60 per cent by number will be **binding upon all the lenders**. In particular, the RPs will provide for payment which will not be less than the liquidation value due to the dissenting lenders.
- In cases where the aggregate exposure of a borrower to lenders (scheduled commercial banks, all -India financial institutions and small finance banks) is ₹2,000 crore and above, the **RP has to be implemented within 180 days from the end of the review period**, and the reference date has been set as June 7, 2019.
- In the case of borrowers in the ₹1,500 crore and above but less than ₹2,000 crore category, **January 1, 2020 has been set as the reference date for implementing the RP**. In the less than ₹1,500 crore category, **the RBI will announce the reference date in due course**.

Additional provisions:

If the implementation of an RP crosses the stipulated 180 days from the end of the review period, the lenders have to make additional provisions of 20 per cent of the outstanding loan. If this timeline exceeds 365 days, they further have to make a provision of 15 per cent.

These additional provisions **are over and above the provisions already held or the provisions required to be made as per the asset classification status of the borrower account**.

What is Inter -Creditor Agreement (ICA)?

The inter -creditor agreement is aimed at the resolution of loan accounts with a size of ₹50 crore and above that are under the control of a group of lenders. It is part of the “**Sashakt**” plan approved by the government to address the problem of resolving bad loans.

The agreement is based on a recommendation by the **Sunil Mehta committee** that looked into resolution of stressed assets.

SHANTA KUMAR COMMITTEE

Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Shri Ram Vilas Paswan lays down the future roadmap for Food Corporation of India (FCI).

He stated that primacy will be given to ensuring that the functioning of FCI is streamlined and fast paced as per recommendations of the **Shanta Kumar Committee**.

Background:

The government had set up a six -member committee to suggest restructuring or unbundling of FCI to improve its financial management and operational efficiency in procurement, storage and distribution of food grains.

Important recommendations made:

- **Reduce the number of beneficiaries under the Food Security Act**—from the current 67 per cent to 40 per cent.
- **Allow private players to procure and store food grains** .
- **Stop bonuses on minimum support price (MSP)** paid by states to farmers, and adopt cash transfer system so that MSP and food subsidy amounts can be directly transferred to the accounts of farmers and food security beneficiaries.
- **FCI should involve itself in full-fledged grains procurement only in those states which are poor in procurement** . In the case of those states which are performing well, like Haryana, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha, the states should do the procurement.
- **Abolishing levy rice:** Under levy rice policy, government buys certain percentage of rice (varies from 25 to 75 per cent in states) from the mills compulsorily, which is called levy rice. Mills are allowed to sell only the remainder in the open market.
- **Deregulate fertiliser sector** and provide cash fertiliser subsidy of Rs 7,000 per hectare to farmers.
- **outsourcing of stocking of grains:** The committee calls for setting up of negotiable warehouse receipt (NWR) system. In the new system, farmers can deposit their produce in these registered warehouses and get 80 per cent of the advance from bank against their produce on the basis of MSP.
- **Clear and transparent liquidation policy for buffer stock:** FCI should be given greater flexibility in doing business; it should offload surplus stock in open market or export, as per need.

RBI PANEL ON ECONOMIC CAPITAL FRAMEWORK

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) -appointed committee to review the economic capital framework of the central bank has failed to arrive at a consensus during a recently held meeting leading to a delay in finalising its report.

Difference of opinion:

The main difference of opinion has arisen between the panel members and the government's representative on the panel **over the transfer of the RBI's 'excess' capital reserves** .

While most panel members were in favour of **a phased transfer of the RBI's capital reserves** to the government over the years, the government's view is for **a one-time transfer** .

Background:

1) THE RBI'S RESERVES			2) HOW DOES RBI BUILD ITS RESERVES?	
Various Funds (₹ lakh crore)			1 RBI earns income from:	2 Earnings retained after giving dividends to govt are parked in reserves
Contingency fund	FY17	FY18	1) Interest on government bonds held for conducting open market operations	3 Revaluation of foreign assets and gold goes to revaluation reserves
Currency and gold revaluation account	5.3	6.92	2) Fees from government's market borrowing programme	
Asset development fund	0.23	0.23	3) Income from investment in foreign currency assets	
Investment revaluation account-rupee	0.57	0.13		
TOTAL	8.38	9.6		

RBI had constituted a panel on economic capital framework. It was headed by Ex-RBI governor **Bimal Jalan** . The expert panel on RBI's economic capital framework was formed **to address the issue of RBI reserves** — one of the sticking points between the central bank and the government.

What's the issue?

The government has been insisting that the central bank hand over its surplus reserves amid a shortfall in revenue collections. Access to the funds will allow the government to meet deficit targets, infuse capital into weak banks to boost lending and fund welfare programmes.

What is economic capital framework?

Economic capital framework refers to the **risk capital required by the central bank while taking into account different risks**. The economic capital framework reflects the capital that an institution requires or needs to hold as a counter against unforeseen risks or events or losses in the future.

Why it needs a fix?

Existing economic capital framework which governs the RBI's capital requirements and terms for the transfer of its surplus to the government is based on a **conservative assessment of risk by the central bank** and that a review of the framework would result in excess capital being freed, which the RBI can then share with the government.

The government believes that RBI is sitting on much higher reserves than it actually needs to tide over financial emergencies that India may face.

Some central banks around the world (like US and UK) keep 13% to 14% of their assets as a reserve compared to **RBI's 27% and some (like Russia) more than that**.

Economists in the past have argued for RBI releasing 'extra' capital that can be put to productive use by the government. The **Malegam Committee** estimated the excess (in 2013) at Rs 1.49 lakh crore.

What is the nature of the arrangement between the government and RBI on the transfer of surplus or profits?

Although RBI was promoted as a private shareholders' bank in 1935 with a paid up capital of Rs 5 crore, the government **nationalised RBI in January 1949**, making the sovereign its "owner". What the central bank does, therefore, is **transfer the "surplus" — that is, the excess of income over expenditure — to the government, in accordance with Section 47 (Allocation of Surplus Profits) of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934**.

Does the RBI pay tax on these earnings or profits?

No. Its statute provides exemption from paying income-tax or any other tax, including wealth tax.

Why RBI needs excess reserves?

The RBI needs adequate capital reserves for monetary policy operations, currency fluctuations, possible fall in value of bonds, sterilisation costs related to open-market operations, credit risks arising from the lender of last resort function and other risks from unexpected increase in its expenditure.

The RBI has maintained the view that it needs to have a stronger balance sheet to deal with a possible crisis and external shocks.

PERIODIC LABOUR FORCE SURVEY (PLFS)

The latest edition of Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) has been released.

Key findings:

- The unemployment rate (UR) in both rural and urban India is at its **highest since 1972**.

- The unemployment rates among men and women in both rural and urban groups, are all so the highest ever. **The increase in the UR is more than three times among rural men and more than double among rural women according to the usual status since 2011 -12.**
- **In urban areas, the UR among men is more than twice and has increased twice among women** since 2011 -12. It is to be noted that the UR between 1972 and 2012 was almost static or did not have many differences (See Table 1). Besides, the UR rose sharply among youth of ages between 15 -29 years and those who got better education.
- **The unemployment rates in urban areas are higher than those in rural areas** . In rural areas, the UR is 5.3 per cent, whereas in urban areas, the UR is 7.8 per cent according to the usual status . The overall unemployment rate is 6.1 per cent in India according to the usual status. The rural unemployment rate is 8.5 per cent whereas the urban rate is 9.6 per cent. The overall unemployment rate is 8.9 per cent.
- **In urban areas, the unemployment rates for females are higher than those for males** .
- The unemployment rate **among youth between 15 and 29 years** has risen sharply since 2011 -12. **Among rural males and females** , the UR is almost three times since 2011 -12, whereas among urban males and females, this rate is more than double.
- The UR has also sharply increased among those who are more educated. Since 2011 -12, the UR among rural males has increased by almost three times, from 1.7 per cent to 5.7 per cent. Those who have higher degree of education and those who are completely not -literate have witnessed almost the same level of unemployment.
- Interestingly, **unemployment among rural not -literate females has reduced and among urban females, the number of those who are literate up to primary -level jobs, is the same as 2011 -12.**
- **Among social groups, the highest UR is among the 'General' or 'Others' category — 6.7 per cent** . This group is followed by Schedule Castes (6.3 per cent), Other Backward Classes (6 per cent) and Scheduled Tribes (4.3 per cent).
- **Among religious groups, Christians have the highest UR in both urban and rural areas** . In rural areas, Christians have a UR of 7.4 per cent, Muslims have a UR of 6.5 per cent, Sikhs 6.3 per cent and Hindus 5.2 per cent.
- **In urban areas, Christians have a UR of 11 per cent** , Sikhs 9.1 per cent, followed by Muslims 8.5 per cent and Hindus 7.6 per cent.

Background:

The Union Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation had constituted PLFS under the chairmanship of **Amitabh Kundu** . The data was collected by NSSO from July 2017 to June 2018. The survey was spread over 12,773 first -stage sampling units (7,014 villages and 5,759 urban blocks) covering 1,02,113 households (56,108 in rural areas and 46,005 in urban areas) and enumerating 4,33,339 persons (2,46, 809 in rural areas and 1,86,530 in urban areas).

ELEPHANT BONDS

Context : A high level government -appointed committee on trade and industry has suggested it to issue 'Elephant Bonds' to people for declaring undisclosed income to mandatorily invest 50% .

Elephant Bonds:

- Elephant Bonds are the 25 -year sovereign bonds in which people declaring undisclosed income will be bound to invest 50 per cent.
- The fund, made from these bonds, will be utilized only for infrastructure projects.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

ATHENA AND LISA MISSIONS

Researchers have proposed to combine the observing power of two future ESA missions, **Athena and LISA**, to study the effects when two supermassive black holes collide. Currently in the study phase, both missions are scheduled for launch in the early 2030s.

Background:

Supermassive black holes, with masses ranging from millions to billions of Suns, sit at the core of most massive galaxies across the Universe. We don't know exactly how these huge, enormously dense objects took shape, nor what triggers a fraction of them to start devouring the surrounding matter at extremely intense rates, radiating copiously across the electromagnetic spectrum and turning their host galaxies into 'active galactic nuclei'.

Athena, the Advanced Telescope for High-ENERgy Astrophysics:

Athena will be **the largest X-ray observatory ever built**, investigating some of the hottest and most energetic phenomena in the cosmos with unprecedented accuracy and depth.

It is designed to answer two fundamental questions: how supermassive black holes at the centre of galaxies form and evolve, and how 'ordinary' matter assembles, along with the invisible dark matter, to form the wispy 'cosmic web' that pervades the Universe.

Objectives: Athena is going to measure several hundreds of thousands of black holes, from relatively nearby to far away, observing the X-ray emission from the million-degree-hot matter in their surroundings.

LISA, the Laser Interferometer Space Antenna:

LISA will be **the first space-borne observatory of gravitational waves** —fluctuations in the fabric of spacetime produced by the acceleration of cosmic objects with very strong gravity fields, like pairs of merging black holes.

LISA will detect **low-frequency gravitational waves**, such as the ones released when two supermassive black holes collide during a merger of galaxies.

LISA will detect the gravitational waves emitted by the spiralling black holes about a month before their final coalescence, when they are still separated by a distance equivalent to several times their radii.

