



AN INITIATIVE BY
VETRI IAS

www.iasgateway.com

MAINS
CURRENT AFFAIRS

MAY - 2019

INDEX

1. MAY DAY	16
2. INDIA'S ASAT TEST A RESPONSE TO GROWING SPACE THREATS: FRANCE	16
3. IGNOU TO LAUNCH COURSE ON GST	17
4. DRUG-RESISTANT DISEASES TO CAUSE 10 MN DEATHS	17
5. AUROBINDO GOT ENVIRONMENTAL NOD	18
6. INDIAN ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS TO BE RECOGNIZED	18
7. GARDEN REACH SHIPBUILDERS & ENGINEERS LIMITED	18
8. INDIA TO DEVELOP CERTIFICATION FACILITY	18
9. IRDAI FORMED 13 MEMBER PANEL	19
10. INDIA JAPAN JOINED HANDS IN MANUFACTURE SECTOR	19
11. INDIA RAISED IMPORT DUTY ON WHEAT TO 40%	19
12. DOMINIC WON BARCELONA OPEN TITLE	20
13. ELIUD KIPCHOGE WON LONDON MARATHON TITLE	20
14. INDIA TO BID FOR 2024 WORLD TTC	20
15. INDIAN PARA-ATHLETES CLINCHED MEDALS	20
16. PETRA WON MAIDEN GRAND PRIX 2019	20
17. JACQUES RECEIVED IKHAMANGA AWARD 2019	21
18. RBI PROPOSED STRICT RULES	21
19. VALTTERI BOTTAS WON AZERBAIJAN GRAND PRIX	21
20. NZ OPEN BADMINTON TOURNAMENT BEGAN	21
21. CYBER EXERCISE CONDUCTED IN NEW DELHI	22
22. GOVERNMENT TO TAKE OVER NHB FROM RBI	22
23. AYUSHMAN BHARAT DIWAS: 30 APRIL	22
24. BEIRUT SET NEW GUINNESS WORLD RECORD	22
25. UN DESIGNATES JEM CHIEF MASOOD AZHAR AS GLOBAL TERRORIST	23
26. DENISOVANS LIVED IN TIBETAN PLATEAU, FOSSIL EVIDENCE	23
27. PANAMA CANAL DROUGHT, LINKED TO EL NIÑO, HIGHLIGHTS CLIMATE FEARS	24
28. ALFRED WON GOLDEN ENVIRONMENTAL PRIZE	24
29. SC RESERVES VERDICT ON CHANGES TO SC/ST LAW	25
30. SECOND LUNAR MISSION CHANDRAYAAN-2 TO BE LAUNCHED IN JULY	25
31. NIRAMAI, THE BENGALURU-BASED HEALTH TECH STARTUP	26

32. BAJRANG :1st INDIAN TO FIGHT AT MADISON SQUARE	26
33. US TO WITHDRAW FROM U.N ARMS TRADE TREATY	26
34. 3000 WASTE COLLECTED FROM Mt. EVEREST	27
35. INDIA RANKED 4th IN SIPRI	27
36. BENJAMIN NETANYAHU: NEW PM OF ISRAEL	27
37. THE COST OF ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE	27
38. INDIA'S MANUFACTURING SECTOR GREW SLOW	29
39. WORKSHOP ON SPACE WARFARE AND TECH HELD	29
40. INDIAN AND FRENCH NAVIES CONDUCTED VARUNA EX	29
41. INDIA'S GROWTH FORECAST LOWERED TO 7.3%	30
42. SEBI FINED NSE OVER RS 625 CRORES	30
43. READY TO DEAL WITH IMPACT OF END OF WAIVERS FROM US SANCTIONS ON IMPORT OF IRANIAN OIL: INDIA	30
44. US LAWMAKERS URGE AUTHORITIES NOT TO TERMINATE PROGRAMME WITH INDIA	31
45. PRESS FREEDOM GLOBALLY UNDER INTENSE, GROWING PRESSURE: IPI	32
46. ISRO PLANS TO LAND A ROVER ON LUNAR SOUTH POLE: SIVAN	32
47. SC REMARK ON 'FOREIGNERS' DETENTION IN ASSAM DEFIES CONSTITUTIONAL OBLIGATIONS: RIGHTS BODY	32
48. ROBUST PLAN IN PLACE TO IMPORT OIL: MEA	33
49. CENTRAL BANKS STEP UP GOLD BUYING IN 2019	33
50. BHEL COMMISSIONS 2 LIFT IRRIGATION PROJECTS	34
51. ONLY 10 OF 100 SEWAGE PROJECTS ON GANGA HAVE BEEN COMPLETED	34
52. INDIA, FRANCE TO HOLD ANTI-SUBMARINE DRILLS OFF DJIBOUTI	35
53. GOVT. AND IIT-D TO SET UP CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE	36
54. 750th BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF SRI VEDANTA DESIKAN	36
55. NORTH KOREA FIRES SEVERAL UNIDENTIFIED SHORT-RANGE MISSILE	37
56. LONDON TOP CHOICE FOR INDIAN INVESTORS	37
57. AFGHANISTAN PEACE SUMMIT ENDS IN KABUL	38
58. PAKISTAN TO FREEZE ASSETS OF MASOOD AZHAR	38
59. WATER STORAGE LEVEL IN RESERVOIRS DOWN BY 1%	38
60. ASIA-PACIFIC TO GROW 5.7% THIS YEAR: ADB	39
61. COCAINE, KETAMINE FOUND IN SHRIMP CAPTURED IN U.K.	39

62. WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY 2019	40
63. ISRO PLANNING TO SEND A PROBE TO STUDY SUN EARLY NEXT YEAR	40
64. BAJRANG PUNIA WINS GOLD IN WRESTLING	40
65. A GLOBAL LABEL: ON DESIGNATING MASOOD AZHAR AS GLOBAL TERRORIST	41
66. WB GIVES \$545 MN FOR CYCLONE-HIT SA	42
67. NORTH KOREA FIRES SEVERAL SHORT-RANGE PROJECTILES INTO THE SEA OF JAPAN	42
68. KING VAJIRALONGKORN CROWNED RAMA X OF THAILAND	43
69. JAPAN'S MOMO-3 ROCKET REACHES OUTER SPACE	43
70. LAST CAPTIVE WHITE TIGER BAJIRAO DIES AT 18	43
71. UN AGENCY PRAISES INDIA ON MINIMISING LOSS OF LIFE FROM CYCLONE FANI	43
72. INDIA TO PURCHASE 10 KAMOV-31 CHOPPERS	44
73. WOLTERS SWORN IN AS MILITARY OFFICER OF NATO	44
74. NIOS SIGNS MOU WITH INDIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION	44
75. INDIA EXTENDS TARIFF DEADLINE ON U.S. ITEMS	45
76. KIRAN KUMAR GETS FRANCE'S HIGHEST HONOUR	45
77. ALL EVS TO USE GREEN NUMBER PLATES	45
78. BHEL AND ARAI TOGETHER SIGNED MOU	45
79. UK PASSES ENVIRONMENT EMERGENCY DECLARATION	46
80. ROBOT FROM IIT MADRAS CHECKS PIPELINES FOR LEAKAGE	46
81. WHY IS NORTHEAST INDIA DRYING UP RAPIDLY?	47
82. IIT DELHI 3D PRINTS HUMAN SKIN	47
83. BUDDHIST SCULPTURES UNEARTHED IN TELANGANA	48
84. BSNL LAUNCHES 'BHARAT FIBRE' BROADBAND SERVICE	48
85. CEA INCLUDED IN FINANCE PANEL'S COUNCIL	48
86. 1 st JAPANESE MONARCH TO ABDICATE IN 200 YEARS	49
87. CHINA STOCKS, YUAN TUMBLE ON TRUMP'S FRESH TRADE THREATS	49
88. BRUNEI SAYS IT WON'T ENFORCE DEATH PENALTY FOR GAY SEX	49
89. BRUNEI'S LGBT COMMUNITY LIVES IN FEAR	50
90. SINO-INDIAN BORDER TRADE OPENS AT NATHU LA	50
91. PUTIN SIGNS RUSSIAN SOVEREIGN INTERNET LAW	50
92. NETHERLANDS GOT \$12.8-B INDIAN FDI IN 2017	50
93. COMMITTEE CONSTITUTED FOR CLEAN AIR PROGRAMME	51
94. GEOLOGICAL DISPLAY BOARDS SET UP AT 2 PLACES	52

95. INTERNATIONAL FIREFIGHTERS' DAY (IFFD) IS OBSERVED EVERY YEAR ON MAY 4 th	52
96. INDIAN NAVY LAUNCHES FOURTH SCORPENE CLASS SUBMARINE	52
97. GOD OF CHAOS' ASTEROID TO PASS NEAR EARTH	52
98. SAND EXTRACTION NEAR FISH SANCTUARY HALTED TENTATIVELY	53
99. IIT KANPUR COLLABORATES WITH CSC	53
100. ANTI-DUMPING DUTY PUT ON SACCHARINE	54
101. STATE-OWNED NEWSPAPER CREATES A FLUTTER AMONG SPACE STARTUPS	54
102. INDIA, US AGREE TO STRENGTHEN ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION	55
103. G7 ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS HELD MEETING	55
104. N KOREA FIRES SEVERAL SHORT-RANGE PROJECTILES	56
105. NGT DIRECTS ENVIRONMENT MINISTRY TO FURNISH REPORT ON FOREST FIRES	56
106. SPACEX LAUNCHES FALCON 9 ROCKET	56
107. INS RANJIT DECOMMISSIONED AT VISAKHAPATNAM	57
108. ASIAN INDIVIDUAL SQUASH CHAMPIONSHIP	57
109. THE ELECTION COMMISSION MUST ACT TOUGH	57
110. SEBI'S 'CAPITAL' PUNISHMENT TO NSE, AN UNPRECEDENTED MOVE	62
111. WORLD RENOWNED CHARDHAM YATRA BEGINS	63
112. SAND, A GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE: UN REPORT	64
113. DESERT STORM 2019 SET TO START TODAY	64
114. GOVT REDUCES NEET-PG CUT-OFFS BY 6 PERCENTILES FOR 2019-20	64
115. INDIA AND US HELD BILATERAL TRADE MEETING	65
116. US-CHINA TENSIONS THREAT TO WORLD ECONOMY: IMF CHIEF	65
117. SRI LANKA APPEALS INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO LIFT TRAVEL WARNINGS	65
118. IRAN LIKELY TO WITHDRAW FROM PARTS OF NUCLEAR DEAL	66
119. MALI PRESIDENT NAMED NEW GOVERNMENT	66
120. 40% AMPHIBIAN SPECIES THREATENED	66
121. INDIA RE-ELECTED AS OBSERVER TO INTER-GOVERNMENTAL FORUM ARCTIC COUNCIL	67
122. ISRO TO LAUNCH RISAT-2BR1 ON 22 MAY	67
123. G D ROBERT HONORED WITH V K MENON AWARD	67
124. INDIAN BOXERS WON 6 MEDALS	67
125. TIGER WOODS AWARDED PRESIDENTIAL MEDAL	68
126. ROGER CLIMBED 3RD IN MEN'S RANKINGS	68
127. PRISONER OF PROCEDURE: ON CJI SEXUAL HARASSMENT CASE	68

128. 100 US FIRMS TO JOIN DEPT OF COMMERCE	73
129. TRADE-RELATED TALKS UNDERWAY IN NEW DELHI BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA	73
130. JUS PR RAMACHANDRAN: NEW CJ HC	73
131. INDIA, US AGREE ON PRESERVING AFGHAN GAINS	74
132. IRAN SAYS IT WILL NOT HONOUR NUCLEAR CURBS	74
133. ROAD ACCIDENTS STILL CAUSE MOST DEATHS: WHO REPORT	74
134. TRUMP IMPOSES SANCTIONS ON IRAN'S IRON, STEEL, ALUMINIUM & COPPER SECTORS	75
135. HOW WILL U.S. SANCTIONS ON CRUDE OIL FROM IRAN AFFECT INDIA?	75
136. PIRAMAL, CANADIAN FUND SET UP RENEWABLE TRUST	75
137. ECUBE ROPES IN BADRINARAYANAN	76
138. INDIA'S NEWEST PIT VIPER FOUND IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH	76
139. WORLD RED CROSS DAY: 8 MAY	76
140. SPACEX SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCHED CARGO MISSION	76
141. CIRCLE OF LIFE: ON ECONOMIC GROWTH FACTORING ECOSYSTEM	77
142. SEA PHASE OF 'VARUNA' EXERCISE BEGINS	80
143. NAVY JOINS EXERCISES IN SOUTH CHINA SEA	80
144. DIVORCE BY MUTUAL CONSENT: HC WAIVES COOLING-OFF PERIOD	81
145. AMAZON'S JEFF BEZOS SAYS HE'LL SEND A SPACESHIP TO THE MOON	81
146. INDIA & TURKEY TO STRENGTHEN ECONOMIC RELATION	82
147. SINGAPORE REPORTS FIRST CASE OF RARE MONKEYPOX VIRUS	82
148. CBIC TO ORGANISE MEETING OF REGIONAL HEADS	83
149. RBI WITHDRAWS MANDATE ON IL&FS NPAS	83
150. GLOBAL WARMING: SURVIVAL PLAN	83
151. INDIA CEO FORUM ORGANISED ON CLIMATE CHANGE	84
152. GREENFIELD IT PARK TO COME UP IN GUINDY	84
153. PT. SWAPAN CHOWDHURY CONFERRED WITH D. LITT	84
154. ARE FARM LOAN WAIVERS A POLITICAL GIMMICK?	85
155. HYDERABAD'S INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT RANKED 8th	89
156. INDIA'S FIRST MEGA SCIENCE EXHIBITION	89
157. 157. WTO MINISTERIAL MEETING OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES TO TAKE PLACE ON MAY	89
158. FISCAL DEFICIT TOUCHED 4.52% AT END-FEBRUARY	90
159. GOVT PROHIBITS IMPORTS OF ELECTRONICS GOODS	90
160. CHANDRAYAAN-2 WILL CARRY 14 INDIAN PAYLOADS	90

161. GENETIC STUDY CONDUCTED ON LAKSHADWEEP	91
162. NASA TO CRASH SPACECRAFT INTO ASTEROID IN 2022	91
163. DEEP-SEA FISH SEE COLOUR IN THE DARK	91
164. CROWDFUNDING BRINGS WATER TO MYANMAR'S DEER	92
165. ESHA AND AKULL WON SILVER IN THE SHOOTING	92
166. NEW CLOUDS OVER THE PERSIAN GULF	92
167. KONKAN RAILWAYS SIGNS AGREEMENT WITH NEPAL	95
168. MINISTERIAL MEETING OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES	95
169. IRELAND DECLARES CLIMATE EMERGENCY	95
170. 20th CONFERENCE OF RHCA CONCLUDES	95
171. 180 NATIONS AGREE ON A NEW UN ACCORD TO CURB EXPORT OF PLASTIC WASTE	96
172. 'RAIN-LOVING' SNAKE DISCOVERED IN MIZORAM	96
173. EXTINCT BIRD SPECIES CAME BACK FROM THE DEAD	97
174. A GLOBAL DEAL FOR POSTPONING PRALAYA	97
175. NATIONAL TECHNOLOGY DAY: 11 MAY	97
176. 1st APACHE HELICOPTER HANDED OVER TO THE IAF	98
177. ISRO TO LAUNCH RISAT-2B FROM SRIHARIKOTA ON MAY 22	98
178. 2019 TO BE OBSERVED AS 'YEAR OF NEXT OF KIN'	98
179. GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY STRATEGY UNVEILED	99
180. UN TO HOLD 2020 OCEAN CONFERENCE IN LISBON	99
181. ROAD SAFETY WEEK: 6-12 MAY	100
182. WTO MINISTERIAL MEETING OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES TO BEGIN TODAY	100
183. GRIZZLED GIANT SQUIRREL SPOTTED NEAR GINGEE	100
184. BENGAL TIGERS MAY NOT SURVIVE CLIMATE CHANGE	100
185. ASSAM PRODUCES AN ORCHID LINK TO THE ORIENT	101
186. KS RADHAKRISHNAN APPOINTED AS MEMBER OF CSAT	101
187. MUHAMMAD-BANDE APPOINTED AS PRESIDENT OF UNGA	101
188. WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY: 11 MAY	101
189. FIFA ANNOUNCES TWO NEW AWARD CATEGORIES	102
190. SUBSTANTIVE EQUALITY: ON SC/ST GOVT. STAFF PROMOTIONS	102
191. CHENNAI TO GET ITS FIRST UNMANNED SUBSTATION	103
192. WTO MEETING BEGAN IN DELHI	104
193. INDIA, IRAN TO DISCUSS IMPACT OF US ENDING WAIVERS ON IMPORT OF IRANIAN OIL	104

194. YOUNG SCIENTIST PROGRAMME 'YUVIKA2019' INAUGURATED TODAY	104
195. INDONESIA COAST GUARD SHIP ARRIVES IN PORT BLAIR TODAY	105
196. CENTRE EXTENDS BAN ON LTTE	105
197. 1ST WOMEN'S CRICKET MAGAZINE LAUNCHED	106
198. CHINA HITS BACK, IMPOSES TARIFF HIKE ON U.S. GOODS WORTH \$60 BN	106
199. US PRESIDENT TO MEET HIS CHINESE COUNTERPART AMID ESCALATING TRADE WAR	107
200. ASIAN ECONOMIES TO DOMINATE 7%	107
201. DNA DATABASE COMING UP FOR INDIAN RHINO	107
202. INTERNATIONAL NURSES DAY: 12 MAY	108
203. JEHAN WON FIA FORMULA 3 CHAMPIONSHIP	108
204. NOVAK WON MADRID OPEN TITLE	108
205. REDACTIVE PRICING AUDIT AND THE CAG'S DUTIES	108
206. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES IN 10% RESERVATION	111
207. DNA DATABASE COMING UP FOR INDIAN RHINO	113
208. CHINA TO ASSIST SRI LANKA IN ITS ANTI-TERROR EFFORTS	114
209. FACING THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY	117
210. IN'S SSB INAUGURATED AT KOLKATA	119
211. INDIA PAVILION AT CANNES FILM FESTIVAL 2019 INAUGURATED	119
212. TRUMP DECLARES NATIONAL EMERGENCY OVER IT THREATS	120
213. CHINA BLOCKS ALL LANGUAGE EDITIONS OF WIKIPEDIA	120
214. U.S. ORDERS STAFF TO LEAVE IRAQ EMBASSY	121
215. XI JINPING REJECTS 'CLASH OF CIVILISATIONS' THEORY	121
216. NABARD ANNOUNCED RS 700 CR CAPITAL FUND	121
217. FULLY RECYCLABLE PLASTIC CREATED	121
218. 1ST WOMEN ASTRONAUT TO GO ON MOON	122
219. THE MOON IS SHRINKING	122
220. JAISALMER TO HOST INT. ARMY GAMES	122
221. MOU SIGNED FOR RUDRAKSH PLANTATION	122
222. 11TH JOINT CONSULAR COMMITTEE MEET BETWEEN INDIA, IRAN HELD IN DELHI	122
223. COMCASA AGREEMENT WILL ENABLE INFO EXCHANGE TO FIGHT TERROR	123
224. WASTE DUMPING PROPOSAL DEFEATED	124
225. AAROHI: 1ST WOMAN TO FLY SOLO ACROSS ATLANTIC	124

226. U.S. PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP ANNOUNCES NEW POINTS-BASED GREEN CARD	124
227. OPEC SAYS GULF REGION NEEDS MORE PEACE AND STABILITY TO ENSURE FLOW OF OIL SUPPLIES	125
228. CHINA WARNS RETALIATION AGAINST TRUMP'S MOVE TO BAN HUAWEI	126
229. THERESA MAY TO CONFIRM RESIGNATION DATE IN JUNE	126
230. TECHNOLOGY BAN ESCALATES U.S.-CHINA TENSION.	126
231. PAKISTAN'S CURRENCY REACHES ALL-TIME LOW AGAINST US DOLLAR	127
232. CHINESE PROBE REVEALS SECRETS OF THE MOON	127
233. A LENS THAT CAN TURN SMARTPHONE INTO A MICROSCOPE	128
234. INDIA DEVELOPS NEW GROUNDNUT LINE WITH DESIRABLE OIL QUALITY	128
235. TREE RING DATA HELPS TRACK RAINFALL LEVELS	129
236. INDIA HAD HIGHEST CHILD MORTALITY RATE	129
237. VIRAT KOHLI BAGGED CRICKETER OF THE YEAR	130
238. SLIPPERY SLOPE: ON INDIA AND IRAN DEVELOPMENTS	130
239. IMD SAYS SOUTHWEST MONSOON WILL REACH KERALA ON JUNE 6	132
240. INDIA GIVES 2 MI-24 HELICOPTERS TO AFGHANISTAN	133
241. KAMI RITA SCALED MOUNT EVEREST FOR 23rd TIME	133
242. NAVY SUCCESSFULLY CONDUCTS FIRING TRIAL OF MEDIUM RANGE SURFACE	133
243. INDIA EXTENDS FULL SUPPORT FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, SUSTAINABLE PEACE IN AFGHANISTAN	134
244. VARANASI HAS ONLY ONE AIR QUALITY MONITORING STATION	134
245. TAIWAN LEGALIZES SAME-SEX MARRIAGE IN LANDMARK FIRST FOR ASIA	135
246. INTERNATIONAL AID FOR EDUCATION TO INDIA DOWN BY 26%	135
247. THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT HAS APPROVED A SCHEME	135
248. IRAN URGES FOR CONCRETE ACTION TO SAFEGUARD NUCLEAR DEAL	136
249. ONGOING TRADE WAR WITH US COULD SLASH 1 % OF CHINA'S GDP	136
250. US APPROVES MISSILE SALES TO SOUTH KOREA, JAPAN	136
251. TRUMP DELAYS DECISION ON AUTO TARIFFS FOR UP TO 6 MONTHS	137
252. CYRIL RAMAPHOSA RE-ELECTED PRESIDENT	137
253. BOI REPORTED RS.252 CRORE PROFIT	137
254. NILEKANI-LED PANEL ON DIGITAL PAYMENTS SUBMITS REPORT TO RBI	138
255. CBIC INTRODUCED WEIGHTAGE SYSTEM	138
256. WHY AN INDUSTRIAL POLICY IS CRUCIAL	138

257. SCORCHING HEAT FORCES ANIMALS OUT OF SESHACHALAM BIOSPHERE	142
258. FOREIGN TRADE POLICY	143
259. CENTRE ISSUED DROUGHT ADVISORY	146
260. INDIAN NAVY CONDUCTED MISSILE TESTS	146
261. 26 MAHARASHTRA DAMS HIT ZERO WATER STORAGE LEVEL AS ON MAY 18	146
262. ORDINANCE ON MARATHA QUOTA APPROVED	147
263. KERALA TO GO PAPERLESS	147
264. BRAZILIAN BISHOP RESIGNED	147
265. IRAN FOREIGN MINISTER DISCOUNTS PROSPECT OF WAR WITH US	148
266. RUSSIA TO PAY 2.7 MILLION EUROS IN GREENPEACE SHIP SETTLEMENT	148
267. U.S. LIFTS METAL TARIFFS ON CANADA, MEXICO	148
268. NPPA SLASHES PRICES OF 9 NON-SCHEDULED CANCER DRUGS BY UP TO 87%	149
269. IBM GARAGE TO CREATE AI-BASED SOLUTIONS	149
270. INDIA'S FOREX RESERVES UP BY \$1.3 BILLION	150
271. UNION MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT TO UNDERTAKE A PROJECT	150
272. IN A FIRST, PRESENCE OF TIGER RECORDED AT GOA NATIONAL PARK	150
273. HORNBILLS AMONG TOP SEED DISPERSERS, MOST THREATENED	150
274. INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM DAY: 18 MAY	151
275. DR. P.K. MISHRA CONFERRED WITH SASAKAWA AWARD	151
276. ICC COMMENTARY PANEL FOR WORLD CUP 2019	151
277. WHY HAS THE U.S. RAISED TRADE WAR STAKES?	152
278. TEN YEARS ON: ON END OF SRI LANKA CIVIL WAR	155
279. INDIA-BOTSWANA OFFICE CONSULTATIONS HELD	158
280. 11th INDIA IRAN JCCM HELD	158
281. JEFFREY CONFIRMED AS US' NEXT DEPUTY AG	159
282. INDIA-SINGAPORE NAVAL DRILL BEGINS IN SOUTH CHINA SEA	159
283. UAE TO CELEBRATE WORLD DAY FOR CULTURAL DIVERSITY ON MAY 21	159
284. BRITISH PM PROMISES NEW DEAL TO SAVE HER BREXIT AGREEMENT	160
285. SAUDI ARABIA SAYS IT SEEKS TO AVERT WAR, BALL IN IRAN'S COURT	160
286. INSURANCE FOR VECTOR BORNE DISEASES LAUNCHED	161
287. SIDBI'S PILOT SCHEME FOR FINTECH NBFCs	161
288. 'MOST BIRD-LIKE' DINOSAUR EVER FOUND	161
289. DAYS AND EVENTS	162

290. RISAT-2B TO BE LAUNCHED ON MAY 22 FROM SRIHARIKOTA	162
291. SRFI-HCL TIE-UP FOR IMPROVING INDIAN SQUASH	163
292. FEMALE REFEREE TEAM TO OFFICIATE AFC CUP GAME	163
293. J&K YOUTH SELECTED FOR AYIMUN CONFERENCE	163
294. EASTERN ARMY COMMANDER VISITED MISA CAMP	163
295. AI SYSTEM IN MCA 21 TO BE INTRODUCED	163
296.US PLACES CHINESE, PAKISTANI COMPANIES ON ENTITY LIST	164
297. TRUMP WARNS IRAN OF ITS 'OFFICIAL END'	164
298. US NAVY DESTROYER SAILED IN SOUTH CHINA	165
299. SUSHMA TO VISIT KYRGYZSTAN	165
300. JOKO WIDODO ELECTED PRESIDENT OF INDONESIA FOR SECOND TERM	166
301. PAKISTAN APPOINTS MUEENUL HAQ AS HIGH COMMISSIONER TO INDIA	166
302. FAR-RIGHT AUSTRIAN MINISTERS READY TO QUIT	166
303. KERALA 1st STATE TO LIST MASALA BOND	167
304.WORLD METROLOGY DAY: 20 MAY	167
305. NASA'S NEW ROBOT GOT 1ST HARDWARE CHECK	167
306. ISRO TO CONDUCT SEVEN MEGA MISSIONS IN NEXT 10 YEARS	167
307.SNEHA SHARMA SHINES IN F4 SEA CHAMP.	168
308.PV SINDHU TO SPEARHEAD INDIAN CHALLENGE	168
309. 2nd INDIA OPEN BOXING TOURN. BEGAN	168
310. RAFAEL NADAL CLINCHES ITALIAN OPEN 2019 TITLE	169
311. TAKING STOCK OF ISLAMIC STATE 2.0	169
312. NOIDA TO BECOME ZERO DISCHARGE CITY	172
313. SC DISMISSES PIL ON 100% MATCHING OF VVPAT SLIPS WITH EVMS	172
314. SC STAYS DELHI HC ORDER DISALLOWING BLACK MONEY LAW TO OPERATE	172
315. SUSHMA SWARAJ TO ATTEND SCO FOREIGN MINISTERS MEET IN BISHKEK	173
316.PCT HUMANITY ENTERED GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS	173
317. INDIAN PEACEKEEPER TO BE HONOURED POSTHUMOUSLY BY UN	173
318.US APPROVED SALES OF MISSILES TO JAPAN& SOUTH KOREA.	174
319. SRI LANKA MARKED 10 YEARS TO THE CIVIL WAR	174
320. BRIEF ON SIMBEX-2019	175
321. 8th INDO-MYANMAR COORDINATED PATROL	175
322. OMAN AUTHOR JOKHA ALHARTHI WINS BOOKER INTERNATIONAL PRIZE	176

323. UK'S MAY TWEAKS BREXIT DEAL IN LAST-DITCH BID TO WIN SUPPORT	176
324. BANK CREDIT TO INFRA SECTOR GREW 18.5%	176
325. TRIPURA GRAMIN BANK UNDER TOP 3 RURAL BANKS	177
326. ANTI-TERRORISM DAY IN INDIA: 21 MAY	177
327. EVIDENCE OF WATER FOUND ON ULTIMA THULE	178
328. ISRO LAUNCHES EARTH OBSERVATION SATELLITE RISAT-2B	178
329. NO PROTECTION TO SPECIES THAT LIVE UNDERGROUND, SAYS EXPERT	178
330. ASHISH TO LEAD GYMNASTICS TEAM	179
331. KEVAL SCALED HIGHEST MOUNTAINS IN 6 DAYS	179
332. NPPA REDUCED PRICES OF 9 CANCER MEDICINES	179
333. RAJASTHAN GOVT TO REVAMP UJALA CLINICS	180
334. IMCOR 2019 BEGAN IN PORT BLAIR AT ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR COMMAND	180
335. SEND NAMES TO FLY ON MARS	181
336. JOKO WIDODO ELECTED PRESIDENT OF INDONESIA	181
337. SARAY: 1ST BLACK WOMAN TO CLIMB MT. EVEREST	181
338. BANGLADESH STOPPED VISAS FOR PAKISTANIS	182
339. SRI LANKA EXTENDS EMERGENCY REGULATIONS BY ANOTHER MONTH	182
340. IAF SUCCESSFULLY FIRES BRAHMOS AIR VERSION MISSILE FROM FRONTLINE SU-30 MKI FIGHTER AIRCRAFT	183
341. BENGALURU DOCTOR GOT GLOBAL ASIAN AWARD	183
342. JOKHA AL HARTHI WON BOOKER INTERNATIONAL PRIZE	183
343. GOVT. INVITES NOMINATION FOR VAYOSHRESHTHA SAMMAN FOR SENIOR CITIZENS	184
344. ANIRUDH AND NIKI WON ITF TENNIS TITLE	184
345. 2 NEW BADMINTON FORMATS LAUNCHED	184
346. WORLD BIODIVERSITY DAY IS OBSERVED ON 22 MAY	185
347. CORAL BLEACHING OBSERVED NEAR MANDAPAM, KEEZHAKKARAI, PALK BAY	186
348. EYE IN THE SKY: ON RISAT-2B	186
349. A BLUEPRINT FOR A NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY	188
350. 1ST KASHMIRI WOMAN TO SUMMIT EVEREST	190
351. INDIA RANKED 117 IN KIDSRIGHT INDEX	190
352. FL LT. BHAWANA: 1ST WOMAN TO FLY FIGHTER JETS	191
353. FOUR NEW SC JUDGES SWORN IN	191

354. AFFILIATION SIGNED BETWEEN AR AND ICG	191
355. UNION CABINET TO MEET TODAY; RECOMMEND DISSOLUTION OF 16th LOK SABHA	192
356. MOU FOR JOINT COLLABORATION ON CANCER RESEARCH	192
357. NAVAL DRILLS IN WESTERN PACIFIC HELD	193
358. CHINA DELIVERED FIGHTER JET TO PAKISTAN	194
359. TRAFFIC JAM-LIKE SITUATION AT MT. EVEREST	194
360. INDIA STOPPED IMPORTING OIL FROM IRAN AFTER US WAIVERS EXPIRED: ENVOY	195
361. MOONS' FORMATION BROUGHT WATER	195
362. BRAHMOS MISSILE SUCCESSFULLY FIRED	196
363. SPACEX LAUNCHES FIRST SATELLITES FOR MUSK'S STARLINK INTERNET SERVICE	196
364. KARNATAKA BANK LAUNCHED SAVINGS BANK PRODUCT	197
365. SHYAM SARAN TO BE CONFERRED WITH AWARD	197
366. INDRA NOOYI RECEIVED DOCTORATE FROM YALE	197
367. KENYA'S OLYMPIC COACH BANNED FOR 10 YEARS	197
368. 32-TEAM FORMAT IN 2022 WORLD CUP	198
369. CHAMLING LOST AFTER 25 YEARS	198
370. REMYA: KERALA'S ONLY DALIT WOMAN MP	198
371. IAF'S AN-32 FLEET ALLOWED TO USE BIO-JET FUEL	198
372. DRDO TEST FIRES GUIDED BOMB FROM SUKHOI COMBAT JET	199
373. MICROSOFT STOPPED ONLINE SALE OF HUAWEI LAPTOPS AFTER US BAN ON CHINESE TECH COMPANIES	199
374. THERESA MAY TO RESIGN AS PRIME MINISTER	199
375. JAPAN WELCOMES TRUMP WITH A CHARM CAMPAIGN, GOLF AND SUMO	200
376. WHO HAS DECLARED ALGERIA AND ARGENTINA AS MALARIA-FREE COUNTRIES	200
377. WORLD TURTLE DAY IS OBSERVED ON 23rd MAY.	201
378. UN CELEBRATED MAY 23 AS AN INTERNATIONAL DAY TO END OBSTETRIC FISTULA	201
379. UN DOWNGRADED THE GLOBAL ECONOMY GROWTH FORECAST TO 2.7% IN 2019	201
380. ADB SIGNED AGREEMENT WITH IRFC	202
381. PCB STUDY TO FIND OUT REASON BEHIND FISH KILLS IN PERIYAR	202
382. VOLCANO ON INDONESIA'S BALI ERUPTS, FLIGHTS CANCELLED	202
383. 18 HIDDEN PLANETS UNCOVERED BY NASA	202
384. SCIENTISTS BROKE SUPERCONDUCTIVITY RECORD	202
385. RESEARCHERS SUSPECTS GAS INSULATION COULD BE PROTECTING AN OCEAN INSIDE	203