Significance: Scientists expect that a fraction of the mergers found by LISA, especially those within distances of a few billion light years from us, will give rise to an X-ray signal that can be eventually seen by Athena.

WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY (WHA)

Delegates at the **72nd World Health Assembly in Geneva** agreed on three resolutions to ensure that the world meets the **universal health coverage (UHC) target** of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

These resolutions include:

1. The member countries will decide to take measures to implement **the Declaration of Astana** vowing to strengthen primary healthcare and achieve universal health coverage by 2030. The declaration was adopted at the **2018 Global Conference on Primary Health Care**. This marked the **40th anniversary of the Declaration of Alma-Ata**.
2. To support community health worker programmes and allocate adequate resources. Such workers should be well-trained, effectively supervised and properly recognised for the work they do. At present

there is a shortfall of 18 million in the number of health workers in the world and this could severely hamper the progress towards UHC.

3. The member states shall push for UHC with focus on poor, vulnerable and marginalized individuals and groups. This will call for the involvement of governments in coordinating the work required across all sectors to achieve universal health coverage.

Need of the hour:

This might not be enough as primary health care is more than universal health care. WHA should take a human rights-based approach to health for a more just and caring world.

World Health Assembly (WHA):

- The World Health Assembly (WHA) is the forum through which the World Health Organization (WHO) is governed by its 194 member states.
- It is the world's highest health policy setting body and is composed of health ministers from member states.
- The members of the World Health Assembly generally meet every year in May in Geneva, the location of WHO Headquarters.
- The main functions of the World Health Assembly are to determine the policies of the Organization, appoint the Director-General, supervise financial policies, and review and approve the proposed programme budget.

What is Universal health coverage?

- Universal health coverage (UHC) is about ensuring all people and communities have access to quality health services where and when they need them, without suffering financial hardship.
- It includes the full spectrum of services needed throughout life—from health promotion to prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care—and is best based on a strong primary health care system.
- Achieving UHC is one of the key targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

MALARIA -FREE STATUS

Context : The World Health Organization (WHO) declared **Algeria and Argentina as malaria-free**, with no recorded cases of indigenous transmission of the disease since 2013 and 2010 respectively.

While **Algeria is the second African country to be officially recognised as malaria-free**, after Mauritius (certified in 1973), **Argentina is the second country in the Americas** to be certified in 45 years, after Paraguay in June 2018.

Background:

Contracted through the bite of an infected mosquito, malaria remains one of the world's leading killers. It accounted for an estimated 219 million cases from 87 countries and over 400,000 related deaths in 2017. Over 60% of fatalities were among children under five years, and caused 266,000 of all malaria deaths worldwide, according to WHO's World malaria report 2018.

Vulnerability:

With 92 per cent of malaria cases and 93 per cent of malaria deaths recorded from Africa, the region had a high share of the global malaria burden in 2017. Four countries in the continent accounted for nearly half of

all malaria cases worldwide: Nigeria (25 per cent), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (11 per cent), Mozambique (five per cent), and Uganda (four per cent).

Criteria:

To receive WHO certification, a country has to prove that it has interrupted indigenous transmission of the disease for at least three consecutive years.

A total of 36 countries and territories have received this WHO certification. The last case of indigenous malaria was reported from Algeria in 2013 and Argentina in 2010. The certificates will be presented on the sidelines of the 72nd session of the World Health Assembly.

About Malaria:

Malaria is caused by the infectious Plasmodium

Spread : Female Anopheles mosquitoes deposit parasite sporozoites into the skin of a human host.

Malaria is a leading cause of human morbidity and mortality. Despite huge progress in tackling the disease, there are still 212 million new cases of malaria and 430,000 malaria-related deaths worldwide each year according to the World Health Organisation (WHO). Most cases (80%) and deaths (90%) were in sub-Saharan African.

World's first vaccine against a parasitic disease: Mosquirix:

RTS,S, known by its trade name Mosquirix, uses antibodies to target proteins presented by sporozoites (such as the circumsporozoite protein of falciparum) to enhance the immune system and help prevent the parasite from infecting the liver.

Mosquirix is also engineered using a hepatitis B viral protein and a chemical adjuvant to further boost the immune response for enhanced effectiveness.

India's efforts in this regard:

- India's progress in fighting malaria is an outcome of concerted efforts to ensure that its malaria programme is country-owned and country-led, even as it is in alignment with globally accepted strategies.
- At the East Asia Summit in 2015, India pledged to eliminate the disease by 2030. Following this public declaration, India launched the five-year National Strategic Plan for Malaria Elimination. This marked a shift in focus from malaria "control" to "elimination". The plan provides a roadmap to achieve the target of ending malaria in 571 districts out of India's 678 districts by 2022.

Durgama Anchalare Malaria Nirakaran (DAMaN) initiative:

Among states, **Odisha's Durgama Anchalare Malaria Nirakaran (DAMaN) initiative** is significant. The initiative aims to deliver services to the most inaccessible and hardest hit people of the State. The initiative has in-built innovative strategies to combat asymptomatic malaria.

The programme is **jointly implemented by Indian Council of Medical Research - National Institute of Malaria Research (ICMR - NIMR), National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP), Odisha and Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV)**.

PARTHENOGENESIS

About a week ago, the New England Aquarium in the US announced that a "virgin" anaconda had given birth during the winter. The aquarium does not have a male anaconda. Yet Anna, a green anaconda, gave birth to a few babies in January, two of which have survived. In scientific terminology, it is known as **parthenogenesis**.

How it happens?

- Parthenogenesis is “a reproductive strategy that involves development of a female (rarely a male) gamete (sex cell) without fertilisation. It occurs commonly among lower plants and invertebrate animals (particularly rotifers, aphids, ants, wasps and bees) and rarely among higher vertebrates”.
- A gamete is the egg in females and the sperm in males. In animals, parthenogenesis means development of an embryo from an unfertilised egg cell.
- Many species that reproduce through parthenogenesis do not reproduce sexually. Others switch between the two modes taking cues from the environment.
- About 2,000 species are known to reproduce through parthenogenesis, which is one of the known means of asexual reproduction. Grafting (of plants) is also a type of asexual reproduction.

Key features:

- Babies born through parthenogenesis are clones of the mother, as has now been confirmed by the aquarium through DNA tests.
- Parthenogenetic offspring tend to be clones of the parent because there has been no exchange and rearrangement of genetic information with another individual as happens in case of a sexual reproductive process.

NASA'S INSIGHT SPACECRAFT

NASA's **InSight lander** is having some problems. The instrument, called a “**mole**,” was designed to hammer itself deep under the Martian surface and monitor temperature changes. NASA figured it would be able to push itself as deep as 16 feet into the Martian crust, but the consistency of the soil has made that difficult. In fact, the mole has only made it around a foot deep, and now InSight's science team has come up with a new plan.

What next?

The new plan involves using InSight's robotic arm to push on the soil surrounding the probe. This, InSight team members suggest, could give the mole enough friction to hammer itself deeper underground.

About InSight Mission:

InSight is part of **NASA's Discovery Program**, managed by the agency's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama.

It will be the **first mission to peer deep beneath the Martian surface**, studying the planet's interior by measuring its heat output and listening for marsquakes, which are seismic events similar to earthquakes on Earth.

It will use the seismic waves generated by **marsquakes** to develop a map of the planet's deep interior.

Significance of the mission:

- The findings of Mars' formation will help better understand how other rocky planets, including Earth, were and are created. But InSight is more than a Mars mission – it is a terrestrial planet explorer that would address one of the most fundamental issues of planetary and solar system science – understanding the processes that shaped the rocky planets of the inner solar system (including Earth) more than four billion years ago.
- InSight would delve deep beneath the surface of Mars, detecting the fingerprints of the processes of terrestrial planet formation, as well as measuring the planet's “vital signs”: Its “pulse” (seismology), “temperature” (heat flow probe), and “reflexes” (precision tracking).

- InSight seeks to answer one of science's most fundamental questions: How did the terrestrial planets form?

Why Mars?

Previous missions to Mars have investigated the surface history of the Red Planet by examining features like canyons, volcanoes, rocks and soil. However, signatures of the planet's formation can only be found by sensing and studying its "vital signs" far below the surface.

In comparison to the other terrestrial planets, Mars is neither too big nor too small. This means that it preserves the record of its formation and can give us insight into how the terrestrial planets formed. It is the perfect laboratory from which to study the formation and evolution of rocky planets. Scientists know that Mars has low levels of geological activity. But a lander like InSight can also reveal just how active Mars really is.

HYPERSONIC TECHNOLOGY DEMONSTRATOR VEHICLE (HSTDV)

DRDO recently conducted maiden test of an **indigenously developed Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle (HSTDV)**.

HSTDV is an **unmanned scramjet demonstration aircraft**.

HSTDV is **dual-use technology** and can have multiple **civilian applications**. It can be **used for launching satellites at low cost and can also be available for long-range cruise missiles of future**.

SPECTRUM-ROENTGEN-GAMMA (SRG)

A **joint team of German -Russian scientists** is all set to launch next week a space telescope - **Spectrum - Roentgen -Gamma (SRG)**.

About the telescope:

It will create **a three-dimensional (3D) X-ray map of the universe and unveil unknown supermassive black holes, dark energy and stars**.

The telescope will be **launched into space on a Russian -built Proton -M rocket from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on June 21, 2019**.

The **four-year mission** will survey the entire sky eight times and track the evolution of the universe and dark energy — a mysterious repulsive force — that is accelerating its expansion.

It also aims **to detect up to three million supermassive black holes — many of which are unknown — and X-rays from as many as 700,000 stars in the Milky Way**.

The telescope is the **first to be sensitive to high-energy 'hard' X-rays and map the entire sky**.

The SRG will **also find how dark matter** — the main engine of galaxy formation — is spread in the universe.

The SRG will, however, **not detect gamma radiation**.

Background:

X-ray sky surveys have also been conducted by previous missions, but they were not able to map the entire sky.

While **Germany's ROSAT mission** in the 1990s was sensitive only to 'soft' X-rays, with energies of about 2 keV, existing missions, such as **NASA's Chandra X-ray Observatory and NuSTAR**, can see high-energy radiation and resolve tiny details of cosmic structures. But, they see only small parts of the sky.

SPITZER TELESCOPE

Spitzer space telescope of NASA will be **retired on January 30, 2020**. Spitzer is going to shut down permanently after about 16 years of exploring the cosmos in infrared light. By 2020, Spitzer space telescope will have operated for more than 11 years beyond its prime mission.

Key achievements:

- Launched into solar orbit on August 25, 2003, Spitzer was initially scheduled for a minimum 2.5-year primary mission. But the space telescope has lasted far beyond its expected lifetime.
- Spitzer's discoveries extend from our own planetary backyard, to planets around other stars, to the far reaches of the universe. And by working in collaboration with NASA's other Great Observatories, Spitzer has helped scientists gain a more complete picture of many cosmic phenomena.
- Spitzer has logged over 106,000 hours of observation time in the past 15 years. It has illuminated some of the oldest galaxies in the universe, revealed a new ring around Saturn, and peered through shrouds of dust to study newborn stars and black holes.
- The space telescope also assisted in the discovery of planets beyond our solar system, including the detection of seven Earth-size planets orbiting the star TRAPPIST-1, among other accomplishments.