386. SETHU CROWNED INDIAN WOMEN'S LEAGUE CHAMPION	203
387. INDIA BAGS 57 MEDALS AT INDIA OPEN INTERNATIONAL TOURNAMENT	204
388. FULL CIRCLE: ON THE CHANGE IN KILOGRAM'S DEFINITION	204
389. 17th LOK SABHA TO WITNESS 78 WOMAN MPS	205
390. NAVEEN TO TAKE OATH FOR 5th TERM AS ODISHA CM	205
391. CHANDRANI MURMU BECAME YOUNGEST LOK SABHA MP	206
392. INT SEMINAR ON NOISE ORGANISE	206
393. INDIA PARTICIPATED IN SCO MASS FORUM	206
394. GUIDED BOMB SUCCESSFULLY TEST-FIRED	206
395. DELHI HC RULED THAT UNITED NATIONS IS NOT A STATE	206
396. PRESI TRUMP, PM MODI TO MEET AT G-20 SUMMIT	207
397. CYRIL RAMAPHOSA SWORN IN AS SOUTH AFRICA'S PRESIDENT	207
398. US PRESIDENT TRUMP REACHES JAPAN ON FOUR-DAY VISIT	207
399. RBI ALLOWS MODERN CURRENCY CHESTS TO HIKE SERVICE CHARGES	208
400. ONE BILLION-YEAR-OLD FUNGI IS FOUND TO BE EARTHS OLDEST FUNGUS	208
401. BRAHMOS MISSILE SUCCESSFULLY TEST FIRED	209
402. AN-32 CERTIFIED TO OPERATE ON BIO-JET FUEL	209
403. SPACEX SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCHES, DEPLOYS 60 INTERNET SATELLITES	209
404. MARY KOM, SARITA WON GOLD AT INDIA OPEN	209
405. 5th SMART CITIES INDIA 2019 EXPO INAUGURATED	210
406. PRIYANKA MOHITE SCALED MOUNT MAKALU	210
407. INDIA BANS JAMAAT-UL-MUJAHIDEEN BANGLADESH TERROR OUTFIT	210
408. LIEUTENANT GENERAL SHAILESH TINAIKAR OF INDIA APPOINTED TO HEAD UN PEACEKEEPING OPERATION IN SOUTH SUDAN	210
409. JAMAAT-UL-MUJAHIDEEN BANGLADESH BANNED	211
410. CHINA, PAKISTAN SIGN SEVERAL MOUS IN DIVERSE SECTORS	211
411. RACE FOR NEXT BRITISH PM CENTRES ON BATTLE OVER 'NO-DEAL BREXIT'	211
412. SWEDEN TO HOST WORLD LEADERS CONFERENCE TO COMBAT ANTI-SEMITISM	211
413. RBI APPROVED MODERN CURRENCY CHESTS TO HIKE THE RATE OF SERVICE CHARGES	212
414. RBI PROPOSES GUIDELINES FOR LARGE NON-BANKING FINANCIAL COMPANIES	212
415. INDIA PROJECTED TO GROW AT 7.1%	214
416. HIGH-LEVEL PANEL PITCHES FOR 'ELEPHANT BONDS'	214

417. MODERN CURRENCY CHESTS TO HIKE SERVICE CHARGES	214
418. CORPORATION BANK LAUNCHES CORP SME SUVIDHA FOR MSMES	214
419. PUNE SCIENTIST WINS GERMAN CHEMISTRY PRIZE	214
420. LIQUID HYDROGEN STORAGE TANK LAUNCHED	215
421. NEWSPACE INDIA OFFICIALLY INAUGURATED	215
422. NASA UNVEILS SCHEDULE FOR 'ARTEMIS'	215
423. DRDO SUCCESSFULLY FLIGHT TESTED INERTIAL GUIDED BOMB FROM AN SU-30 MKI	215
424. NSIL, THE COMMERCIAL ARM OF ISRO, WAS INAUGURATED IN BENGALURU	216
425. NEW MEDICINAL PLANTS FOUND IN MANIPUR	216
426. DAYS AND EVENTS	216
427. INDIA BAGS 57 MEDALS AT INDIA OPEN INTERNATIONAL TOURNAMENT	217
428. JITENDER KUMAR POSTHUMOUSLY WITH UN MEDAL	217
429. NALINI MALANI WINS JOAN MIRÓ PRIZE FOR 2019	217
430. APURVI CHANDELA BAGS GOLD MEDAL IN 10M AIR RIFLE IN ISSF WORLD CUP	217
431. INDIA'S MAHESH MANGAONKAR WON SEKISUI OPEN	218
432. PROF. BHARGAVA AWARDED 2019 DR LEE JONG-WOOK MEMORIAL PRIZE	218
433. BAYERN MUNICH CLINCHED 2019 GERMAN CUP	219
434. IT'S TIME TO TAKE STOCK OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS	219
435. MT. EVEREST: LEARN FROM TRAGEDY, TIGHTEN SAFETY MEASURES	222
436. PEMA KHANDU TO TAKE OATH AS CM OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH.	223
437. IAF ALL-WOMAN CREW FLIES MI-17 CHOPPER	223
438. INDIA ELECTED IN UN EXECUTIVE BOARD	223
439. NSIC SIGNS MOU WITH MINISTRY OF MSME FOR THE YEAR 2018-19	224
440. TRIBUNAL FOR ADJUDICATING BAN ON LTTE	224
441. INDIA'S FIRST TREE AMBULANCE INITIATED IN CHENNAI BY GREEN MAN OF INDIA	224
442. SRI LANKA SIGNS TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT WITH INDIA AND JAPAN	225
443. RBI EXTENDS RTGS TIMINGS FROM 4:30 PM TO 6 PM	225
444. GOVT PROJECTED RISE IN NON-GST REVENUE	226
445. MALAYSIA'S LAST MALE RHINO DIED	226
446. RIVERS LOADED WITH ANTIBIOTICS WASTE	226
447. RAHI SARNOBAT WON GOLD IN WC	226
448. SAURABH CHAUDHARY WON GOLD	227
449. LEWIS HAMILTON WON MONACO GRAND PRIX	227

450. GUY GUNARATNE RECEIVED THE 2019 SWANSEA UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL DYLAN THOMAS PRIZE	227
451. DRDO SUCCESSFULLY TEST-FIRED THE NEW VERSION OF THE AKASH	228
452. RUSSIA LAUNCHED THE WORLD'S LARGEST NUCLEAR-POWERED ICEBREAKER 'URAL'	228
453. NASA UNVEILED THE PLANS ABOUT THE ARTEMIS PROGRAM	229
454. AN-32 AIRCRAFT TO FLY ON BLENDED AVIATION FUEL CONTAINING UP TO 10% OF INDIGENOUS BIO-JET FUEL	229
455. ORCHHA TOWN OF MADHYA PRADESH ADDED TO THE TENTATIVE LIST OF UNESCO'S WORLD HERITAGE SITES	230
456. GOVERNMENT'S KEY AGENDA MUST BE TO ACCELERATE GROWTH	231
457. IAF CHIEF PAID TRIBUTE TO KARGIL HEROES BY FLYING MISSING MAN FORMATION	234
458. INDIA UPDATED TRAVEL ADVISORY FOR SL	234
459. IAF SIGNS MOU WITH ISRO FOR CREW SELECTION, TRAINING FOR GAGANYAAN	235
460. ARMY CONDUCTS CSA CAMP 2019	235
461. BS DHANOA WILL BE CHAIRMAN COSC	235
462. PM MODI TO HOST XI JINPING FOR AN SUMMIT	235
463. INDIA, SRI LANKA AND JAPAN SIGNED A DEAL TO DEVELOP CONTAINER TERMINAL	236
464. US RULES OUT EXEMPTIONS FROM IRANIAN SANCTIONS	237
465. US REMOVES INDIA FROM ITS CURRENCY WATCH LIST	237
466. US-UAE DEFENSE AGREEMENT COMES INTO FORCE	237
467. MAHATHIR URGES US TO TALK WITH CHINA, ACCEPT ITS GREATNESS	238
468. SINO-INDIA IT AND DT INDUSTRY COOPERATION FORUM 2019 WAS HELD IN GUIYANG	238
469. AGREEMENT FOR RAJASTHAN WITH WORLD BANK	239
470. INTERNATIONAL DAY OF UN PEACEKEEPERS, 29 MAY	239
471. NEPAL CELEBRATING ITS 12TH REPUBLIC DAY	239
472. WHO RECOGNIZED 'BURN-OUT' AS MEDICAL CONDITION AND GAMING DISORDER	239
473. MALAYSIA TO SEND BACK HUNDREDS OF TONNES OF IMPORTED PLASTIC WASTE	240
474. MEGHALAYA CM CONRAD SANGMA LAUNCHED A NEW PROJECT TO BOOST MEDICINAL PLANT CULTIVATION	241
475. NEW SPECIES OF WASP IDENTIFIED IN GOA	241
476. SCIENTISTS GIVE THE THUMBS-UP FOR ANTHROPOCENE EPOCH	241
477. IVO KARLOVIC-OLDEST MAN TO WIN A MATCH AT THE FRENCH OPEN 2019	242

478. BIMSTEC LEADERS TO HOLD BILATERAL MEETINGS WITH PM MODI	242
479. INDIA'S FIRST ALL WOMAN CREW FLIES MI - 17 V5 MEDIUM LIFT HELICOPTER	243
480. CENTRE SETS UP TRIBUNAL FOR ADJUDICATING BAN ON LTTE	243
481. TRUMP ANNOUNCES TARIFFS ON ALL MEXICO GOODS	244
482. WHO CONCLUDED THAT BURNOUT IS NOT A MEDICAL CONDITION	244
483. UN EXTENDS SANCTIONS AGAINST SOUTH SUDAN	245
484. SAUDI KING SALMAN URGES INTERNATIONAL EFFORT TO THWART IRAN	245
485. HUAWEI CHALLENGED U.S.S NDDA BILL AS SANCTIONS FIGHT RAMPS UP	245
486. 'HAWA AANE DE' LAUNCHED TO SPREAD AWARENESS.	246
487. MAY 28 OBSERVED AS WORLD HUNGER DAY	246
488. GOA CELEBRATES ITS STATEHOOD DAY.	247
489. MANU BHAKER CLINCHES TOKYO OLYMPICS QUOTA.	247
490. CHELSEA CLINCHED THE UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE 2019 CUP	247
491. N KUMAR, TNAU V-C, CONFERRED WITH 'LIFETIME RECOGNITION AWARD' BY THE CONFEDERATION OF HORTICULTURE ASSOCIATION OF INDIA	247
492. LINE OF CONTROL	248
493. THE SECOND COMING: ON NARENDRA MODI'S UPCOMING SWEARING-IN	250



1. MAY DAY

Context:

- ▶ As for May Day in India, the country witnessed the first celebration of Labour Day in 1923 in what was then Madras.

Background:

- ▶ May 1 is a metonym for International Workers Day, a day of celebration of the working class. Behind it lies a history dating back over one-and-a-half centuries.
- ▶ The roots of May 1 can be traced to the second part of the 19th century when there were revolutions, and organisations behind which industrial workers rallied.
- ▶ Countries including Germany, France, England, the US saw demand for reducing work time from 12-15 hours a day to eight hours. The Communist Manifesto written by Karl Marx and Engels in 1848 had a great impact on workers across various countries that were feeling the heat of industrialisation. Crop failure in the 1840s led to widespread anti-feudal upheavals called 'The Revolutions of 1848'.
- ▶ As a result the International Workingmen's Association, known as the First International, was born in 1864 as an umbrella association for all socialist and communist organisations, at a workers' congregation in London. After the First International dissolved in 1876 over an ideological rift, the Second International emerged in 1889 as a united outfit of socialist and labour parties. It was this organisation that declared May 1 as International Workers' Day and March 8 as International Women's Day.

2. INDIA'S ASAT TEST A RESPONSE TO GROWING SPACE THREATS: FRANCE

Prelims:

- ▶ Recent Space missions

Mains:

- ▶ Why china and Pakistan bothering about India's ASAT test? Evaluate.

Context:

- ▶ Outer space becoming an arena of rivalry between nations.
- ▶ Defence and offensive space technologies are being developed with various aims of spying, gaining control, deactivating service and destroying, French Envoy in India Alexandre Ziegler has supported India's Anti-Satellite (ASAT) missile test as a response to these growing threats.

Background: / Debris Concerns:

- ▶ Satellites today have to avoid almost 6,00,000 debris of over 1cm travelling at speed faster than a bullet.

- ▶▶ On March 27, India shot down a live satellite in the Low Earth Orbit (LEO) of 300 km using a modified interceptor of the Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system.
- ▶▶ India and France, which have been cooperating in the area of space for several decades, had announced the setting up of a constellation of satellites for maritime surveillance of the Indian Ocean.

3. IGNOU TO LAUNCH COURSE ON GST

Context:

- ▶▶ The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) will launch an awareness programme on Goods and Services Tax (GST) in collaboration with Bombay Stock Exchange Institute Limited.
- ▶▶ The programme will be launched from its July 2019 session.
- ▶▶ It aims to impart the basic knowledge and skills required to fulfill various requirements under the GST Act.

Background:

- ▶▶ Entrepreneurs engaged in small-scale business ventures can also benefit from this programme as it gives an overview of the procedures and formalities to comply under the GST Act.
- ▶▶ The main objective of the programme is to impart skills to book keeping professionals to file various regular GST returns along with the various compliance requirements.
- ▶▶ Those who have passed Class 12 are eligible for the course, which will be offered in January and July cycle of admissions.
- ▶▶ The study material, which is available online, is divided into seven small modules.

4. DRUG-RESISTANT DISEASES TO CAUSE 10 MN DEATHS

Prelims:

- ▶▶ What is Red Line Campaign

Mains:

- ▶▶ What are the initiatives taken by the government to curb AMR
- ▶▶ Why is antimicrobial resistance a global concern? Critically Evaluate.

Context:

- ▶▶ Drug-resistant diseases could cause 10 million deaths each year by 2050, warned the United Nation Ad Hoc Interagency Coordinating Group (IACG).
- ▶▶ The report also highlighted that by 2030, antimicrobial resistance could force up to 24 million people into extreme poverty.
- ▶▶ Currently, at least 700,000 people die each year due to drug-resistant diseases.

Background:

- ▶▶ The reasons for the sharp increase in antibiotic use are as follows:
- ▶▶ The high disease burdens.
- ▶▶ The rising income.
- ▶▶ The easy and the cheap availability of these medicines to the public.
- ▶▶ The uncontrolled sales of antibiotics.
- ▶▶ Poor public health infrastructure.
- ▶▶ Lack of awareness regarding the misuse of antibiotics.

5. AUROBINDO GOT ENVIRONMENTAL NOD

Context:

- ▶▶ The ₹250-crore expansion plan of Aurobindo Pharma's manufacturing facility in Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh has been accorded environmental clearance.
- ▶▶ The project also involves installation of a captive power plant of 8.85 MW.
- ▶▶ The project is expected to create jobs for 600 people directly and 120 indirectly.

6. INDIAN ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS TO BE RECOGNIZED

Mains:

- ▶▶ What reforms we need in our education system?

Context:

- ▶▶ 4 Indian academic qualifications will now be recognized by the French government with effect from May 1. These are Senior School Certificate (SSC), Bachelor's and Master's degrees and PhDs – from government-approved institutions. Similarly, the French equivalents of these qualifications will be recognized by the Indian government.

7. GARDEN REACH SHIPBUILDERS & ENGINEERS LIMITED

CONTEXT:

- ▶▶ (GRSE) has been awarded a ₹6,311 crore contract to build 8 anti-submarine warfare shallow watercraft for the Indian Navy. These crafts are designed for a deep displacement of 750 tons, speed of 25 knots and complement of 57.

8. INDIA TO DEVELOP CERTIFICATION FACILITY

Context:

- ▶▶ The National Physical Laboratory (NPL) is developing India's own certification facility for air pollution monitoring equipment.
- ▶▶ The move could boost the 'Make in India' initiative.

- ▶ At least 40,000 such machines are being used by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and other government agencies to monitor air pollution levels, including both ambient and source-based emissions.

9. IRDAI FORMED 13 MEMBER PANEL

Prelims:

- ▶ Objectives of IRDAI

Context:

- ▶ Insurance Regulatory & Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has set up a 13-member committee under IRDAI Executive Director Suresh Mathur.
- ▶ It will review the regulatory framework on microinsurance & recommend measures to increase the demand for such products.
- ▶ It has been formed in the backdrop of a less-than-desired offtake of microinsurance products despite their inherent benefits.

10. INDIA-JAPAN JOINED HANDS IN MANUFACTURE SECTOR

Prelims:

- ▶ Contribution of sectors to National GDP
- ▶ Indo-japan bilateral relations.

Context:

- ▶ Japan partnered with India for polishing technicians in the manufacturing sector.
- ▶ Japan's Ambassador to India Kenji Hiramatsu inaugurated the Japan-India Institute for Manufacturing (JIM), at Andhra Pradesh.
- ▶ JIM is part of a Manufacturing Skill Transfer Promotion Programme initiated by the Government of Japan in India under a MoU signed by both countries in 2016.

11. INDIA RAISED IMPORT DUTY ON WHEAT TO 40%

Prelims & Mains:

- ▶ Objectives of National food policy.
- ▶ Wheat fields in india.
- ▶ Types of soils and its suitable crops

Context:

- ▶ India has raised its import duty on wheat to 40% from 30% to support local farmers.
- ▶ India is the world's No. 2 producer of the grain.
- ▶ Local wheat prices have fallen over 11% in 2019 due to ample supply from last year's crop and forecasts of record output.

12. DOMINIC WON BARCELONA OPEN TITLE

Context:

- ▶ Dominic Thiem clinched the Barcelona Open Banc Sabadell 2019 title held at Barcelona, Spain which was held from April 22- 28, 2019.
- ▶ He secured 6-4, 6-0. He became just the fourth player in the past 15 years to lift the title in Barcelona, joining Rafael Nadal, Kei Nishikori, and Fernando Verdasco.
- ▶ He's also the first Austrian winner at this event since Thomas Muster in 1996.

13. ELIUD KIPCHOGE WON LONDON MARATHON TITLE

Context:

- ▶ Kenyan Eliud Kipchoge clinched his fourth London Marathon 2019 crown on 28th April 2019 at London, UK.
- ▶ Kipchoge strode clear of the field to win with the second fastest-ever time of 2:02:37.
- ▶ He set the world record time of 2:01.39s at Berlin in 2018.
- ▶ In the women's section, Brigid Kosgei won the title.
- ▶ She finished the course in 2:18:20 and defeated Vivian Cheruiyot and Roza Dereje.

14. INDIA TO BID FOR 2024 WORLD TTC

Context:

- ▶ Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI) has decided to bid for the 2024 edition of the biennial World Team Championships.
- ▶ The last time India hosted a World Championships was way back in 1987.
- ▶ The last big ITTF event was staged in India was in 2012 when Hyderabad hosted the World Junior Championships.

15. INDIAN PARA-ATHLETES CLINCHED MEDALS

Context:

- ▶ Indian para-athletes secured a silver and two bronze medals at the Asian Road para-cycling championships at Tashkent, Uzbekistan.
- ▶ Divij Shah clinched silver while Asian Para Games bronze medallist Gurlal Singh and Hand cyclist Sudhakar Marathe claimed bronze.

16. PETRA WON MAIDEN GRAND PRIX 2019

Context:

- ▶ World number three tennis player Petra Kvitova (Czech Republic) beat Anett Kontaveit (Estonia) to win Stuttgart's Porsche Grand Prix for her second title of the year.

- ▶ Kvitova is a two-time Wimbledon champion.
- ▶ The championship was held at Stuttgart, Germany.

17. JACQUES RECEIVED IKHAMANGA AWARD 2019

Context:

- ▶ Jacques Kallis was honoured with the Order of Ikhamanga in the Silver Division.
- ▶ The national honour is bestowed by the President of South Africa on citizens who have made significant contributions to arts, literature, music, journalism, culture, and sports.
- ▶ He was rewarded for his successful cricket career.
- ▶ He played 166 Tests, 328 ODIs and 25 T20Is, returning 62 hundred and 577 wickets.

18. RBI PROPOSED STRICT RULES

Context:

- ▶ India's Central Bank, the RBI would tighten rules on opening and operating current accounts of corporate borrowers.
- ▶ This would be done to prevent the diversion of funds.
- ▶ The rules would be applicable to corporates who have borrowed and used credit facilities of more than Rs 50 crore from the banking system.

19. VALTTERI BOTTAS WON AZERBAIJAN GRAND PRIX

Context:

- ▶ Valtteri Viktor Bottas of Mercedes won Formula 1 State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) Azerbaijan Grand Prix 2019.
- ▶ He defeated Mercedes teammate Lewis Hamilton at the Baku City Circuit in Baku, Azerbaijan.
- ▶ Bottas finished the race 1.5 seconds ahead of Hamilton Sebastian Vettel of Ferrari finished with 3rd position and Max Verstappen Red Bull gained 4th position.

20. NZ OPEN BADMINTON TOURNAMENT BEGAN

Context:

- ▶ The New Zealand Open Badminton tournament began in Auckland on 30 April 2019.
- ▶ Ace Indian shuttler Saina Nehwal will be aiming to win her second title this year.
- ▶ Parupalli Kashyap, B Sai Praneeth, HS Prannoy, Subhankar Dey and Laskshya Sen will be seen in action in the Men's section.

21. CYBER EXERCISE CONDUCTED IN NEW DELHI

Context:

- ▶ Directorate of Indian Defence University organised a 2-day Cyber Exercise on Scenario Building & Response on 29-30 April, 19 at Purple Bay, New Delhi.
- ▶ The Exercise was represented by Services, NSCS, NTRO, CERT-in, DRDO, NIC, CSRC, Academia and Industry. The scope of the exercise would encompass the threat landscape and its impact, incident reporting & response framework, and more.

22. GOVERNMENT TO TAKE OVER NHB FROM RBI

Prelims:

- ▶ National Housing Bank and its objectives

Mains:

- ▶ What will be the effect on housing sector after govt buying the stake of NHB?

Context:

- ▶ The government will be taking over the National Housing Bank (NHB) after buying entire stake for Rs 1,450 crore from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- ▶ The RBI has exited the NHB, thus making it a fully government-owned entity.
- ▶ RBI was holding 100% stake in the NHB, the housing finance regulator.

23. AYUSHMAN BHARAT DIWAS: 30 APRIL

Prelims:

- ▶ Ayushman Bhaarat scheme

Mains:

- ▶ Write about National health Protection Mission

Context:

- ▶ As part of Gram Swaraj Abhiyan, Ayushman Bharat Diwas was celebrated across the country on April 30, 2019. During the event, information regarding Ayushman Bharat Scheme was provided to people during health camps organised in rural areas. The Ayushman Bharat - National Health Protection Mission (AB- NHPM) was launched by PM Narendra Modi on April 14, 2018, at Bijapur, Chhattisgarh.

24. BEIRUT SET NEW GUINNESS WORLD RECORD

Context:

- ▶ Lebanon's capital Beirut has set a new Guinness World Record for the number of national flags raised in a city for 24 hours. The Beirut Alive Association, on 28 April, raised a total of 26,852 Lebanese flags breaking New York's Waterloo record of 25,599 flags.
- ▶ The event was organised under the patronage of Prime Minister Saad Hariri.

25. UN DESIGNATES JEM CHIEF MASOOD AZHAR AS GLOBAL TERRORIST

Mains:

- ▶ How India brought China to its knees before UN? Comment.

Context:

- ▶ Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar was listed as a designated terrorist by the UN Security Council 1267 Committee on Wednesday.

Background:

- ▶ Significantly, the reasons for listing did not mention the Pulwama attack of February 14, for which the JeM had claimed responsibility, and which found mention in the latest listing request for Azhar. Nevertheless, the listing is a victory for India in a decade-old diplomatic battle waged primarily by it and supported by its friends at the UNSC, as it would mean a travel ban, arms embargo and asset freeze on Azhar. The P-3 or group of three permanent UNSC members, the U.S., the U.K. and France, had co-sponsored a listing request at the Committee on February 27, weeks after the Pulwama attack that killed over 40 security personnel.

26. DENISOVANS LIVED IN TIBETAN PLATEAU, FOSSIL EVIDENCE

Prelims:

- ▶ Tibetan Plateau location and its geography

Context:

- ▶ The mandible is so well preserved that it allows for a virtual reconstruction of the two sides of the mandible. Mirrored parts are in grey. (Picture credit: Jean-Jacques Hublin, MPI-EVA, Leipzig). Species adapted to low-oxygen environment before modern humans arrived
- ▶ Analysis of a fossil jawbone containing molars recovered from Baishiya Karst cave in Xiahe, Gansu, China shows Denisovans lived in the Tibetan Plateau some 1,60,000 years ago.

Background:

- ▶ The first evidence for Denisovans or Denisova hominins was first discovered in 2008 in a cave in the Altai mountains in Siberia. This is the first-time evidence of Denisovan presence has been found outside the Denisova cave. The mandible was so well preserved that it allowed for a virtual reconstruction of the two sides of the mandible (in photo, with mirrored parts in grey).
- ▶ Contrary to popular belief that high altitude regions were inhabited only by modern humans dating back to less than 40,000 years, the fossil remains conclusively prove that Denisovans lived in the Tibetan Plateau at an altitude of 3,280 metres much earlier — 1,60,000 years ago. The Denisova cave in Siberia is at an altitude of just 700 metres. The discovery of a Denisovan sample in the Tibetan plateau at a high altitude provides the answer.

27. PANAMA CANAL DROUGHT, LINKED TO EL NIÑO, HIGHLIGHTS CLIMATE FEARS

Prelims:

- ▶ Panama Canal and its geography
- ▶ Concept of El nino

Mains:

- ▶ What are the reasons for frequent recurrence of El Nino?

Context:

- ▶ A cargo ship transits the Panama Canal on its way to the Atlantic Ocean, while tree trunks that used to be submerged are exposed due to the low water levels of Gatun Lake, Panama.

Background:

- ▶ The driest period in memory for the canal basin is also hitting small indigenous villages that depend on tourism along the tributaries of the inter-oceanic passage.
- ▶ An intense drought related to this year's El Niño phenomenon has precipitously lowered the level of Panama's Gatun Lake, forcing the country's Canal Authority to impose draft limits this week on ships moving through the waterway's recently expanded locks.
- ▶ The restrictions on how deep the vessels can reach below the surface means large ships, primarily from the United States and China, must pass through with less cargo, which translates into lower revenue for the voyages. The driest period in memory for the canal basin is also hitting small indigenous villages that depend on tourism along the tributaries of the inter-oceanic passage. The economic hit to canal operators stands to be minor an estimated \$15 million this year, compared with the \$2.5 billion in revenue generated in 2018. But the drought and the resulting restrictions highlight the difficulties Panama faces in satisfying increased demand for fresh water to feed the canal while irrigating fields and keeping the taps flowing in the capital as climate change threatens more extreme weather events.

28. ALFRED WON GOLDEN ENVIRONMENTAL PRIZE

Prelims:

- ▶ Global Environmental Prize
- ▶ Alfred Brownell, an environmental lawyer, and activist was awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize. He was awarded for exposing alleged abuse by the palm oil company Golden Veroleum Liberia and helping to prevent it from converting about 50 km² of the forest. He won the Goldman prize along with five others for grassroots environmental activism.
- ▶ Niramai won gold prize at Hack Osaka.

29. SC RESERVES VERDICT ON CHANGES TO SC/ST LAW

Prelims:

- ▶ Constitutional Provisions of SC/ST

Mains:

- ▶ Salient features of SC/ ST atrocities prevention act, 1989. Also write a note on recommended changes.

Context:

- ▶ The Supreme Court on Wednesday reserved for judgment a batch of petitions challenging the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Act of 2018 which nullified a controversial March 20 Supreme Court judgment diluting the stringent provisions of the Dalit protection law.

Background:

- ▶ The 2018 Act nullified the March 20 judgment which allowed anticipatory bail to those booked for committing atrocities against the SCs and the STs.
- ▶ The apex court verdict saw a huge backlash across the country. Several died in ensuing protests and crores worth of property was destroyed.
- ▶ The government reacted by filing a review petition and subsequently amended the 1989 Act back to its original form.
- ▶ Several petitions were filed last year challenging the amendments. The lead petitioner, advocate Prithvi Raj Chauhan, even called the amendments a “blunder” and a violation of the fundamental right to equality and personal liberty. The Supreme Court however had refused to stay the implementation of the amendments.
- ▶ The government had responded that there had been no decrease in the atrocities committed on the SCs/STs despite the laws meant to protect their civil rights.

30. SECOND LUNAR MISSION CHANDRAYAAN-2 TO BE LAUNCHED IN JULY

Prelims:

- ▶ Learn about Global Lunar Missions

Mains:

- ▶ How Chandrayaan-2 helps to know about the evolution planet Earth.

Context:

- ▶ ISRO chairman K. Sivan addresses a press conference in Bengaluru.
- ▶ The moon landing is likely to be around September 6, 2019, nearly two months after the launch.

- ▶ India's much-delayed second lunar mission, Chandrayaan-2, has got yet another launch window. The mission is now set to be launched any time between July 5 and July 16 this year. The moon landing is likely to be around September 6, 2019, nearly two months after the launch. The Rover will be housed inside the Lander. "After launch into earth bound orbit by GSLV MK-III, the integrated module will reach the Moon orbit using Orbiter propulsion module. =Subsequently, Lander will separate from the Orbiter and soft land at the predetermined site close to lunar South Pole. Further, the Rover will roll out for carrying out scientific experiments on the lunar surface. The Lander and Orbiter also carry instruments for carrying out scientific experiments and all the modules are getting ready for this launch window.

31. NIRAMAI, THE BENGALURU-BASED HEALTH TECH STARTUP

- ▶ Startup won gold prize at the Hack Osaka event, Japan, imprinting India's technology at the global level. The startup is developing an AI-based solution for early detection of breast cancer.
- ▶ The concern is the brainchild of Geetha Manjunath and Nidhi Mathur, marking their inception in 2016.

32. BAJRANG :1st INDIAN TO FIGHT AT MADISON SQUARE

Context:

- ▶ Bajrang Punia is set to become the first wrestler from India to fight at the iconic Madison Square Garden in New York. He is currently the World No.1 in the 65-kg weight category.
- ▶ Bajrang will be up against two-time US national champion Yianni Diakomahlis at the 'Grapple at the Garden -- Beat the Streets' event.

Background:

- ▶ The 25-year-old, currently holds World No.1 title in 65-kg weight category freestyle wrestling

33. US TO WITHDRAW FROM U.N ARMS TRADE TREATY

Prelims:

- ▶ UN Arms Trade treaty

Mains:

- ▶ How USA withdrawl from UN Ars Trade Treaty will affect the Global security

Context:

- ▶ US is withdrawing from the U.N. Arms Trade Treaty, in response to concerns from gun rights activists that it could impinge on Americans' right to bear arms. Former US President Barack Obama signed the treaty in 2013 and sent the treaty to the Senate for ratification. The Trump administration has withdrawn from a number of international agreements including the Iran nuclear deal.

34. 3000 WASTE COLLECTED FROM MT. EVEREST

Prelims:

- ▶ Learn about Mt Everest, surrounding National parks

Mains:

- ▶ “The threat of Plastic reached to the world’s highest altitude” Comment.

Context:

- ▶ A total of 3,000 kg of solid waste has been collected from Mt. Everest, since April 14, 2019, as a part of a campaign launched by Nepal. The campaign seeks to bring back and safely dispose of a total of 10,000 kg of waste. The 45-day 'Everest Cleaning Campaign', led by Solukhumbu district's Khumbu Pasanglhamu Rural Municipality began on April 14, 2019.

35. INDIA RANKED 4TH IN SIPRI

Prelims:

- ▶ Learn about SIPRI report

Mains:

- ▶ What are the causes that made India to be the world’s biggest military spender?

Context:

- ▶ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's (SIPRI) report said that India is the world’s 4th biggest military spender in 2018. The United States topped the list followed by China and Saudi Arabia. France also figures on the list of top five spenders that together accounted for 60% of the global military spending in 2018.

36. BENJAMIN NETANYAHU: NEW PM OF ISRAEL

Context:

- ▶ Benjamin Netanyahu was elected as the new PM of Israel.
- ▶ Mr. Netanyahu will seek to form a governing coalition in the days ahead.
- ▶ His Likud party won 35 seats in the election, the same as his main opponent from the centrist Blue and White alliance, led by former military chief Benny Gantz.

37. THE COST OF ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE

Prelims:

- ▶ Medicine and Pharmaceuticals

Mains:

- ▶ Bio- Technology

Context:

- ▶ India must brace for the economic shocks from uncontrolled antimicrobial resistance.

- ▶ Even though antimicrobial resistance is acknowledged by policymakers as a major health crisis, few have considered its economic impact.
- ▶ Now, a report from the Interagency Coordination Group on Antimicrobial Resistance (IACG) puts the financial fall-out in perspective.

Why it is in news?

- ▶ It is in news because uncontrolled antimicrobial resistance will cause global economic shocks on the scale of the 2008-09 financial crisis.

What is Anti-Microbial resistance?

- ▶ Antimicrobial resistance is a serious public health threat. Bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites are all microbes. They cause diseases like pneumonia, HIV, candidemia (the most common bloodstream infection in hospital patients), and malaria, as well as severe diseases in animals.
- ▶ All types of microbes can develop resistance to the medicines that have been developed to kill them. Common infections are becoming resistant to all available medicines.