About Spitzer:

NASA's Spitzer Space Telescope was launched in 2003 **to study the universe in the infrared**. It is the **last mission of the NASA Great Observatories program**, which saw four specialized telescopes (including the Hubble Space Telescope) launched between 1990 and 2003.

The goal of the Great Observatories is to observe the universe in distinct wavelengths of light. **Spitzer focuses on the infrared band, which normally represents heat radiation from objects. The other observatories looked at visible light (Hubble, still operational), gamma-rays (Compton Gamma-Ray Observatory, no longer operational) and X-rays (the Chandra X-Ray Observatory, still operational.)**

- Spitzer's highly sensitive instruments allow scientists to peer into cosmic regions that are hidden from optical telescopes, including dusty stellar nurseries, the centers of galaxies, and newly forming planetary systems.
- Spitzer's infrared eyes also allows astronomers see cooler objects in space, like failed stars (brown dwarfs), extrasolar planets, giant molecular clouds, and organic molecules that may hold the secret to life on other planets.

NASA'S OSIRIS-REX

The US space agency NASA has announced that its asteroid probe **OSIRIS-REx set a new record for the closest-ever orbit of a planetary body made by a man-made spacecraft**.

The recent maneuver has placed the spacecraft into an orbit **680 meters above the asteroid Bennu's surface** for about seven weeks.

About the mission:

OSIRIS-Rex stands for **Origins, Spectral Interpretation, Resource Identification and Security-Regolith Explorer**.

OSIRIS-REx is the **third mission in NASA's New Frontiers program**, which previously sent the New Horizons spacecraft zooming by Pluto and the Juno spacecraft into orbit around Jupiter.

Why was Bennu chosen?

Bennu was selected for the OSIRIS-REx mission from over 500,000 known asteroids, due to it fitting a number of key criteria. These include:

Proximity to Earth: In order for OSIRIS-REx to reach its destination in a reasonable timeframe, NASA needed to find an asteroid which had a similar orbit to Earth.

Size: Small asteroids, those less than 200m in diameter, typically spin much faster than larger asteroids, meaning the regolith material can be ejected into space. Bennu is around 500m in diameter, so rotates slowly enough to ensure that the regolith stays on its surface.

Composition: Bennu is a primitive asteroid, meaning it hasn't significantly changed since the beginning of the Solar System (over 4 billion years ago). It is also very carbon-rich, meaning it may contain organic molecules, which could have been precursors to life on Earth.

Additionally, Bennu is of interest as it is a **Potentially Hazardous Asteroid (PHA)**. Every 6 years, Bennu's orbit brings it within 200,000 miles of the Earth, which means it has a high probability of impacting Earth in the late 22nd Century.

ACUTE ENCEPHALITIS SYNDROME (AES)

An epidemic of **Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES)** has broken out in five north Bihar districts. Locally known as **Chamki Bukhar** in the state.

About AES:

Acute encephalitis syndrome (AES) is a serious public health problem in India.

It is characterized as **acute-onset of fever and a change in mental status** (mental confusion, disorientation, delirium, or coma) and/or new-onset of seizures in a person of any age at any time of the year. The disease most **commonly affects** children and young adults and can lead to considerable morbidity and mortality.

Viruses are the main causative agents in AES cases, although **other sources** such as bacteria, fungus, parasites, spirochetes, chemicals, toxins and noninfectious agents have also been reported over the past few decades.

Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV) is the major cause of AES in India (ranging from 5% -35%).

Nipah virus, Zika virus are also found as causative agents for AES.

In India, AES outbreaks in north and eastern India have been linked to children eating **unripe litchi fruit on empty stomachs**. Unripe fruit contains the toxins **hypoglycin A and methylenecyclopropylglycine (MCPG)**, which cause vomiting if ingested in large quantities. Hypoglycin A is a naturally occurring amino acid found in the unripened litchi that causes severe vomiting (Jamaican vomiting sickness), while MCPG is a poisonous compound found in litchi seeds.

NIPAH IS CONFIRMED, PRECAUTIONS IN PLACE, IN KERELA

Major outbreak had occurred last year.

Nipah virus (NiV) infection is a new emerging **zoonotic disease (transmissible from animals to humans) affecting both animals** (pigs and other domestic animals) and **humans**.

Fruit bats of the Pteropodidae Family, { *Pteropus genus* } are the **natural host** for the virus.

NiV was first identified in Malaysia in 1998, during an outbreak of disease that occurred in a place called Kampung Sungai Nipah. Pigs were the intermediate hosts in this outbreak and most of the human cases resulted from exposure to ill pigs. After that in Singapore during March 1999 eleven abattoir workers developed NiV infection following close contact with imported pigs from Malaysia.

Outbreak of Nipah virus infection was reported in Bangladesh in 2001. Since then, outbreaks of Nipah virus encephalitis have been reported almost every year in selected districts of Bangladesh.

Consumption of raw date palm sap contaminated by flying bats was the primary source of human NiV infection in Bangladesh.

In India outbreaks of NiV infection were reported from Siliguri (January -February 2001) and Nadia (April - 2007) districts in West Bengal. Seventy one cases with 50 deaths (70% of the cases) occurred in two outbreaks. Recently in May 2018 an outbreak of NiV infection is reported from Kerala.

Outbreaks reported from South -East Asia have a seasonal pattern with occurrence during winter and spring (December -May). This pattern could be associated with several factors like the breeding season of the bats, increased shedding of virus by the bats and the date palm sap harvesting season. Nipah cases may occur in a cluster or as an outbreak.

There is strong evidence that loss of natural habitats of bats by human activity may attribute to emergence of bat -related viral infection communicable to humans and animals.

INTERNATIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF DISEASES (ICD)

Context : The World Health Organization has for the first time recognised **“burn -out” in its International Classification of Diseases (ICD)**, which is widely used as a benchmark for diagnosis and health insurers.

Significance:

The decision could help put to rest decades of debate among experts over how to define burnout, and whether it should be considered a medical condition.

What is burn - out?

In the latest update of its catalogue of diseases and injuries around the world, WHO defines burn -out as **“ a syndrome conceptualised as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed.”**

The syndrome is characterised by three dimensions: “1) feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion; 2) increased mental distance from one’s job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one’s job ; and 3) reduced professional efficacy.”

Background:

The updated ICD list, dubbed ICD -11, was drafted last year following recommendations from health experts around the world. The ICD -11, which is to take effect in January 2022, contains several other additions, including classification of “compulsive sexual behaviour” as a mental disorder, although it stops short of lumping the condition together with addictive behaviours.

What is ICD?

The ICD is the global health information standard for mortality and morbidity statistics. The first international classification edition, known as the International List of Causes of Death, was adopted by the International Statistical Institute in 1893. WHO was entrusted with the ICD at its creation in 1948. The ICD is revised periodically and is currently in its 10th revision.

- ICD is increasingly used in clinical care and research to define diseases and study disease patterns, as well as manage health care, monitor outcomes and allocate resources. ICD has been translated into 43 languages.
- More than 100 countries use the system to report mortality data, a primary indicator of health status. This system helps to monitor death and disease rates worldwide and measure progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.
- About 70% of the world's health expenditures (USD \$ 3.5 billion) are allocated using ICD for reimbursement and resource allocation.

Highlights of ICD -11:

- ICD -11 identifies health trends and statistics worldwide, and contains around 55,000 unique codes for injuries, diseases and causes of death.
- ICD -11, which has been over a decade in the making, provides significant improvements on previous versions.
- Also for the first time, it is completely electronic and has a much more user -friendly format. And there has been unprecedented involvement of health care workers who have joined collaborative meetings and submitted proposals.
- The new ICD -11 also reflects progress in medicine and advances in scientific understanding. For example, the codes relating to antimicrobial resistance are more closely in line with the Global Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance System (GLASS).
- ICD -11 is also able to better capture data regarding safety in health care, which means that unnecessary events that may harm health – such as unsafe workflows in hospitals can be identified and reduced.
- The new ICD also includes new chapters - one on traditional medicine and another new chapter on sexual health.
- Gaming disorder has been added to the section on addictive disorders.

ICD purpose and uses:

- The ICD is the foundation for the identification of health trends and statistics globally. It is the international standard for defining and reporting diseases and health conditions. It allows the world to compare and share health information using a common language.
- The ICD defines the universe of diseases, disorders, injuries and other related health conditions. These entities are listed in a comprehensive way so that everything is covered. It organizes information into standard groupings of diseases, which allows for:
- Easy storage, retrieval and analysis of health information for evidenced -based decision -making;
- Sharing and comparing health information between hospitals, regions, settings and countries; and
- Data comparisons in the same location across different time periods.

FIXED DOSE COMBINATIONS (FDCS)

Context : A drug advisory body sub -committee has asked pharmaceutical companies to prove that 324 combination medicines are safe and effective for patients to consume in order to decide whether these drugs should continue to be sold in India.

What's the issue now?

- Fixed dose combinations (FDCs) were declared "irrational" by a Health Ministry expert committee set up in 2014.
- To give an opportunity to drug makers to defend the 324 FDCs, the sub-committee has given the companies until June 30 to submit and present "precise data".

Concerns:

As of April, the CDSCO had approved 1,288 FDCs. This is disproportionately high compared with the availability in a tightly regulated market like USFDA, which has only a few hundred approved FDCs.

- The problem of **unapproved FDCs mainly affects those who get treated in the private sector**. In the absence of a strong pharmacovigilance mechanism in India, there is no data on adverse events of these unapproved FDCs.

What's ailing the system?

There are multiple deficiencies in the CDSCO's approval process for FDCs. Main amongst them are institutional problems such as understaffing, lack of skills, and inadequate infrastructure. However, the most significant issue is the issuance of manufacturing licenses by the State Licensing Authority without the prior clearance of the Drug Controller General of India DCG(I), the head of CDSCO.

What are FDCs?

An FDC is a cocktail of two or more active drug ingredients in a fixed ratio of doses. According to US healthcare provider IMS Health, almost half the drugs sold in India in 2014 were FDC, making it a world leader in combination drugs.

Why are they popular in India?

FDCs' popularity in India is due to advantages such as increased efficacy, better compliance, reduced cost and simpler logistics of distribution. FDCs have shown to be particularly useful in the treatment of infectious diseases like HIV, malaria and tuberculosis, where giving multiple antimicrobial agents is the norm. FDCs are also useful for chronic conditions especially, when multiple disorders co-exist.

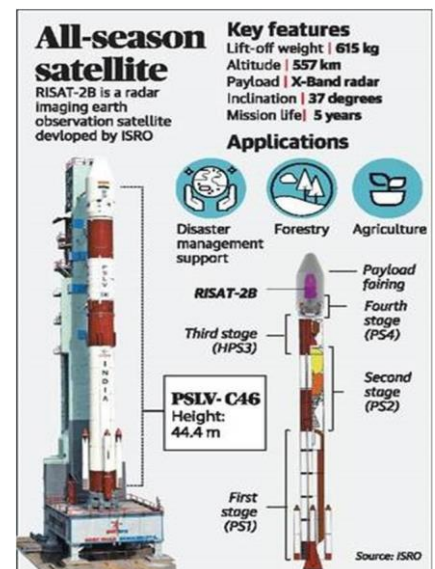
EYE IN THE SKY: ON RISAT -2B

Radar imaging satellite RISAT -2B:

RISAT -2B, the country's newest **microwave Earth observation satellite**, rode to its orbit 557 km above the ground.