Issues:

- ▶ India first published almost nine years ago the broad contours of a plan to fight antimicrobial resistance. The difficulty has been in implementing it, given the twin challenges of antibiotic overuse and underuse. Many Indians still die of diseases like sepsis and pneumonia because they don't get the right drug at the right time. A poorly regulated pharmaceutical industry means that antibiotics are freely available to those who can afford them.

How does it affect?

- ▶ With nearly 10 million people estimated to die annually from resistant infections by 2050, health-care costs and the cost of food production will spike, while income inequality will widen. In the worst-case scenario, the world will lose 3.8% of its annual GDP by 2050, while 24 million people will be pushed into extreme poverty by 2030.
- ▶ Nations must acknowledge this eventuality, the IACG says, and act to fight it.
- ▶ For high- and mid-income nations, the price of prevention, at \$2 per head a year, is extremely affordable.
- ▶ For poorer countries, the price is higher but still modest compared to the costs of an antibiotic apocalypse.

Way Forward:

- ▶ The IACG report acknowledges these obstacles, and calls for efforts to overcome them.
- ▶ Some steps can be initiated right away, it says, such as phasing out critical human-use antibiotics in the animal husbandry sector, such as quinolones. But these steps cannot be driven by regulation alone.
- ▶ A multi-stakeholder approach, involving private industry, philanthropic groups and citizen activists is needed.

- ▶ Private pharmaceutical industries must take it upon themselves to distribute drugs in a responsible manner. Philanthropic charities must fund the development of new antibiotics, while citizen activists must drive awareness. These stakeholders must appreciate that the only way to postpone resistance is through improved hygiene and vaccinations.

Conclusion:

- ▶ It is a terrifying task as India still struggles with low immunisation rates and drinking water contamination. But it must consider the consequences of a failure. While the 2008-09 financial crisis caused global hardships, its effects began to wear off by 2011.
- ▶ Once crucial antibiotics are lost to humankind, they may be lost for decades.

38. INDIA'S MANUFACTURING SECTOR GREW SLOW

Prelims:

- ▶ Manufacturing sector measuring indices
- ▶ Manufacturing Purchasing managers Index

Mains:

- ▶ What are the reasons for low growth in manufacturing growth?

Context:

- ▶ The country's manufacturing sector performance eased to an eight-month low in April as new business growth moderated. The Nikkei India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index declined from 52.6 in March to 51.8 in April. This is the 21th consecutive month that the manufacturing PMI remained above the 50-point mark.

39. WORKSHOP ON SPACE WARFARE AND TECH HELD

Context:

- ▶ Directorate of Indian Defence University (IDU) is organizing a 2-day workshop on Space Warfare and Technology on 2-3 May, 19 in New Delhi.
- ▶ It is being held for senior and middle-level officers from the three Services.
- ▶ The workshop intends to cover Weaponisation and Militarisation of Space, preparation for Absorption of High-End Technology for Self-Sustenance in Space Operations, and more.

40. INDIAN AND FRENCH NAVIES CONDUCTED VARUNA EX

Prelims:

- ▶ Defense exercises between India and France.

Mains:

- ▶ How India-France alliance can change the global politics?

Context:

- ▶ The first part of the Indo-French joint naval exercise, Varuna 19.1 is being conducted off the Goa coast from 1-10 May 19.
- ▶ It includes the participation of the French Navy's aircraft carrier FNS Charles de Gaulle, two destroyers, FNS Forbin and FNS Provence.
- ▶ The exercise will be conducted in 2 phases.
- ▶ The second part, Varuna 19.2, is scheduled to be held at the end of May in Djibouti.

41. INDIA'S GROWTH FORECAST LOWERED TO 7.3%

Prelims:

- ▶ Methods to measure GDP and GNP
- ▶ Formulae related to National Income, GDP, GNP

Mains:

- ▶ What are the challenges for low GDP growth despite increased investments.

Context:

- ▶ India Ratings & Research (A Fitch Group Company) has lowered the country's growth forecast for the current fiscal to 7.3%, from the earlier projection of 7.5 %.
- ▶ The agency has listed three key reasons for lowering its projection.

42. SEBI FINED NSE OVER RS 625 CRORES

Context:

- ▶ Markets regulator SEBI directed National Stock Exchange to pay more than Rs625 crore in the case of misuse of its co-location facility.
- ▶ SEBI has been probing alleged lapses in high-frequency trading offered through NSE's co-location facility. The National Stock Exchange of India Ltd. is the second largest in the world by nos. of trades in equity shares from January to June 2018.

43. READY TO DEAL WITH IMPACT OF END OF WAIVERS FROM US SANCTIONS ON IMPORT OF IRANIAN OIL: INDIA

Prelims:

- ▶ Iran location, OPEC

Mains:

- ▶ What could be the alternatives for India to handle Iran sanctions?

Context:

- ▶ External Affairs Ministry has said that India is prepared to deal with the impact of the end of waivers from US sanctions on import of oil from Iran.

Background:

- ▶▶ There will be additional supplies from other major oil-producing countries based on the plan drawn up by the Ministry of Petroleum.
- ▶▶ The decision will be taken keeping in view the country's energy security, commercial consideration and economic interests.
- ▶▶ In November, the US had granted a six-month waiver to India, China, Greece, Italy, Taiwan, Japan, Turkey and South Korea to continue importing oil from Iran.
- ▶▶ The temporary waiver ended yesterday.

44. US LAWMAKERS URGE AUTHORITIES NOT TO TERMINATE PROGRAMME WITH INDIA

Prelims:

- ▶▶ GSP program

Mains:

- ▶▶ What could be the effect of terminating GSP program on India trade?

Context:

- ▶▶ A group of 25 influential American lawmakers has urged the US Trade Representative not to terminate the GSP programme with India after the expiry of the 60-day notice on Friday, saying the country's companies seeking to expand their exports to India could be affected.

Background:

- ▶▶ The Generalized System of Preference (GSP) is the largest and oldest US trade preference programme and is designed to promote economic development by allowing duty-free entry for thousands of products from designated beneficiary countries.
- ▶▶ President Donald Trump announced on March 4, the US intends to terminate India's designations as a beneficiary developing country under the GSP programme.
- ▶▶ On the eve of the end of the notice period, the 25 members of the US House of Representatives urged US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer to continue negotiating a deal that protects and promotes jobs that rely on trade - both imports and exports - with India.
- ▶▶ They argued that terminating GSP for India would hurt American companies seeking to expand their exports to India.
- ▶▶ Noting that the 60-day notice period expires in the middle of general elections in India, the Congressmen said that it will be up to India's next government to resolve outstanding issues with the US.

45. PRESS FREEDOM GLOBALLY UNDER INTENSE, GROWING PRESSURE: IPI

Prelims:

- ▶ Constitutional provisions for freedom of press

Context:

- ▶ Governments across the world are increasingly clamping down on press freedom by enacting new laws, according to a global network of journalists.

Background:

- ▶ Vienna-based International Press Institute (IPI) said in its latest report that as many as 55 journalists have been killed since May last year. IPI Executive Director Barbara Trionfi, on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day 2019, said Press freedom globally is under intense and growing pressure, as illiberal-minded governments seek to shut down critical voices and, in many cases, deliberately erode the credibility of independent media. While on the one hand governments are attempting to curtail press freedom, on the other journalists around the world are being killed with impunity, the IPI added.

46. SC REMARK ON 'FOREIGNERS' DETENTION IN ASSAM DEFIES CONSTITUTIONAL OBLIGATIONS: RIGHTS BODY

Context:

- ▶ A rights body, comprising a retired Supreme Court judge and a former Assam police chief, has said the apex court's remark on the detention of 'foreigners' in Assam was unfortunate and "flies in the face of India's constitutional and international obligations".
- ▶ One of the reasons, the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) has pointed out, is that accounts from Assam indicate "arbitrariness and not rule of law" is often used to define those who came post 1971 from Bangladesh — of whatever religious denomination — and those who are Indian nationals.

47. ISRO PLANS TO LAND A ROVER ON LUNAR SOUTH POLE: SIVAN

Prelims:

- ▶ Lunar probes by ISRO and NASA

Context:

- ▶ India's second moon mission, Chandrayaan-2, will be historic for the scientific community as the country's space agency, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), attempts to land a rover on the lunar South Pole, a region on the moon to which no one has gone till now.

Background:

- ▶ A launch window between July 5 and July 16 to launch the moon mission on board a GSLV-MkIII, with an aim to land on the moon around September 6.
- ▶ If ISRO manages to successfully execute this, India will be the first country to land a rover on the moon's South Pole.
- ▶ The South Pole of the moon has generated a lot of interest in the recent past, with countries aiming to reach the region in what could spark another race to the moon.
- ▶ China is reportedly aiming to construct a moon research station on the lunar south pole, while the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is working to send astronauts there by 2024. According to NASA, some regions of the lunar South Pole have permanently shadowed craters with some of the lowest temperatures in the Solar System, where water ice is stable. These craters are believed to have significant ice deposits, "untainted by the Sun's radiation or geological processes."

48. ROBUST PLAN IN PLACE TO IMPORT OIL: MEA

Context:

- ▶ U.S. refuses to extend sanctions waiver to India on Iran oil import; OMCs stop placing orders from Iran.

Background:

- ▶ India has a "robust plan" to import oil from other countries, the Ministry of External Affairs said, even as the deadline for the U.S. sanction waiver for oil imports from Iran expired on Thursday without an extension from the U.S.
- ▶ Last year, the U.S. re-imposed sanctions on Iran, prohibiting countries from importing oil from it, but waived these sanctions for eight countries, including India.
- ▶ That waiver has now expired and the U.S. announced last month that it would not be extending it. Prior to the sanctions and the subsequent reduction in the quantity of oil imported from Iran, Iran accounted for about 10% of India's oil requirements.

49. CENTRAL BANKS STEP UP GOLD BUYING IN 2019

Prelims:

- ▶ Gold replacement schemes in India

Mains:

- ▶ Why the fiscal deficit is narrowing down? What could be done for further narrowing?

Context:

- ▶ Diversification and desire for safe, liquid assets were main drivers of purchases, says WGC.

Background:

- ▶ Central banks across the globe are building up gold reserves with the first quarter of 2019 seeing significant buying from such entities.
- ▶ According to the latest Gold Demand Trends report by the World Gold Council, central banks bought 145.5 tonnes of gold in the first quarter — a 68% jump from the same period in 2018 and also the strongest start to a year since 2013. Meanwhile, the overall global gold demand rose to 1,053.3 tonnes in the first quarter of 2019, up 7% compared to the same period last year. On a different note, the first quarter jewellery demand rose 1% compared with the same period last year, at 530.3 tonnes, boosted by India.

50. BHEL COMMISSIONS 2 LIFT IRRIGATION PROJECTS

Prelims:

- ▶ Types of Irrigation projects in India.

Context:

- ▶ Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) has successfully commissioned 2 motor pump set units for the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Scheme in Telangana. Under the scheme, 89 cu.secs of water will be used for irrigation and water supply in nearby drought prone areas. BHEL is presently executing hydro-electric projects of more than 2,900 MW across the country, and 3,904 MW in Bhutan & Nepal.

51. ONLY 10 OF 100 SEWAGE PROJECTS ON GANGA HAVE BEEN COMPLETED

Prelims:

- ▶ What is Namami gange mission.
- ▶ Schemes related to clean ganga.

Mains:

- ▶ Sewage contamination poses a serious health hazard? Comment.

Context: / Background:

- ▶ Of ₹28,000 cr. sanctioned, only ₹6,700 cr. spent till date. The National Democratic Alliance government has only finished 10 of the 100 sewage infrastructure projects commissioned after 2015 under the Namami Gange mission, according to records.
- ▶ Commissioning of sewage treatment plants (STP) and laying sewer lines are at the heart of the mission to clean the Ganga. Nearly ₹23,000 crore has been sanctioned of the ₹28,000 crore outlay for sewage management work. River-front development, cleaning ghats and removing trash from the river — the cosmetic side of the mission — make up about for ₹1,200 crore of the mission outlay.

- ▶ The bulk of the projects completed were those commissioned before the Ganga mission began work in earnest under programmes such as the Ganga Action Plan-1 and Ganga Action Plan-2, which began in 1987 and 1996 respectively.
- ▶ For instance, as of March 31, 27 of the 37 completed STP projects and sewer infrastructure were those commissioned before 2015, says a report on the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) website.
- ▶ Uttar Pradesh, responsible for about three-fourths of the inadequately treated industrial waste and municipal sewage, had 18 pre-2015 STP and sewage infrastructure projects commissioned. Only 12 of these have been completed, and only 1 — of the 33 projects commissioned after 2015 at the cost of ₹8,000 crore — has been wrapped up, records show.
- ▶ Making the Ganga pristine was one of the claims of the Narendra Modi government and this was followed up by sanctioning ₹20,000 crore for the NMCG.

52. INDIA, FRANCE TO HOLD ANTI-SUBMARINE DRILLS OFF DJIBOUTI

Prelims:

- ▶ India, France Bilateral relations.

Context:

- ▶ First part of joint exercise, named Varuna, already under way off Goa
- ▶ End of this month, India and France will hold anti-submarine warfare games off Djibouti coast near the Horn of Africa, as part of the 17th edition of the bilateral Varuna exercise series which is currently underway.

Background:

- ▶ Official sources also said that India's request for access to Djibouti naval base for refits has been informally cleared with the Djibouti government.
- ▶ Under the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA) signed as part of its foreign cooperation initiatives, the Indian Navy has sought access to the French base in Djibouti for refit and refuelling. However, as Djibouti is a sovereign country, its clearance is needed for Indian ships and the onus to get it is on France. "It has been informally done," diplomatic sources told this newspaper. Interestingly, several countries have bases in Djibouti, and China opened its first overseas base there last year.
- ▶ Phase I will see the participation of INS Vikramaditya and French carrier FNS Charles de Gaulle and the two air wings, comprising Mi-29Ks and Rafale-M, will perform joint drills.
- ▶ In addition to the carrier, France has sent two destroyers, FNS Forbin and FNS Provence, the frigate FNS Latouche-Treville, a tanker FNS Marne and a nuclear submarine.

- ▶ The exercise will be conducted in two phases. The harbour phase at Goa would include cross-visits, professional interactions and discussions and sports events and the sea phase would comprise various exercises across the spectrum of maritime operations, the Navy stated.
- ▶ Apart from its sole aircraft carrier, India has fielded destroyer INS Mumbai, stealth frigate INS Tarkash, Shishumar-class submarine INS Shankul and fleet tanker INS Deepak. Apart from carrier drills, other focus areas during the exercise are explosive detection, mine hunting and protection of offshore assets, a specific area of interest for France. The bilateral naval exercise was initiated in 1983 and was christened as 'Varuna' in 2001. Of late, submarine hunting has become a major area of focus for the Indian Navy in its military cooperation with major countries.

53. GOVT. AND IIT-D TO SET UP CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

Context:

- ▶ GoI and IIT-Delhi will set up a Centre of Excellence for Waste to Wealth Technologies to
- ▶ commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

Background:

- ▶ This will be done to implement sustainable, scientific and technological solutions for waste management. This will provide an effective platform to bring together integrated approaches for effective recycle, reuse & resource recovery of waste. The waste to wealth mission project has been approved under Prime Minister's Science Technology and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC). The focus is to consolidate all possible Waste to Wealth Technologies, learn from best practices followed worldwide, and implement them at ground level.

54. 75th BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF SRI VEDANTA DESIKAN

Context:

- ▶ Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu unveiled a postage stamp to commemorate the 75th birth anniversary of Sri Vedanta Desikan in New Delhi on May 2, 2019.

Background:

- ▶ Sri Vedanta Desikan (1268–1369), born in present day Tamil Nadu is also known as Swami Desika, Swami Vedanta Desika, Thoopul Nigamaantha Desikan. He was a multi-faceted personality – a spiritual teacher, a scientist, a logician, a mathematician, a literary genius, a linguist, a military strategist and much more. He was conferred the title of 'Sarva-tantra-svatantra' or master of all arts and crafts. He was one of the prominent philosophers in the in the Srivaishnava tradition in post-Ramanuja period. One of the essential features of his philosophy was the aspect of inclusion. Anyone, irrespective of caste and creed could join the Sri Vaishnava fold. The stamp was released by the Indian postal department to commemorate the great philosopher's life and highly valued works.

55. NORTH KOREA FIRES SEVERAL UNIDENTIFIED SHORT-RANGE MISSILE

Prelims:

- ▶ Types of Missiles.
- ▶ India, Korea Defence relations.

Context:

- ▶ A mock North Korea's Scud-B missile, center, and South Korean missiles are displayed at Korea War Memorial Museum in Seoul, South Korea.

Background:

- ▶ North Korea said on Thursday that it had test-fired a new type of "tactical guided weapon," its first such test in nearly half a year, and demanded that Washington remove Secretary of State Mike Pompeo from nuclear negotiations.
- ▶ South Korea's military has bolstered its surveillance in case there are additional weapons launches, and South Korean and U.S. authorities are analyzing the details.
- ▶ If it's confirmed that the North fired banned ballistic missiles, it would be the first such launch since the North's November 2017 test of an intercontinental ballistic missile.
- ▶ That year saw a string of increasingly powerful weapons tests from the North and a belligerent response from President Donald Trump that had many in the region fearing war.
- ▶ White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders said in a statement that the United States was aware of North Korea's actions and would continue to monitor the situation.

56. LONDON TOP CHOICE FOR INDIAN INVESTORS

Mains:

- ▶ Explain India's new model Bilateral investment treaties (BITs) and challenges in it?

Context:

- ▶ London emerged as the top choice for Indian investors ahead of other cities such as Dubai and Singapore.

Background:

- ▶ The investments by Indian companies in the British capital reached an all-time high in 2018.
- ▶ The UK emerged as the top most country to attract Indian FDI with 52 projects, ahead of the US (51) and the UAE (32) in 2018.
- ▶ Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from India into London increased by 255 per cent from 2017 to 2018. And, investment into the UK from India grew by over 100 per cent compared with the previous year, with London accounting for over 60 per cent of all Indian investment into the UK in 2018.

57. AFGHANISTAN PEACE SUMMIT ENDS IN KABUL

Prelims:

- ▶▶ India, Afghan bilateral relations.
- ▶▶ Afghan land bordering countries.

Mains:

- ▶▶ How Peace summits Helps Afghan to pause the evil actions by Taliban? Comment.

Context:

- ▶▶ A huge peace meeting aimed at finding an exit from Afghanistan's war concluded in Kabul on May 3, 2019.

Background:

- ▶▶ A vital first step is an immediate reduction in violence, which has continued apace across Afghanistan even with various peace summits taking place.
- ▶▶ It saw about 3,200 religious and tribal leaders, politicians and representatives gather to negotiate a peace deal with the Taliban. The meeting comes as the Taliban, who were not at these talks, are this week separately meeting in Doha with US peace envoy.

58. PAKISTAN TO FREEZE ASSETS OF MASOOD AZHAR

Mains:

- ▶▶ How India won Hearts at International stage by framing Azhar as Global terrorist? Evaluate.

Context:

- ▶▶ Pakistan has issued an official order to freeze the assets of and impose a travel ban on Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar.

Background:

- ▶▶ This move comes after the United Nations declared him a “global terrorist” after China lifted its hold on a proposal by the U.S., the U.K. and France to blacklist him.
- ▶▶ A veto-wielding permanent member of the UNSC, China was the sole hold-out in the 15-nation body on the bid to blacklist Azhar, blocking attempts by placing a “technical hold” and asking for “more time to examine” the proposal.
- ▶▶ Pakistan-based Azhar is also banned from selling or purchasing arms and ammunition.

59. WATER STORAGE LEVEL IN RESERVOIRS DOWN BY 1%

Prelims:

- ▶▶ Types of Reservoirs.

Mains:

- ▶▶ What are the traditional water conservation systems in India.
- ▶▶ What is the status of Groundwater Level in India.

Context:

- ▶ The water storage available in 91 major reservoirs of the country for the week ending on May 02, 2019 was 40.592 BCM.
- ▶ Total storage capacity of these 91 reservoirs is 161.993 BCM which is nearly 63% of estimated total storage capacity of 257.812 BCM created in country.

Background:

- ▶ States having better storage are Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Gujarat, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.
- ▶ States having equal storage are Odisha and Andhra Pradesh and Telangana combined (AP&TG, Two combined projects in both states). States having lesser storage are Rajasthan, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Tripura, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, and Kerala. This is 25% of total storage capacity of these reservoirs.
- ▶ Storage during current year is less than storage of last year and is also less than average storage of last ten years. 37 Reservoirs out of these 91 have hydropower benefit with installed capacity of more than 60 MW.

60. ASIA-PACIFIC TO GROW 5.7% THIS YEAR: ADB

Context:

- ▶ The Asia-Pacific region is expected to power ahead growing at 5.7% this year but escalating trade tensions are a source of worry.
- ▶ The consumer and investor behaviour could be undermined by trade tensions between countries.

61. COCAINE, KETAMINE FOUND IN SHRIMP CAPTURED IN U.K.

Mains:

- ▶ “Humans are over: Now, the Drug Era entered into WildLife.” What are the measures taken to control the Narcotics in India with the help of UN? Critically Evaluate.

Context:

- ▶ Researchers found cocaine in all samples of shrimp tested in a rural area of eastern England, they revealed on May 1, with ketamine also widespread.

Background:

- ▶ Scientists from King’s College London, in collaboration with the University of Suffolk, made the “surprise” discovery after taking samples from 15 locations across the farming county of Suffolk. The study, published in Environment International, looked at the levels of various “micro-pollutants” in freshwater shrimp.

62. WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY 2019

Context:

- ▶ World Press Freedom Day is observed annually on May 3 to inform the international community that freedom of the press and freedom of expression are fundamental human rights. The main celebration of World Press Freedom Day 2019 is taking place in Addis Ababa, from 1 to 3 May 2019. The overall theme of this year's event is the role of media in elections and democracy.

63. ISRO PLANNING TO SEND A PROBE TO STUDY SUN EARLY NEXT YEAR

Prelims:

- ▶ Other space missions to Sun.

Mains:

- ▶ “Touching the sun might reveal the ‘Secret of Chidambaram’ about our Solar System and Earth’s Evolution?” Evaluate.

Context:

- ▶ Indian Space Research Organization is planning to send a probe to study the sun early next year.

Background:

- ▶ Currently scientists are exploring possibilities to study more about Sun and the probe named Aditya-L1 will be sent to observe the solar corona, the outer layers of the Sun.
- ▶ The satellite would be ed in a halo orbit around the L1 (Lagrangian point 1) of the Sun-Earth system so that it has the advantage of continuously viewing the Sun without any occultation or eclipses. The L1 is 1.5 million kms from the Earth. Mr Sivan said, the mission to send Indian astronauts to space by 2022 is well on stream. About tracking cyclone Fani with the details provided by ISRO, officials were able to forecast the landfall area and this helped in taking precautionary measures in advance. It may be recalled that ISRO is making all-out efforts to launch Chandrayaan-2 in the launch window between July 9 and 16, with the aim of its lander soft landing near the south pole of the moon by September 6th.

64. BAJRANG PUNIA WINS GOLD IN WRESTLING

Context:

- ▶ Bajrang Punia won the gold medal in the Ali Aliyev wrestling tournament held in Kaspiisk, Russia. In his final bout, he defeated Russian Viktor Rassadin by 13-8 in men's 65kg freestyle.
- ▶ The 25-year-old currently holds the number one spot in World Wrestling Rankings.

65.A GLOBAL LABEL: ON DESIGNATING MASOOD AZHAR AS GLOBAL TERRORIST

Context:

- ▶ Masood Azhar's listing as a designated terrorist by the UN Security Council closes an important chapter in India's quest to bring the Jaish-e-Mohammad chief to justice.
- ▶ He eluded the designation for 20 years, despite his release in 1999 in exchange for hostages after the IC-814 hijack, and his leadership of the JeM as it carried out dozens of deadly attacks in India, including the Parliament attack of 2001, and more recent ones like the Pathankot airbase attack in 2016 and the Pulwama police convoy bombing this year.

Why it is in News?

- ▶ Masood Azhar is the chief of the terrorist organization named, the Jaish-e-Mohammad was listed as a designated terrorist by the UN Security Council.

China's Position:

- ▶ China's opposition to the listing has long been a thorn in India's side, given the toll Azhar and the JeM have exacted, and Beijing's veto of the listing three times between 2009 and 2017 had driven a wedge in India-China relations.

Patience and Persistence of Indian diplomacy:

- ▶ Despite the frustration over China's last hold on a proposal moved by the U.S., the U.K., and France just weeks after Pulwama, the government has done well to approach Beijing with what the Ministry of External Affairs called "patience and persistence".
- ▶ There is much disappointment, however, over the final listing released by the Security Council, with no mention of Mr. Azhar's role in any of the attacks against India, or directing the insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir.
- ▶ A specific reference to Pulwama, which was in the original proposal, was also dropped, presumably to effect China's change of mind on the issue.

Claims of Victory:

- ▶ Pakistan's claims of a victory in this are hardly credible; Masood Azhar is one of about twenty 1267-sanctioned terrorists who have Pakistani nationality, and more are based there, which is hardly a situation that gives it cause for pride. It is necessary to recognise that India's efforts and those of its partners in the Security Council have been rewarded with a UNSC designation at its 1267 ISIL and Al-Qaeda Sanctions Committee.

Conclusion:

- ▶ Experts opine that the focus must now move to ensuring its full implementation in Pakistan.
- ▶ But this is easier said than done.

- ▶ Pakistan's actions against others on the 1267 list have been far from effective, and in many cases obstructionist. Hafiz Saeed, the 26/11 mastermind and Lashkar-e-Toiba chief, roams free, addresses rallies, and runs a political party and several NGOs without any government restrictions.
- ▶ LeT's operations commander Zaki Ur Rahman Lakhvi was granted bail some years ago despite the UNSC sanctions mandating that funds and assets to the sanctioned individuals must be frozen. It will take constant focus from New Delhi, and a push from the global community, to ensure that Masood Azhar is not just starved of funds, arms and ammunition as mandated, but that he is prosecuted in Pakistan for the acts of terror he is responsible for.
- ▶ Further, Azhar and his JeM must lose all capacity to carry out attacks, particularly across the border. It is important to note that the Global terror financing watchdog, Financial Action Task Force will also be watching Pakistan's next moves closely, ahead of a decision, that could come as early as in June 2019, on whether to "blacklist" Pakistan or keep it on the "greylist".
- ▶ Both financial and political pressure should be maintained on Islamabad to bring the hard-fought designation of Masood Azhar to its logical conclusion.

66. WB GIVES \$545 MN FOR CYCLONE-HIT SA

Context:

- ▶ The World Bank will extend more than half-a-billion dollars in grants for cyclone-ravaged southern African countries. A total of up to USD 545 million will be disbursed to Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi - the three countries hit by Cyclone Idai in March. Cyclone Idai caused catastrophic damage earlier this year that affected millions of people.

67. NORTH KOREA FIRES SEVERAL SHORT-RANGE PROJECTILES INTO THE SEA OF JAPAN

Context:

- ▶ North Korea has fired several short-range projectiles into the Sea of Japan. North Korean leader Kim Jong-un oversaw the drill yesterday.
- ▶ State media confirmed that North Korean leader gave the order of firing to increase the combat ability of the country. The he purposes of the drill was to test the operating ability and accuracy of multiple rocket launchers and tactical guided weapons by the defence units.
- ▶ It could be Pyongyang's first short-range missile launch for more than a year as it seeks to up pressure on Washington with nuclear talks deadlocked.

68. KING VAJIRALONGKORN CROWNED RAMA X OF THAILAND

Context:

- ▶ King Maha Vajiralongkorn, Rama X of Thailand, was crowned on 4th May.
- ▶ King Vajiralongkorn is the tenth monarch of the Chakri dynasty, which has reigned since 1782.
- ▶ He ascended the throne over two years ago following his the death of his beloved father, but waited until after a long mourning period before setting his coronation date.

69. JAPAN'S MOMO-3 ROCKET REACHES OUTER SPACE

Context:

- ▶ A Japanese aerospace startup funded by a former internet maverick has successfully launched a small rocket into space. Interstellar Technology Inc. says the unmanned MOMO-3 rocket has exceeded 100 kilometers (60 miles) in altitude before falling into the Pacific Ocean.
- ▶ The rocket, about 10 meters (32 feet) long and 50 centimeters (1.5 feet) in diameter, weighs about 1 ton.

70. LAST CAPTIVE WHITE TIGER BAJIRAO DIES AT 18

Context:

- ▶ Bajirao, the last captive white tiger at the Sanjay Gandhi National Park in Mumbai suburb Borivali, died at the age of 18. The tiger had been suffering from chronic ankylosis on left shoulder and chronic senile generalised arthritis for the last four years.
- ▶ Bajirao was born at the Sanjay Gandhi National Park in 2001.

71. UN AGENCY PRAISES INDIA ON MINIMISING LOSS OF LIFE FROM CYCLONE FANI

Context:

- ▶ UN agency for disaster reduction has commended the Indian Meteorological Department's almost pinpoint accuracy of early warnings that helped authorities conduct a well-targeted evacuation plan and minimize the loss of life as extremely severe cyclonic storm Fani made landfall near the coastal city of Puri. India's zero-casualty approach to managing extreme weather events is a major contribution to the implementation of the Sendai Framework and the reduction of loss of life from such events. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the first major agreement of the post-2015 development agenda. It is a 15-year, voluntary, non-binding agreement which recognizes that the state has the primary role to reduce disaster risk.
- ▶ UN agencies are monitoring Fani's movements closely and taking measures to protect families living in refugee camps in Bangladesh, which is on .

72. INDIA TO PURCHASE 10 KAMOV-31 CHOPPERS

Context:

- ▶ The Defence Ministry approved Indian Navy's proposal to acquire 10 Kamov-31 choppers from Russia at a cost of around Rs 3,600 crore.
- ▶ It will strengthen its capability against aerial threats to its aircraft carriers and large warships.
- ▶ The Navy already has a fleet of 12 of these Kamov-31 choppers which sanitise the air space around the aircraft carriers and destroyers operating in open seas.

Background:

- ▶ The Kamov-31 helicopters would be deployed on Indian Navy's aircraft carriers and warships including INS Vikrant and Grigorovich-class frigates.
- ▶ Its deployment is largely aimed at sanitising air space around battle groups which are led by aircraft carriers while carrying out defence operations in open sea or anti-submarine warfare operations.
- ▶ It is a military helicopter manufactured by 'JSC Kamov' (a Russian rotorcraft manufacturing company) and development started in 1987 for Soviet Navy.
- ▶ It is currently in service in Russia, China and India in Naval role These are Airborne Early Warning and Control helicopters based on Ka-27 (Ka-28) design
- ▶ For anti-submarine warfare operations Indian Navy already has fleet of Russian 'Kamov-28' choppers along with 'Seaking' choppers which were procured in 1980s but they need to be upgraded for future operations.

73. WOLTERS SWORN IN AS MILITARY OFFICER OF NATO

Context:

- ▶ US Air Force General Tod D. Wolters has been sworn in as the top military officer of the 29-nation NATO military alliance.
- ▶ The former pilot, who has served in Afghanistan and Iraq, became Supreme Allied Commander Europe at a ceremony today at NATO's military headquarters in Mons in southern Belgium. Wolters' term is likely to run two to three years.

74. NIOS SIGNS MOU WITH INDIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

Context:

- ▶ NIOS has signed a MoU with Indian Medical Association for imparting skill education in Paramedical Courses to the learners.
- ▶ The MoU is initially for period of three years for the paramedical courses all over the country through its Accredited Vocational Institutions.

- ▶ In the first Phase Diploma in Medical Imaging Technology and Diploma in Medical Laboratory Technology are being offered.

75. INDIA EXTENDS TARIFF DEADLINE ON U.S. ITEMS

Context:

- ▶ The government has again extended its deadline to impose retaliatory import duties on 29 U.S. products, including on almonds, walnuts and pulses, till May 16. A Finance Ministry notification said that implementation of increased customs duty on specified imports from the U.S. has been postponed from May 2 to May 16 this year. These deadlines have been extended several times since June 2018.

76. KIRAN KUMAR GETS FRANCE'S HIGHEST HONOUR

Context:

- ▶ Former ISRO chairman A S Kiran Kumar was conferred with France's highest civilian honour, Chevalier de l'Ordre national de la Legion d'Honneur.

Background:

- ▶ He was awarded for his contribution to India-France space cooperation.
- ▶ He currently holds the Chair of the ISRO Committee on Earth Observation Satellites.
- ▶ He served as 9th Chairman ISRO's from 2015 to 2018. He was succeeded by incumbent K Sivan (former Director of Vikram Sarabhai Space Center and Liquid Propulsion centre).

77. ALL EVS TO USE GREEN NUMBER PLATES

CONTEXT:

- ▶ The Central government has made mandatory for all Electric Vehicles (EVs) to use the green number plates.

BACKGROUND:

- ▶ All EVs should use green number plates wherein the private electric vehicles will get white lettering on a green background and commercial EVs will get yellow lettering.
- ▶ The aim is to help distinguish green vehicles to provide easy identification for preferential treatment.

78. BHEL AND ARAI TOGETHER SIGNED MOU

Context:

- ▶ BHEL and Automotive Research Association of India signed an MoU.

Background:

- ▶ The term electro mobility refers to full and hybrid electric vehicles as well as those using hydrogen fuel cell technology.

- ▶▶ These vehicles represent electronically driven vehicles in the future.
- ▶▶ It is for effective cooperation on different projects related to e-mobility and implement solutions for electric & trolley bus, EV (Electric Vehicles) chargers, battery and charger testing.
- ▶▶ Electro mobility refers to full and hybrid electric vehicles as well as those using hydrogen fuel cell technology.

79. UK PASSES ENVIRONMENT EMERGENCY DECLARATION

Context:

- ▶▶ UK Parliament became the first national government to pass a national declaration of an Environment and Climate Emergency.

Background:

- ▶▶ This move marks a serious emergency in dealing with climate change.
- ▶▶ The declaration was preceded by a visit by teenage activist Greta Thunberg (to the Parliament), the feature of David Attenborough's documentary movie titled 'Climate Change: The Facts'.

80. ROBOT FROM IIT MADRAS CHECKS PIPELINES FOR LEAKAGE

Context:

- ▶▶ Endobot is a low-cost solution to identify faults and stealthy connections

Background:

- ▶▶ At a time when water scarcity pervades many urban centres, it is important to ensure that water being transported through pipes is not lost through leakages. In an attempt to address this issue, researchers from IIT Madras have developed a robot to check pipelines for leaks and other faults. Named Endobot, this robot is to be marketed by an IIT Madras incubated start-up, Solinas Integrity, founded by the researchers.
- ▶▶ Quite often, pipes that transport water suffer from low maintenance and neglect which causes them to develop leakages. These often go unnoticed except when the water seeps to the surface. Periodically, water pipelines are dug up, and this may bring leaks to notice, but this is left to chance and is a costly process at best. Water is also lost through connections
- ▶▶ that have not been sanctioned officially. Endobot is presented as a solution that can identify these faults and stealthy connections, at a low cost.
- ▶▶ The electrically-powered robot looks like a small tank, runs within the pipe on four wheels connected using a conveyor belt. It is tethered to the entry point outside the pipe. This construction allows it to run over tough terrain within the pipe without stalling.

- ▶ “Endobot is about 6 inches high and can study any pipe having a diameter more than 8 inches. Since water pipes typically have an inner diameter of at least 15 inches, it suits the purpose well,” says Prabhu Rajagopal from the Centre for Non-destructive Evaluation in IIT Madras, where the robot was developed. He is also a non-executive director of the company.

81. WHY IS NORTHEAST INDIA DRYING UP RAPIDLY?

Context:

- ▶ Decreasing monsoon rainfall is associated with natural changes in the subtropical Pacific Ocean.

Background:

- ▶ Northeast India, one of the wettest places on the Earth has been experiencing rapid drying, especially in the last 30 years. Some places which used to get as high as 3,000 mm of rain during the monsoon season have seen a drop of about 25-30%.
- ▶ A team of researchers from the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune, and Assam University set out to understand whether this decline is caused by anthropogenic activity or is it part of natural changes.
- ▶ The results published recently in JGR-Atmospheres show that the decreasing monsoon rainfall is associated with natural changes in the subtropical Pacific Ocean.

82. IIT DELHI 3D PRINTS HUMAN SKIN

Context:

- ▶ The model can reduce and even replace testing cosmetics on animals
- ▶ Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi have successfully 3D bio printed human skin models that have certain anatomically relevant structural, mechanical and biochemical features similar to native human skin.
- ▶ The bio printed skin produced in the lab by the team is already being used by ITC Ltd for experiments. It can also reduce and probably even replace testing on animals.
- ▶ It can also be used for testing dermatology drugs on human skin and at a future date even help in testing drugs for personalised medicine.

Background:

- ▶ The European Commission has prohibited testing finished cosmetic products and cosmetic ingredients on animals. It even prohibits marketing of finished cosmetic products and ingredients in the European Union.
- ▶ The skin is composed of two important layers – the inner dermis (made of fibroblasts) and the outer epidermis (keratinocytes, melanocytes). The junction between the two layers is not flat but is undulatory or wavy.

- ▶ The undulatory morphology is important as it provides biochemical cues and mechanical support to the epidermis layer, provides structural stability to the skin by making the two layers adhere to each other, and not allow cells to cross the junction.
- ▶ Unlike the currently available tissue-engineered skin equivalents, the team led by Sourabh Ghosh from the institute's Department of Textile Technology was successful in creating this wavy junction in the bio printed skin model.
- ▶ The results were published in the journal Bioprinting. The study was funded by ITC Ltd.
- ▶ The undulatory junction was designed using 3D CAD and 10 layers of dermis were constructed through bioprinting followed by eight layers of epidermis. "We designed the pattern so that both layers fit and the interface had a wavy pattern," says Prof. Ghosh. Silk bio ink mixed with fibroblasts was used for growing the dermis, while bio ink mixed with keratinocytes and melanocytes was used for growing the epidermis.

83. BUDDHIST SCULPTURES UNEARTHED IN TELANGANA

Prelims:

- ▶ Buddhist monasteries in India.

Context:

- ▶ Archaeologists excavated a rare life-size stucco Buddhist sculpture in Phanigiri, Suryapet district in Telangana. The figurine represents one of the Bodhisattvas belonging to the Jathaka Chakra. The sculpture is also one of the largest Buddhist stucco sculptures unearthed in India till date.

84. BSNL LAUNCHES 'BHARAT FIBRE' BROADBAND SERVICE

Context:

- ▶ BSNL has become the first operator to start optical fiber-based high-speed broadband service in Pulwama with the launch of 'Bharat Fibre'. This is the first such FTTH (fiber-to-the-home) service deployment in the (Kashmir) Valley. The Bharat Fibre services are generally not affected even during adverse weather conditions.

85. CEA INCLUDED IN FINANCE PANEL'S COUNCIL

Context:

- ▶ Chief Economic Advisor Krishnamurthy Subramanian has been included in the Advisory Council of the 15th Finance Commission as its member. The Advisory Council was set up in April 2018 to advise the commission on any issue or subject related to the terms of reference (ToR) of the commission. The council had also been mandated to help in broadening the 15th Finance Commission's ambit.

86. 1st JAPANESE MONARCH TO ABDICATE IN 200 YEARS

- ▶▶ Japan's Emperor Akihito formally abdicated on 30 April 2019 in Tokyo.
- ▶▶ He is the country's first monarch to step down from the Chrysanthemum Throne in two centuries.
- ▶▶ Akihito's reign and the Heisei era officially ended at midnight on 30 April 2019.
- ▶▶ Hereafter the 85-year-old will be known as Emperor Emeritus Akihito.

87. CHINA STOCKS, YUAN TUMBLE ON TRUMP'S FRESH TRADE THREATS

Context:

- ▶▶ The move marked a major escalation in trade tensions between the world's two largest economies and a shift in tone from Mr. Trump, who cited progress in talks as recently as Friday.

Backgrounds:

- ▶▶ Chinese investors, caught off guard by U.S. President Donald Trump's tariff threats, dumped stocks and sold the country's yuan on Monday as a fresh deterioration in Sino-U.S. trade tensions roiled Asian financial markets. China's major stock indexes extended losses after opening sharply lower. Both the blue-chip CSI300 index and the Shanghai Composite Index tumbled more than 5 percent in morning trade. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index slumped more than 3 percent. Fanning expectations that the latest trade developments could lead to new monetary easing, China's central bank said on Monday it will cut reserve requirement ratios (RRRs) for small and medium-sized banks. China's currency, the yuan, dropped to 6.7980 per dollar in early trade, its weakest level in 3-1/2 months, while 10-year treasury futures for June delivery, the most traded contract, rose 0.3 percent.

88. BRUNEI SAYS IT WON'T ENFORCE DEATH PENALTY FOR GAY SEX

Prelims:

- ▶▶ Recent judiciary judgements.

Context:

- ▶▶ Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah said on Sunday that Brunei has had a “de facto moratorium” on capital punishment for over two decades and “this will also be applied to cases under the” new Shariah laws. Brunei’s sultan says a moratorium on capital punishment is in effect for new Shariah criminal laws including stoning people for gay sex and adultery that sparked an international outcry.

89. BRUNEI'S LGBT COMMUNITY LIVES IN FEAR

Context:

- ▶ The United Nations has called the new laws “draconian” while the US and several other countries had urged Brunei to halt its plans. Celebrities including George Clooney, Elton John and Ellen DeGeneres have rallied for a boycott of nine hotels in the U.S. and Europe linked to Brunei. Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah said on Sunday that Brunei has had a “de facto moratorium” on capital punishment for over two decades and “this will also be applied to cases under the” new Shariah laws. The announcement came as a surprise but appeared aimed at deflecting criticism that Islamic criminal laws are cruel.

90. SINO-INDIAN BORDER TRADE OPENS AT NATHU LA

Prelims:

- ▶ India – Sino Border states.

Mains:

- ▶ What are the reasons for the closing the Nathu La pass Border for the 44 years? Evaluate

Context:

- ▶ The 14th edition of the annual Sino-Indian border trade opened at Nathu La in Sikkim on 1 May 2019. The bilateral border trade between the two countries is organised four days a week for six months, between May 1 and November 30, every year.
- ▶ It was resumed in 2006 after a gap of 44 years.

91. PUTIN SIGNS RUSSIAN SOVEREIGN INTERNET LAW

Context:

- ▶ Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed into law new measures that would enable the creation of a national network, able to operate separately from the rest of the world.
- ▶ The new law aims to protect Russia from foreign online restrictions by creating a 'sustainable, secure and fully functioning' local internet. The legislation takes effect in November 2019.

92. NETHERLANDS GOT \$12.8-B INDIAN FDI IN 2017

Prelims:

- ▶ India's FDI partners.

Context:

- ▶ The Netherlands has emerged as the third largest foreign direct investor in India during 2017-18. The Netherlands was also the second largest destination for foreign investment by Indian companies, after Singapore, with investments worth \$12.8 billion in 2017.
- ▶ During 2017-18, the bilateral trade topped \$ 8.77 billion while the Indian exports to the Netherlands grew at 14.7%.

93. COMMITTEE CONSTITUTED FOR CLEAN AIR PROGRAMME

Prelims:

- ▶ National Clean Air Programme (NCAP).

Mains:

- ▶ Significance & challenges in implementation of NCAP and measures needed to improve its outcomes.

Context:

- ▶ The Union Environment Ministry has constituted a committee to implement the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP). The committee will be chaired by the Secretary, Union Environment Ministry. The NCAP unveiled in January 2019 is envisaged as a scheme to provide the States and the Centre with a framework to combat air pollution.

94. GEOLOGICAL DISPLAY BOARDS SET UP AT 2 PLACES

Prelims & mains:

- ▶ Cretaceous-Palaeogene (K-Pg) boundary transition in India.
- ▶ Iridium reserves in india and how it forms?

Context:

- ▶ The Geological Survey of India (GSI) North Eastern Region (NER) installed two geological display boards at two important sites -- Mawmluh cave and Therriaghat, Sobhar in East Khasi district in Meghalaya.

Background:

- ▶ The boards are unveiled at Meghalaya's two important geological sites namely Mawmluh cave and Therriaghat, Sobhar in East Khasi Hill District.
- ▶ These geological display boards with geo-scientific information will help in creating awareness among visiting tourists, students and general public.
- ▶ They will help preserve site and also help future generation will be aware of such geological developments.
- ▶ GSI is the organisation that studies various aspects of the Earth forming processes and evolution of life.
- ▶ GSI is also the primary custodian of the rocks and fossils of the country.

95. INTERNATIONAL FIREFIGHTERS' DAY (IFFD) IS OBSERVED EVERY YEAR ON MAY 4th

Context:

- ▶ Coal Miners Day is observed every year on 4 May to highlight the conditions of coal miners as it is the toughest profession known. National Space Day is observed annually on the first Friday in May which was 3 May. World Tuna Day is observed on 2 May every year to raise awareness about tuna fish globally.

96. INDIAN NAVY LAUNCHES FOURTH SCORPENE CLASS SUBMARINE

Prelims:

- ▶ Types of Submarines.

Context:

- ▶ The fourth of Indian Navy's stealth Scorpene class Submarines of Project 75 was launched today at the Kanhoji Angre Wet Basin of Mazagon Dock Limited at Mumbai in Maharashtra.

Background:

- ▶ The submarine has been named 'Vela' after an earlier submarine, which was the lead submarine, of the erstwhile Vela class, the second batch of the Foxtrot class submarines acquired from erstwhile USSR. The steel cutting for this submarine commenced in July 2009. The submarine has completed joining of all its sections. The launch ceremony also signifies that four submarines of this project would be afloat and soon join the Navy's submarine fleet.
- ▶ The submarines are being built at Mazagon Dock Limited, with the main collaborator being M/s Naval group, France. Secretary Defence Production Dr Ajay Kumar was the Chief Guest for the launch ceremony

97. GOD OF CHAOS' ASTEROID TO PASS NEAR EARTH

Prelims:

- ▶ Types of asteroids.

Mains:

- ▶ What are asteroids and how it grouped?
- ▶ Why was today's asteroid classified as 'Potentially Hazardous'? Comment.

Context:

- ▶ In 2029, a massive asteroid called 99942 Apophis will fly past earth at an approximate distance of 19,000 miles within the distance of some orbiting spacecraft. Apophis is named after the Egyptian god of chaos.

- ▶ The asteroid was originally discovered in 2004 by astronomers at the Kitt Peak National Observatory, which is located in Arizona.

98. SAND EXTRACTION NEAR FISH SANCTUARY HALTED TENTATIVELY

Prelims:

- ▶ Types of Sanctuaries in India.

Mains:

- ▶ “How Humans Destroying Natural Habitats for their Luxury Needs?” Comment.

Context:

- ▶ The Department of Mines and Geology has passed an order to tentatively halt sand extraction from the Tunga in the vicinity of the Chibbalagudde fish sanctuary in Tirthahalli taluk.

Background:

- ▶ The 3-km stretch of the Tunga river near Chibbalagudde in Tirthahalli taluk hosts 27 varieties of fishes and has been declared as a fish sanctuary by the State government.
- ▶ The department had sanctioned permission recently for sand extraction from the Tunga bank in Dabbanagadde village located a few metres away from Chibbalagudde.
- ▶ Environmentalists had expressed apprehension that sand extraction here would loosen the river bank and alter the course of the river owing to which the fish in Chibbalagudde might migrate to other places or they might cease to exist. Residents of Chibbalagudde and surrounding places had requested the district administration to stop sand extraction to conserve the aquatic

99. IIT KANPUR COLLABORATES WITH CSC

Prelims:

- ▶ Unnat Bharat Abhiyan

Mains:

- ▶ How technology can be useful for rural development?

Context:

- ▶ Ministry of Electronics & IT, and CSC e- Governance Services India Limited partnered with the IIT Kanpur to upscale ‘Unnat Bharat Abhiyan’.

Background:

- ▶ ‘Unnat Bharat Abhiyan’ is the programme of the HRD (Human Resource Development) Ministry which is working towards achieving solutions for increasing sustainable growth in rural India.

- ▶ IIT-Kanpur brought 15 leading higher education institutions from UP (Uttar Pradesh) to work together with CSC, under this policy, for the villages' development.
- ▶ Through CSC, they will adopt gram panchayats and equip themselves with citizen-centric services.

100. ANTI-DUMPING DUTY PUT ON SACCHARINE

Prelims:

- ▶ Anti-dumping duty
- ▶ Effects of Saccharine on health an environment

Context:

- ▶ The Finance Ministry has, on the recommendations of the Commerce Ministry, imposed an anti-dumping duty of \$1,633.17 per tonne on the import of saccharine from Indonesia.
- ▶ Saccharine is a compound most commonly used in sugar-substitute sweeteners. Indonesia, until recently, accounted for a large chunk of India's saccharine imports. In 2017-18, India imported \$4.36 million worth of saccharine from Indonesia, which is 43% of the total imports of the sugar-substitute compound.
- ▶ However, imports from Indonesia have declined since then. In the April 2018 to February 2019 period, India imported only \$1.48 million worth of saccharine from Indonesia, about 20% of its total imports from around the world.

101. STATE-OWNED NEWSPACE CREATES A FLUTTER AMONG SPACE STARTUPS

Prelims:

- ▶ ISRO set up and its associated research centres

Context:

- ▶ In early March, the small set of NewSpace entities in the country sat up in disbelief to see a state-run company taking birth in that name although it did not fit the standard definition of their league.

Background:

- ▶ On March 6, the Department of Space (DoS) quietly registered its second commercial entity, NewSpace India Ltd. (NSIL), in Bengaluru.
- ▶ At the time, the small, new age ventures and startups foraying into the space industry were still coming to terms with the news of February 19 that the Union Cabinet had cleared a new business arm for DoS. Surprise, because DoS already has a commercial venture, Antrix Corporation Limited, which was set up in September 1992 to market the products and services of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

- ▶ While the government hasn't said much about NSIL plans since the first announcement, officials in the DoS and ISRO have been trying to figure out how exactly Antrix and NSIL would operate their respective businesses in the common, niche area.

102. INDIA, US AGREE TO STRENGTHEN ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION

Prelims:

- ▶ India-US relations timeline and challenges

Mains:

- ▶ What are the trade challenges between India and USA, how will it impact the global economy?

Context:

- ▶ India and the United States have agreed to strengthen economic co-operation and bilateral trade by ensuring greater collaboration amongst stakeholders, including government, businesses and entrepreneurs.

Background:

- ▶ A bilateral trade meeting was held between the two countries in New Delhi.
- ▶ Commerce and Industry Minister Suresh Prabhu and US Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross co-chaired the meeting. Both leaders appreciated the strong, robust and growing bilateral ties across the entire spectrum of trade and commerce. Both sides also expressed satisfaction over last year's progress, with bilateral trade in Goods and Services registering a growth of 12.6 per cent. India and US also discussed various outstanding trade issues.

103. G7 ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS HELD MEETING

Prelims:

- ▶ G7 grouping and its objectives

Mains:

- ▶ How can G7 help in combating the climate change?

Context:

- ▶ Environment ministers of the G7 nations met in France, before the release of what is expected to be another alarming report on the state of the planet.

Background:

- ▶ Ministers from Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the US gathered for the two-day meeting in the city of Metz.
- ▶ They were due to discuss measures to tackle deforestation, plastic pollution and the degradation of coral reefs.

104. N. KOREA FIRES SEVERAL SHORT-RANGE PROJECTILES

Context:

- ▶ North Korea has fired several short-range projectiles into the Sea of Japan.
- ▶ State media confirmed that North Korean leader gave the order of firing to increase the combat ability of the country.
- ▶ The purpose of the drill was to test the operating ability and accuracy of multiple rocket launchers and tactical guided weapons by the defence units.
- ▶ North Korean leader - Kim Jong-un.

105. NGT DIRECTS ENVIRONMENT MINISTRY TO FURNISH REPORT ON FOREST FIRES

Context:

- ▶ Following a plea raising concerns over incidents of forest fires in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Jammu and Kashmir, the National Green Tribunal has sought a report from the Union Environment Ministry.

Background:

- ▶ The bench sought a report on the preventive steps taken by the Centre and the State governments in accordance with previous orders passed by the National Green Tribunal.
- ▶ Directing authorities to file the report within 10 days, the bench directed the Inspector General of Forest (In charge, Forest Protection and Forest Fire) to be present before the tribunal on May 28.

106. SPACEX LAUNCHES FALCON 9 ROCKET

Mains:

- ▶ What are the pros and cons of having a reusable rocket launcher?

Context:

- ▶ Space Exploration Technologies Corp. (Space X) launched its 17th commercial resupply mission to the International Space Station by using Falcon 9 rocket with Dragon Spacecraft.
- ▶ The 213-foot-tall rocket lifted off from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida.
- ▶ This mission is a part of NASA's Commercial Resupply Services program, which uses commercial spacecraft to deliver cargo to the ISS.

107. INS RANJIT DECOMMISSIONED AT VISAKHAPATNAM

Context:

- ▶ INS Ranjit, a Rajput class destroyer was decommissioned at a solemn grand ceremony at Naval Dockyard today at Visakhapatnam.

Background:

- ▶ The Decommissioning Ceremony was graced by 16 officers and 10 sailors from the commissioning crew and 23 erstwhile Commanding Officers.
- ▶ The ship commissioned on 15 September 1983 by Captain Vishnu Bhagwat in erstwhile USSR has rendered yeoman service to the nation for 36 years. The ship since her commissioning has sailed for 2190 days covering a distance of over 7,43,000 nautical miles.
- ▶ The ship has been at the forefront of major naval operations and has the distinction of serving on both Eastern and Western seaboard.
- ▶ Apart from various naval operations like Op Talwar and various multinational exercises, the ship has also been a flag bearer of the Indian Navys benign role by participating in relief operations post Tsunami in 2004 and Hud-hud on 2014.
- ▶ At the sunset on 06th May 19, the National Flag, Naval Ensign and Commissioning Pennant were lowered for one last time onboard, a glorious era in the history of the Indian Navy came to a nostalgic end.

108. ASIAN INDIVIDUAL SQUASH CHAMPIONSHIP

- ▶ Ace Indian squash players Saurav Ghoshal and Joshna Chinappa won their respective Asian Individual Squash Championship titles in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- ▶ Saurav Ghoshal defeated Leo Au Chun Ming of Hong Kong to win the men's title. He is the first Indian male player to reach top ten of the world rankings.
- ▶ Joshna Chinappa retained her title by beating Annie Au of Hong Kong in the women's final.

109. THE ELECTION COMMISSION MUST ACT TOUGH

Context:

- ▶ The 2019 general election will long be remembered not just for the transgressions of the top political leadership, but also for the Election Commission (EC) itself being put in the dock.
- ▶ The EC has repeatedly found itself at the receiving end of scathing attacks from the Opposition, the public, the media and the judiciary.
- ▶ This is unprecedented for what was until now the most trusted institution in the country.

Case of a Trust Deficit?

- ▶ Experts opine that the trust deficit between the EC and the Opposition parties and the voters started with the EVM/VVPAT saga. The EC was accused of being on the defensive rather than being communicative. On April 8, 2019, in a letter to the President, a group of retired bureaucrats and diplomats expressed concern over the EC's "weak-kneed conduct" and said that the institution is "suffering from a crisis of credibility today".
- ▶ As a matter of fact, it took repeated raps on its knuckles by the Supreme Court for the EC to crack the whip. Experts opine that it is a pity that we needed the Supreme Court to remind the EC of powers that it always had.

The supreme court Making a Course Correction:

- ▶ Article 329 of the Constitution has barred courts from interfering in electoral matters after the election process has been set in motion.
- ▶ As a matter of fact, in a long chain of judgments, the Supreme Court has reiterated that provision and restrained all courts from intervening. It is therefore significant that in the last couple of months, the apex court itself had to jump in for course correction. This is more serious than is realised at present. On April 15, 2019 a Supreme Court Bench headed by the Chief Justice of India pulled up the EC for not acting against hate speeches and statements on religious lines. It was reported that the EC told the apex court, "We are toothless, we are powerless, we issue notices, then advisory and on repeated violation, we file complaint."
- ▶ The Supreme Court was furious with this stand.

About EC:

- ▶ The Supreme Court had observed in 1977 that "where these [the existing laws] are absent, and yet a situation has to be tackled, the Chief Election Commissioner has not to fold his hands and pray to God for divine inspiration to enable him to exercise his functions and to perform his duties or to look to any external authority for the grant of powers to deal with the situation. He must lawfully exercise his power independently, in all matters relating to the conduct of elections, and see that the election process is completed properly, in a free and fair manner." This has been the EC's bible.

Prompting the EC to act:

- ▶ After the EC had not acted on complaints against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP president Amit Shah for almost a month, the Supreme Court ordered it to do so before May 6, 2019. The EC promptly disposed of several complaints, giving the two leaders a clean chit in each case.
- ▶ Experts opine that the trust of the people which the Election Commission of India enjoys cannot be taken for granted. The moment there is a deficit of credibility, problems begin.

Important points to be known:

- ▶ The three-member “full commission” of the Election Commission consists of the Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora and the two election commissioners Ashok Lavasa and Sushil Chandra.
- ▶ The poll panel’s rules express preference for a unanimous view, but provide for a majority ruling in the absence of unanimity.

Issues:

- ▶ The opposition had alleged poll code violations committed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP chief Amit Shah.
- ▶ Recently, the Election Commission of India gave clean chits in response to these alleged poll code violations. However, certain sections of the media have reported that these recent clean chits by the Election Commission were not unanimous.
- ▶ It has emerged that on five occasions, one of the three commissioners dissented with the majority view to let PM Modi and Amit Shah off the hook for their comments.
- ▶ The five rulings where one of the commissioners dissented with his two colleagues include two separate instances where the Prime Minister sought votes in the name of the martyrs of the Pulwama terror attacks, in speeches in Maharashtra and Karnataka and two separate instances where the Prime Minister questioned Rahul Gandhi’s selection of the Wayanad Lok Sabha seat as pandering to minorities, in speeches in Maharashtra.
- ▶ The fifth instance was related to Mr Shah’s comments, also on Wayanad, where in a speech in Nagpur, he said “Rahul Gandhi is contesting in such a place where it is impossible to say when a procession is taken out, whether it is a procession in India or Pakistan”.
- ▶ In this case, too, the sole commissioner objected to the majority view granting the BJP president a clean chit.
- ▶ Experts opine that the minority view expressed by this sole election commissioner may not have changed the result, but dissent is a healthy sign of objective deliberation, and thus presents a ray of hope.

Alleged Inaction on Part of The Election Commission:

- ▶ Experts opine that while complaints against other leaders were promptly dealt with, there was an obvious delay in taking up those against Mr. Modi.
- ▶ Few would have failed to notice that he has been running an abrasive campaign.
- ▶ Critics allege that he had stoked fears over India’s security, claimed credit for the performance of the armed forces and implicitly underscored that his party stands for the religious majority.
- ▶ It was only after the matter reached the Supreme Court that the three-member EC began to dispose of the complaints.

- ▶ Experts opine that what is disconcerting is the EC's finding that none of his remarks touching on the role of the armed forces under his rule violates the directive against the use of the armed forces for political propaganda.
- ▶ Further, the fact that some of these decisions were not unanimous, but marked by dissent from one of the Election Commissioners, points to the seriousness of the credibility crisis the institution is facing.
- ▶ For instance, a remark Mr. Modi made in Wardha on April 1, 2019 — that Congress president Rahul Gandhi was contesting from a constituency “where the majority community is in a minority” — was deemed innocent, and it took four weeks for the EC to give this clean chit.
- ▶ The second one, for a speech at Latur on April 9, 2019. Here, the Prime Minister made a direct appeal to first-time voters that they should dedicate their votes to the Air Force team that struck at Balakot, and the martyrs of Pulwama.
- ▶ The technicality the EC used to absolve Mr. Modi was that he did not directly appeal for votes in the name of the armed forces.
- ▶ So far the EC has rejected six complaints.
- ▶ It is important to note that the prohibition against the use of the armed forces in election propaganda is to underscore their apolitical nature and to deny ruling parties the opportunity to project their performance as their own achievements.
- ▶ Yet, the EC has decided that none of the references to air strikes, the nuclear option and dealing with Pakistan attracted the bar under the MCC.
- ▶ Critics point out that it is difficult not to speculate that had the same remarks been made by other candidates, they may have attracted a ban on campaigning for a period.
- ▶ The EC has so far retained its well-founded reputation, although there have been occasional complaints in the past that questioned its impartiality.
- ▶ However, it is unfortunate that this reputation for independence and even-handedness is starkly under question in this election.

Appointments and Removal:

- ▶ Experts opine that the root of the problem lies in the flawed system of appointment of Election Commissioners.
- ▶ They are appointed unilaterally by the government of the day.
- ▶ There has been a demand for de-politicising appointments through a broad-based consultation, as is done in other countries.
- ▶ The uncertainty of elevation by seniority makes them vulnerable to government pressure.
- ▶ The government can control a defiant CEC through the majority voting power of the two Election Commissioners.

- ▶▶ In its 255th Report, the Law Commission of India recommended a collegium system for appointing Election Commissioners.
- ▶▶ Political stalwarts such as L.K. Advani and former CECs B.B. Tandon, N. Gopalaswami and S.Y. Quraishi supported the idea even when in office. However, successive ruling dispensations have ducked the issue, not wanting to let go of their power. It is obvious that political and electoral interests take precedence over national interest.
- ▶▶ A public interest litigation was also filed in the Supreme Court in 2018 on the matter. This has been referred to a Constitution Bench.
- ▶▶ Experts feel that on issues of such vital importance, even the Supreme Court, which is described as the guardian angel of democracy, has to act urgently. If democracy is derailed, its future too would be in jeopardy.

Way Forward:

- ▶▶ Apart from the manner of appointment, the provision for the removal of Election Commissioners also needs correction.
- ▶▶ At present, only the CEC is protected from being removed (except through impeachment).
- ▶▶ One has to remember that the Constitution enabled protection to the CEC as it was a one-man Commission initially. This must now be extended to other Commissioners, who were added in 1993, as they collectively represent the EC.
- ▶▶ In the rich history of democratic India, all institutions of the state have come under pressure at one point or another. But the strength and credibility of an institution is tested when it buckles under political influence.

Conclusion:

- ▶▶ It is unfortunate that the topic of debate now is the EC rather than the appalling and unconstitutional conduct of our leaders.
- ▶▶ Over 40 electoral reforms remain pending for two decades.
- ▶▶ While it seems futile to have any hope from the political leadership, it is imperative that the EC asserts the ample authority that it already possesses constitutionally.
- ▶▶ It has the full support of the Supreme Court. It must act tough. This is not a mere question of its discretion, but a constitutional duty. Governments come and go, but the reputation of the EC stays for good.

110. SEBI'S 'CAPITAL' PUNISHMENT TO NSE, AN UNPRECEDENTED MOVE

Context:

- ▶ The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) does not have a history of acting tough against stock exchanges, which are also the first level regulators for listed companies.
- ▶ There have been instances in the past when processes and procedures of exchanges have been a subject of regulatory probe, but more often than not, the bourses managed to get away with a censure or warning.

Why it is in News?

- ▶ Information asymmetry is not allowed under SEBI laws, and this violation led to the regulator acting in a manner hitherto not witnessed in the history of Indian capital markets.
- ▶ SEBI has also taken strong action against the former and current top brass of the exchange as well, with two former chief executives being directed to disgorge a part of their salaries and barred from being associated with any exchange or listed company.

What is the Issue?

- ▶ The SEBI action is unprecedented and welcomed by many in the market, it has also raised important questions, the foremost being the rationale of directing NSE to disgorge money at a time when neither the regulator nor the exchange knows who lost money in this game.
- ▶ There have been two high profile instances in the past when SEBI came out with disgorgement orders. One was in the IPO irregularities scam and then in the Satyam matter.
- ▶ In both matters, the regulatory probe clearly showed that investors lost money due to fraudulent activities done by certain entities.
- ▶ In the IPO scam, even cheques were issued to various retail individual investors that were believed to have suffered losses due to the fraud.
- ▶ SEBI itself is saying that there is no fraud in this matter, but then goes on to pass a disgorgement order," said a former SEBI official, adding that passing a disgorgement order for not exercising proper due diligence could set a bad precedent.
- ▶ Indeed, the SEBI has explicitly stated in its order that there is no sufficient evidence to say that fraud was committed.
- ▶ Another issue is that ever since the matter came out in the open, it was widely believed that a set of brokers — predominantly OPG Securities — made the most of the gains due to preferential access to information.
- ▶ OPG Securities and its directors have been barred from the market for five years, though the amount to be disgorged is only around 15 crore.

Way forward:

- ▶▶ “Disgorgement orders are passed in cases where you are able to establish that money or gains were made in a manner in which it shouldn’t have been made,” said another former SEBI official.
- ▶▶ “If SEBI is able to identify the entities that lost money in the process, then it needs to disgorge the money to such entities or else the money can go to the Consolidated Fund of India.
- ▶▶ In this particular case, the money will go to the government fund,”
- ▶▶ It is widely believed that the best way forward for the stock exchange is to disgorge the money and move on instead of stretching the matter by challenging the order at the Securities Appellate Tribunal or the high court.
- ▶▶ Incidentally, the exchange already has more than the required amount of money kept in a separate bank account in which based on a SEBI directive revenue from co-location services were being credited since September 2016.

Conclusion:

- ▶▶ “SEBI has directed that pending completion of investigation to the satisfaction of SEBI, all revenues emanating from co-location facility, including the transaction charges on the trades executed through co-location facility with effect from September 2016, be transferred to a separate bank account,” the NSE stated, as part of the notes with its financial statements.
- ▶▶ This probe was also the biggest overhang in N
- ▶▶ SE’s plans of going public to raise funds.
- ▶▶ So, clearing the matter by disgorging the money would pave the way for the exchange to get listed in the coming months.

111. WORLD RENOWNED CHARDHAM YATRA BEGINS

Context:

- ▶▶ In Uttarakhand, the world renowned and much awaited chardham yatra began from today. On the auspicious occasion of Akshay Tritiya, Gangotri and Yamunotri dhams have been opened for pilgrims.
- ▶▶ Gangotri dham’s kapat was opened at 11.30 in the morning whereas Yamunotri dham kapat at 1.15 in the afternoon. Large number of devotees were present to witness the grand opening of the shrines and offered pujas. Gangotri and Yamunotri temples are located in Uttarkashi district of the state and are two of the four sacred pilgrimage centres famously known as Chardham.
- ▶▶ The other two are Kedarnath and Badrinath. The government and the administration have made all necessary arrangements for the people coming on Chardham Yatra.

112. SAND, A GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE: UN REPORT

Mains:

- ▶▶ How Sand play important role in ecological balance.

Context:

- ▶▶ The riverbeds of Nagavali and Gostani, in Vizianagaram district, Andhra Pradesh.
- ▶▶ The report notes that China and India head the list of critical hotspots for sand extraction impacts in rivers, lakes and on coastlines.