With the successful pre-dawn launch of **RISAT -2B satellite**, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has added another feather to its cap. Data that will come from the **all-weather day-and-night satellite** are considered to be vital for the **Armed Forces** as also **agriculture forecasters** and **disaster relief agencies**.

Dubbed as a '**spy**' satellite, RISAT-2B (Radar Imaging Satellite -2B) will replace its predecessor RISAT -2 which has been actively used by India to **monitor activities in terror camps** across the border in Pakistan to thwart infiltration bids by terrorists.



Radar imaging satellite RISAT -2B:

- **Radar imaging** is important for **surveillance applications** , as it does not require sunlight or clear skies to be able to observe its target.
- Optical imaging satellites are only able to see points of interest when they are illuminated by the sun and **not hidden by cloud** , whereas a spacecraft equipped **with SAR** can still observe at night and its **radio waves** can propagate through cloudy skies.
- The satellite aboard launch will be a **replacement for RISAT -2** . The original RISAT -2 was built for ISRO Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), and is based on the **Polaris satellite** (known as TecSAR or Ofeq 8) which ISRO had launched for Israel in 2008.
- The RISAT-2B satellite uses **X-band synthetic aperture radar** for the first time; the synthetic aperture radar was developed indigenously.
- Its **X-band synthetic aperture radar** can give added details such as size of objects on Earth, structures, movement and change.
- Since it has **high resolution** , the satellite will be able to detect objects with dimensions of as little as a metre.
- This capacity to study small objects and also movement could be useful for surveillance. The satellite could be used for civil and strategic purposes.
- RISAT-2B will have an **inclined orbit of 37 degrees** , which will allow more frequent observations over the Indian subcontinent.
- With ISRO planning to launch four more such radar imaging satellites in a year, its ability to **monitor crops and floods** as well as engage in military surveillance will be greatly enhanced.

RISAT -2B will use Microwave radiation:

- Unlike visible light, **microwaves** have **longer wavelength** and so will not be susceptible to atmospheric scattering.
- Microwave radiation can thus easily pass through the cloud cover, haze and dust, and image the ground. Hence, **RISAT -2B satellite** will be able to image under almost **all weather and environmental conditions**.
- Since it does not rely on visible light for imaging, it will be able to image the ground during **both day and night** .
- The satellite does not have passive microwave sensors that detect the radiation naturally emitted by the atmosphere or reflected by objects on the ground.
- Instead, RISAT -2B will be transmitting **hundreds of microwave pulses** each second towards the ground and receiving the signals reflected by the objects using radar.
- The moisture and texture of the object will determine the strength of the microwave signal that gets reflected.
- While the strength of the reflected signal will help **determine different targets** , the time between the transmitted and reflected signals will help determine the distance to the object.

RISAT -2B Equipped with SAR (Synthetic Aperture Radar):

A Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) or SAR, is a coherent mostly airborne or spaceborne **side looking radar system** which **utilizes the flight path** of the platform to simulate an **extremely large antenna** , and that **generates high -resolution remote sensing imagery**.

Over time, individual transmit/ receive cycles (PRT's) are completed with the data from each cycle being **stored electronically**.

The signal processing uses magnitude and phase of the received signals over successive pulses from elements of a synthetic aperture.

After a given number of cycles, the **stored data is recombined** to create a **high -resolution image** of the terrain being over flown.

Countries using Radar Imaging Satellites:

India is not the only country to use **radar imaging** for military reconnaissance – other systems currently in operation include **the United States' TOPAZ constellation, Japan's IGS Radar and Italy's COSMO - SkyMed.**

SAR has also been used on **civilian scientific** and commercial satellites and on interplanetary probes.

India's partnership **with Israel** on this satellite boosted its **radar imaging technology**, and provided an initial capability ahead of the launch of India's indigenously -developed RISAT -1. Newer satellites, including RISAT -2B, have been developed by ISRO.

The information will complement data from the normal optical remote -sensing satellites. Such data are useful for agencies that need ground imageries during **cloud, rain and in the dark.**

Conclusion:

The satellite will enhance India's capability in **crop monitoring** during the **monsoon season**, forestry mapping for **forest fires** and **deforestation**, and **flood mapping** as part of the national disaster management programme.

Given that overcast skies are a constant during the monsoon season and during times of flood, the ability to **penetrate the cloud cover** is essential.

The biggest advantage is that ground imageries can be collected during rains and despite dust, clouds or darkness and **during all seasons**, thus ensuring **continuous and reliable data.**

ISRO is now gearing up for the **launch of Chandrayaan -2** onboard **GSLV MkIII** during the window of July 2019, with an expected Moon landing on September 2019.

BLIGHT DISEASE IN RICE

Scientists unravel fungus responsible for **Sheath Blight disease in rice.**

A strain of Rhizoctonia solani is the fungal pathogen that causes the dreaded Sheath Blight disease in rice.

The researchers have identified several genes and gene families in the strain that might account for their disease aggressiveness. **This genomic insight is expected to help develop rice varieties resistant to sheath blight disease .**

About Sheath Blight disease: It is a major issue in rice cultivation. It can cause up to 60 per cent reduction in rice yield. It is difficult to breed disease resistant rice varieties, as there is lack of natural source of disease resistance.

PER- AND POLYFLUOROALKYL (PFAS)

Context : Per - and Polyfluoroalkyl (PFAs), **a chemical on non -stick cookware** among many other things, has made its way into the human food chain, according to the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

What are PFAs? PFAs, **currently unregulated in India** , are a group of **artificial chemicals used in many items of daily use**. Apart from cookware, they are found in resistant fabrics used for cleaning, paints and food packaging.

SECURITY

SPICE 2000 GUIDED BOMBS

Context : Indian Air Force (IAF) has signed a deal with *Israel's Rafael Advanced Defense Systems*, an Israeli defence firm to procure a batch of SPICE 2000 guided bombs.

- The SPICE stands for *Smart, Precise Impact and Cost -Effective*. It is guidance and maneuvering kit manufactured by Israel's Rafael Advanced Defense Systems.
- SPICE can overcome errors in locating target, GPS jamming and also reduces collateral damage.

AKASH MISSILE

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully test fired AKASH -MK-1S missile . Key facts:

- This is **surface to air anti -aircraft missile** with a strike range of 25 km and capability to carry warhead of 60 kilogram.
- It can reach an altitude of 18 km and can be fired from both tracked and wheeled platforms.
- The missile is guided by a phased array fire control radar called 'Rajendra' which is termed as Battery Level Radar (BLR) with a tracking range of about 60 km.
- The Akash -MK-1S is capable of striking down enemy fighter jets and drones very effectively and accurately.
- The Akash surface-to-air missile was designed to intercept enemy aircraft and missiles from a distance of 18 to 30 km

NASAMS-II

US approves sale of **NASAMS-II air defence systems** to India.

NASAMS-II (National Advanced Surface to Air Missile System – NASAMS) is an upgraded version of the NASAMS developed by Raytheon in partnership with KONGSBERG Defence and Aerospace of Norway.

- It features new 3D mobile surveillance radars and 12 missile launchers for quicker reaction.
- It provides tailor -able, state -of-the -art defence system that can maximise the ability to quickly identify, engage and destroy current and evolving enemy aircraft, UAV or emerging cruise missile threats.
- NASAMS-II is armed with 3D Sentinel radars, short and medium -range missiles, launchers, fire -distribution centres and command and control units to quickly detect, track and shoot down multiple airborne threats.

Defence Space Research Agency (DSRA):

The Cabinet Committee on Security headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has cleared the setting up of the

DEFENCE SPACE RESEARCH AGENCY (DSRA)

DSRA has been entrusted with the task of **creating space warfare weapon systems and technologies**.

The agency would be provided with a team of scientists which would be working **in close coordination with the tri -services integrated Defence staff officers**.

It would be providing the **research and development support to the Defence Space Agency (DSA)** which comprises members of the three services.

The DSA has been created “ **to help the country fight wars in the space** ”.

The **Defence Space Agency is being set up in Bengaluru** under an Air Vice Marshal -rank officer and will gradually take over the space -related capabilities of the three forces.

BRAHMOS

The **Anti -ship version of supersonic cruise missile BrahMos** was test fired from the launch complex -3 of Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur in Odisha.

The name BrahMos is formed from names of **two rivers** i.e. Indian river **Brahmaputra** and the **Moskva** River of Russia.

Manufactured at **BrahMos Aerospace Limited** which is a **joint venture** between India's **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** and Russia's **NPO Mashinostroyeniya (NPOM)**.

The medium -range **ramjet** supersonic cruise missile has a strike range of about **290 km**.

The BrahMos is the **fastest cruise missile** of its class in the world.

KHARGA PRAHAR

It is a major training exercise conducted by the Indian Army.

The latest edition was undertaken in plains of Punjab by various units and formations of Army's **Khar ga Corps**.

II Corps is a corps of the Indian Army, based in Ambala and known as **Kharga Corps**.

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ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY

INDIA'S FERTILISER INDUSTRY NEEDS TO PRIORITISE POLLUTION CONTROL: CSE STUDY

The Indian fertiliser industry has overlooked the aspects related to environmental pollution, while making improvements in energy efficiency, according to a study conducted by the Centre for Science and Environment, a New Delhi -based non -profit, under its **Green Rating Project (GRP)**.

Highlights of the study:

The fertiliser industry has been classified under the '**red category**' of polluting sectors by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

Water pollution:

- The discharge of untreated or partially treated industrial wastewater has increased pollution of surface water (rivers and other water bodies) and groundwater sources. Most of the groundwater samples were found to be non -compliant with the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) limits on amount of **ammonia**.
- According to the BIS, **the maximum permissible limit of ammonia (as total ammoniacal nitrogen) in drinking water is 0.5 ppm**. However, about 83 per cent groundwater samples collected from hand -pumps in surrounding villages and near ash ponds, tubewells and borewells near 18 plant sites (out of the total 23 plant sites studied) had an ammoniacal nitrogen content of 0.51 –93.5 ppm, the upper limit of which is 187 times the permissible limit set by BIS.
- Such high levels of contamination can be linked to the seepage or overflow of a plant's ash pond water into the ground, the study showed.
- About 57 per cent samples collected near 14 plants were found non -compliant with fertiliser effluent discharge norms set by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, particularly with respect to cyanide concentrations in many of the samples and total Kjeldahl nitrogen levels in a few samples.
- Some plants were also found to be diluting their wastewater with freshwater to meet pollution control norms.

Air pollution :

- While most plants are meeting the particulate matter (PM) standards, inefficient air pollution control devices or improper fuel combustion within the systems have led to high emission levels at some plants. **There is also no regulation in India for parameters like emissions of gaseous ammonia from urea manufacturing, the study pointed out**.
- Emissions from prilling towers are the main source of pollution at a urea plants. The emissions, which contains urea dust, ammonia and oxides of nitrogen and carbon, also affects the growth and productivity of vegetation and crops around a plant. Crops become dry due to exposure to excess ammonia gas.

Solid Waste:

- Solid and hazardous waste management of most urea manufacturing plants is satisfactory. But, a few plants are not managing their hazardous waste properly, for which they have received notices or directions from the respective PCB or CPCB.

- Ash pond maintenance has emerged as an issue at most plants. At some plants, handling and storage of fly ash is inefficient and causes pollution due to fly ash dispersal into the atmosphere and leaching into the groundwater table.
- A few plants transport coal by road in uncovered trucks, taking advantage of lack of strict regulations regarding transportation of coal

STATE OF INDIA'S ENVIRONMENT 2019

Context : The State of India's Environment 2019 in Figures is an exclusive data-driven analysis of major developmental and environmental sectors. SoE 2019 in Figures is an annual quantified statement of environmental statistics and analysis put together by Down To Earth magazine, which Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) helps publish.

Usefulness : The datasets can be used by the media to investigate compelling stories, ask better questions to policymakers to drive them to come up with better policies for sustainable development agenda.

Key findings:

State of air – Air pollution is responsible for 12.5 per cent of all deaths in India. Its impact on children is equally worrying. Over 100,000 children below the age of five die due to bad air in the country. While India was one of the first countries to pledge the phasing out of non-electric vehicles, its national scheme to promote the sale of e-vehicles is yet to pick up. Against the target of 15-16 million e-vehicles by 2020, the country had 0.28 million vehicles till May 2019.

State of development – Climate change poses the biggest economic threat in the world today and features prominently in the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030. With just 10 years to go, India is yet to identify indicators to track its climate change preparedness. Of the 13 SDGs the country is tracking, indicators exist for only a handful of the targets.

State of water – Both surface and groundwater in the country are under stress. 86 water bodies are critically polluted. The bulk of the polluted water bodies are in Karnataka, Telangana and Kerala. One of the reasons is the substantial increase (136 per cent) in the number of grossly polluting industries between 2011 and 2018. Groundwater is also reeling under overexploitation, which is running 94.5 per cent of all minor irrigation schemes in the country. There has been an unsustainable increase in the number of deep tubewells that has gone up by 80 per cent between 2006-07 and 2013-14.

State of land and agriculture – India's farm sector is under duress. While the input costs for major crops are rising, the average farmland size is shrinking. Even the share of the insured cropped area stands at a dismal 26 per cent.

State of Health – India's rural health infrastructure is ailing. There is a 35 per cent shortfall in the number of 24x7 public health centres, where 26 per cent of the positions for medical officers are lying vacant. In fact, Kerala does not have a single 24x7 public health centre. Another worrying trend is that the number of new doctors qualifying every year in the country has decreased by 60 per cent between 2013 and 2017. The country also shares the world's largest absolute burden of at least 11 major neglected tropical diseases, which includes diseases like dengue.

State of cities – By 2050, India is projected to add 416 million urban dwellers to the world's urban population and will be home to about 58 per cent of the total global population. Keeping this in mind, India in

2015 -16 announced its ambitious plan of creating 100 smart cities. Four years later, only 21 per cent of the allocated funds for the smart cities have been spent. In the meanwhile, most urban cities have a sizeable population living in slums, which are unfit for habitation. India has 2,613 towns with slums. Of the 57 per cent are in Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra.

State of waste – The burden of solid waste is becoming unmanageable. In fact, 79 major protests against unsanitary landfills and dump yards have been recorded in 22 states in the past three years. Maharashtra, which registered 16 major protests, leaves 43 per cent of its waste unprocessed. While India claims to process 96 per cent of its biomedical waste, eight states and UTs have defaulting hospitals. The country has also recorded a 56 per cent increase in the number of hazardous waste generating industries between 2009 and 2016 -17. At the same time, most of these industries are not properly maintaining their waste inventory, as mandated by the law.

State of energy – India's natural gas and hydro-based power plants are in shambles. Gas-based plants are running at 24 per cent of their capacity due to the acute shortage of domestic natural gas. Hydropower projects, on the other hand, are running at just 19 per cent of their capacity and their share in total installed capacity has consistently declined since 1962. The country's progress in renewable energy in 2018 -19 has also been dismal. In wind, the country met only 6.3 per cent of the target this year. In solar, it met 5.86 per cent.

State of climate – There has been a 22 per cent increase in India's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions between 2010 and 2014. This has been fuelled by the energy sector, which is responsible for 73 per cent of the total GHG emissions. Besides, India phased out ozone depleting substances such as chlorofluorocarbon by 2011, it shifted to substances such as hydrochlorofluorocarbon, which have high globalwarming potential. India continues to bear the brunt of extreme weather events. In 2018, 11 states recorded major extreme weather events that claimed 1,425 lives.

State of forests – India has recently shifted to a powerful forest fire monitoring and alert system, SNPP - VIIRS, which can capture forest fires with better accuracy and precision. In April 2019, the new technology recorded 69,523 forest fires, which was 9.5 times more than that recorded by the earlier technology.

State of wildlife – 37 species were poached or seized in 2018. Of these, 13, including lion, marked an increase over the last year; 161 wild animals were also killed due to road and train accidents.

State of employment – India has witnessed a 1.9 times increase in the unemployment rate in the past two years. This has especially affected the youth and the educated. Unemployment rate among people with at least a graduate degree was 13.17 per cent in September -December 2018, up from 10.39 per cent in May - August 2017.

GUJARAT LAUNCHES INDIA'S FIRST TRADING PROGRAMME TO COMBAT PARTICULATE AIR POLLUTION

Context : Gujarat has launched *India's first trading programme to combat particulate air pollution -the emission trading scheme (ETS)*

- on World Environment Day 2019, which has air pollution as its theme.

Key features of the programme:

- It is a **market-based system** where the **government sets a cap on emissions** and **allows industries to buy and sell permits to stay below the cap**.

- Being **initiated in Surat** by the **Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB)** .
- Gujarat programme is the **first in the world to regulate particulate air pollution** .

How it works?

- Under the cap and trade system, the regulator first defines the total mass of pollution that can be put into the air over a defined period by all factories put together.
- Then, a set of permits is created, each of which allows a certain amount of pollution, and the total is equal to the cap.
- These permits are the quantity that is bought and sold. Each factory is allocated a share of these permits (this could be equal or based on size or some other rule).
- After this, plants can trade permits with each other, just like any other commodity on the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange Limited (NCDEX).

Significance and benefits:

- The reason for trading is that in a cap and trade market, the regulator will measure pollution over a period of time and industries must own enough permits to cover their total emissions.
- Factories who find it very expensive to reduce pollution, will seek to buy more permits. Those who can easily reduce pollution are encouraged to do so because then they have excess permits to sell.
- Eventually, after buying and selling by plants that find it cheap to cut pollution and those for whom it is expensive, most pollution is taken care of. Whatever the final allocation, the total number of permits does not change so the total pollution is still equal to the predefined cap. And yet the costs to industry are decreased.

Current practice and issues associated:

Under existing regulations, every industry has to meet a certain maximum concentration of pollutants when it is operating. They are tested occasionally and manually (one or two times a year). However, there is widespread non-compliance across India. This is partly because penalties are rarely applied, in large part because they involve punishments such as closing down the entire plant which is not necessarily appropriate for small violations.

ASIATIC GOLDEN CAT

The coat of **Asiatic golden cat** comes in five other shades besides the golden colour in Arunachal Pradesh, scientists have discovered.

Its **coat comes in six types**: cinnamon, golden, gray, melanistic, ocelot and tightly rosetted.

- The Asiatic golden cat (*Catopuma temminckii*) is listed as **near threatened** on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of threatened species.
- It is **found across eastern Nepal through north-eastern India to Indonesia** .
- Scientists believe that **the wide variation displayed in the cat's coats provides them with several ecological benefits** such as occupying different habitats at different elevations — from wet tropical lowland forests to alpine scrubs — and providing camouflage while preying on pheasants and rabbits.

PROLIFERATION OF KELPS IN THE ARCTIC

Underwater Arctic forests are expanding thanks to global warming .

What are Kelps? How do they survive underwater?

Kelps are **large brown algae seaweeds** that make up the order Laminariales. There are about 30 different genera.

Kelps have adapted to the severe conditions. These **cool water species have special strategies to survive freezing temperatures and long periods of darkness, and even grow under sea ice** .

In regions with cold, nutrient-rich water, they can attain **some of the highest rates of primary production of any natural ecosystem on Earth** .

Significance of kelps:

- Kelps function underwater in the same way trees do on land.
- They create habitat and modify the physical environment by shading light and softening waves.
- The underwater forests that kelps create are used by many animals for shelter and food.
- More than 350 different species – up to 100,000 small invertebrates – can live on a single kelp plant, and many fish, birds and mammals depend on the whole forest.
- Kelp forests also help protect coastlines by **decreasing the power of waves during storms and reducing coastal erosion** .
- Kelp forests through out the world play an important role in coastal economies, supporting **a broad range of tourism, recreational and commercial activities** .
- Kelp is a coveted **food source in many countries** , full of potassium, iron, calcium, fibre and iodine.
- In the Arctic, **Inuit** traditionally use kelp as food and wild harvest numerous species.

How climate change is leading to expansion of Kelps?

Genetic evidence reveals that **most kelps reinvaded the Arctic from the Atlantic Ocean quite recently** (approximately 8,000 years ago, following the last Ice Age). As a result, **most kelps in the Arctic are living in waters colder than their optimal temperature** . Ocean warming will also move conditions closer to temperatures of maximum growth, and could increase the productivity of these habitats.

As waters warm and sea ice retreats, **more light will reach the seafloor, which will benefit marine plants** . Researchers predict a **northern shift of kelp forests as ice retreats** .

Concerns:

Other changes are happening in the Arctic that complicate this picture. In Canada, Alaska, Greenland, Norway and Siberia, **permafrost soils that have been frozen for thousands of years are receding by half a metre per year** . Thawing permafrost and crumbling Arctic coasts are dumping **sediments into coastal waters** at alarming rates, which **blocks light and could limit plant growth** .

The **run-off from melting glaciers will also lower salinity and increase turbidity** , which impacts young kelp.

Facts for prelims:

The Canadian Arctic is the **longest Arctic coastline in the world** .

In the northwestern Canadian Arctic, **lack of rock substrate and a harsher climate support smaller, fragmented kelp forests** .

IRENA REPORT 'RENEWABLE POWER GENERATION COSTS IN 2018'

Context : *International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)* has released a report titled '*Renewable Power Generation Costs in 2018*' .

For the study, IRENA analysed eight major solar PV markets from 2010 to 2018. These countries include China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, the UK and the US.

Key findings:

India is now the lowest -cost producer of solar power globally . total installed costs of utility -scale solar PV in India is as low as \$793 per kilowatt (kW) in 2018 which is 27 per cent lower than for projects commissioned in 2017. Costs have dropped by 80 per cent in India.

Canada has the highest cost at \$2,427 per kW.

Renewable energy sources have witnessed **cost decline globally** .

Reasons behind the low cost:

- India has high solar potential that leads to **improved asset utilization** .
- The country **imports majority of hardware for installation from China which is cheaper** and helps cut the cost by a huge margin.
- As the **cost of land and labor is cheaper** than the rest of the world, it also contributes to low -cost production of solar power in India.

About IRENA:

It is an **intergovernmental** organisation mandated **to facilitate cooperation, advance knowledge, and promote the adoption and sustainable use of renewable energy** .