Background:

- ▶▶ The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on Tuesday released a report, Sand and Sustainability: Finding new solutions for environmental governance of global sand resources, that highlights a problem that has largely stayed under the radar: sand consumption globally has been increasing and we are extracting it at rates exceeding natural replenishment rates.
- ▶▶ Sand and gravel, the report says, are the second largest natural resources extracted and traded by volume after water, but among the least regulated. We must acknowledge that this is “one of the major sustainability challenges of the century,” it says, and we must answer complex questions on how we reduce demand to responsible levels and stop environmentally damaging practices to protect sensitive ecosystems and meet biodiversity conservation goals.

113. DESERT STORM 2019 SET TO START TODAY

Context:

- ▶▶ Desert Storm 2019, touted to be the longest Cross-Country Rally in India is set to kick off today. The four-day-long Rally will see over 100 teams competing in high temperatures, treacherous dune crossings and fast technical gravel straights.
- ▶▶ It comprises 600 km of extremely harsh Special Stages in addition to over 900 km of Transport Stages. The first stage, covering a distance of 158 km, is starting from Bikaner in Rajasthan today.

114. GOVT REDUCES NEET-PG CUT-OFFS BY 6 PERCENTILES FOR 2019-20

Context:

- ▶▶ The government has decided to reduce the qualifying marks for NEET-PG for 2019-20 by six percentile. An official statement said, general category candidates with a minimum mark of 44 percentile, persons with disabilities category with a minimum of 39 percentile and SC/ST and OBC category candidates with 34 percentile will become eligible for admission to postgraduate medical courses.

- ▶ All states and Union Territories were requested to make necessary arrangements for allowing students as per revised qualifying marks in any further rounds of counselling this year.

115. INDIA AND US HELD BILATERAL TRADE MEETING

Context:

- ▶ India and the United States held the India-U.S. Bilateral Trade meeting in New Delhi on 6 May 2019. India appreciated the US Trade Winds Indo-Pacific Business Forum and Mission initiative 2019, being held at New Delhi. The forum will bring together distributors, representatives and partners and enable them to increase sales by taking part in business-to-business meetings from 8-10 May 2019.

116. US-CHINA TENSIONS THREAT TO WORLD ECONOMY: IMF CHIEF

Prelims:

- ▶ India, China Trade relations.

Mains:

- ▶ How Us, China affects world economy? Evaluate.

Context:

- ▶ Expressing concern over fresh trade tensions between the United States and China, International Monetary Fund chief Christine Lagarde has said that the tensions between the US and China are the main threat to the world economy. Speaking at a conference in Paris, Lagarde said, recent tweets and rumours make it clear that an agreement between the two countries is less likely. US President Donald Trump announced on Sunday that tariffs already imposed on 200 billion dollars in Chinese exports to US would more than double to 25 per cent on Friday from the current level of 10 per cent. Meanwhile, China has said that its top trade negotiator will visit the US for talks with his American counterparts this week.

117. SRI LANKA APPEALS INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO LIFT TRAVEL WARNINGS

- ▶ Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena has appealed to the international community to lift travel warnings issued after the Easter Sunday attacks.
- ▶ In a meeting with the diplomatic community in Colombo yesterday, the President said that tourists are returning to Sri Lanka. He urged the foreign missions to eliminate hurdles preventing others from visiting the country.
- ▶ India, United States, China, UK and Australia are among the countries which issued travel warnings after Easter attacks.

- ▶ Sri Lanka's tourism board earlier said that tourist arrivals have gone down by 60 per cent. India is the largest source of tourists for Sri Lanka as around 4 Lakh 50 thousand Indians visited the country last year.
- ▶ Sri Lanka received 2.3 million tourists from around the world in 2018 and has set up a target of 3 million for this year.

118. IRAN LIKELY TO WITHDRAW FROM PARTS OF NUCLEAR DEAL

Prelims:

- ▶ India, Iran Trade relations

Context:

- ▶ Iran is likely to announce today that it is partially withdrawing from the nuclear deal it struck with world powers.
- ▶ The move comes a year after President Donald Trump pulled America from the accord. The terms of the withdrawal remain unclear. Iran's decision in letters to leaders of Britain, France and Germany that will be handed over to their ambassadors in Tehran. Iran has continued to comply with the terms of the 2015 nuclear deal.

119. MALI PRESIDENT NAMED NEW GOVERNMENT

Context:

- ▶ In Mali, the president has named a new government after its predecessor resigned in April 2019. President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita announced the new executive of 37 members under Prime Minister Boubou Cisse. He was appointed on April 22, 2019, to oversee the formation of a broad-based government.

120. 40% AMPHIBIAN SPECIES THREATENED

Context:

- ▶ Relentless pursuit of economic growth, twinned with the impact of climate change, has put one million species at risk of extinction, as per a report.
- ▶ Known as the Global Assessment, the report found that up to 1 million of Earth's estimated eight million plants, insect and animal species are at risk of extinction within decades.
- ▶ The study is compiled by 145 expert authors from 50 countries.

121. INDIA RE-ELECTED AS OBSERVER TO INTER-GOVERNMENTAL FORUM ARCTIC COUNCIL

Context:

- ▶ India has been re-elected as an observer to inter-governmental forum Arctic Council. The Arctic Council promotes cooperation, coordination and interaction among Arctic states on common issues, particularly on sustainable development and environmental protection.
- ▶ In a tweet, Secretary in Ministry of Earth Sciences M Rajeevan said, at the 11th Arctic Council ministerial meeting at Rovaniemi, Finland and India re-elected as Observer of the Arctic Council. He said, India is committed to do more contributions in the Arctic Council.

122. ISRO TO LAUNCH RISAT-2BR1 ON 22 MAY

Prelims:

- ▶ Types of satellites.

Context:

- ▶ ISRO is set to launch its Radar Imaging Satellite, the RISAT-2BR1, on May 22, 2019 from Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh. The RISAT, a remote sensing satellite, provide all-weather surveillance using synthetic aperture radars (SAR). RISAT's are the first all-weather observation satellites from ISRO and are designed to provide a continuous view of earth either at day or night. In his role as ambassador, the former mayor will be taking his knowledge of urban climate change strategies to organizations around the world.

123. G D ROBERT HONORED WITH V K MENON AWARD

Context:

- ▶ Indian-origin journalist G D 'Robert' Govender was conferred with V K Krishna Menon Award 2019 in the UK for his contribution as a pioneer of decolonised journalism.
- ▶ The award is given to mark the 123rd birth anniversary of V K Krishna Menon, Indian diplomat and politician. He is the first person who has been awarded the V K Krishna Menon posthumously.

124. INDIAN BOXERS WON 6 MEDALS

Context:

- ▶ Indian boxers finished with six medals, including two gold at the 36th Feliks Stamm International Boxing Tournament in Warsaw, Poland.
- ▶ Gaurav Solanki and Manish Kaushik bagged one gold each.
- ▶ Indian boxers also clinched a silver and three bronze.

125. TIGER WOODS AWARDED PRESIDENTIAL MEDAL

Context:

- ▶ US President Donald Trump bestowed Tiger Woods with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honour.
- ▶ Woods is only the fourth and the youngest golfer ever to have received the highest American civilian award. Mr. Trump praised Mr. Woods as one of the greatest athletes in the history of sports. The six-day competition saw boxers from all over the world participating in 10 categories in the men's section.

126. ROGER CLIMBED 3RD IN MEN'S RANKINGS

Context:

- ▶ Former world number one Roger Federer has returned to third in the ATP Men's rankings released on 6 May 2019.
- ▶ He replaced Alexander Zverev after he was knocked out of the Munich Open at the quarter-finals stage. Novak Djokovic remains first ahead of Rafael Nadal to mark the Serb's 250th week as world number one.

127. PRISONER OF PROCEDURE: ON CJI SEXUAL HARASSMENT CASE

Context:

- ▶ It involves an allegation of sexual harassment on part of the Chief Justice of India

What is the Complaint?

- ▶ The complaint made by the victim of sexual harassment to the judges of the Supreme Court had two equally serious facets.
- ▶ One related to sexual harassment, a very serious charge.
- ▶ The other related to the victimisation of the complainant and her family “at the hands of the Chief Justice of India [CJI]”, as claimed by her.
- ▶ Experts opine that it is this latter charge to which the nation needs to pay equal, if not greater, attention.
- ▶ The in-house committee of the Supreme Court spoke: “No substance in the allegations contained in the Complaint dated 19th April, 2019 of a former Employee of the Supreme Court.”
- ▶ In the absence of any known procedure, the non-observance of the principles of natural justice and the absence of effective representation of the victim, the report, even though not for the public, is non-est and void ab initio.

Throw Back:

- ▶▶ The charge on this count, as per her affidavit, involves the following: after the alleged incident on October 11, 2018, her transfer to the Centre for Research and Planning on October 22, 2018, change of position to “Admin, Material Section” on November 16, 2018, issuance of a memorandum on November 19, 2018, by Deepak Jain, Registrar, accusing the victim of violating conduct rules and seeking an explanation, her third transfer to the Library Division on November 22, 2018, the issuance of a memorandum on November 26, 2018 rejecting her explanation and proposing further action, her suspension on November 27, 2018 and the communication of December 18, 2018 from the Registrar that the charges against her stood proved.
- ▶▶ On December 21, 2018 she was dismissed from service.
- ▶▶ Meanwhile, according to her affidavit, on November 27, 2018 her husband, a head constable with the Delhi Police, Crime Branch Division, was transferred to the Third Battalion.
- ▶▶ On December 8, 2018 her husband, and the latter’s brother, also a constable with the Delhi Police, were suspended over telephone, and the orders followed the next day.
- ▶▶ On January 2, 2019, an inquiry was initiated by a Deputy Commissioner of Police against her husband on the ground that “unsolicited calls were made to the Office of the Hon’ble Chief Justice amounting to official misconduct”.
- ▶▶ On January 11, 2019, the victim and her husband were summoned to Delhi’s Tilak Marg police station by Station House Officer (SHO) Naresh Solanki.
- ▶▶ In their presence, the SHO called the Registrar, Mr. Jain, to discuss ways to reach the residence of CJI Ranjan Gogoi.
- ▶▶ The SHO, the victim and the husband went there, and in the presence of Mr. Jain, the victim was forced to fall at the feet of the CJI’s wife.
- ▶▶ Upon their return to the police station, the SHO had a long conversation with the victim and her husband.
- ▶▶ On January 14, 2019 the disabled brother-in-law of the victim, who had been appointed temporary Junior Court Attendant under the orders of the CJI himself on October 9, 2018, was removed from service.
- ▶▶ On March 3, 2019, an FIR was registered on a complaint by a person named Naveen Kumar at the Tilak Marg police station in respect of an alleged demand made by the victim in June 2017 for a bribe of ₹10 lakh for getting him a job in the Supreme Court and his payment of ₹50,000 as advance.
- ▶▶ Based on this FIR, the victim and her husband were arrested from their village in Rajasthan, hand-cuffed and subjected to cruel and inhuman treatment.

- ▶▶ The victim was remanded for a day on March 10, 2019. She was released on bail on March 12, 2019.
- ▶▶ The affidavit in support of the complaint appears truthful and honest.
- ▶▶ The details are heart-rending and extremely troubling, and reflect a deep malaise that appears to have set in in high offices.
- ▶▶ These incidents are all corroborated by official records.
- ▶▶ Experts opine that collectively, they establish beyond doubt the victimisation of the woman, her husband and other family members at the hands of the state machinery, including the Registry of the Supreme Court.

Violations of Rights:

- ▶▶ Experts opine that each of these actions is either unconstitutional or illegal or criminal in nature.
- ▶▶ Clearly, they establish a well-designed conspiracy to victimise the victim beyond redemption so as to ensure that neither she nor her husband and her family members could raise their heads again to seek justice in respect of the complaint made against the CJI.
- ▶▶ Together, they constitute gross violations of the constitutional and fundamental rights of the victim and her family members, including those guaranteed under Articles 14 and 21.
- ▶▶ Clearly, the motive behind ensuring grossly inhuman, illegal, unconstitutional and disproportionate punishment to the victim and her family members seems to be to suppress her will and spirit so that she does not raise any charge about the incident of October 11, 2018.
- ▶▶ The last straw:
- ▶▶ One thing is clear: the complainant Naveen Kumar, who alleged that the victim demanded a bribe and willingly offered, according to his own case, ₹50,000, has made himself an accomplice to the alleged bribery to secure public employment.
- ▶▶ He must therefore face the rigour of the law.
- ▶▶ The case on its own showing appears to be concocted and its timing raises serious questions about its authenticity.
- ▶▶ If the bribe was demanded in June 2017, it is a curious coincidence that the complainant from Jhajjar, Haryana surfaces in March 2019 and that too in Tilak Marg police station to make the complaint.
- ▶▶ It activates the entire police machinery against the victim and her family.
- ▶▶ This was the final nail in the coffin, as the proverb goes, pushing the victim and her family to the wall and igniting in them the courage to stand up against the CJI and make the complaint on April 19, 2019.
- ▶▶ Dispelling doubts over the delay in the complaint:

- ▶ Those who have doubts about the so-called delay in the complaint must be prepared to put themselves in the shoes of the victim, a Class III employee pitted against the Chief Justice of India, one of the highest and the most powerful constitutional functionaries.
- ▶ Her approaching lawyers who are widely respected as human rights activists was natural and cannot be viewed with suspicion under any circumstances.

Some legal Precedents:

- ▶ The Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court in *Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation* recognised procedural safeguards as necessary and said they have “historical origins in the notion that conditions of personal freedom can be preserved only when there is some institutional check on arbitrary action on the part of public authorities”.
- ▶ In *Uma Shankar Sistani v. Commissioner of Police, Delhi (1996)*, the Supreme Court ordered the Central Bureau of Investigation to investigate the circumstances under which a false complaint was registered against the petitioner, leading to his arrest.
- ▶ The FIR against the victim in this case needs the same treatment.
- ▶ Equally, the punishment of dismissal imposed on her is grossly disproportionate, even assuming that the charges against her were proved.
- ▶ The Supreme Court has consistently frowned upon such punishments.
- ▶ In *Ranjit Thakur v. UOI (1987)*, the court interpreted the doctrine of proportionality “as part of the concept of judicial review” to ensure that if the sentence is an outrageous defiance of logic, then it can be corrected.

Grounds for Judicial Review?

- ▶ Irrationality and perversity are recognised grounds of judicial review.
- ▶ The court has held that if the punishment is outrageously disproportionate and the court considers it arbitrary in that it is wholly irrational or “a punishment is so excessive or disproportionate to the offence as to shock the conscience of the Court the same can be interfered with”. Experts opine that on each one of these counts the punishment of dismissal imposed upon the victim is completely arbitrary and perverse. It must go.

Important Questions:

- ▶ Where can she and her family members get justice if the police at the highest level is pitted against them? Will they ever get a fair investigation and fair reports in the criminal cases? (This appears to be doubtful). Can she and her family get justice at all at the hands of the judiciary, considering the respondents would be the CJI and the Supreme Court? Only time will tell.
- ▶ But certainly, for the present, the picture is dark for them.
- ▶ All these raise extremely troubling and discomfoting thoughts in the minds of many.

The Power Imbalance:

- ▶ She later withdrew from the inquiry, saying she was denied the help of a lawyer or a representative, that she found the questions from a panel of three sitting Supreme Court judges quite intimidating, and that she was not clear how her testimony was being recorded.
- ▶ Critics opine that there is no doubt that the committee remained impervious to the power imbalance in the situation.
- ▶ Perhaps she ought not to have pulled out from the probe, despite these grievances.
- ▶ The panel's conclusion would have been even starker had she been present to hear how Justice Gogoi defended himself; and who among the court officials, if any, answered her specific and documented charges about the administrative harassment she was put through following the alleged incident of sexual harassment.
- ▶ The most relevant parts of the complaint were the transfer orders and disciplinary inquiry against her, the role of the court administration in dismissing her, and that of the Delhi Police in arresting her on a complaint of alleged bribery and initiating disciplinary action against her husband and his brother, both police personnel. It is not known if any of these officials were examined.

Dealings of the court: Less Than Fair?

- ▶ Critics opine that the manner in which the court dealt with the complaint on the administrative side has been less than fair.
- ▶ It is true that the in-house procedure devised in 1999 envisages only a committee of three judges to deal with allegations against serving Supreme Court judges.
- ▶ The fact that a special law to deal with sexual harassment at the workplace is in force since 2013 appears to have made no difference. Unfortunately, the court could not bring itself, even in the interest of appearing fair, to adopt a formal procedure or allow the complainant to have legal representation. Critics opine that for all its judicial homilies on fairness, when it comes to dealing with its own the Supreme Court has come across as a prisoner of procedure and displayed an alarming propensity to mix up its institutional reputation with an individual's interest.

Conclusion:

- ▶ "The abuse of greatness is when it disjoins remorse from power," wrote Shakespeare. The decision by the 'in-house committee' is an egregious instance of a hallowed institution abusing its own greatness by letting its power speak, and not the compassion for which it is renowned.
- ▶ Is it the Supreme Court as an institution that is responsible for what has happened, or is it the CJI?. The dichotomy will emerge only when other Justices act independently, uphold the majesty of the law and steer the institution out of troubled waters.

- ▶▶ If they fail, the institution is doomed to serious loss of face and credibility.
- ▶▶ It is time the collective conscience of the Justices prevails.

128. 100 US FIRMS TO JOIN DEPT OF COMMERCE

Context:

- ▶▶ The U.S. Commercial Service will bring more than 100 U.S. companies to India as part of the U.S.

Background:

- ▶▶ Department of Commerce's largest annual trade mission program, Trade Winds.
- ▶▶ Trade Winds Indo-Pacific features a three-day business forum in New Delhi, with additional trade mission stops in Ahmedabad, Chennai, Kolkata, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Bangladesh.

129. TRADE-RELATED TALKS UNDERWAY IN NEW DELHI BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA

Context:

- ▶▶ Trade-related talks are underway in New Delhi between senior officials of India and China. The Chinese side is being headed by Li Guo, Vice Minister of the General Administration of Customs of China (GACC).

Background:

- ▶▶ From the Indian side, officials from different departments including commerce, agriculture, animal husbandry and the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) are participating.
- ▶▶ The meeting assumes significance as India is seeking greater access for its manufactured and agricultural products in the Chinese market to bridge the widening trade deficit.
- ▶▶ Recently, India has identified and shared with China a list of 380 products, including horticulture, textiles, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, as their shipments hold huge export potential. Increasing exports of these products will help India narrow the widening trade deficit with China, which stood at 50.12 billion US dollars from April 2018-February -2019.

130. JUS PR RAMACHANDRAN: NEW CJ HC

Context:

- ▶▶ Justice PR Ramachandra Menon was sworn in as Chief Justice of the Chhattisgarh High Court.
- ▶▶ Governor Anandiben Patel administered him the oath of office and secrecy at a function here at Raj Bhawan.
- ▶▶ He was earlier a judge in the Kerala High Court.

131. INDIA, US AGREE ON PRESERVING AFGHAN GAINS

Context:

- ▶ India and the US have agreed that the gains made in Afghanistan in the past 18 years have must be preserved and consolidated.
- ▶ During Khalilzad's talks in New Delhi, it was agreed that Afghanistan's political future is for Afghans to decide through an inclusive and legitimate process'.
- ▶ India has committed more than \$3 billion to the reconstruction and rebuilding of Afghanistan since 2001.

132. IRAN SAYS IT WILL NOT HONOUR NUCLEAR CURBS

Context:

- ▶ Iran stopped respecting limits on its nuclear activities agreed under a 2015 deal with major powers until they find a way to bypass renewed U.S. sanctions.
- ▶ The announcement came as Washington stepped up its rhetoric against Tehran, accusing it of planning "imminent" attacks and deploying an aircraft carrier strike group with several nuclear-capable B-52 bombers to the region.

Background:

- ▶ Iran was responding to the sweeping unilateral sanctions that Washington has reimposed since it quit the agreement one year ago, which have dealt a severe blow to the Iranian economy. Iran's Supreme National Security Council said that it no longer considered itself bound by the agreed restrictions on stocks of enriched uranium and heavy water.
- ▶ After 60 days, it would also stop abiding by restrictions on the level to which Iran can enrich uranium and modifications to its Arak heavy water reactor that were designed to prevent the production of plutonium.
- ▶ Uranium enriched to much higher levels than Iran's current stocks can be used as the fissile core of a nuclear weapon, while heavy water is a source of plutonium which can be used as an alternative way to produce a warhead.

133. ROAD ACCIDENTS STILL CAUSE MOST DEATHS: WHO REPORT

Context:

- ▶ WHO says over 1.35 mn lives lost a year
- ▶ Road accidents are the leading cause of death among people in the 5-29 age-group worldwide with more than 1.35 million lives lost each year and 50 million sustaining injuries, according to a World Health Organisation (WHO) report released during the on-going global road safety week.

134. TRUMP IMPOSES SANCTIONS ON IRAN'S IRON, STEEL, ALUMINIUM AND COPPER SECTORS

Context:

- ▶ US President Donald Trump has imposed sanctions on Iran's iron, steel, aluminium and copper sectors. The move is aimed at stopping Tehran from acquiring a nuclear weapon and intercontinental ballistic missiles. A year after he withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal and began the process of reimposing sanctions on Tehran, Mr Trump with his new move has now imposed sanctions on Iran's top three exports - oil, petrochemicals and metals.
- ▶ The US will aggressively enforce its sanctions, and those who continue to engage in a sanctionable activity involving Iran will face severe consequences.

135. HOW WILL U.S. SANCTIONS ON CRUDE OIL FROM IRAN AFFECT INDIA?

Context:

- ▶ India's crude oil imports are set to become expensive as U.S. ends waiver on crude import from Iran
- ▶ India will be hit by the Trump administration's decision to end waivers that allowed the import of crude oil from Iran without facing U.S. sanctions. Iran has been among India's top and most preferred sources of crude oil. Crude from Iran came with discounts on shipping, insurance, and freight and longer credit period. Crude from the U.S., an alternative exporter, comes at a hefty price.

Background:

- ▶ Iran has been one of India's top-suppliers of crude oil over the years. In 2018-19, 10.9% of India's crude demands were met by imports from Iran. While Iraq is India's top-supplier of crude oil since 2017-18, there has been a sudden jump of 288% in imports from the U.S. since 2017-19. The chart shows India's top suppliers of crude oil and their contribution over the years.

136. PIRAMAL, CANADIAN FUND SET UP RENEWABLE TRUST

Context:

- ▶ Piramal Enterprises Ltd. and Canada Pension Plan Investment Board (CPPIB) have entered into a MoU to co-sponsor a renewable energy-focused Infrastructure Investment Trust.
- ▶ The InvIT would seek to acquire up to 1.5-2GW of stable and cash-generating renewable assets on a hold-to-maturity basis. Both PEL and CPPIB will act as co-sponsors of the proposed InvIT and hold up to 75% of the units.

137. ECUBE ROPES IN BADRINARAYANAN

Context:

- ▶ ECube, an ESG (environment, social and governance) platform announced the appointment of Chandru Badrinarayanan as managing partner.
- ▶ Early this year, Ecube had announced a fundraise of \$1 billion jointly with Quantum Advisors.
- ▶ Mr. Badrinarayanan was till recently executive director and head of MSCI's India business and has more than 30 years of experience.

138. INDIA'S NEWEST PIT VIPER FOUND IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Context:

- ▶ Team of herpetologists hoping to study its diet, breeding pattern and habitat
- ▶ India now has a fifth brown pit viper but with a reddish tinge. A team of herpetologists led by Ashok Captain have described a new species of reddish-brown pit viper, a venomous snake with a unique heat-sensing system, from a forest in West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh.

Background:

- ▶ The discovery, published in the March-April volume of the Russian Journal of Herpetology, makes the Arunachal pit viper (*Trimeresurus arunachalensis*) the second serpent to have been discovered after the non-venomous crying keelback in the State's Lepa-Rada district in 2018.
- ▶ The new species also makes Arunachal Pradesh the only Indian state to have a pit viper
- ▶ The other four — Malabar, horseshoe, hump-nosed and Himalayan — were discovered 70 years ago.

139. WORLD RED CROSS DAY: 8 MAY

Context:

- ▶ World Red Cross Day, also known as World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day is observed every year on May 8.
- ▶ It is a gentle nod to all the volunteers who have made unparalleled contribution to people in duress or need.
- ▶ The 2019 theme is, '#Love' and aims to broaden the public's understanding of the society by highlighting the diversity and universality of its work and approach.

140. SPACEX SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCHED CARGO MISSION

Context:

- ▶ SpaceX successfully launched a Dragon spacecraft on a cargo mission for NASA to International Space Station (ISS).

Background:

- ▶▶ It carries 2,500 kilograms of research, supplies and hardware for astronauts living and working on ISS as part of the CRS-17 mission (17th resupply mission)
- ▶▶ This is SpaceX's fifth launch of the year.
- ▶▶ The launch was rescheduled earlier due to some electrical problem on ISS.
- ▶▶ It was launched on a 'Falcon 9' rocket, from Cape Canaveral in Florida. It is being used for the first time.

141. CIRCLE OF LIFE: ON ECONOMIC GROWTH FACTORING ECOSYSTEM

Context:

- ▶▶ This article talks about the global assessment report of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) is that human beings have so rapaciously exploited nature, and that species belonging to a quarter of all studied animal and plant groups on earth are gravely threatened.

Why it is in News?

- ▶▶ The recent report by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) is the most comprehensive scientific evaluation ever made of the state of our nature, and gives a detailed account of health of the species that inhabit this earth, and the condition of habitats that they live in and depend upon.
- ▶▶ The report says that 75% of Earth's land surface and 66% marine environments have been "significantly altered", and that "over 85%" of wetland area had been lost.
- ▶▶ However, on an average, these trends were less severe on areas controlled or managed by indigenous people and local communities (like tribal communities in India).

What is IPBES?

- ▶▶ The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) is an independent intergovernmental body, established by member States in 2012.
- ▶▶ The objective of IPBES is to strengthen the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, long-term human well-being and sustainable development. IPBES currently has over 130 member States.
- ▶▶ A large number of NGOs, organizations, conventions and civil society groupings also participate in the formal IPBES process as observers, with several thousand individual stakeholders, ranging from scientific experts to representatives of academic and research institutions, local communities and the private sector, contributing to and benefiting from our work.

- ▶ IPBES is a global scientific body very similar in composition and functioning to the better-known Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that makes periodic reviews of scientific literature to make projections about the earth's future climate. IPCC's assessment reports, which won it the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007, form the scientific basis on which the international negotiations on climate change have been happening.
- ▶ IPBES is mandated to do a similar job for natural ecosystems and biodiversity. Formed in 2012, this is the first global assessment report by the IPBES (IPCC, set up in 1988, has produced five assessment reports, and sixth one is under preparation). IPBES has produced a few regional and specialised reports earlier. Like IPCC, IPBES does not produce any new science, it only evaluates existing scientific knowledge to make assessments and projections.
- ▶ Unlike IPCC, however, the IPBES assessment reports are likely to feed into and inform several multilateral processes.
- ▶ As a matter of fact, the two UN Conventions, i.e. the Convention on Biological Diversity that addresses biodiversity issues, and the Convention on Combating Desertification that deals with sustainable land management are likely to be guided by this report in future.
- ▶ It is possible that so would be a host of other international agreements and processes, like the Ramsar Convention on wetlands, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, or the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

Why Does IPBES Matter?

- ▶ It is important to note that biodiversity and nature's benefits to people underpin almost every aspect of human development and are key to the success of the new Sustainable Development Goals.
- ▶ They help to produce food, clean water, regulate climate and even control disease. Yet they are being depleted and degraded faster than at any other point in human history.
- ▶ IPBES is unique it harnesses the best expertise from across all scientific disciplines and knowledge communities to provide policy-relevant knowledge and to catalyze the implementation of knowledge-based policies at all levels in government, the private sector and civil society.

What Does IPBES do?

- ▶ The work of IPBES can be broadly grouped into four complementary areas:
 - Assessments:** On specific themes (e.g. "Pollinators, Pollination and Food Production"); methodological issues (e.g. "Scenarios and Modelling"); and at both the regional and global levels (e.g. "Global Assessment of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services").
 - Policy Support:** Identifying policy-relevant tools and methodologies, facilitating their use, and catalyzing their further development.

C. **Building Capacity & Knowledge:** Identifying and meeting the priority capacity, knowledge and data needs of our member States, experts and stakeholders.

D. **Communications & Outreach:** Ensuring the widest reach and impact of our work.

A Look at Some Specifics:

- ▶ Nature provides ecosystem services, but these are often not included in productivity estimates: they are vital for food production, for clean air and water, provision of fuel for millions, absorption of carbon in the atmosphere, and climate moderation.
- ▶ The result of such skewed policies, as the IPBES estimates, is that the global rate of species extinction is at least tens to hundreds of times higher today than the average rate over the past 10 million years, and it is accelerating alarmingly.
- ▶ Ecological economists have for years pointed to the extreme harm that humanity as a whole is courting by modifying terrestrial, marine and freshwater ecosystems to suit immediate needs, such as raising agricultural and food output and extracting materials that aid ever-increasing consumption.
- ▶ Expanding agriculture by cutting down forests has raised food volumes, and mining feeds many industries, but these have severely affected other functions such as water availability, pollination, maintenance of wild variants of domesticated plants and climate regulation.
- ▶ Losses from pollution are usually not factored into claims of economic progress made by countries, but as the IPBES assessment points out, marine plastic pollution has increased tenfold since 1980, affecting at least 267 species, including 86% of marine turtles, 44% of seabirds and 43% of marine mammals. At the same time, about 9% of 6,190 domesticated breeds of mammals used for food and agriculture had gone extinct by 2016, and another 1,000 may disappear permanently. Viewed against a shrinking base of wild varieties of farmed plants and animals, all countries have cause for alarm. They are rapidly emptying their genetic resource kit. Experts opine that reversing course is a dire necessity to stave off disaster.
- ▶ This can be done by incorporating biodiversity impacts into all economic activity, recognising that irreparably breaking the web of life will impoverish and endanger people everywhere.

Perspective on India:

- ▶ The report does not have country-specific information.
- ▶ However, as a major biodiversity hotspot, vast areas, especially the coastline, of which are under tremendous stress due to large population, India can identify with most of the trends pointed out in the report.
- ▶ For example, it says 23% of global land area had shown a reduction in productivity due to degradation, and that between 100 to 300 million people were at an increased risk of floods and hurricanes because of loss of coastal habitats and protection.

- ▶ It says plastic pollution had increased 10 times from 1980, the number of large dams (those with a height of 15 m or more) had reached almost 50,000, and that human population had more than doubled since 1970s, and the number of urban areas had doubled since 1992.
- ▶ All these trends have been clearly visible in the case of India, and bring with them the associated risks to natural ecosystems highlighted in the report.

Conclusion:

- ▶ Losses from pollution are usually not factored into claims of economic progress made by countries, but as the IPBES assessment points out, marine plastic pollution has increased tenfold since 1980, affecting at least 267 species, including 86% of marine turtles, 44% of seabirds and 43% of marine mammals.
- ▶ At the same time, about 9% of 6,190 domesticated breeds of mammals used for food and agriculture had gone extinct by 2016, and another 1,000 may disappear permanently.
- ▶ Viewed against a shrinking base of wild varieties of farmed plants and animals, all countries have cause for alarm. They are rapidly emptying their genetic resource kit.
- ▶ Reversing course is a dire necessity to stave off disaster.
- ▶ This can be done by incorporating biodiversity impacts into all economic activity, recognising that irreparably breaking the web of life will impoverish and endanger people everywhere.

142. SEA PHASE OF 'VARUNA' EXERCISE BEGINS

Prelims:

- ▶ India, french defence relations.

Context:

- ▶ The sea phase of the Indo-French naval exercise 'Varuna' began on 8 May 2019.
- ▶ This year's edition of the Indo-French naval exercise currently underway off the Goa coast is the largest ever undertaken by the two navies.
- ▶ The exercise, began on May 1, will culminate on May 10 after sea phase operations.
- ▶ The first bilateral naval exercise between India and France was held in 1983.

143. NAVY JOINS EXERCISES IN SOUTH CHINA SEA

Prelims:

- ▶ Sino, India Defence relations.

Context:

- ▶ Navy ships INS Kolkata and Shakti carried out Group Sail with the naval ships of Japan, the Philippines and the U.S. in the South China Sea (SCS) from May 3-9.
- ▶ The ships undertook various exercises en route which included formation manoeuvring, under way replenishment runs, cross-deck flying and exchange of sea riders.

Background:

- ▶ The group sail exercise showcased India's commitment to operating with like-minded nations to ensure safe maritime environment through enhanced interoperability.
- ▶ China, which claims a major part of the SCS, has disputes with most of its maritime neighbours. Six ships, including a frigate and helicopter carrier JMSDF Izumo from Japan, a Philippines frigate and an Arleigh Burke class destroyer from the U.S. Navy took part in the six-day exercise. Indian Navy ships were on return passage from their deployment to the South and the East China Seas as part of the annual Eastern Fleet overseas deployment during which they visited Vietnam, China and South Korea. In China, the ships took part in the International Fleet Review (IFR) as part of the 70th anniversary celebrations of the People's Liberation Army (Navy). They later took part in the Phase I of the maritime security field training exercise under the aegis of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus) from May 1 to 3 off South Korea.