It is the **first international organisation to focus exclusively on renewable energy** , addressing needs in both industrialized and developing countries.

It was **founded in 2009** & its statute entered into force on 8 July 2010 and is **headquartered in Masdar City, Abu Dhabi** .

IRENA is an **official United Nations observer** .

#SELFIEWITHSAPLING

On the eve of World Environment Day, Union Environment Ministry has launched a people's campaign called **# SelfiewithSapling** , urging people to advocate the cause on social media.

Under the campaign, **people have been urged to plant a sapling and post selfie with the planted sapling on social media** .

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

Every **June 5th is World Environment Day** . On this day, communities and individuals around the world work to increase awareness of the importance of conserving the environment, the positive global impact of environmental regulations and controls and engage in activities that serve to educate and improve their environment locally.

The World Environment Day is **a part of the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP)** for creating awareness and action worldwide for the environment. The first World Environment Day was celebrated in 1973.

The theme for 45th World Environment Day is Beat Air Pollution. It is the call for action to combat the global crisis for 'fresh air'.

Host : China.

IMPORTANT MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (CURRENT AFFAIRS)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Yeti was claimed to be sighted
 a) Himalayas
 b) Satpuras
 c) Aravalis
 d) Vindhya</p> <p>2. Fani is a
 a) Alcohol
 b) Cyclone
 c) Disease
 d) Virus</p> <p>3. Rosewood and Ebony species of tree are found in
 a) Prairies
 b) Desert Vegetation
 c) Tropical Rain forests
 d) Tropical Dry Deciduous forests</p> <p>4. 'Swiss formula' is
 a) Designed to cut and harmonize tariff rates in international trade
 b) A new formula one race championship
 c) Tourism Guidelines to visit Switzerland.
 d) None of the above</p> <p>5. Which cricketer is recommended for Arjuna Award 2009?
 a) Virat Kohli
 b) Rohit Sharma
 c) Mithali Raj
 d) Poonam Yadav</p> <p>6. Vedanta Desikan has authored his literary work in
 a) Sanskrit
 b) Tamil
 c) Manipravala
 d) All of the above</p> <p>7. Hangul is a state animal of
 a) Jammu and Kashmir
 b) Assam
 c) Arunachal Pradesh.
 d) Himachal Pradesh</p> | <p>8. Which of the following is not the pillar of Namami Gange Programme?
 a) Afforestation
 b) Ganga Gram
 c) River front Development
 d) All are the part of Namami Gange</p> <p>9. World Press Freedom Day is observed on
 a) May 2
 b) May 3
 c) May 4
 d) May 5</p> <p>10. Bairath Temple in Himachal belongs to
 a) Shiva
 b) Krishna
 c) Kali
 d) Vishnu</p> <p>11. Zero pendency court project' belongs to
 a) Delhi High Court
 b) Bombay High Court
 c) Madras High Court
 d) Guwahati High Court</p> <p>12. Consider the statements
 1. Arsenic is naturally present at high levels in the groundwater of a number of countries
 2. Arsenic is highly toxic in its inorganic form
 Choose correct :
 a) 1
 b) 2
 c) Both
 d) None</p> <p>13. Sanjay Gandhi National Park is in?
 a) Andhra Pradesh
 b) Uttar Pradesh
 c) Odisha
 d) Maharashtra</p> |
|---|---|

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>14. Which state city police has launched an all - women police patrol unit 'Rani Abbakka Force'?
 a) Himachal Pradesh
 b) Karnataka
 c) Kerala
 d) Telangana</p> <p>15. Who is the former ISRO Chief to get
 a) Madhavan Nair
 b) Satish Dhawan
 c) Kiran Kumar
 d) Ramachandra Rao</p> <p>16. Charminar was built by
 a) Mohammad Quli Qutab Shah
 b) Qutb -din-Aibak
 c) Alaudding Khilji
 d) Iltatmish</p> <p>17. Pakkamalai Reserve forests are in
 a) Kerala
 b) Tamil Nadu
 c) Karnataka
 d) Telangana</p> <p>18. Which of the following is not a part of Chardham Project?
 a) Yamunotri
 b) Gangotri
 c) Rudra Prayag
 d) Badrinath</p> <p>19. Theme of the 2019 world Red cross Day is?
 a) # Happiness
 b) # Brotherhood
 c) # Joy
 d) # Love</p> <p>20. India's first natural Ice Cafe' is located in
 a) Arunachal Pradesh
 b) J & K
 c) Uttarakhand
 d) Himachal Pradesh</p> <p>21. As per IUCN, Asiatic lion is
 a) Endangered
 b) Critically Endangered
 c) Threatened
 d) Nearly Threatened</p> | <p>22. As per IUCN, Indian Rhino is
 a) Vulnerable
 b) Endangered
 c) Threatened
 d) Nearl y Threatened</p> <p>23. Monkey pox virus is recently reported in?
 a) Thailand
 b) Laos
 c) Nepal
 d) Singapore</p> <p>24. Strait of Hormuz reparates?
 a) Iran and UAE
 b) Iran and Saudi Arabia
 c) Iran and Somalia
 d) Iran and Oman</p> <p>25. Thrissur Pooram is celebrated in
 a) Tamil Nadu
 b) Pondicherry
 c) Kerala
 d) Telangana</p> <p>26. Theme of world Reconstruction conference 2019 is
 a) Resilient Recovery of Disaster
 b) Reconstruct Resiliently
 c) Inclusion for resilient Recovery
 d) Effective International disaster recovery</p> <p>27. YUVA Vigyani Karyakram 2019 is launched by
 a) DRDO
 b) Ministry of Home Affairs
 c) ISRO
 d) Ministry of Wo men Empoerment</p> <p>28. Lecanorchis taiwaniana, an orchid, was recently discovered in
 a) Assam
 b) Sikkim
 c) Bihar
 d) Jharkhand</p> <p>29. Election Commissioners can be removed by the President of India on the advice of the
 a) Home Minister
 b) Prime Minister</p> |
|--|---|

- c) Chief Election Commissioner
d) Council of Minister
30. **The first Anglo -Afghan war was fought in**
 a) 1838 -1840
 b) 1837 -1841
 c) 1835 -1839
 d) 1839 -1842
31. **Masala bonds are**
 a) Rupee denominated bonds raised from Indian market.
 b) Rupee denominated bonds raised from overseas market.
 c) Related to money raised from spices.
 d) None of the above.
32. **Mt. Makalu is at**
 a) 8480 m
 b) 8440 m
 c) 8485 m
 d) 8840 m
33. **Mt. Tenchenkhang is in**
 a) Sikkim
 b) Arunachal Pradesh
 c) Assam
 d) Jammu and Kashmir
34. **SIMBEX is maritime exercise between Indian and_____?**
 a) Singapore
 b) Nepal
 c) Sri-Lanka
 d) Myanmar
35. **Green card system is announced by**
 a) UK
 b) France
 c) Australia
 d) USA
36. **Consider the statements.**
 1. Article 324 of the Indian Constitution vests in an election commission' the "superintendence, direction and control of elections.
 2. Article 325 is responsible for National and State elections.
 Choose correct:
- a) 1
 b) 2
 c) Both
 d) None
37. **Akshaya Patra, an NGO is funded by**
 a) International Society for Krishna Consciousness.
 b) Hindu Mahasabha
 c) Art of Living
 d) Anand Marga
38. **National electronics fund transfer was states in**
 a) 2003
 b) 2004
 c) 2005
 d) 2006
39. **Indian's first engineless train is**
 a) Vande Bharat
 b) Rajdhani
 c) Samjhanta
 d) Vande Mataram
40. **E-Vidhan project is under**
 a) Digital India Programme.
 b) Make in India
 c) Ministry of Home
 d) Parliament
41. **Balukhand -Konark wildlife sanctuary is in**
 a) West bengal
 b) Odisha
 c) Andhra Pradesh
 d) Telangana
42. **Seshachalam Biosphere Reserve is in**
 a) West bengal
 b) Odisha
 c) Andhra Pradesh
 d) Telangana
43. **IUCN Status of Slender Loris is**
 a) Endangered
 b) Critically Endangered
 c) Threatened
 d) Nearly threatened
44. **Consider the statements**

1. Article 124 prescribes how supreme court judges are to be appointed
 2. Article 124 also prescribes the procedure of collegium system.
 Choose correct:
 a) 1
 b) 2
 c) Both
 d) None
45. First President of all Indian Trade Union congress founded in 1920 was?
 a) Bhagat Singh
 b) Diwan Chaman Lal
 c) Lala Lajpat Rai
 d) Subhash Chandra Bose
46. SIMBEX is the annual Maritime Exercise between India and _____
 a) USA
 b) UK
 c) Nepal
 d) Singapore
47. National e-Vidhan Application (NEVA) is a mission mode project under the digital India Programme. The Nodal Ministry for its implementation is ?
 a) Ministry of Science and Technology
 b) Ministry of Home
 c) Ministry of Parliamentary affairs.
 d) Ministry of Information and broad casting
48. Cloud Technology of Indian is called
 a) Bhuvan
 b) Meghraj
 c) Badal
 d) Akash
49. Pakke Tiger Reserve is in
 a) Andhra Pradesh
 b) Sikkim
 c) Assam
 d) Arunachal Pradesh.
50. Gautam Buddha was born in
 a) Lumbini
 b) Bodhgaya
 c) Kapilvastu
 d) Kushinagar
51. Ongole, Gaolao and Bhagnari are
 a) Scripts
 b) Cattle Breeds
 c) Lakes
 d) Rivers
52. Competition commission of India is a
 a) Statutory Body
 b) Constitutional Body
 c) Non statutory Body
 d) None of the above
53. 'Room for the river project' belongs to
 a) Netherlands
 b) France
 c) Australia
 d) Ireland
54. Theme for 2019 International day for Biological Diversity is
 a) 'Biodiversity, food and Health
 b) Our Biodiversity, our food, our health
 c) Think of our Health and our Biodiversity
 d) None of the above
55. Brasilia Declaration led to the formation of
 a) IBSA
 b) BIMSTEC
 c) G20
 d) BRICKS
56. Indian became the full member of shangai cooperation organization in the year
 a) 2015
 b) 2016
 c) 2017
 d) 2018
57. 'Golden card' Permanent Residency Schemes in launched by
 a) UAE
 b) South Africa
 c) Iran
 d) UK
58. Second U20 Mayors Summit is to be hosted by
 a) London
 b) Melbourne
 c) Mian
 d) Tokyo

59. Man Booker International prize is awarded to Jokha Alharthi for her novel

- a) Celestial Bodies
- b) Milkman
- c) Last Minute
- d) Joy Ride

60. Khushi Scheme for free Sanitary Napkins to Girl Students is an initiative of

- a) Odisha
- b) West Bengal
- c) Tamil Nadu
- d) Goa

61. Jaswant and Dasawant were two famous painters in the court of

- a) Jahangir
- b) Akbar
- c) Farrukhsiyar
- d) Balban

62. First English President of Indian National Congress was

- a) A O Hume
- b) Annie Besant
- c) George Yule
- d) None

63. Which of the following peak is not in

- a) Manaslu
- b) Kanchenjunga
- c) Saramati
- d) Khayang

64. Oath of the judge of High Court is administered by

- a) Governor
- b) Chief Justice of High Court
- c) President
- d) Chief Minister