144. DIVORCE BY MUTUAL CONSENT: HC WAIVES COOLING-OFF PERIOD

Context:

- ▶ The Delhi High Court has waived the cooling-off period for divorce by mutual consent of a woman, from her estranged husband, after she expressed her intention to enter into another marriage with a non-resident Indian who was in India for limited number of days.
- ▶ Section 13B of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 mandates that in case of divorce by mutual consent, there has to be a composite period of 18 months of separation — one year provided in Section 13B (1) and six months in Section 13B (2). The woman had approached the High Court after a family court here rejected her application for waiving the statutory period of six months under Section 13B (2) of the Hindu Marriage Act

145. AMAZON'S JEFF BEZOS SAYS HE'LL SEND A SPACESHIP TO THE MOON

Prelims:

- ▶ Space missions to moon

Mains:

- ▶ "Privatization in Space." Critically Evaluate.

Context:

- ▶ Amazon going to send a spaceship to the moon, joining a resurgence of lunar interest half a century after people first set foot there.

- ▶ Blue Origin will land a robotic ship the size of a small house, capable of carrying four rovers and using a newly designed rocket engine and souped-up rockets. It would be followed by a version that could bring people to the moon along the same timeframe as NASA's proposed 2024 return.
- ▶ The announcement for the usually secretive space company came with all the glitz of an Apple product launch in a darkened convention ballroom bedazzled with shimmering stars on its walls. Astronauts and other space luminaries sat in the audience under blue-tinted lighting.

146. INDIA & TURKEY TO STRENGTHEN ECONOMIC RELATION

Prelims:

- ▶ India, Turkey bilateral relations.

Mains:

- ▶ Explain about Turkey's Currency Crisis and how did it affected Rupee?

Context:

- ▶ India and Turkey vowed to strengthen economic relations with the aim of reaching 10 billion US dollars bilateral trade by 2020. Turkey's Deputy Foreign Minister Sedat Onal held talks with Gitesh A Sarma, Secretary under the institutional mechanism of foreign office consultations. Other aspects such as enhanced cultural interaction, tourism, people-to-people contacts were also discussed.

147. SINGAPORE REPORTS FIRST CASE OF RARE MONKEYPOX VIRUS

Prelims:

- ▶ Monkeypox virus.

Mains:

- ▶ Global Warming is the biggest threat to Humans and what are the affects on human health? Evaluate.

Context:

- ▶ Monkeypox, a virus similar to the human smallpox which was eradicated in 1980, does not spread easily from person to person, but can in rare cases be fatal.
- ▶ Singapore has reported its first case of the rare monkeypox virus brought in by a Nigerian man who authorities said may have been infected by bushmeat he ate at a wedding.
- ▶ Monkeypox, a virus similar to the human smallpox which was eradicated in 1980, does not spread easily from person to person, but can in rare cases be fatal.

- ▶ Human monkeypox infections have only been documented three times outside of Africa, in the United States, the United Kingdom and Israel, according to the U.S.-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Singapore's Ministry of Health (MOH) said in a statement late on Thursday that the infected patient was a 38-year-old Nigerian who arrived in Singapore in late April.

148. CBIC TO ORGANISE MEETING OF REGIONAL HEADS

Context:

- ▶ Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) is organising a meeting of the Regional Heads of Customs Administration of Asia Pacific Region of the World Customs Organisation (WCO) in Kochi from 08th to 10th May, 2019. India is hosting this meeting in its capacity as Vice Chair of the Asia Pacific region that it assumed on 1st July, 2018 for a two-year period.

149. RBI WITHDRAWS MANDATE ON IL&FS NPAS

Prelims:

- ▶ Parameters of RBI
- ▶ RBI structure and functions.

Mains:

- ▶ What is the Role of Green finance on Environmental Protection? Explain.

Context:

- ▶ Following the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal's decision to allow banks to declare NPAs of Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services Limited and its group entities, the RBI has now withdrawn its circular. The circular mandated to disclose bad loans of the IL&FS group in its notes of accounts. Previously, RBI had asked banks and financial institutions to disclose the NPA.

150. GLOBAL WARMING: SURVIVAL PLAN

Prelims:

- ▶ INDC of India.
- ▶ IPCC report on global warming.

Mains:

- ▶ "Environment declared a war on Humans" How Humans can survive this war? Comment.

Context:

- ▶ Solutions to the biggest threats facing our planet lie underground, according to experts who insist climate change, overpopulation and food shortages can all be tackled by going subterranean.

- ▶ Efforts to meet seven of the United Nations' 17 sustainable development goals — from cleaning up pollution-clogged metropolises to ending world hunger — could be given a big boost by re-purposing spaces below street level.
- ▶ Scientific developments in areas like aquaponics — where vegetables and fish are farmed together — could help relieve the pressure on the food supply chain, and dramatically cut transport costs if such new farms were situated under cities.

151. INDIA CEO FORUM ORGANISED ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Prelims:

- ▶ Paris Conference.

Context:

- ▶ India CEO Forum on Climate Change was organized by Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) on 8 May 2019. The Forum consisted of high-level discussions across several sessions covering topics from India's Nationally Determined Contributions. The sessions voiced deliberations from the government on India's international commitments to fighting climate change.

152. GREENFIELD IT PARK TO COME UP IN GUINDY

Mains:

- ▶ What is the Role of Industries in Indian Economy? Explain.

Context:

- ▶ Olympia Cyberspace, a unit of the Chennai-based Olympia Group, is coming up with a million square feet greenfield IT park jointly with US Private equity fund Apollo Global, in Guindy.
- ▶ The project will entail investments upto 750 crore. Apollo Global, an alternate investment platform with \$270 billion in assets under management, is the joint venture partner of Olympia for this project.

153. PT. SWAPAN CHOWDHURY CONFERRED WITH D. LITT

Context:

- ▶ Noted writer Sanjib Chattopadhyay, Classical dancer Sonal Mansingh and Tabla Maestro Pt. Swapan Chowdhury were conferred with D.Litt degrees by the Rabindra Bharati University (RBU) in Kolkata on 8 May 2019.
- ▶ The Chancellor of the University and West Bengal Governor Mr. Keshari Nath Tripathi presented the degrees.
- ▶ Noted educationists Professor V. N. Jha delivered the convocation address.

154. ARE FARM LOAN WAIVERS A POLITICAL GIMMICK?

Context:

- ▶ This issue is important from the civil services perspective as addressing rural distress is an important theme and has also been a subject of electoral debate during this election season.

How does it affect small and marginal farmers?

- ▶ Farm distress is real because there have been low agricultural prices and low farm incomes.
- ▶ The farm sector growth rate is much lower than in earlier periods.
- ▶ As a result, farm prices are low despite production rising.
- ▶ The demand is also low.
- ▶ Whether the increase in farm production is enough for incomes is not clear.
- ▶ For small and marginal farmers, the additional problem is that the size of land holdings is declining.
- ▶ Earlier, the average size was two hectares, now it has come down to nearly one hectare.
- ▶ Marginal farmers have less than half a hectare.
- ▶ With these sizes, income is difficult to sustain.
- ▶ The recent stress is also because prices are much lower than the MSP [minimum support price] in the market, while long-term problems such as low capital formation in agriculture persist.
- ▶ Public investment in the sector as a percentage of GDP is also stagnant.
- ▶ So, these factors, along with two years of drought, have led to this.
- ▶ Another thing is that the non-farm sector creates jobs.
- ▶ As per NABARD [National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development] data, 23% of rural income is from agriculture, so the rest is from non-farm activity.
- ▶ The rate of growth in agricultural wages has stagnated and is lower than in earlier years when MGNREGA and the construction sector helped boost wages.
- ▶ The rural economy overall, agricultural as well as non-farm, is facing a demand problem and low incomes, which has caused farm distress.

Mistake which contributing to the stress:

- ▶ The government had focused on managing inflation in the early years of its tenure and the inability to generate jobs could have created non-farm avenues for the youth in farming households. This has contributed to the stress.
- ▶ The agriculture focus is short term, [which is why we have] loan waivers, but the focus on how to generate incomes and jobs has been lacking.
- ▶ The construction sector was earlier responsible for higher wages and demand, but now that sector is also stagnating.

Farm loan waiver scheme: A workable strategy?

- ▶ The UPA announced a massive farm loan waiver scheme. But the impact of this scheme on farm income was limited.
- ▶ In the present day, institutional credit to farmers is just 64%, so the rest is from non-institutional sources.
- ▶ The large farmers corner the institutional credit, and small and marginal farmers get non-institutional credit at interest rates of 25-30%.
- ▶ Moreover, there is a moral hazard problem as banks get affected farmers say they don't have to repay the loans as there will be a waiver some time.
- ▶ There are opportunity costs for this loan waiver spending.
- ▶ Several States have started them, including Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh.
- ▶ This will also have fiscal implications.

PM-KISAN scheme:

- ▶ The Centre has announced the PM-KISAN scheme under which ₹6,000 per year will be given to 12 crore small and marginal farmers holding cultivable land up to two hectares.
- ▶ This is similar to the loan waiver in terms of quality spending but only slightly better than loan waivers, as smaller farmers could also get this amount.
- ▶ Telangana and Odisha have also started such schemes.
- ▶ The amount may not be very high for farmers, but its implementation may be relatively easier as it's a direct cash transfer.
- ▶ But it's also similar to farm loan waivers and is just a palliative.

Some steps promised by the Congress Party:

- ▶ The Congress had announced farm loan waivers in States like Madhya Pradesh. It has also promised a new law to waive farm loans, a separate farmer budget, and a minimum income support scheme.
- ▶ There are certain sections of experts who support cash transfers to the poor.
- ▶ It is important to note that farmers and agricultural labourers face several risks, so some social protection measures are important for an economy which has 90% of the workforce in the unorganised sector.
- ▶ But on the other hand, if you want to remove distress, these are not the solutions.
- ▶ In the NYAY [NyuntamAay Yojana] scheme announced by the Congress, it's not clear where the money will come from.

A Critical View on Farm-Load Waivers:

- ▶ First, it doesn't really help the needy farmers who borrow from moneylenders.
- ▶ Second, it creates a bad credit culture.

- ▶ As we go along, commercial banks will become hesitant to give loans to farmers because from time to time, this particular problem comes up.
- ▶ This is not a good use of taxpayers' money.
- ▶ You need to find a solution to the basic problems of farmers.
- ▶ Their distress is real, and on both the supply and demand sides.

Do you need to reorient the entire system, from being consumer-oriented to producer-oriented?

- ▶ Whenever you have a problem, you want to protect the consumer with low prices for farm products. When prices rise, you want to import and ban exports. Your support price policy helps only a few crops for which you undertake procurement.
- ▶ That actually distorts the cropping pattern, so even if paddy and sugarcane are water-intensive crops, farmers prefer them as there is some stabilisation in prices.
- ▶ With regards to the money that the Government is using on farm loan waivers and other subsidies, if only it could be used on infrastructure, developing markets and processing and transportation networks, it would be a huge thing.
- ▶ Removing the oligopoly of agricultural markets is important.

Some Needed Reforms in the Farming Process:

- ▶ The government wants to double farm incomes by 2022.
- ▶ In an effort to achieve this, freeing farm markets from excessive regulation along with some safeguards would be a better alternative to multiple state interventions at every step of the farming process.
- ▶ It is important to note that even if you increase procurement prices, it will be useful only for those crops that the government procures.
- ▶ Many States don't procure most items.
- ▶ Agricultural markets are in very bad shape and marketing reforms are very important as is the removal of middlemen. Many interventions are needed on both the demand and supply side.
- ▶ Further, market reforms are the biggest change needed.
- ▶ MSP is not a solution, which focuses on cereals like rice and wheat.
- ▶ Very few reforms have taken place in market infrastructure, value chains, logistics, processing and warehousing to boost farmer incomes.
- ▶ We also need a consistent import and export policy, which is lacking, so that farmers can sell their excess produce. For perishables, a different model is needed.
- ▶ Returns are much higher if the same amount of money spent on loan waivers and income support schemes is deployed on things like water and technology, research and extension services.

Changes in Structures:

- ▶▶ Political parties largely don't have a long-term view.
- ▶▶ Immediate solutions that lend themselves to sloganeering are the big issue.
- ▶▶ Somebody has to come and say, look, my agenda is not to double farm incomes, but these are the reforms I will implement for a better future for farmers.
- ▶▶ Another issue is the consolidation of holdings.
- ▶▶ Small farms have become unviable.
- ▶▶ Farm labourers are not available because of MGNREGA.
- ▶▶ Many of them have migrated to urban areas in search of work.
- ▶▶ We need to legally facilitate the consolidation of holdings.
- ▶▶ Information asymmetry is a big problem too. When the farmer is going to the market with his bullock cart full of produce, he doesn't know what prices he is going to get for his produce.
- ▶▶ If prices are low, he can't just return as he has to pay rent for the cart and other things, so there is a distress sale as many crops are perishables.
- ▶▶ We have never thought of this in a comprehensive manner, and unless there is a package of holistic measures, all this talk of doubling farm incomes is meaningless.

Way Forward:

- ▶▶ On old-age pension, there was a scheme that gave ₹200 a month earlier.
- ▶▶ State governments have offered ₹2,000 in some places. Farmers also come under that scheme.
- ▶▶ Basic minimum income can be considered if you remove non-merit subsidies and move fertilizer subsidy to cash transfers as you can save more and improve soil fertility too.

Conclusion:

- ▶▶ Giving a minimum basic income deserves to be looked at, but you can do that fiscally only when you get rid of all other subsidies and transfers.
- ▶▶ The basic issue is the sustainability of a policy measure such as minimum income.
- ▶▶ The other important thing is farm insurance, which needs to be expanded much more so that farmers are protected from the vagaries of nature.
- ▶▶ Compared to earlier schemes, the recent farm insurance programme is better, but still many farmers have not benefited because of implementation problems.
- ▶▶ It's a long way to go. We don't have crop cutting experiments, State governments are not working on it properly when disasters take place.
- ▶▶ Between subsidies and investments, there is a trade-off — when subsidies increase, investment declines.

155. HYDERABAD'S INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT RANKED 8TH

Context:

- ▶ With the eighth position, the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport in Hyderabad has been ranked among the top ten best airports in the world.
- ▶ The survey was conducted by AirHelp.
- ▶ The Hamad International Airport in Qatar has topped the list followed by Japan's Tokyo and Greece's Athens International airports.

156. INDIA'S FIRST MEGA SCIENCE EXHIBITION

Context:

- ▶ India's first 'mega-science' exhibition 'Vigyan Samagam' was inaugurated in Mumbai.
- ▶ It is organised by the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), the Department of Science and Technology (DST), and the National Council of Science Museums (NCSM).
- ▶ After Mumbai, the exhibition will move to Bengaluru from 7 July, and on to Kolkata and then New Delhi.

157. WTO MINISTERIAL MEETING OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES TO TAKE PLACE ON MAY 13-14

Context:

- ▶ The World Trade Organisation, WTO, ministerial meeting of developing countries will take place on 13-14 of this month in New Delhi.

Background:

- ▶ The meeting is being held at a time when the multilateral rule-based-trading system is facing serious and grave challenges.
- ▶ It will provide an opportunity to the Ministers to discuss various issues and the way forward.
- ▶ On the first day, there will be a meeting of senior officers of the participating countries. On the 2nd day, the Ministerial Meeting will be held. Sixteen developing countries and six Least Developed Countries are participating in the meeting. This meeting at New Delhi is an effort to bring together the developing countries and Least Developed Countries on a platform for sharing common concerns on various issues affecting the WTO and work together to address these issues. There have been increasing unilateral measures and counter measures by members, deadlock in key areas of negotiations and the impasse in the Appellate Body, which threaten the very existence of Dispute Settlement Mechanism of the WTO and impacts the position of the WTO as an effective multilateral organisation.
- ▶ The current situation has given rise to demands from various quarters to reform the WTO.

158. FISCAL DEFICIT TOUCHED 4.52% AT END-FEBRUARY

Context:

- ▶ Finance Ministry told that the country's fiscal deficit at ₹8.51 trillion at the end of February 2019 had touched 4.52% of the GDP.
- ▶ The governments has pegged its fiscal deficit target for 2018-19 at 3.4% for which was revised upwards from the earlier 3.3%.

159. GOVT PROHIBITS IMPORTS OF ELECTRONICS GOODS

Context:

- ▶ The government of India has prohibited Import of second-hand or refurbished electronics and IT goods without registration with the Bureau of Indian Standards.
- ▶ Under the Electronics and IT Goods (Requirement of Compulsory Registration) order 2012, imports of these goods is allowed through the registration with the BIS or on specific exemption letter from the ministry of IT and electronics.

160. CHANDRAYAAN-2 WILL CARRY 14 INDIAN PAYLOADS

Context:

- ▶ ISRO aims to land Vikram in unexplored lunar south pole.
- ▶ Chandrayaan-2, the lunar lander mission planned to be launched during July 9-16, will have 14 Indian payloads or study devices.

Background:

- ▶ The 3,800-kg spacecraft includes an orbiter which will circle the moon at 100 km; a five-legged lander called Vikram that will descend on the moon on or around September 6; and a robotic rover, Pragyan, that will probe the lunar terrain around it.
- ▶ All three modules will carry payloads but did not specify them or their objective. The orbiter alone will have eight payloads or instruments.
- ▶ ISRO has chosen a landing area at the hitherto unexplored lunar south pole, making it the first agency to touch down at the south pole if it succeeds in its first landing attempt.
- ▶ Chandrayaan-2 will be India's second outing to the moon. ISRO will send the mission on its heavy lift booster, the MkIII, from Sriharikota.
- ▶ In October 2008, the space organisation had launched its orbiter mission Chandrayaan-1 on its PSLV booster.
- ▶ The spacecraft had 11 payloads. One of the U.S. payloads shares credit with Chandrayaan-1 for confirming the presence of water ice on the moon.
- ▶ Before that, the Moon Impacter Probe carrying the Indian tricolour image was made to hard-land on the lunar south pole.

161. GENETIC STUDY CONDUCTED ON LAKSHADWEEP

Context:

- ▶ For the very first-time scientists carried out a genetic study on people of Lakshadweep Islands.
- ▶ It was conducted by a team of researchers at CSIR's (Council of Scientific & Industrial Research) Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB).
- ▶ It found the close genetic link of Lakshadweep islanders with people from the Maldives, Sri Lanka, and India.

162. NASA TO CRASH SPACECRAFT INTO ASTEROID IN 2022

Context:

- ▶ In a first, NASA will launch a spacecraft that will collide with an asteroid in 2022 to demonstrate a planetary defense technique.
- ▶ The Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART) will get one chance to hit its target, a small moonlet in the binary asteroid system Didymos.
- ▶ The asteroid poses no threat to Earth.

163. DEEP-SEA FISH SEE COLOUR IN THE DARK

Context:

- ▶ Unique genetic evolution has helped them as they search for food and mates
- ▶ While people and other vertebrates are colour blind in dim light, some deep-sea fish may possess keen colour vision to thrive in the near total darkness of their extreme environment thanks to a unique genetic adaptation, scientists said on Thursday.

Background:

- ▶ Researchers analysed the genomes of 101 fish species and found that three lineages of deep-sea fish, living up to about 1,500 meters below the surface, boast a specialised visual system to allow for colour vision in inky blackness.
- ▶ Having acute vision could provide tremendous advantages to these fish as they search for food and mates and try to avoid becoming another creature's dinner in the exotic dark world of the ocean depths, the planet's largest habitat.
- ▶ "Their eyes are certainly much more sensitive, so we believe their vision in the depths would be very good," said evolutionary biologist Zuzana Musilova of Charles University in Prague, one of the researchers in the study published in the journal Science.
- ▶ Vertebrates use two types of photoreceptor cells in the retina to see: light-sensitive rods and cones. The cones are employed in bright-light conditions and perceive colours. The rods are used in dim light, not geared to detect colours.

- ▶▶ Rod cells contain a single type of photopigment - pigments that react to a certain wavelength of light - called rhodopsin.
- ▶▶ The spiny fin has an almost circular body shape and large eyes. Other fish with this visual system includes the extremely elongated tube-eye fish and the bioluminescent lanternfish.

164. CROWDFUNDING BRINGS WATER TO MYANMAR'S DEER

Context:

- ▶▶ Lakes and ponds, a lifeline for the deer, wild boar, jackals and peacocks, all dried up this summer.
- ▶▶ A herd of endangered deer wait under the shade of one of the sparse trees in this parched central Myanmar landscape, watching as rangers dispatch drinking water, a life-saving resource funded by well wishers.

Background:

- ▶▶ Shwe Settaw nature reserve in Magway Division is home to the endemic species of Eld's or golden deer. But their habitat lies in the country's central dry zone, a low-lying plain astride the Irrawaddy River where water shortages are rife in the hot season.
- ▶▶ This year temperatures have soared to a record 47 degrees centigrade.
- ▶▶ The sanctuary's 20-odd lakes and ponds, a lifeline for the deer, wild boar, jackals, peacocks and other creatures have all dried up. In one lake bed, a water depth-measuring rod stands marooned in the middle of a mosaic of cracked earth.

165. ESHA AND AKULL WON SILVER IN THE SHOOTING

- ▶▶ India's Esha Singh and Akull Kumar won silver in junior mixed air pistol event in the International Shooting Competition at Hannover, Germany.
- ▶▶ They secured 5.4 points and defeated by the German pair of Jan Luca Karstedt and Vanessa Seeger. It was the second mixed medal for Esha, after the one she won recently with Anmol Jain in Plzen, Czech Republic

166. NEW CLOUDS OVER THE PERSIAN GULF

Context:

- ▶▶ Iran's decision to reduce its commitments to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), known as the P5+1 agreement, comes as a reaction to the U.S.'s attempts in recent weeks to reduce Iran's oil exports to zero.
- ▶▶ As a response to U.S. sanctions, Iran is demanding that the remaining signatories of the deal the U.K., China, France, Germany and Russia ease the restrictions on its banking and oil sectors in the next 60 days.

- ▶▶ In case the five endorsers of the deal decide not to act in favour of Iran, the authorities of Tehran will remove the caps on uranium enrichment levels and resume work on the Arak nuclear facility.

Why it is in News?

- ▶▶ Iranian President Hassan Rouhani recently announced that Iran will withdraw partially from the landmark nuclear deal of 2015.

Iran's possible actions and its consequences:

- ▶▶ Iran's plans are very clear, and they put an end to long and laborious multilateral negotiations which put strict limits on Iran's nuclear activities in return for lifting most international sanctions. Undoubtedly, Iran's decision comes as an expression of loss of patience with a deal that is providing very few of the promised economic benefits. As a matter of fact, by resuming its uranium enrichment operations, Iran could be taking a huge risk, putting at danger its diplomatic relations with Europe and playing the game of the Trump administration that has been taking a hard line against Tehran. Consequently, Iran might be economically isolated.

Russian Support:

- ▶▶ The message from Russia is that Iran is not alone.
- ▶▶ The Kremlin has joined Tehran to accuse the U.S. of retreating from the nuclear deal, while approving Iran's rolling back of some of the terms of the deal due to pressure from the U.S.
- ▶▶ It is important to note that the Russian gesture is not without some long-term interests for the Kremlin. As a matter of fact, U.S. sanctions against Iran will certainly result in the development of cooperation between Moscow and Tehran, but also with countries like Turkey which are important to American foreign policy.

Economic impact:

- ▶▶ The goal of the Trump administration in applying the new series of sanctions is likely to hit the earnings of Iran's major metals companies, such as Mobarakeh Steel and the National Iranian Copper Industries Company. This will have an immediate impact on the Iranian government's revenues, but it will also deteriorate the balance sheets of Iran's heavily indebted metals and mining companies. This situation will be followed by mass unemployment, especially among blue-collar workers employed by state-owned enterprises who form the backbone of Iran's economy.

A Perspective

- ▶▶ It is no secret that last year (2018) the 2.5-million-strong government workforce did not get a raise while prices accelerated.
- ▶▶ To this end, the Trump administration's "maximum pressure" policy on Iran aims directly to stoke social unrest in Iranian cities by creating labour strikes (in the Polish style of Solidarity back in the 1980s) within the metals industry.

Trump's Aim:

- ▶▶ The outcome of their confrontation with Iran is clearly to deprive the Iranian regime of the funds it can use to impose its hegemony around West Asia, but also to put pressure on the everyday life of Iranian citizens.
- ▶▶ From the Trump administration's perspective, the economic malaise in Iran should stoke protests sooner or later.
- ▶▶ But does this mean the beginning of the end of the regime of the Ayatollahs?

Violating the JCPOA:

- ▶▶ THINGS ARE MORE COMPLEX than they might appear.
- ▶▶ If we take a close look at the geostrategic situation of West Asia, Iran's threat to violate the JCPOA is a very worrisome decision.
- ▶▶ Let us not forget that from Iran's perspective, Mr. Trump's America is considered a rogue state. As for the Trump administration, it considers the Islamic regime in Tehran as its Enemy Number One in West Asia.

Washington's Intimidations:

- ▶▶ The recent announcement by John Bolton, Mr. Trump's National Security Adviser, that the U.S. was dispatching an aircraft-carrier strike group and bombers to West Asia to protect American allies and their interests is an unmistakable attempt to intimidate the Iranian regime.
- ▶▶ Over the past few weeks, the White House has intensified its campaign of pressure and threats against the authorities in Tehran and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).
- ▶▶ In Washington's eyes, Iran is a rogue state because of its support of militant groups, its violations of human rights, and its pursuit of nuclear-related technologies.
- ▶▶ But despite the sanctions, Iran continues to fund its proxies in the region, prepare missile tests and support the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad.

Conclusion:

- ▶▶ Thus, at the point where things stand, it is very hard to imagine a turn towards negotiations, although some European countries might continue encouraging a return to diplomatic management of the Iranian crisis. There is little likelihood of any flexibility towards the Iranian regime from the American side till the November 2020 U.S. presidential election.
- ▶▶ Iran will certainly look for ways to inflict a cost on the U.S. directly or through militia proxies in the region. In that case, experts opine that the scene will be set for military confrontation between Iran and the U.S.
- ▶▶ Last but not the least, if Iran's leadership is to successfully resist U.S. "maximum pressure", it must do more than choose the military path.

- ▶ Those who oppose any unilateral U.S. military action against Iran can only hope that the Ayatollahs and the IRGC will not react violently to U.S. forces in the region and to its allies.
- ▶ In case that happens, troubled times are ahead for Iran, West Asia and the global market.

167. KONKAN RAILWAYS SIGNS AGREEMENT WITH NEPAL

Context:

- ▶ Konkan Railways Corporation Ltd has signed a contract agreement with Nepal's Department of Railways to supply two 1600 HP DEMU train sets.
- ▶ These trains will be used to operationalise railway link between Jayanagar in India and Kurtha in Nepal.
- ▶ The train sets will be manufactured by the Integrated Coach Factory, Chennai.

168. MINISTERIAL MEETING OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Context:

- ▶ A WTO Ministerial meeting of developing countries is being hosted by India in New Delhi on 13-14 May 2019.
- ▶ Sixteen developing countries, Six Least Developed Countries (LDC) and Director General of World Trade Organisation (WTO) are participating in the meeting.
- ▶ The Twelfth Ministerial Conference of the WTO to be held in Kazakhstan in June 2020.

169. IRELAND DECLARES CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Context:

- ▶ Ireland has become only the second country in the world to declare a climate and biodiversity emergency.
- ▶ It happened after the Oireachtas (Irish parliament) report on Climate Action was accepted by the government and opposition parties without a vote. The United Kingdom became the first country to declare the emergency on 1 May 2019.

170. 20th CONFERENCE OF RHCA CONCLUDES

Context:

- ▶ The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) had organised a Conference of the Regional Heads of Customs Administration of Asia Pacific Region of the World Customs Organisation (WCO) in Kochi from 08 to 10 May 2019.
- ▶ India hosted this Conference in its capacity as Vice-Chair of the Asia Pacific Region of WCO which it assumed on 1st July, 2018 for a two-year period.

171. 180 NATIONS AGREE ON A NEW UN ACCORD TO CURB EXPORT OF PLASTIC WASTE

Mains:

- ▶▶ What is the significance of BASEL Convention.

Context:

- ▶▶ Around 180 governments on Friday agreed on a new UN accord to regulate the export of plastic waste, some eight million tonnes of which ends up in the oceans each year, organisers said.

Background:

- ▶▶ The Geneva meeting amended the 1989 Basel Convention on the control of hazardous wastes to include plastic waste in a legally-binding framework.
- ▶▶ The IPEN umbrella group seeking to eliminate hazardous and toxic chemicals said the new amendment would empower developing countries to refuse “dumping plastic waste” by others.
- ▶▶ Even though the U.S. and a few others have not signed the accord, they cannot ship plastic waste to countries that are on board with the deal.

172. ‘RAIN-LOVING’ SNAKE DISCOVERED IN MIZORAM

Context:

- ▶▶ Herpetologists took 12 years to document *Smithophis atemporalis*, a predominantly aquatic species.
- ▶▶ It’s literally raining reptiles in the Northeast, and the latest to be discovered has a Mizo name that means rain-loving.

Background:

- ▶▶ A month after a Russian journal published the discovery of a reddish-brown pit viper in Arunachal Pradesh, the New Zealand-based journal *Zootaxa* has come out with the discovery of a non-venomous snake in Mizoram.
- ▶▶ The discovery of another non-venomous snake species — the Crying Keelback, in Arunachal Pradesh’s Lepa-Rada district, was published in an international journal about six months ago.
- ▶▶ The new genus and species of the natricine — predominantly aquatic — that took a seven-member team of herpetologists 12 years to document, has been named *Smithophis atemporalis* after eminent British herpetologist Malcolm Arthur Smith for his immense contribution to Indian herpetology.

173. EXTINCT BIRD SPECIES CAME BACK FROM THE DEAD

Context:

- ▶ A previously extinct species of bird returned from the dead, reclaiming the island it previously lived on and re-evolving itself back into existence.
- ▶ The white-throated rail colonized the Aldabra Atoll in the Indian Ocean and evolved to become flightless. It was completely wiped out when the island disappeared below the sea around 136,000 years ago.

174. A GLOBAL DEAL FOR POSTPONING PRALAYA

Mains:

- ▶ What happens when the level of the greenhouse gases increases? Evaluate.

Context:

- ▶ Temperature rise and climate change affect not just some countries but the entire globe, on which all species live- humans, animals, plants, fish, microbes.
- ▶ The Earth and the atmosphere surrounding it receive radiation from the Sun, and get “heated”.

Background:

- ▶ Some of the gases in the atmosphere, notably carbon dioxide (CO₂) absorb this heat radiating from the earth’s surface and bounce it back.
- ▶ This is what keeps the earth- land and seas- at a temperature range “comfortable” for us humans and the other organisms inhabiting the earth today. We thus live in a large “green house”.
- ▶ The temperature will rise. And this rise has been due to increases in the levels of CO₂ and other gases, produced upon burning carbon-rich fuels (coal, wood, petroleum products).
- ▶ Over the last 100 years alone, the global temperature has risen by close to 2 degree. And if we do not reduce or stop these fuels and use alternate sources of energy (solar, wind and others), the global temperature will rise further.

175. NATIONAL TECHNOLOGY DAY: 11 MAY

Context:

- ▶ National Technology Day is observed every year on 11t May in India.
- ▶ It acts as a reminder of the anniversary of Shakti, the Pokhran nuclear test which was held on 11 May 1998.
- ▶ The aim of the celebration is to highlight the achievements of the scientists and engineers of India in the field of science and technology.

176. 1st APACHE HELICOPTER HANDED OVER TO THE IAF

Context:

- ▶ First AH-64E (I) - Apache Guardian helicopter was formally handed over to the Indian Air Force at Boeing production facility in Mesa, Arizona, USA on 10 May, 2019.
- ▶ Air Marshal AS Butola, represented the Indian Air Force and accepted the first Apache.
- ▶ IAF had signed a contract with US Government and M/s Boeing Ltd in Sep 2015 for 22 Apache helicopters.

177. ISRO TO LAUNCH RISAT-2B FROM SRIHARIKOTA ON MAY 22

Context:

- ▶ Indian Space Research Organization ISRO is scheduled to launch the nation's latest radar imaging satellite RISAT-2B on 22nd of this month.

Background:

- ▶ A release from the national space agency says, it will be lifted off by the workhorse rocket PSLV-C46 in its 48th flight.
- ▶ It will zoom into space from the First Launch Pad of Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota, 90 km north of Chennai. The launch is tentatively scheduled at 0527 hrs on the day. RISAT-2B is a modern radar imaging earth observation satellite. It will be placed in an orbit of 555 km from the earth.
- ▶ PSLV will fly in 'core-alone' configuration carrying the satellite, without the use of solid strap-on motors.
- ▶ This will be the 72nd launch vehicle mission for ISRO from its spaceport at Sriharikota.
- ▶ ISRO has made provisions for the general public to view the launch from its recently opened Viewer's Gallery in the spaceport. They can make online registration for viewing the launch from 5 days before the launch.

178. 2019 TO BE OBSERVED AS 'YEAR OF NEXT OF KIN'

Context:

- ▶ The Indian Army is commemorating 2019 as the 'Year of Next of Kin'.
- ▶ It plans to reach out to the next of kin of battle casualties, ex-servicemen and serving soldiers to inform them of entitled financial benefits, welfare schemes and help resolve pension-related problems.
- ▶ The issue gains importance in light of most next of kin of deceased soldiers being unaware of the financial benefits.

179. GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY STRATEGY UNVEILED

Mains:

- ▶ Discuss the Objectives of recently unveiled global health security strategy by the US. Write its significance.

Context:

- ▶ The US unveiled the 'Global Health Security Strategy'.
- ▶ The strategy is a first of its kind strategy to prevent, detect and respond to threats from infectious diseases occurring naturally or accidentally.

Background:

- ▶ The National Security Strategy precisely identifies fighting biological threats and pandemics as central component of US's national security. It treats Biological threats, (like infectious disease outbreaks) as national security priority.
- ▶ The GHS strategy focuses on three interrelated goals –
 1. Strengthen partner country global health security capacities.
 2. Increase international support for global health security.
 3. Prepare a homeland ready and resilient against global health threats.
- ▶ Under the new Strategy, it will work to ensure that every partner country has a plan to achieve self-reliance in the critical area of health security.

180. UN TO HOLD 2020 OCEAN CONFERENCE IN LISBON

Prelims:

- ▶ Sustainable Development Goals.

Mains:

- ▶ What is the significance of SDG 14? Write its advantages and challenges.

Context:

- ▶ United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) will hold its 2020 high-level conference early June in Portugal's Lisbon to support the sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources.

Background:

- ▶ Theme of "Scaling up ocean action based on science and innovation for the implementation of Goal 14: stocktaking, partnerships and solutions."
- ▶ It will be co-hosted by the Governments of Portugal and Kenya.
- ▶ The Conference will support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development in Lisbon.

181. ROAD SAFETY WEEK: 6-12 MAY

Context:

- ▶ UN Global Road Safety Week was observed from 6 to 12 May 2019.
- ▶ It is celebrated every two years and highlights the need for strong leadership for road safety.
- ▶ The theme for 2019 is 'leadership for road safety'.

182. WTO MINISTERIAL MEETING OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES TO BEGIN TODAY

Context:

- ▶ The World Trade Organisation (WTO) ministerial meeting of developing countries will begin in New Delhi today.

Background:

- ▶ The two-day meeting is being held at a time when the multilateral rule-based-trading system is facing serious and grave challenges.
- ▶ The meeting will provide an opportunity for the Ministers to discuss various issues and the way forward. Today, on the first day, there will be a meeting of senior officers of the participating countries. Tomorrow, the Ministerial Meeting will be held.

183. GRIZZLED GIANT SQUIRREL SPOTTED NEAR GINGEE

Context:

- ▶ For the first time, researchers have sighted nests of the grizzled giant squirrel at Pakkamalai Reserve Forests near Gingee in the Eastern Ghats.
- ▶ The squirrel is an endangered species listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act.
- ▶ Owing to habitat loss and poaching, the species has been categorised as near threatened by the Red List and listed under Schedule II of CITES.

184. BENGAL TIGERS MAY NOT SURVIVE CLIMATE CHANGE

Prelims:

- ▶ Status of bengal tiger in IUCN RedList

Mains:

- ▶ “Are we doing enough?” Even our National Animal Facing threat of climate change. What precautions should we take to fight against global warming? Critically Evaluate.

Context:

- ▶ According to a report by the UN, Royal Bengal Tiger, which dominates the marshy areas of the Sundarban forest reserves, may be pushed into extinction due to rise in sea levels and climate change.

- ▶ The Sunderbans, a 10,000-km area of wet and marshy land sprawled across Bangladesh and India, is among the world's richest mangrove forest reserves and supports species like Bengal Tiger.

185. ASSAM PRODUCES AN ORCHID LINK TO THE ORIENT

CONTEXT:

- ▶ The parasitic bloom is a variant of a Japanese orchid
- ▶ Discovery has given India one of its smallest orchids in terms of size and duration of bloom to be recorded botanically. *Lecanorchis taiwaniana*, which the Japanese Journal of Botany has published as a “new record for the flora in India” in its latest issue, is a mycoheterotroph, one of two types of parasitic plants that have abandoned photosynthesis.

186. KS RADHAKRISHNAN APPOINTED AS MEMBER OF CSAT

Context:

- ▶ K S Radhakrishnan, former Supreme Court Judge, has been appointed as a member of the Commonwealth Secretariat Arbitral Tribunal, London.
- ▶ He will render his services as a member of the Tribunal for a period of four years from 1st of June, 2019 to 31st of May, 2023.
- ▶ He served as the Chief Justice of the Gujarat and Jammu & Kashmir High Courts before his term in Supreme Court from 2009-2014.

187. MUHAMMAD-BANDE APPOINTED AS PRESIDENT OF UNGA

Context:

- ▶ TIJJANI Muhammad-Bande, a professor and former vice chancellor of Usman Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, has been appointed the President of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).
- ▶ He was the permanent representative of Nigeria at the UN.
- ▶ When he assumes the role, the professor will become the second Nigerian to be president of the UN General Assembly.

188. WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY: 11 MAY

Context:

- ▶ World Migratory Bird Day is observed every year on 11 May.
- ▶ The theme for this year's World Migratory Bird Day is ‘Protect Birds: Be the Solution to Plastic Pollution.’ The aim of the day is to highlight the need to protect migratory birds and their habitats.

189. FIFA ANNOUNCES TWO NEW AWARD CATEGORIES

Context:

- ▶ FIFA announced two new award categories to promote women's football across the globe.
- ▶ The two new award categories are off Women's goalkeeper of the year and a women's team of the year. This announcement means and both men and women will be up for receiving accolades in the same categories at the FIFA Best ceremony in Milan on September 23.

190. SUBSTANTIVE EQUALITY: ON SC/ST GOVT. STAFF PROMOTIONS

Context:

- ▶ The Supreme Court verdict upholding a Karnataka law to preserve the consequential seniority of Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe candidates promoted on the basis of reservation is notable for being the first instance of quantifiable data being used to justify reservation.

Background:

- ▶ The Reservation Act 2018 was preceded in time by the Karnataka Determination of Seniority of the Government Servants Promoted on the Basis of the Reservation (to the Posts in the Civil Services of the State) Act 2002.
- ▶ The constitutional validity of the Reservation Act 2002 was challenged in *B K Pavitra v Union of India*, (2017) wherein it was held that Sections 3 and 4 of the Reservation Act 2002 to be ultra vires Articles 14 and 16 of the Constitution on the ground that an exercise for determining inadequacy of representation, backwardness and the impact on overall efficiency had not preceded the enactment of the law. Such an exercise was held to be mandated by the decision of a Constitution Bench of this Court in *M Nagaraj v Union of India*, (2006).
- ▶ The Karnataka government then appointed a committee to collect data on the “backwardness” of SC/ST communities, the inadequacy of their representation in the services and the overall impact of reservation on the efficiency of the administration — parameters laid down in the 2006 verdict as constitutional limitations on the power to extend reservation in employment.
- ▶ Based on the report, the State enacted a fresh law, which has now been upheld.

Details:

- ▶ The verdict is notable for being the first instance of quantifiable data being used to justify reservation. A key principle in this decision is that where reservation for SC/ST candidates is concerned, there is no need to demonstrate the ‘backwardness’ of the community.
- ▶ The other pre-requisites of a valid system — quantifiable data on the ‘inadequacy of representation’ for classes of people identified for reservation, and an assessment of the impact of such quota on the efficiency of administration — remain valid.

Significance of the judgement:

- ▶ Justice D.Y. Chandrachud's judgment applies the rule emerging from Jarnail Singh, which decided that Nagaraj did not require reconsideration. At the same time, it held that Nagaraj was not right in insisting on data to justify the 'backwardness' of SC/ST communities, as it contradicted a nine-judge Bench decision in Indra Sawhney (1992).
- ▶ The judgment places in perspective the historical and social justification for according reservation, rejecting the argument that – quotas, by themselves, affect administrative efficiency. It says merit lies not only in performance but also in achieving goals such as promotion of equality, and that India's transformative Constitution envisages not just a formal equality of opportunity but the achievement of substantive equality.
- ▶ It accepts the subjective satisfaction of the government in deciding the adequacy of representation, subject to the norm that there should be relevant material before it.
- ▶ One must also recognise the constant tension between legislative intent and judicial interpretation. Most judgments on affirmative action indicate that the courts are laying down constitutional limitations, lest the equality norm, a basic feature of the Constitution, be given the go-by.

Conclusion:

- ▶ It is welcome that the backwardness of the SCs and STs no more needs to be demonstrated. Policy-makers should heed the appeal contained in the judgment: there is no antithesis between the concept of efficiency and the inclusion of diverse sections of society in the administration. While data on representation may be a requirement, the idea that reservation has an adverse effect on administration must be rejected.

191. CHENNAI TO GET ITS FIRST UNMANNED SUBSTATION

Context:

- ▶ The Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (Tangedco) has identified a substation to be upgraded into an unmanned substation- the first of its kind in the city.
- ▶ The 33 (KV)/11 KV substation is located right at the heart of the central business district of Anna Salai, near the Express Mall on Woods Road.
- ▶ It has been chosen for the upgrade.

Background:

- ▶ The first substation in the city to be converted into an unmanned one, several substations in the State, including in Dindigul, Madurai and Tirunelveli, were already functioning in a similar manner. The unmanned substation concept is similar to the successful working model of the Power Grid Corporation India Limited (PGCIL).

192. WTO MEETING BEGAN IN DELHI

Context:

- ▶ The World Trade Organisation ministerial meeting of developing countries began in New Delhi on 13 May 2019.

Background:

- ▶ The logjam in the Appellate Body is a serious threat to the dispute settlement mechanism of the WTO and the implementation function of the organization.
- ▶ The meeting will provide an opportunity for the Ministers to discuss various issues and way forward. 16 developing countries and 6 Least Developed Countries, LDCs are participating in the meeting including China, South Africa, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Kazakhstan and Bangladesh.

193. INDIA, IRAN TO DISCUSS IMPACT OF US ENDING WAIVERS ON IMPORT OF IRANIAN OIL

Context:

- ▶ Foreign Minister of Iran Mohammad Javad Zarif will hold talks with External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj in New Delhi .
- ▶ The talks will primarily focus on the impact of the US ending waivers on import of Iranian oil and ways to deal with it.

Background:

- ▶ Both the leaders are expected to discuss the latest developments pertaining to the Iran nuclear deal also known as Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.
- ▶ Mr Zarif arrived in New Delhi yesterday on a two-day visit to India
- ▶ India is one of the most important partners of Iran and both countries have regular consultations on various issues.

194. YOUNG SCIENTIST PROGRAMME 'YUVIKA2019' INAUGURATED TODAY

Context:

- ▶ The Young Scientist Programme 'Yuvika2019' was inaugurated by Indian Space Research Organisation, ISRO Chairman Dr K Sivan, through video mode in Bengaluru today.
- ▶ The two-week residential summer vacation programme spread over four ISRO centres in Bengaluru, Thiruvananthapuram, Ahmedabad and Shillong are attended by 110 students.

Background:

- ▶ The programme will help in inculcating scientific temper in the students.

- ▶ Science and Technology is an essential component for the development of any country, they play a major role in improving the quality of life including safety and security of human beings.
- ▶ How the applications of Space technology is helping in the day to day activities of common man besides ensuring the safety of life and property during disaster situations.
- ▶ That programmes like this will lead to national integration and nation building.
- ▶ The participants will be visiting the spaceport of India, Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Shriharikota during this programme.

195. INDONESIA COAST GUARD SHIP ARRIVES IN PORT BLAIR TODAY

Prelims:

- ▶ India, Indonesia Bilateral relations.

Mains:

- ▶ Explain the Formation of thousands of Islands in Indonesia.

Context:

- ▶ Indonesian Coast Guard ship (BAKAMLA) 'Tanjung Datu' arrived in Port Blair today along with a high-level delegation led by First Admiral Eko Murwanto.

Background:

- ▶ The aim of this goodwill visit is to enhance bilateral cooperation between the Coast Guards of two countries. The ship 'KN Tanjung Datu' is a Patrol Vessel.
- ▶ The ship has a complement of 25 officers and 40 sailors. During the stay in Port Blair, various professional exchanges including Table Top exercise and Sea Exercise will be conducted for enhancing domain expertise of personnel from both Coast Guards. Indian Coast Guard will also conduct a pollution response demonstration. Indonesian Coast Guard Ship 'KN Tanjung Datu' will depart Port Blair on Thursday.

196. CENTRE EXTENDS BAN ON LTTE

Prelims:

- ▶ Indo- Srilanka Relations.

Mains:

- ▶ Why and how did india get into Srilana's LTTE problem during SL's Civil War? Elaborate.

Context:

- ▶ The Home Ministry extended ban on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, LTTE in India for a further period of five years.
- ▶ Government of India under the provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 declares the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) as an Unlawful Association.

Background:

- ▶▶ LTTE was banned in India after the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991. LTTE was an association based in Sri Lanka, but having its supporters, sympathizers and agents in India and that its objective for a separate homeland Tamil Eelam for all Tamils threatened the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India for the Union and thus, fell within the ambit of unlawful activity.
- ▶▶ LTTE, even after its military defeat in May 2009 in Sri Lanka, has not abandoned the concept of Eelam and has been clandestinely working towards the Eelam cause by undertaking fundraising and propaganda activities in Europe.
- ▶▶ The remnant LTTE leaders or cadres have also initiated efforts to regroup the scattered activists and resurrect the outfit locally and internationally.

197. 1st WOMEN'S CRICKET MAGAZINE LAUNCHED

Context:

- ▶▶ World's first exclusive women's cricket magazine CRICZONE has released.
- ▶▶ It has Indian women's cricket team vice-captain Smriti Mandhana featured as the cover story.
- ▶▶ The publisher of the magazine is Yash Lahoti.
- ▶▶ The objective of this magazine is to empower young aspiring women cricketers to take the sport as a profession and able to make a sustainable living.

198. CHINA HITS BACK, IMPOSES TARIFF HIKE ON U.S. GOODS WORTH \$60 BN

Context:

- ▶▶ U.S. President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping participate in a welcome ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China. Trump is to meet with Xi at the Group of 20 summit in Buenos Aires, Argentina.
- ▶▶ Beijing defies Trump warning not to retaliate or it would only get worse.

Background:

- ▶▶ China will raise tariffs on \$60 billion worth of U.S. goods from June 1, in retaliation to the latest round of U.S. tariff hikes and Washington's plans to target almost all Chinese imports.
- ▶▶ The announcement came after the latest round of U.S.-China trade negotiations ended on Friday without a deal, and after Washington increased tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods. U.S. President Donald Trump had also ordered the start of a process to impose new duties on another \$300 billion worth of Chinese items.

199. US PRESIDENT TO MEET HIS CHINESE COUNTERPART AMID ESCALATING TRADE WAR

Prelims:

- ▶ Aim and Goals of G20 Summit.

Context:

- ▶ US President Donald Trump will meet Chinese President Xi Jinping at the G20 summit at Osaka in Japan next month amid latest escalation in trade tensions between the two countries.
- ▶ Trump expressed hope that his meeting with Xi will be very fruitful.

Background:

- ▶ China increased tariffs on 60 billion dollar's worth of American goods in a tit-for-tat to US move to raise tariffs on 200 billion dollar's worth of Chinese imports.
- ▶ After the near collapse of trade talks with China, US on Friday imposed punitive duties on 200 billion dollar's worth of Chinese imports, raising them to 25 per cent from 10 per cent.
- ▶ China's retaliation came hours after the US President warned China not to impose retaliatory tariffs on American products.

200. ASIAN ECONOMIES TO DOMINATE 7%

- ▶ The 2020s are set to be the Asian decade, with the continent dominating an exclusive list of economies expected to sustain growth rates of around 7%.
- ▶ Ethiopia and Côte d'Ivoire are also likely to reach the 7% growth pace.
- ▶ India, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Myanmar and the Philippines should all meet that benchmark, according to a research note.

201. DNA DATABASE COMING UP FOR INDIAN RHINO

Prelims:

- ▶ Indian rhino status in IUCN RedList.

Mains:

- ▶ What is Indian Rhino Vision 2020 (IRV 2020)? Write about threats for Indian species.
- ▶ Why there is a need for translocation of Indian rhino species to new rhino habitat? Evaluate.
- ▶ Write about Indian Rhino and its role on ecosystem and biodiversity.

Context:

- ▶ The Union Environment Ministry has embarked on a project to create DNA profiles of all rhinos in the country.
- ▶ By 2021, the project's deadline, the Indian rhino could be the first wild animal species in India to have all its members DNA-sequenced.

Background:

- ▶▶ The project's proponents, including the World Wide Fund for Nature-India (WWF-India) and the Centre-funded Wildlife Institute of India (WII).
- ▶▶ There are about 2,600 rhinos in India, with more than 90% of the population concentrated in Assam's Kaziranga National Park. Outside Kaziranga, there are about 200 rhinos in West Bengal, 40 in Uttar Pradesh and 1 in Bihar. There are three species of rhinos, of which only one, the Indian rhino is found in the country. The rhinos were once abundant and well-distributed in the country. However poaching reduced its numbers to about 200 wild animals by the end of the 20th century.

202. INTERNATIONAL NURSES DAY: 12 MAY

- ▶▶ International Nurses Day (IND) is an international day observed around the world on 12 May each year.
- ▶▶ It marks the contributions that nurses make to society.
- ▶▶ It was first observed in 1965.
- ▶▶ The theme for the year 2019 is Nurses: A voice to lead - Health for All.

203. JEHAN WON FIA FORMULA 3 CHAMPIONSHIP

- ▶▶ Indian racer Jehan Daruvala, won the inaugural round of the FIA Formula 3 Championship, one of the support events to Formula One in Barcelona on 12 May 2019.
- ▶▶ The FIA F3 Championship was created by merging the erstwhile GP3 Championship and FIA F3 European Championship.
- ▶▶ Jehan is the only Indian to win a Grand Prix when he won the New Zealand Grand Prix.

204. NOVAK WON MADRID OPEN TITLE

- ▶▶ Novak Djokovic of Serbia beat Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece 6-3, 6-4 to win his third Madrid Open title on 12 May 2019.
- ▶▶ Djokovic lifted the title in Madrid and has now won 33 Masters 1000 titles - the same number as Rafael Nadal and five more than Roger Federer.

205. REDACTIVE PRICING AUDIT AND THE CAG'S DUTIES

Context:

- ▶▶ The Supreme Court's observations in connection with the Rafale fighter aircraft deal by citing the Comptroller and Auditor General of India's (CAG's) report on redacted pricing, and subsequent media reports and the controversy over "stolen files" brought back into the spotlight the role of the supreme audit institution of India.

What is Redaction?

- ▶ Redaction is the selection or adaption by obscuring or removing sensitive information from a document prior to publication.

Why CAG?

- ▶ The CAG is mandated to audit all receipts and expenditures of the three-tier governments in India and report to the legislature judiciously, independently, objectively in compliance with applicable laws, rules and regulations, without fear and favour.
- ▶ The CAG conducts financial compliance and performance audits and submits his reports to the legislature to help people's representatives in enforcing legislative oversight and public accountability of the executive.
- ▶ Legislative committees such as the Public Accounts Committee and Committee on Public Undertakings examine the CAG's selected reports.

Not being Transparent?

- ▶ In the preface of the audit report, the CAG stated that redactive pricing was unprecedented but had to be accepted due to the Ministry's insistence citing security concerns.
- ▶ Consequently, the full commercial details were withheld and the figures on the procurement deal were blackened.
- ▶ Experts opine that it was unprecedented that an audit report submitted by the CAG to the President under Article 151 of the Constitution suppressed relevant information.
- ▶ It is important to note that whether the Ministry's insistence citing security concerns could have been accepted by the CAG can be examined only by the Supreme Court of India. This is in light of the constitutional provisions on the CAG's duties and parliamentary privileges and prerogatives.

The Issue with Redactive Pricing:

- ▶ Redactive pricing is nowhere used in SAI audit reports.
- ▶ It does not seem to have been used in a government audit by any SAI of any country.
- ▶ Redactive pricing in the 'Performance Audit Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Capital Acquisition in Indian Air Forces' suppresses more than it reveals.
- ▶ For example, in the Rafale deal, Parliament, its committees, the media and other stakeholders of the CAG's reports cannot obtain complete, accurate and reliable information due to redactive pricing.
- ▶ Experts opine that the reduction in the original requirement, to 36 aircraft, a waiver of the earlier decision to involve Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, observations of the Indian Negotiating Team, cost escalation due to inclusion of bank guarantee and performance guarantee were not compared properly to arrive at the audit conclusion.

Important Points to Be Known:

- ▶ Pricing is the quintessence of any procurement decision.
- ▶ Along with quality and quantitative specifications, comparative merits and demerits are ascertained, and the pricing of comparable products are compared in decision-making.
- ▶ Pricing is an integral part of the procurement decision-making process of any equipment, product, goods or service. A strategic competitive advantage of a product, how best it should be procured, how many at a time are to be purchased and at what price and under what conditions, terms, instalments, along with after-service conditions, discounts, commissions and other conditions are evaluated to arrive at a purchase decision.
- ▶ Therefore, price integrity and comparative competitiveness are at the heart of any procurement decision.

Way Forward:

- ▶ The CAG is mandated to get into the nitty-gritty of procurement terms, procedures, comparative advantages and disadvantages without fear and favour to form an objective, independent and judicious audit opinion.
- ▶ An audit is expected to analyse the facts and comparative pricing charts to highlight the financial propriety and prudence of the procurement decision.
- ▶ The CAG is constitutionally mandated and empowered to do its duties covering all essential factors about the procurement, customised end-to-end pricing assessments, legal requirements, escrow accounting, terms and conditions and arbitration clauses in compliance with legal and other regulations.
- ▶ The executive procurement decision is expected to be completely analysed in the CAG's audit to pinpoint inaccuracies, non-compliance of essential procurement procedures, conditions and pricing errors which may have a negative financial impact and cause potential damage to the country's interests.

Conclusion:

- ▶ Given the dynamics of international competition in competitive products and pricing in today's modern market scenario, pricing, delivery and post-delivery service and other conditions are essentially covered in an SAI audit.
- ▶ It is a complex audit, demanding exceptional insight, expertise, knowledge and skills.
- ▶ It is important to note that in case the CAG's office lacks expertise to conduct a performance audit, expertise can be sought from the pool of resources or credible organisations to be coopted in the audit team. Pricing decisions must be subjected to detailed analysis, without resorting to redactive pricing. Parliament is constitutionally privileged to know what the executive has done and how and under what conditions a procurement was decided.

- ▶ The CAG's audit is expected to highlight value for money in purchase decisions.
- ▶ A performance audit is done to establish whether the procurement activity was executed keeping in mind economy, efficiency, effectiveness, ethics and equity.
- ▶ Only a thorough pricing audit can bring out the credibility and integrity of a purchase decision, thereby achieving an SAI's constitutionally mandated responsibilities.

206. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES IN 10% RESERVATION

Context:

- ▶ A new Constitution amendment provides 10% reservation to individuals from economically weaker sections (EWS) in the general category for government jobs and educational institutions in India.
- ▶ Under the law, EWS applicants may even find it harder to obtain positions. These problems can be addressed using the science of matching theory.

Unreserved to Reserved:

- ▶ India's main reserve-eligible groups have been Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes. In job and university assignments, there is a widespread tradition of first assigning a reserved category applicant to an unreserved position if he or she qualifies on the basis of merit alone. When unreserved positions are exhausted, a reserved category applicant may then be considered for a reserved position.
- ▶ A meritorious reserved candidate (MRC) is a reserved category applicant, who is tentatively assigned to an unreserved position.
- ▶ When the assignment involves multiple types of jobs or universities, the existence of MRCs raises two important questions.
- ▶ These are as below:
- ▶ Can an MRC move to a reserve position for a more preferred job or university place if he or she is tentatively holding a less preferred unreserved position?
- ▶ If such movement is allowed, what happens to the newly vacated seat?
- ▶ It is important to note that a 2004 Supreme Court decision in *Anurag Patel v. U.P. Public Service Commission* mandates that an MRC is entitled to move or "migrate" to the more preferred assignment.
- ▶ A 2010 Supreme Court decision in *Union of India v. Ramesh Ram & Ors* answers the second question for the case of public sector job assignments. It specifies that the newly vacated position is to be given to a candidate from the general category, who is not eligible for any reservation. That is, even if there is a more deserving reserved category applicant — say, another MRC who received a less preferred position — the newly available unreserved position can go to a potentially lower-scoring applicant from the general category.

- ▶ Therefore, it is important to note that one unintended consequence of this judgment is that the cut-off score for reserved category candidates can be higher than the cut-off score for the general category.
- ▶ At present, a small fraction of unreserved positions are tentatively assigned to reserved category applicants. This means that the number of meritorious reserved candidates is relatively modest compared to the number of unreserved positions.
- ▶ However, with the new EWS reservation amendment, a large fraction of general category applicants are expected to qualify as economically weak.
- ▶ This means that a large share of unreserved positions will be tentatively assigned to the EWS category. As a result, there will be many more meritorious reserved candidates. And the positions they vacate due to migration are to be offered to the general category candidates who do not qualify for EWS reservation due to the verdict as pronounced in the Ramesh Ram case.
- ▶ This may result in a reduction in the number of positions offered to those in the EWS category.

The Most Sought-After Government Jobs:

- ▶ For example, under the system used by the Union Public Service Commission to allocate the most sought-after government jobs in India, such as in the Indian Administrative Service, a non-EWS applicant from the general category would take newly vacated positions following migration, increasing their overall share.
- ▶ In all likelihood, the cut-off scores will be higher for EWS candidates than for non-EWS general category applicants, meaning it's harder for the poor to qualify than the rich.
- ▶ Creating such a large reserved category results in a big challenge to the implementation of Ramesh Ram, or any system based on the idea of a meritorious reserved candidate.

Horizontal or Vertical?

- ▶ Another implementation challenge with the new amendment is that the new law does not explicitly state whether the new EWS reservation is horizontal or vertical.
- ▶ This is despite the clear distinction made in the landmark judgment in Indra Sawhney v. Union of India (1992). A horizontal reservation is a 'minimum guarantee', which only binds when there are not enough EWS applicants who receive a position on the basis of their merit score alone; if so, the bottom-ranked general category selections are knocked out by the top-ranked unselected EWS candidates. With a large number expected to qualify for EWS, the 10% minimum guarantee will already be achieved essentially in all applications. This means the policy, if applied horizontally, will virtually have no effect.
- ▶ A vertical reservation, on the other hand, is an 'over and beyond' reservation. This means that if an applicant obtains a position on the basis of his or her merit score without the benefit of the reservation, it does not reduce the number of reserved positions.

- ▶ This important distinction appears not to have been a part of discussions leading up to the passage of the law. A government memo suggests that the new EWS reservation might be vertical, but it is important that this issue be clarified.

Conclusion:

- ▶ It is important to note that these issues can be resolved using a well-designed assignment mechanism and transparent rules about processing of reserves. Research done by some experts show how it is possible to adapt certain mechanisms for India and satisfactorily implement reservation policies, as they are envisioned in Indra Sawhney. Moreover, lack of clarity on implementation opens up possibilities to distort or even manipulate outcomes, undermining policy goals. It can confuse the public and keep university or job assignments in limbo for years as courts process legal challenges. India's new EWS reservation policy is heading in this direction unless these implementation issues are addressed head-on.

207. DNA DATABASE COMING UP FOR INDIAN RHINO

Context:

- ▶ The Union Environment Ministry has begun a project to create DNA profiles of all rhinos in the country.

Background:

- ▶ The rhinos were once abundant and well-distributed in the country. However poaching reduced its numbers to about “200 wild animals by the end of the 20th century.
- ▶ Since the 1980s, the government has been trying to move a significant number of rhinos out of Kaziranga in the interest of the species' conservation, threats from poaching and challenges to their habitat. The project is a subset of the Centre's larger, ongoing rhino conservation programme.

Details:

- ▶ By 2021, the project's deadline, the Indian rhino could be the first wild animal species in India to have all its members DNA-sequenced.
- ▶ The project's proponents, including the World Wide Fund for Nature-India (WWF-India) and the Centre-funded Wildlife Institute of India (WII), said the exercise would be useful in curbing poaching and gathering evidence in wildlife crimes involving rhinos.
- ▶ There are about 2,600 rhinos in India, with more than 90% of the population concentrated in Assam's Kaziranga National Park. Outside Kaziranga, there are about 200 rhinos in West Bengal, 40 in Uttar Pradesh and 1 in Bihar. There are three species of rhinos, of which only one — the Indian rhino — is found in the country. Around 60 samples of tissue have been collected so far from some rhinos living outside Kaziranga. Once the project is completed, database will be hosted in the WII headquarters in Dehradun.

The National Rhino Conservation Strategy for India:

- ▶ The National Rhino Conservation Strategy for India was launched in February 2019
- ▶ It called for an engagement between India and Nepal to conserve the greater one-horned Rhinoceros. The plan said the single population of rhinos in Sukla-Phanta (Nepal), Valmiki tiger reserve (India) and Chitwan National Park (Nepal) and Dudhwa (India) is separated by the political boundary between the two countries.
- ▶ Instead of managing the two populations differently in the two countries, it needs to be managed with the same protocol.

Indian Rhinoceros:

- ▶ The Indian rhinoceros also called the greater one-horned rhinoceros and great Indian rhinoceros, is a rhinoceros native to the Indian subcontinent.
- ▶ It is listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List.

The Indian rhinoceros once ranged throughout the entire stretch of the Indo-Gangetic Plain, but excessive hunting and agricultural development reduced their range drastically to 11 sites in northern India and southern Nepal. The rhino's single horn is present in both males and females, but not on newborn young. The rich presence of blood vessels underneath the tissues in folds gives it the pinkish colour. The folds in the skin increase the surface area and help in regulating the body temperature.

- ▶ The thick skin does not protect against bloodsucking Tabanusflies, leeches and ticks.

Conclusion:

- ▶ Protection of wild animals is responsibility of human, leading animals life to endangered soon will lead human life endangered.

208. CHINA TO ASSIST SRI LANKA IN ITS ANTI-TERROR EFFORTS

Context:

- ▶ Chinese President Xi Jinping has promised “all possible assistance” to Sri Lanka from defence cooperation to intelligence sharing for the island's efforts to “strengthen national security by wiping out terrorism”, according to sources here.

Issue:

- ▶ The people of Sri Lanka have shown courage, wisdom and resilience in recovering from the traumatic effects of the country's brutal ethnic conflict between 1983 and 2010.
- ▶ As a matter of fact, an estimated 47,000 Tamil civilians, 27,000 LTTE members, 50,000 Sinhala civilians, 23,790 Sri Lankan soldiers and 1,500 members of the Indian Peace Keeping Force laid down their lives, during the conflict.
- ▶ The Sri Lankan ethnic conflict, however, did not affect the lives of “Indian Tamils” in Southern Sri Lanka, whose ancestors had migrated, as plantation workers, during British rule.

- ▶ There have, however, been recent incidents of religious tensions between the Sinhala Buddhist clergy and radicalised elements in the Muslim minority.
- ▶ Sri Lanka's relatively small Christian minority, which is peaceful and relatively affluent, had steered clear of getting drawn into any ethnic conflict.
- ▶ In these circumstances, the world was shocked to learn that in the midst of holy Easter Sunday church services on April 21st, 2019, churches in Colombo, Negombo and even the eastern port of Tamil dominated Batticaloa, were hit by bomb explosions.
- ▶ Three hotels housing a large number of western tourists in Colombo were also targeted. As many as 253 innocent people perished in the carnage.
- ▶ The "Islamic State of Iraq and Syria" (ISIS) soon claimed responsibility for the attack, contradicting President Trump's claims that the terrorist outfit had been "100 per cent" crushed in Syria.
- ▶ It soon emerged that the mastermind behind the blasts was a rabidly fundamentalist Sri Lankan Tamil, Maulvi Mohammad Zahran Hashim, who was from the town of Kathankudy, in Sri Lanka's Tamil dominated eastern province.

The extreme drive in Sri Lanka:

- ▶ Sri Lanka's Muslim community, which has done well economically in the Island, has lived in peace with both Buddhist Sinhalas and Hindu Tamils.
- ▶ Recent studies, however, indicate that some years before the bombings, sections of Tamil Muslims from the eastern province were getting radicalised in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab countries.
- ▶ Zahran Hashim was one of those so influenced by radical Islamist practices and beliefs. Cutting across ethnic differences, Hashim made common cause with Sinhala Muslims, including two sons of a Muslim business tycoon in Colombo, who had been deeply influenced by the ISIS.
- ▶ Both the sons died in suicide bomb blasts, even as the wife of another bomber detonated explosives in a suicide bombing the same day, resulting in the deaths of three police personnel.
- ▶ The Sri Lanka bomb blasts were thus executed by young radicalised Sri Lankan Muslims, cutting across the ethnic divide.

The 'SPREADING-OUT' of Extreme Elements:

- ▶ There are now signs that an estimated 75-100 Indian Muslims, who were with the ISIS in Syria, have dispersed and chosen escape routes, including through Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- ▶ Hashim has also reportedly established close institutional links with a counterpart group in Coimbatore and with people in other parts of Tamil Nadu and Kerala.
- ▶ There are now indications that after being forced out of Iraq and Syria, ISIS fighters have now dispersed across Asia, Africa and even to parts of Europe.

- ▶▶ While the Osama bin Laden-led Al Qaeda made it clear that its struggle was against “Jews and Crusaders,” the ISIS targets all non-Muslims, as was evident from its brutal killings of Indians in Iraq.
- ▶▶ Moreover, the Al Qaeda operated primarily out of Afghanistan and Pakistan, apart from select Arab countries. Al Qaeda’s leadership was predominantly Arab. It had very few members from other parts of the world.
- ▶▶ Experts opine that the ISIS poses a much more serious challenge to India than the Al Qaeda ever did, primarily because it has recruited its fighters from countries across Europe, Asia and Africa.
- ▶▶ It is important to note that President George Bush praised India because not a single Indian joined or backed Al Qaeda. However, things are different with ISIS, which regards India as a part of the “Islamic State of Khorasan”.
- ▶▶ Over 100 Indians are estimated to have joined the ISIS.