65. Hurricane Florida is to hit

- a) North and South Carolina of America
- b) Brazil
- c) South Africa
- d) None of these

66. Seoul Peace Prize is awarded to

- a) Narendra Modi

- b) Donald Trump
- c) Imran Khan
- d) Shinzo Abe

67. Ramon Magsaysay 2018 award is given to

- a) Bharat Vatwani
- b) Sonam Wang Chuk
- c) Proth A and C
- d) None

68. 10th BRICS summit was held at

- a) New Delhi
- b) Capetown
- c) Johannesburg
- d) Moscow

69. FIFA 2022 Football world cup will be held in

- a) Japan
- b) Qatar
- c) France
- d) Croatia

70. Exercise Maitri is between India and

- a) Thailand
- b) China
- c) Iran
- d) Nepal

71. The lower House is dissolved by the President on the advice of

- a) Home Minister
- b) Vice-President
- c) Prime Minister
- d) Chief Justice of India

72. Education Quality Upgradation and Inclusion Programme (EQUIP) recently launched by Ministry of Human Resource Development is meant for

- a) Colleges
- b) Higher Education
- c) Vocational Training
- d) Primary Schools

73. Shanghai cooperation organization was founded in

- a) 2001
- b) 2000
- c) 2002
- d) 2003

74. Who is the new President of Indonesia?

- a) Joko Widodo
- b) Prabowo
- c) Subianto
- d) Maruf Amin

75. Vijaya Mulay who passed away recently was a famous_____

- a) A.Filmmaker
- b) B.Journalist
- c) C.Scientist
- d) D.Singer

76. Jahangir Palace, Raj Mahal, Sheesh Mahal and Rai Parveen Mahal are in

- a) Uttar Pradesh
- b) Madhya Pradesh
- c) Maharashtra
- d) Telangana

77. Particularly Vulnerable tribal group was created by

- a) Kelkar Committee
- b) Dhebar Committee
- c) Tendulkar Committee
- d) Mandal Commission

78. Which of the following is not a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal group?

- a) Chench
- b) Birhor
- c) Gaddis
- d) Siddi

79. Schedule Tribes are mentioned in

- a) Article 362
- b) Article 366
- c) Article 367
- d) Article 373

80. Chairman of 15th Finance Commission is

- a) N.K. Singh
- b) V.K. Singh
- c) Ajay Narayan Jha
- d) None

81. Which of the site of Indus Valley civilization was added to UNESCO World Heritage site recently?

- a) Lothal

- b) Mohenjodaro
- c) Harappa
- d) Kalibangan

82. Which of the following is not a fund transfer systems in India?

- a) NEFT
- b) RTGS
- c) SWIFT
- d) IMPS

83. Gahirmatha wildlife Sanctuary is in

- a) Odisha
- b) Andhra Pradesh
- c) Telangana
- d) Gujarat

84. New START Treaty is signed between

- a) US and France
- b) US and UK
- c) Russian federation and UK
- d) US and Russian Federation

85. Arribada is

- a) Nesting ground
- b) Tribe
- c) Dance
- d) Turtle Specie

86. The recent draft of National Education Policy 2019 was prepared by?

- a) Kasturirangan Committee
- b) Gadgi Committee
- c) Tendulkar Committee
- d) Kasturirangan Committee

87. Chagos Archipelago is in?

- a) Indian Ocean
- b) Pacific Ocean
- c) Atlantic Ocean
- d) Arctic Ocean

88. SWAYAM platform is developed by

- a) Ministry of Home
- b) Ministry of Finance
- c) Ministry of HRD
- d) Ministry of Defence

89. Ghoomar, Kalbelia, Teerah Taali, Gair are dances of

- a) Gujarat

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>b) Rajasthan
c) Andhra Pradesh
d) Assam</p> <p>90. Consider the statements.
 1. Teerah Taali dance is performed by Kamada Tribes.
 2. Gair Dance is performed by Bhil community.
 Choose correct:
 a) 1 only
 b) 2 only
 c) Both
 d) None</p> <p>91. Nal se Jal Scheme is to ensure piped water for every household by
 a) 2020
 b) 2022
 c) 2024
 d) 2025</p> <p>92. Chaukhandi Stupa is in
 a) Uttar Pradesh
 b) Bihar
 c) Madhya Pradesh
 d) Andhra Pradesh</p> <p>93. Which Act deprived the Governors of Bombay and Madras of the Legislative powers?
 a) Charter Act 1853
 b) Indian Councils Act 1861
 c) Charter Act 1833
 d) Indian Councils Act 1892</p> <p>94. Which one is not correctly matched
 a) Mount St. Helena -USA
 b) Mount Fuji -Japan
 c) Mount Pinatubo -Philippines.
 d) Mount Etna -France</p> <p>95. Terah Taali is performed by
 a) Kamada
 b) Mirasi
 c) Bhand
 d) Nat</p> <p>96. Gair Dance is performed by
 a) Bhil</p> | <p>b) Kamada
c) Bhand
d) Mirasi</p> <p>96. Ravi River originates from which district of Himachal?
 a) Lahaul -Spiti
 b) Chamba
 c) Kangra
 d) Kullu</p> <p>97. Highest number of Particularly vulnerable tribal groups are found in
 a) Andhra Pradesh
 b) Telangana
 c) Assam
 d) Odisha</p> <p>98. Total number of Particularly vulnerable Tribal groups in Odisha
 a) 13
 b) 12
 c) 11
 d) 10</p> <p>99. Which of the following is not a criteria for determination of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal group.
 a) A pre -agriculture level of technology
 b) Extremely low literacy
 c) A subsistence level of economy.
 d) All are considered for PVTG.</p> <p>100. Who administers the oath of the office of Pro-terms speaker in Parliament?
 a) Outgoing speaker
 b) President
 c) Chief Justice of India
 d) Prime Minister</p> <p>101. Surendra Vasant sirsat case and Godavaris Misra case talks about the powers of
 a) Protons speaker
 b) Prime Minister
 c) Government
 d) Leader of Opposition</p> <p>102. India joined Shanghai co -operation organization as a full member in
 a) 2015</p> |
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- b) 2016
c) 2017
d) 2018
- 103. Financial action task force was established in**
a) 1986
b) 1987
c) 1988
d) 1989
- 104. Regional Anti -Terror structure (RATS) was established by**
a) SCO
b) BBIN
c) BRICS
d) BIMSTEC
- 105. Which commission stated the existence of inequality within schedule tribes in the rate of development?**
a) Mandal Commission
b) Sarkaria Commission
c) Dhebar Commission
d) Phukan Commission
- 106. Which of the following is not correctly matched?**
a) Chenchu -Andhra Pradesh/ Telangana
b) Mal Paharia -Bihar/ Jharkhand
c) Kotwalia -Gujarat
d) Abujh -Kerala
- 107. The 42nd Amendment Act of 1976 added how many new directive Principles to the original list?**
a) 3
b) 2
c) 5
d) 4
- 108. Which amendment changed the subject matter of Article 45?**
a) 42nd
b) 44th
c) 86th
d) 97th
- 109. Which act was called as 'Gagging Act'?**
a) Vernacular Press Act 1878.
b) Licensing Regulation 1823
c) Censorship of Press Act, 1799
d) None of the above
- 110. India's rank in 13th Global peace index is?**
a) 139
b) 140
c) 141
d) 142
- 111. Natural host of the Nipah virus is Which of the following was not the member of Shanghai cooperation organisation in formation in 2001?**
a) Russia
b) Tajikistan
c) Uzbekistan
d) India
- 112. Which of the following is not among the Regional Anti -terrorist structure (RATS) C o-operation against three evils?**
a) Terrorism
b) Separatism
c) Extremism
d) Communalism
- 113. Justice B.N. Krishna committee is based on?**
a) Left wing Extremism
b) Data Protection
c) Animal Rights
d) Himalayan Biodiversity
- 114. Shanghai C o-operation summit 2019 held in ?**
a) Bishkek
b) Dushanbe
c) Astana
d) Tashkent
- 115. Jnanpith Award 2018 is awarded to**
a) Amitav Ghosh
b) Amitav Kant
c) Sankara Kurup
d) Krishna Sobti
- 116. Consider the statement's**
1. strait of Hormuz separates Ira n and Oman.

2. Strait of Hormuz Links Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea.

Choose correct:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both
- d) None

117. As per IUCN, The Asiatic Golden Cat is

- a) Near Threatened
- b) Threatened
- c) Vulnerable
- d) Endangered

118. Marching Blue, a movement against privatization of water was rallied in

- a) Telangana
- b) Rajasthan
- c) Uttar Pradesh
- d) Kerala

119. 'Indian Opinion' newspaper belongs to

- a) Mahatma Gandhi
- b) Jawahar Lal Nehru.
- c) Lala Laj Pat Rai
- d) Bal Ganga Dhar Tilak

120. Khudkashta, Muzariam and Pahikashta were

- a) Agriculturist
- b) Marriage Customs
- c) Form of Taxes
- d) None

121. Ugra Tara temple is located in?

- a) Assam
- b) Sikkim
- c) Odisha
- d) Bihar

122. As per IUCN, Black Softshell turtle is?

- a) Vulnerable
- b) Threatened
- c) Endangered
- d) extinct

123. India's rank in Global Peace Index 2019 is

- a) 140
- b) 141
- c) 142
- d) 143

124. Least peaceful country as Global Peace Index 2018 is

- a) Pakistan
- b) Sudan
- c) Afghanistan
- d) Syria

125. Inter sessional meeting of Kimberley Process is being hosted by

- a) Mumbai
- b) Delhi
- c) Bangalore
- d) Chennai

126. 16th Asia Media summit was organised in

- a) Cambodia
- b) Laos
- c) Vietnam
- d) Thailand

127. 'Juneteenth' is considered as the ending of slavery in

- a) South Africa
- b) Syria
- c) United States
- d) Australia

128. World Day to combat Desertification and Drought is observed on

- a) June 16
- b) June 17
- c) June 18
- d) June 19

129. Which Amendment Act of the constitution stated that the strength of ministers should not be more than 15%?

- a) 91st Amendment Act 2003
- b) 91st Amendment Act 2002
- c) 92nd Amendment Act 2003
- d) 92nd Amendment Act 2002

130. District Judges are appointed by

- a) Chief Justice of India
- b) Chief Justice of High Court
- c) President
- d) Governor

- 131. Theme for 'World Day to combat Desertification 2019' is _____?**
 a) Let's save the Environment together
 b) Let's grow the future together
 c) Let's save planet together
 d) None
- 132. A Chalcolithic site Catalhoyuk belongs to**
 a) Turkey
 b) Iraq
 c) Afghanistan
 d) Iran
- 133. Yoga Locator app was recently launched by**
 a) Ministry of Ayush
 b) Ministry of finance
 c) Ministry of family and Health welfare
 d) Ministry of Home
- 134. World elder abuse Awareness Day is observed on**
 a) June 14
 b) June 16
 c) June 15
 d) June 17
- 135. The world's highest operating weather stations has installed on _____**
 a) K2
 b) Mt. Kanchenjunga
 c) Mt. Everest
 d) Mt. Makalu
- 136. 'Natya Shastra' the main source of India's classical dance was written by**
 a) Narad Muni
 b) Bharat Muni
 c) Abhinav Gupta
 d) Tandua Muni
- 137. The Last British Emperor of India was**
 a) King George I
 b) King George III
 c) King George V
 d) King George VI
- 138. Laughing gas in**
 a) Nitrogen
 b) Nitrous Oxide
 c) Nitric Oxide
 d) None
- 139. A Presidential Ordinance can remain in force for**
 a) 3 Month
 b) 6 Month
 c) 9 Month
 d) Indefinitely
- 140. The Chemical used as a 'fixer' in photography is**
 a) Sodium Sulphate
 b) Sodium Thiosulphate
 c) Ammonium Persulphate
 d) Borax
- 141. Operation Sunrise is launched on the border of**
 a) Indo -Bangladesh
 b) Indo -Myanmar
 c) Indo -China
 d) Indo -Bhutan
- 142. Sittoung port is in**
 a) Bangladesh
 b) Sri Lanka
 c) Mauritius
 d) Myanmar
- 143. Chhittuipuri River is in**
 a) Mizoram
 b) Assam
 c) Manipur
 d) Meghalaya
- 144. Cherry blossom festival is celebrated in**
 a) Meghalaya
 b) Manipur
 c) Tripura
 d) Assam
- 145. New speaker of Lok Sabha is**
 a) Soumitra Mahajan
 b) OM Birla
 c) Hukam Dev
 d) Shashi Tharoor
- 146. Presiding officer of Lok Sabha is**
 a) President
 b) Prime Minister
 c) Leader of Opposition

- d) Speaker
- 147. Who decides the agenda of various discussion in Lok -Sabha?**
 a) President
 b) Prime Minister
 c) Speaker
 d) Leader of Opposition
- 148. What are the major languages spoken in Andhra Pradesh?**
 a) English and Telugu
 b) Telugu and Urdu
 c) Telugu and Kannada
 d) All of the above languages
- 149. Which social activist has won the HridayMitra Foundation's Save Water Hero Award'?**
 a) Shaheen Mistri
 b) Sandeep Pandey
 c) Makarand Tiloo
 d) Sanal Edamaruku
- 150. Who has been sworn -in as the first female President of Slovakia?**
 a) Zuzana Caputova
 b) Adriana Karembeu
 c) Jana Kolesaro va
 d) Suzie Kronerova
- 151. Which ministry has constituted a committee to implement the National Clean Air Program (NCAP) recently?**
 a) Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
 b) Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)
 c) Ministry of New and Renewable Energy
 d) Ministry of Rural Development
- 152. Name the Indo -French (India & France) bilateral naval exercise that held in the Arabian sea of Goa coast.**
 a) Varuna 19.1
 b) Konkan 19.1
 c) Corpat 19.1
 d) Simbex 19.1
- 153. Which public sector bank, has become the first bank in the country that has linked its deposit accounts and short term loans to an external benchmark?**
 a) State Bank of India (SBI)
 b) Canara Bank
 c) Indian Bank
 d) Bank of Baroda
- 154. Who ascended the throne, ushering in the Reiwa era after his father Akihito abdicated?**
 a) Fushimi
 b) Taisho
 c) Naruhito
 d) Hirohito
- 155. Geological sites, Mawmluh cave and Therriaghat cave were in news recently. It is located in which State?**
 a) Maharashtra
 b) Manipur
 c) Mizoram
 d) Meghalaya
- 156. Find the online payment system, that launched One Touch experience using Google Smart Lock forging India, the first market to use Google Smart Lock?**
 a) Oxigen Wallet India
 b) PayPal India
 c) PayUbiz India
 d) MobiKwik India
- 157. Name the cricketer, who was appointed as the first non -British president of Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC).**
 a) Chris Gayle
 b) Sachin Tendulkar
 c) Kumar Sangakkara
 d) Sunil Gavaskar
- 158. Which Stock Exchange has appointed M Jayshree Vyas as its first independent woman director?**
 a) India International Exchange (INX)
 b) Calcutta Stock Exchange
 c) National Stock Exchange of India (NSE)
 d) Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE)
- 159. Which mountain pass has been opened for the 14th edition of Sino -India n (China - India) border trade?**

- a) Mana Pass, Uttarakhand
 b) Baralacha La, Himachal Pradesh
 c) Nathu La, Sikkim
 d) Rohtang Pass, Himachal Pradesh
- 160. Vice President, M. Venkaiah Naidu has released a postage stamp to commemorate the 750th birth anniversary of which spiritual icon?**
 a) Manavala Mamunigal
 b) Sri Vedanta Desikan
 c) Yamunacharya
 d) Nathamuni
- 161. With respect to PM's Awards for Outstanding Contribution towards the Development and Promotion of Yoga, Consider the following statements:**
1. The awards will be given only to citizens of India.
2. An entity which has received award once may not be considered again for conferring award in the same category.
Which of the statement(s) given above is/ are correct?
 a) 1 only
 b) 2 only
 c) Both 1 and 2
 d) Neither 1 nor 2
- 162. Consider the following statements with respect to National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB)**
1. It is responsible for accreditation of certification/ inspection bodies as per applicable international standards under an international system of equivalence.
2. It is a constituent board of Quality Council of India (QCI).
3. It is an autonomous body attached to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
Which of the statement(s) given above is/ are correct?
 a) 2 only
 b) 1 and 2 only
 c) 1 and 3 only
 d) 1, 2 and 3
- 163. Which of the following is/are the applications of Carbon Quantum Dots**
 (CQDs) sometimes seen in the news recently?
1. Bio-imaging
2. Chemical sensing
3. Opto-electronics
Select the correct answer using the codes given below:
 a) 2 only
 b) 1 and 2 only
 c) 2 and 3 only
 d) 1, 2 and 3
- 164. Bhavishya is an online pension sanction and payment tracking system implemented by?**
 a) Ministry of Finance
 b) Ministry of Social Justice
 c) Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology
 d) Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pension
- 165. Consider the following statements with respect to National Bal Bhavan**
1. It is an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
2. It was founded by Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru in 1956.
3. It aims at enhancing the creative potential of children by providing them opportunities and a common platform.
Which of the statement(s) given above is/ are correct?
 a) 3 only
 b) 1 and 2 only
 c) 2 and 3 only
 d) 1, 2 and 3
- 166. Consider the following statements with respect to UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**
1. It is one of the 15 specialised agencies of the United Nations.
2. Seats in the council are allocated based on geographical representation.
Which of the statement(s) given above is/ are correct?
 a) 1 only
 b) 2 only
 c) Both 1 and 2

d) Neither 1 nor 2

167. Consider the following statements with respect to Ethiopia

1. It is located in the region called Horn of Africa.

2. It shares its border with Indian Ocean.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/ are incorrect?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

168. The chairman and members of National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) are appointed by the President on the recommendations of a committee consisting of

- 1. Union home minister**
- 2. The Speaker of the Lok Sabha**
- 3. The Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha**
- 4. The leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha**
- 5. The leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha**

Which of the statement(s) given above is/ are correct?

- a) 2 and 4 only
- b) 2, 3 and 4 only
- c) 2, 3, 4 and 5 only
- d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

169. Chamki Fever sometimes seen in the news recently refers to which of the following diseases?

- a) West Nile Fever
- b) Leptospirosis
- c) Yellow Fever
- d) Acute Encephalitis Syndrome

170 . Consider the following statements regarding Chilka Lake

- 1. It has been designated as wetland of International importance under the Ramsar convention.**
- 2. Ramsar convention.**
- 3. It is the largest brackish water lake.**
- 4. It is the largest coastal lagoon in India.**
- 5. It is also known for Irrawaddy dolphins.**

Which of the statements given above is/ are correct?

- a) 1, 2 and 3 only
- b) 1 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 2 only
- d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

171. Crypto currency announced by facebook is

- a) Libra
- b) Scorpio
- c) Arias
- d) Capricorn

172. What is the minimum percent to become a leader of opposition?

- a) 8%
- b) 10%
- c) 12%
- d) 15%

173. Kaleshwaram lift Irrigation project is on

- a) Godavari
- b) Krish na
- c) Mahanadi
- d) Mandovi

174. GI tag given to Namma Kolhapuri chappal is jointly received by

- a) Karnataka and Telangana
- b) Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu
- c) Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh
- d) Karnataka and Maharashtra

175. 'Back to village' programme is initiated by

- a) Himachal Pradesh
- b) Gujarat
- c) Jammu and Kashmir
- d) Haryana

176. Kaleshwaram lift Irrigation project is initiated by

- a) Telangana
- b) Andhra Pradesh
- c) Tamil Nadu
- d) Kerala

177. Operation Sankalp is launched by

- a) Indian Army
- b) CRPF
- c) B.S.F

d) Indian Navy

178. Theme for 2019 Yoga Day was

- a) Yoga for Harmony and Peace
- b) Climate and Yoga
- c) Yoga for climate Action.
- d) None of the above

179. Which state was proposed the union government for a third presidential retreat?

- a) Manipur
- b) Sikkim
- c) Meghalaya
- d) Odisha

180. Kalbelia dance belongs to

- a) Madhya Pradesh
- b) Uttar Pradesh
- c) Punjab
- d) Rajasthan

181. RCEP is a proposed free trade agreement between.

- a) ASEAN and SAARC
- b) SAARC and BIMSTEC
- c) ASEAN and Six Pacific States
- d) None

182. Which country has become the first country to be granted full membership of financial action task force (FATF)?

- a) Iran
- b) India
- c) Saudi Arabia
- d) Isreal

183. Recently, Justice S.N Shukla, guilty of misconduct belongs to which court?

- a) Delhi High Court
- b) Allahabad High Court
- c) Madras High Court
- d) Himachal Pradesh High Court

184. Kami tribal community belongs to

- a) Tamil Nadu
- b) Karnataka
- c) Odisha
- d) Kerala

185. Who is India's Sherpa at the 14th G20 Summit in Osaka

- a) Arun Lal
- b) Suresh Prashu
- c) Narendra Modi
- d) Rajnath Singh

ANSWER KEY

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
a	b	c	a	d	d	a	d	b	a	a	c	d	b	c	a	b	c	d	b
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
a	a	d	d	c	c	c	a	c	d	b	c	a	a	d	a	a	c	a	a
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
b	c	a	a	c	d	d	b	d	a	b	a	a	b	a	c	a	d	a	a
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80
b	c	a	a	d	a	c	c	b	a	c	b	a	a	a	b	d	c	b	a
81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
c	c	a	d	a	d	a	c	b	c	c	a	c	d	a	a	c	a	d	b
101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120
a	c	d	a	c	d	d	c	a	c	d	d	b	a	a	c	a	b	a	a
121	122	123	124	125	126	127	128	129	130	131	132	133	134	135	136	137	138	139	140
a	d	b	c	a	a	c	b	a	d	b	a	a	c	c	b	d	b	b	b
141	142	143	144	145	146	147	148	149	150	151	152	153	154	155	156	157	158	159	160
d	d	a	a	b	d	c	b	c	a	b	a	a	c	d	b	c	d	c	b
161	162	163	164	165	166	167	168	169	170	171	172	173	174	175	176	177	178	179	180
b	d	c	d	c	b	b	d	d	d	a	b	a	d	c	a	d	c	c	d
181	182	183	184	185															
c	c	b	d	b															