Extending its reach to India?

- ▶▶ The reach of ISIS across India is evident from its links with extremists in Kashmir, apart from those established in the recent past, in Tamil Nadu and Kerala.
- ▶▶ Radicalisation in our southern States poses new and serious security challenges.
- ▶▶ ISIS also acknowledges its links with associates, across India’s maritime frontiers in Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, Myanmar, Indonesia, Maldives, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. It also has a growing presence in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Way Forward:

- ▶▶ India will also have to take note of the distinct possibility of ISIS attempting to take advantage of tensions arising out of the Rohingya refugee crisis.
- ▶▶ A senior Myanmar official recently revealed that even as ISIS was losing influence in Iraq and Syria, its supporters were moving into Myanmar’s Rakhine State, where Rohingyas reside.
- ▶▶ Many Rohingya refugees, now in Bangladesh, could well make common cause with ISIS and with members of Pakistani backed militant outfits like the Jamat-ul-Mujahideen, to destabilise the situation along the common borders of India, Bangladesh and Myanmar.
- ▶▶ It is important to also note here that Pakistan has had an abiding interest in destabilising the Sheikh Hasina-led Government in Bangladesh.

Conclusion:

- ▶▶ Apart from having to deal with continuing Pakistan sponsored terrorism, India will now also have to keep a watch on challenges that would likely arise from the ISIS, with its emerging presence in the southern States.
- ▶▶ Like in Sri Lanka, ISIS activities could target selected sections of the population in India, while seeking to radicalise them.

- ▶▶ They will pose a challenge to internal security in India.
- ▶▶ Lastly, Pakistan could be expected to use the challenges posed by ISIS, to absolve itself of responsibility on actions of its trained jihadis, on Indian soil and in Bangladesh.

209. FACING THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Context:

- ▶▶ The politics of the climate crisis needs a radical transformation – people’s movements are a spark of hope.
- ▶▶ Already wealthy countries have become wealthier and developing countries have been made poorer in relative terms during this time.
- ▶▶ India’s GDP growth penalty between 1961 and 2010 is in the order of 31% for the period, whereas Norway gained about 34% on a per capita basis.
- ▶▶ More recently, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services has reported that, worldwide, the abundance of species has reduced by at least one-fifth, about a million species are under threat of extinction in the next few decades and 85% of wetlands have been lost.

Why it is in News?

- ▶▶ A recent paper in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the U.S.A. shows that global warming during the past half century has contributed to a differential change in income across countries.

Instances of Collusion:

- ▶▶ What we have, moreover, are numerous instances of elite networks that are taking advantage of the situation to consolidate their control.
- ▶▶ These networks often involve governments actively or quiescently colluding with fossil fuel companies, agro-industrial elites, financial elites and other big businesses that are ignoring climate change and making a fast buck often even from the growing disasters.
- ▶▶ The International Monetary Fund estimates in a recent working paper that fossil fuel subsidies were \$4.7 trillion in 2015 and estimated to be \$5.2 trillion in 2017.
- ▶▶ It goes on to say that efficient fossil fuel pricing would have reduced global carbon emissions by 28%.

CASES IN POINT: The Arctic and Mozambique

- ▶▶ The Arctic is melting rapidly and the tenor of the recent discussions among Arctic countries suggests that even as increasing glacier melt is responsible for opening up shipping in the area, superpowers are angling to access wealth from the oil, gas, uranium and precious metals in the region.

- ▶ Mozambique recently had two successive intense cyclones, Idai and Kenneth, with widespread devastation.
- ▶ As a matter of fact, there have been instances where big oil and energy companies have been eager to tap into Mozambique's liquid natural gas, with large banks from many countries involved in the financing. It is important to note that in 2013, bank loans for \$2 billion were guaranteed by the Mozambican government. However, when the government defaulted on its loans and the currency plummeted, it left behind a trail of woes.
- ▶ In essence, the story in Mozambique is of how "corrupt local elites collude with plundering foreign elites" and enrich themselves and their partners, while the people are left to bear the burden of debt. Further, while this kind of corruption may not be new, various versions of this are played out in other countries. Governments' corporate cronies and plundering elites, of course, need not be foreign.
- ▶ Environmental laws can be broken by old boys' networks with impunity as penalties are cancelled by a party in control.
- ▶ It is the poorest and those without access to power who become victims of the fallout from these situations.
- ▶ Another recent example to be pointed out here is the draft Indian Forest Act of 2019, which enhances the political and police power of the forest department and curtails the rights of millions of forest dwellers.

Issue:

- ▶ Policies and commitments make it clear that most governments and businesses are not interested in dealing with the climate and ecological crises.
- ▶ They will certainly not give these the central attention they deserve in these times of an emergency; they barely even acknowledge them.
- ▶ It is important to note that fossil fuel companies and politicians have known about climate change for at least 30 years.
- ▶ They have funded misinformation regarding climate directly, taking lessons from tobacco companies that propagated lies for decades about cigarettes being safe.
- ▶ The documentary film Merchants of Doubt describes how a handful of scientists have obscured the truth on global warming so that business profits can continue to flow.
- ▶ Further, the fossil fuel industry has also funded politicians, so their words and laws are already bought.

Responses to the "PLANET EMERGENCY": People's Movements

- ▶ What we are currently witnessing is a large-scale movement for "planet emergency", climate and ecology.

- ▶ There have been non-violent civil disobedience movements such as that started by Greta Thunberg. Greta Thunberg has been leading a non-violent civil disobedience movement among school-going children, while Extinction Rebellion has been organising “die-ins” in many parts of Europe and now in Asia.
- ▶ Experts opine that these non-violent civil disobedience movements are just what is needed and it is indeed inspiring to see children and grandparents protest together. It is important to note that people’s movements, whether made up of students or adults, cannot be ignored for long and governments will have to pay attention.
- ▶ The atmosphere now has concentrations of over 415 parts per million (ppm) of carbon dioxide, compared to 280 ppm in pre-industrial times.

Conclusion:

- ▶ The only solutions that governments and business are looking for are those that enable them to carry on as before. However, the planet is well past that point where small fixes can help take us on a long path to zero carbon earth. We are now at a stage where we need major overhaul of our lifestyles and patterns of consumption. The U.K. Parliament became the first recently to declare a climate emergency. It remains to be seen if appropriate actions will follow this declaration.

210. IN'S SSB INAUGURATED AT KOLKATA

Context:

- ▶ Admiral Sunil Lanba, the Chief of Naval Staff inaugurated Indian Navy’s first full-fledged Service Selection Board (SSB) at Diamond Harbour, near Kolkata on 14 May 2019.
- ▶ This is the fifth Service Selection Board of the Indian Navy and caters for selection of both Permanent and Short Service Commission officers.

211. INDIA PAVILION AT CANNES FILM FESTIVAL 2019 INAUGURATED

Context:

- ▶ The India Pavilion at Cannes Film Festival 2019 was inaugurated by Information and Broadcasting Secretary Amit Khare today.
- ▶ A special IFFI poster marking its Golden Jubilee Edition was also released, along with a comprehensive Film Guide to showcase the importance of the film ecosystem and government incentives to shoot in India.

Background:

- ▶ The India Pavilion has been set up to showcase Indian cinema across linguistic, cultural and regional diversity, with the aim of forging international partnerships in distribution, production, filming in India, development, technology, promoting film sales and syndication.

- ▶ It will serve as a platform for the Indian Delegates to meet International Delegates attending the Festival to promote networking with other countries and organizations
- ▶ The Pavilion will also serve as an information dissemination point about India and Indian Cinema for the Global Film Community.
- ▶ The Indian Delegation will interact with key stakeholders of Cannes as well as other members of the film fraternity during the Festival, along with promoting the Golden Jubilee Edition of IFFI to be held later this year.
- ▶ To take advantage of the availability of technicians and skilled professionals, the Delegation will showcase India as a post-production hub to promote collaborations for films with international production houses.

212. TRUMP DECLARES NATIONAL EMERGENCY OVER IT THREATS

Context:

- ▶ US President Donald Trump has declared a national emergency to protect American computer networks from foreign adversaries. Mr. Trump signed an executive order which effectively bars US companies from using foreign telecoms believed to pose a security risk to the country.
- ▶ Mr. Trump does not name any company specifically in the order. However, analysts suggest it is mainly directed at Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei.
- ▶ A number of countries – including the US – have raised concerns that the company's products could be used by China for surveillance. Huawei work does not pose any threat. The US is also embroiled in an escalating trade war with China.

213. CHINA BLOCKS ALL LANGUAGE EDITIONS OF WIKIPEDIA

Context:

- ▶ China has broadened its block of online encyclopedia Wikipedia to include all language editions.
- ▶ According to a report by the Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI), China started blocking all language editions of Wikipedia last month.

Background:

- ▶ Previously, most editions of Wikipedia - besides the Chinese language version, which was reportedly blocked in 2015 - were available. China's online censorship apparatus - dubbed the 'Great Firewall' - blocks a large number of foreign sites in the country, such as Google, Facebook and The New York Times. Topics that are deemed too sensitive are also scrubbed.
- ▶ In November, China had removed over nine thousand accounts on Chinese social media platforms like messaging app WeChat and the Twitter-like Weibo that it accused of spreading politically harmful information and rumours.

214. U.S. ORDERS STAFF TO LEAVE IRAQ EMBASSY

Context:

- ▶ The department ordered “non-emergency U.S. government employees”, at both the Embassy in Baghdad and the Consulate in Irbil, to leave the country.
- ▶ The order applies primarily to full-time diplomats posted to Iraq by State Department headquarters in Washington, and visa services in Iraq would be suspended as a result. Contractors who provide security, food and other services will remain in place for now.
- ▶ The administration had received intelligence related to “Iranian activity” that put U.S. facilities and service personnel at “substantial risk”.

215. XI JINPING REJECTS ‘CLASH OF CIVILISATIONS’ THEORY

Context:

- ▶ China’s President Xi Jinping debunked the “clash of civilisations” theory, and appealed for harmonious dialogue and coexistence between civilisations.
- ▶ Without naming the U.S., President Xi, in his address at the maiden conference on Asian Civilizations Dialogue, advocated equality, and rejected superiority of the U.S.-led West.
- ▶ Rejecting isolationism, Mr. Xi stressed that, “If countries retreat to secluded islands, human civilisation will die out because of a lack of exchanges.”

216. NABARD ANNOUNCED RS 700 CR CAPITAL FUND

Context:

- ▶ The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development announced a Rs 700-crore venture capital fund for equity investments in agriculture and rural-focused startups.
- ▶ NABARD has been contributing to other funds till now and this is the first time that the rural development bank has launched a fund of its own.
- ▶ The fund has been launched by Nabventures with a proposed corpus of Rs 500 cr.

217. FULLY RECYCLABLE PLASTIC CREATED

Context:

- ▶ The scientists have created a next-generation plastic that can be fully recycled into new materials of any colour, shape, or form, without loss of performance or quality.
- ▶ A team of researchers at the US Department of Energy's (DOE) Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory has designed it.
- ▶ All plastics are made up of large molecules called polymers, which are composed of monomers.

218. 1st WOMEN ASTRONAUT TO GO ON MOON

Context:

- ▶ Mission Artemis will likely carry the first woman astronaut to the Moon.
- ▶ The mission has been named after the Greek Moon goddess who was also the twin sister of the Apollo. The first men to walk on the Moon did so under the Apollo missions between 1960 and 1972. Now, 50 years later, NASA has planned to send the first woman to the Moon in a manned lunar mission in 2024.

219. THE MOON IS SHRINKING

Context:

- ▶ The Moon is steadily shrinking, causing wrinkling on its surface and quakes, according to an analysis of imagery captured by NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO).
- ▶ A survey of more than 12,000 images revealed that lunar basin Mare Frigoris near the Moon's north pole has been cracking and shifting. Since the moon's crust is brittle, these forces cause its surface to break.

220. JAISALMER TO HOST INT. ARMY GAMES

- ▶ International Army Scout Masters Competition as a part of International Army Games will be organised at Jaisalmer from 24 July-17 August 2019.
- ▶ The event will witness participation of the Mechanised Infantry Scout Teams of eight countries including Russia. The Competition will be conducted in 5 stages, which will test the overall skills of Mechanised Infantry Scouts.

221. MOU SIGNED FOR RUDRAKSH PLANTATION

Context:

- ▶ A MoU was signed between National Mission for Clean Ganga, HCL Foundation and INTACH for taking up a project of 'Plantation of Rudraksh Trees in Uttarakhand'.
- ▶ It is a part of CSR initiative under the 'Namami Gange' Programme.
- ▶ The project aims at planting 10,000 Rudraksh trees in the catchment area of river Ganga in Uttarakhand.

222. 11th JOINT CONSULAR COMMITTEE MEET BETWEEN INDIA, IRAN HELD IN DELHI

Context:

- ▶ The 11th Joint Consular Committee meeting between India and Iran took place on 14th of this month in New Delhi.

- ▶ Both sides discussed the early conclusion of Agreement on Mutual Legal Assistance on civil and commercial matters and extending the longer duration of e-Visa for each other nationals on reciprocity.
- ▶ The meeting provided an opportunity to review the status of ongoing cooperation in consular and visa related issues and to discuss ways and means to further expand people to people contacts and promote friendly exchanges between India and Iran.
- ▶ Joint Secretary in the External Affairs Ministry Amit Narang led the Indian side, while the Iran delegation was led by Director General for Consular Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran Ali Asghar Mohammadi.

223. COMCASA AGREEMENT WILL ENABLE INFO EXCHANGE TO FIGHT TERROR

Context:

- ▶ India and the U.S. are cooperating to prevent all forms of terrorism both from land and sea, U.S. Chief of naval operations .
- ▶ The Admiral, who was in India earlier this week on a three-day visit Navy chief Admiral Sunil Lanba were especially concerned by the threat “coming from the sea”.

Background:

- ▶ The foundational agreement, Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), which India signed last year would enable exchange of information on such threats.
- ▶ With COMCASA, India has signed three of the four foundational agreements with the U.S., and discussions are under way on the final one, Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-spatial Cooperation (BECA). COMCASA allows India to procure specialised equipment for encrypted communications from the U.S. origin military platforms.
- ▶ Two warships, INS Kolkata and INS Shakti, are also participating in IMDEX as also several Indian engineering and ship-building firms, including the Larsen & Toubro and the BrahMos aerospace corporation.
- ▶ After IMDEX, the Indian ships along with a Navy P-8I long range maritime surveillance aircraft will participate in the 26th edition of the Singapore India Maritime Bilateral Exercise (SIMBEX) scheduled from May 16 to 22.
- ▶ SIMBEX is the longest uninterrupted naval exercise that India has with any other country.

224. WASTE DUMPING PROPOSAL DEFEATED

Context:

- ▶ A proposal by India to prevent developed countries from dumping their electronic and plastic waste onto developing countries, was defeated at the recently concluded meeting of the Basel Convention in Geneva.
- ▶ The 14th meeting of the Basel Convention, which lays down guidelines on the movement of hazardous waste, concluded in Geneva on the 10th of May after two weeks of negotiations involving 187 countries.

Background:

- ▶ Pollution from plastic waste, acknowledged as a major environmental problem of global concern, has reached epidemic proportions with an estimated 100 million tonnes of plastic now found in the oceans, 80%-90% of which comes from land-based sources. India, too, grapples with the problem of having piles of electronic and plastic waste that aren't recycled or treated.
- ▶ India's laws currently don't allow electronic and plastic waste to be imported into the country. Plastic and electronic waste recyclers in Special Economic Zones were permitted to import waste for recycling.
- ▶ However, they will not be allowed to do so after August 31 this year. Despite these restrictions, countries continued to ship different kinds of plastics and e-waste to Indian ports.

225. AAROHI: 1st WOMAN TO FLY SOLO ACROSS ATLANTIC

Context:

- ▶ Aarohi Pandit has become the world's first female pilot to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean in a Light Sport Aircraft (LSA). She completed the feat when she landed at Iqaluit Airport in Canada on 13 May, having flown there from Wick in the UK. It also made Pandit the first female pilot in the world to successfully complete a solo flight across the Greenland ice cap in an LSA.

226. U.S. PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP ANNOUNCES NEW POINTS-BASED GREEN CARD SYSTEM

Context:

- ▶ Education, language skills to be rewarded in new proposal
- ▶ U.S. President Donald Trump on Thursday announced a proposal that will include significant changes to the way green cards are allocated, by dramatically reducing the number of family-based green cards and moving towards a points-based ("merit-based") system that will reward, among other factors, education, skills and English language proficiency.

Background:

- ▶ The plan, which the President outlined at a Rose Garden gathering, with senior administration officials and influential Hill Republicans in attendance, sought to boost border security and tighten asylum procedures.
- ▶ Mr. Trump's new plan, details of which had already been reported widely in the U.S. media before the announcement, will dramatically increase the number of green cards that are given through the skills route versus the family-based route. However, the overall number of green cards, just over 1.1 million in 2017, will remain the same.
- ▶ Currently about 12% of those receiving green cards entered the U.S. based on skill-based visas (such as the H1B), while some 66% are family-based green cards.
- ▶ The new proposal will increase skills-based green cards to 57%. Points will be awarded to applicants based on their education, work experience, age (more points for younger
- ▶ workers), English language ability etc. New immigrants will have to show that they can financially support themselves and will need to pass a civics exam.
- ▶ People given Green Cards on humanitarian and diversity grounds will now only constitute 10% of all Green Card recipients, according to a handout given to the press at the end of the Rose Garden event. Currently, the diversity lottery offers 50,000 green cards to under-represented groups each year.

227. OPEC SAYS GULF REGION NEEDS MORE PEACE AND STABILITY TO ENSURE FLOW OF OIL SUPPLIES

Context:

- ▶ The organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has said the Gulf region needs more peace and stability to ensure the flow of oil supplies. Any tension that occurs in the region affects the whole world. UAE-based Brooge Petroleum and Gas Investment yesterday unveiled a plan to build the refinery to produce IMO 2020-compliant bunker fuel in Fujairah, scheduled for completion by the first quarter of 2020.

Background:

- ▶ From 1st January 2020, IMO will enforce its Marpol Annex VI regulation mandating all ocean-going vessels to burn bunker fuels with a maximum sulphur content of 0.5%, down from the current limit of 3.5%. The refinery will be the first of its kind in the Middle East and North Africa to comply with the upcoming IMO 2020 regulation. The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) has ruled that from 1st January 2020, marine sector emissions in international waters be slashed to 0.5%. IMO 2020 regulations will see the largest reduction in the sulphur content of a transportation fuel undertaken at one time.

228. CHINA WARNS RETALIATION AGAINST TRUMP'S MOVE TO BAN HUAWEI

Context:

- ▶ China today warned of retaliation against US President Donald Trump's order that effectively barred Chinese telecom giant Huawei from the US market.
- ▶ China will take necessary measures to safeguard rights and interest of its business firms. He, however, parried questions over what measures China would take, saying the commerce ministry would come out with a response.
- ▶ US President Trump signed an executive order barring American companies from installing the foreign-made telecom equipment posing a national security threat.
- ▶ The order does not name any company but is believed to target Huawei. Meanwhile, Huawei termed the executive order as unreasonable, saying that the US is infringing upon the firm's rights.

229. THERESA MAY TO CONFIRM RESIGNATION DATE IN JUNE

Context:

- ▶ British Prime Minister Theresa May agreed to set a firm date for her resignation as Conservative Party leader to make way for a new leader in Downing Street by next month.
- ▶ After a crunch meeting with the party's influential 1922 Committee of backbench MPs, it was agreed that May would set out an exact timetable for her exit after her Brexit deal goes through the House of Commons for the fourth time in early June.
- ▶ Boris Johnson confirmed publicly for the first time that he will run to replace May as leader of the Conservative Party and the new prime minister.
- ▶ Johnson a former Cabinet minister had been widely seen as a front runner pro-Brexit candidate alongside Dominic Raab, the former Brexit minister who had similarly resigned from May's Cabinet last year due to differences over the Brexit Withdrawal Agreement.

230. TECHNOLOGY BAN ESCALATES U.S.-CHINA TENSION.

Context:

- ▶ China warned the U.S. on Thursday against further harming trade ties after President Donald Trump effectively barred Chinese telecom giant Huawei from the U.S. market, escalating tensions between the world's top economic powerhouses.
- ▶ At the same time, Beijing's diplomatic relations with Ottawa further soured as China formally arrested two Canadians on suspicion of snatching state secrets in a case seen as retaliation over Canada's arrest of a Huawei executive on a U.S. extradition request.

Background:

- ▶ The spat over Huawei adds to the uncertainty over efforts to revive a deal that would end a bruising U.S.-China trade war after the two sides hiked tariffs in recent days.
- ▶ Mr. Trump stepped up the U.S. battle against Huawei on Wednesday when he signed an executive order prohibiting the purchase or use of equipment from companies that pose “an unacceptable risk to the national security of the United States” or the safety of the American people. While the White House insisted that no particular country or company was targeted, Huawei is likely to be hit by the move amid concerns that its equipment could be used by Chinese intelligence services.
- ▶ The U.S. Commerce Department followed up with a more direct hit on the tech giant, adding it to a blacklist that will make it much harder for the firm to use crucial U.S. components in its array of phones, telecom gear, databases and other electronics.

231. PAKISTAN’S CURRENCY REACHES ALL-TIME LOW AGAINST US DOLLAR

Context:

- ▶ Pakistan's currency hit an all-time low against the US dollar after it dropped to Rs 148 per dollar in the inter-bank market.
- ▶ The devaluation followed bailout package by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the weekend.

Background:

- ▶ The IMF agreed to provide USD 6 billion to Pakistan under stringent conditions, including a higher role of market forces in determining currency rates.
- ▶ Opposition parties blamed Imran Khan-led PTI government's policies for weakening the national currency. Maryyium Aurangzeb of PML-Nawaz said in Islamabad that the prime minister is responsible for the mess in which he has landed the country.
- ▶ In August last year, when Khan took over the government, one dollar was equal to Rs 124.

232. CHINESE PROBE REVEALS SECRETS OF THE MOON

Context:

- ▶ The natural satellite is believed to have gone through a phase when it was composed of molten rock. Scientists have said they could be a step closer to solving the riddle behind the Moon’s formation, unveiling the most detailed survey yet of the far side of Earth’s satellite.

Background:

- ▶ In January, the Chinese spacecraft Change-4 named after the moon goddess in Chinese mythology became the first ever craft to touch down on the far side of the lunar surface.

- ▶▶ The moon is believed to have gone through a phase during its formation when it was partially or entirely composed of molten rock.
- ▶▶ As it cooled, denser minerals sank to the bottom of the magma-ocean, while lighter materials gathered near the surface to form its mantle.
- ▶▶ The team landed its probe in the Von Karmen Crater in the Aitken Basin at the Moon's south pole home to one of the largest impact craters known in the solar system.
- ▶▶ They detected materials such as olivine and low-calcium pyroxene that are rare elsewhere on the surface. Authors of the study, which was published in the journal Nature, suggest
- ▶▶ that these materials were ejected from the Moon's upper mantle when it was struck by a meteor.

233. A LENS THAT CAN TURN SMARTPHONE INTO A MICROSCOPE

Context:

- ▶▶ Low-cost technology developed by IIT Bombay can be used to detect imprints on currency notes, blood cells
- ▶▶ Researchers from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay have devised low-cost lenses that will elevate smartphone cameras to the power of a microscope.

Background:

- ▶▶ The lens with a resolution of 1.4 micrometre, which has been prepared by using natural interface, has been successfully tested to verify the authenticity of currency notes and in biomedical applications like identifying infected blood cells and contaminants in water.
- ▶▶ The lens was developed by Bhuvaneshwari Karunakaran as part of her PhD at the institute.
- ▶▶ The idea was to build a microscope that could be used through a mobile phone and solve problems caused by spherical lenses.
- ▶▶ Spherical disruptions is a phenomenon where light rays that strike the edges of the lens do not focus at the same location as the light that comes through the centre of the lens. We developed an alternative technology to make aspherical lenses. This lens could be used with a mobile phone and see things that a naked eye or a magnifying glass misses.

234. INDIA DEVELOPS NEW GROUNDNUT LINE WITH DESIRABLE OIL QUALITY

Context:

- ▶▶ Groundnuts grown in India have about 55% oleic acid, about 25% linoleic acid and around 10% palmitic acid, whereas in the U.S., several groundnut varieties have 80% oleic acid and just 2-3% linoleic acid.

Background:

- ▶ Fatty acid composition defines groundnut oil quality. Six saturated fatty acids including palmitic acid constitute 10%, whereas oleic acid (monounsaturated fatty acid) together with linoleic acid (polyunsaturated fatty acid) constitutes nearly 80% of unsaturated fatty acid in groundnuts. It is highly desirable to increase the oleic acid content and reduce both linoleic acid and palmitic acid content.
- ▶ Groundnuts grown in India have about 55% oleic acid, about 25% linoleic acid and around 10% palmitic acid, whereas in the U.S., several groundnut varieties have 80% oleic acid and just 2-3% linoleic acid.
- ▶ Efforts have been taken to increase the oleic acid content and reduce both linoleic and palmitic acid content for health benefits and to increase the shelf-life.
- ▶ In close collaboration with scientists from several institutions in India and Africa, the Hyderabad-based International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) has developed improved groundnut lines for disease resistance and high oleic acid content. In 2016, the result of development of high (up to 82%) oleic acid content lines in three popular groundnut varieties.

235. TREE RING DATA HELPS TRACK RAINFALL LEVELS

Context:

- ▶ Rainfall from the Asian summer monsoon, which influences water availability, ecosystems and agriculture in India, has been decreasing over the past 80 years, according to a study.
- ▶ Man-made atmospheric pollutants are likely the reason for the decline unprecedented in the last 448 years, said researchers from the University of Arizona in the U.S.
- ▶ The study, published in the journal Geophysical Research Letters, used tree ring records to reconstruct the Asian summer monsoon back to 1566.
- ▶ The study found the monsoon has been weakening since the 1940s, resulting in regional droughts and hardships.

236. INDIA HAD HIGHEST CHILD MORTALITY RATE

Prelims:

- ▶ National Health mission

Mains:

- ▶ What are the initiatives taken by the government to decrease the infant mortality rate.

Context:

- ▶ India had more deaths among children under five than any other country in 2015, a Lancet study has found.

- ▶ The researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in the US analysed state-level Indian data on the causes of death among children under five for the years 2000-2015.

Background:

- ▶ India reduced annual mortality among children under five from 2.5 million in 2000 (90.5 per 1,000 live births) to 1.2 million in 2015 (out of 2.5 million live births, or 47.8 per 1,000), it was still the highest in the world. Among the states, the highest mortality rate, in Assam at 73.1 per 1,000, was more than seven times that in Goa's 9.7. Among the regions, the mortality rate ranged from a low of 29.7 per 1,000 (South) to 63.8 (Northeast). The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG) set in 2000 was to reduce the under-five mortality rate in 2015 to one-third of the 1990 figure. For India, that would have meant reducing the under-five mortality rate to 39 deaths per 1,000 live births.

237. VIRAT KOHLI BAGGED CRICKETER OF THE YEAR

Context:

- ▶ India captain Virat Kohli bagged the International Cricketer and Batsman of the Year award during the CEAT Cricket Rating (CCR) International awards 2019.
- ▶ Pacer Jasprit Bumrah was adjudged as International Bowler of the Year.
- ▶ Ashutosh Aman was awarded Domestic Cricketer of the Year.
- ▶ Mohinder Amarnath was bestowed with the 'CCR International Lifetime Achievement Award'.

238. SLIPPERY SLOPE: ON INDIA AND IRAN DEVELOPMENTS

Context:

- ▶ The U.S. has followed withdrawal of its sanctions-waiver for Iranian oil with a series of actions that it claims are in response to the perceived threat from Iran.
- ▶ It has recalled all non-emergency diplomatic staff based in neighbouring Iraq; sent an aircraft carrier, the USS Abraham Lincoln, missile defence hardware and B-52 bombers to the Gulf; imposed fresh sanctions on various Iranian entities; and slapped a terror designation for the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.
- ▶ Iran has matched some of the expression with threats that it would close off the Strait of Hormuz to trade and treat the U.S. carrier as a legitimate "target" if it came anywhere close to Iranian waters.

Why it is in News?

- ▶ Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif was in New Delhi this week as part of a regional outreach that includes Russia, China, Turkmenistan and Iraq amid rising tensions in West Asia.

India – Iran Relations:

- ▶ India–Iran relations refers to the bilateral relations between the countries India and Iran. Independent India and Iran established diplomatic relations on 15 March 1950.
- ▶ From the economic perspective, Iran is the second largest supplier of crude oil to India, supplying more than 425,000 barrels of oil per day, and consequently India is one of the largest foreign investors in Iran's oil and gas industry.
- ▶ In 2011, the US\$12 billion annual oil trade between India and Iran was halted due to extensive economic sanctions against Iran, forcing the Indian oil ministry to pay off the debt through a banking system through Turkey.

Economic Relation:

- ▶ Iran's trade with India exceeded US\$13 billion in 2007, an 80% increase in trade volume within a year. Via third party countries such as UAE this figure reaches \$30 billion.

North-South Transport Corridor:

- ▶ The North–South Transport Corridor is the ship, rail, and road route for moving freight between India, Russia, Iran, Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.
- ▶ The route primarily involves moving freight from India, Iran, Azerbaijan and Russia via ship, rail and road. The objective of the corridor is to increase trade connectivity between major cities such as Mumbai, Moscow, Tehran, Baku, Bandar Abbas, Astrakhan, Bandar Anzali and etc.

Education:

- ▶ There are about 8,000 Iranian students studying in India. India provides 67 scholarships every year to Iranian students under ITEC, ICCR, Colombo Plan and IOR-ARC schemes.
- ▶ Every year around 40,000 Iranians visit India for various purposes. Kendriya Vidyalaya Tehran, the Embassy of India School, serves Indian citizens living in Tehran.

Issue:

- ▶ The U.S. aims to pin on the Iranian government and military forces blame for attacks on two Saudi Arabian oil tankers over the weekend. U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton's remark that "any attack on United States interests or those of [its] allies will be met with unrelenting force" gives the impression that the ground is being prepared by the U.S., aided by Saudi Arabia and Israel, for an escalation.

Way Forward:

- ▶ Given the signs of a gathering storm, India must consider not only its own interests in terms of its ties with Iran and with the U.S. and its allies, but also its position as a regional power.
- ▶ The External Affairs Ministry comment that the government would take a decision on Iranian oil imports after the elections appeared to be an attempt to buy time.

- ▶ The truth is that Indian oil importers have already stopped placing orders for Iranian oil in compliance with the U.S. diktat on “zeroing out” imports. India had been importing about 10% of its oil requirements from Iran, and the losses in terms of finding alternative suppliers in the face of rising oil prices are piling up. News reports also indicate that despite a U.S. waiver on the Chabahar port, banks in India and Afghanistan that planned to finance trade through the port are now being restricted by U.S. sanctions.

Conclusion:

- ▶ Instead of being a mute spectator to the crisis that is building for India’s energy bill as well as for regional stability, New Delhi must take the challenge head-on. One immediate priority is to work more closely with European countries in ensuring that Iran does not feel compelled to walk out of the nuclear deal, and to jointly build a sanctions-immune financial infrastructure to facilitate Iranian trade. It is necessary that the countries affected in the region meet urgently, as well as unitedly express concerns over a possible U.S.-Iran clash.

239. IMD SAYS SOUTHWEST MONSOON WILL REACH KERALA ON JUNE 6

Context:

- ▶ The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said, the southwest monsoon would be “slightly delayed” over Kerala and arrive on June 6. The normal onset date is June 1.

Customised Weather Model:

- ▶ This model crunches 6 meteorological parameters, The minimum temperatures over northwest India, The pre-monsoon rainfall peak over south Peninsula, The outgoing long-wave radiation (OLR) over the South China Sea, The lower tropospheric zonal wind over southeast Indian Ocean, The upper tropospheric zonal wind over the east equatorial Indian Ocean.
- ▶ The outgoing long-wave radiation (OLR) over the southwest Pacific region.

Southwest Monsoons:

- ▶ India gets southwest monsoon winds in the summers and northeast monsoons during the winters. The former arises because of the formation of intense low-pressure system over the Tibetan Plateau. The latter arise due to the high-pressure cells that are formed over the Siberian and Tibetan plateaus.

Causes for Southwest Monsoon:

- ▶ Intense low-pressure formation over the Tibetan Plateau because of intense heating during the summer season. Permanent high-pressure cell in the South of the Indian Ocean (East to Northeast of Madagascar in summer). SW monsoon winds bring heavy rainfall to most parts of the country.

Factors influencing Onset of SW Monsoons:

- ▶ Intense low-pressure formation over the Tibetan Plateau
- ▶ Permanent high-pressure cell in the South of the Indian Ocean
- ▶ Subtropical jet stream, African Easterly jet (Tropical easterly jet)
- ▶ Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ)

Factors Influencing Intensity of SW Monsoons:

- ▶ Strengths of the low pressure over Tibetan plateau and the high pressure over the south Indian Ocean, Somali Jet, Somali Current, Indian Ocean dipole
- ▶ Indian Ocean branch of the Walker Cell.

Conclusion:

- ▶ Generally, the monsoon reaches Kerala within 10 days of reaching the Andamans. However, meteorologists had indicated that the monsoon — impeded by high temperatures in the seas surrounding India, and an El Nino — will advance sluggishly after reaching Kerala.
- ▶ The monsoon's arrival time, the IMD said, had no bearing to the quantum of rainfall in June-September period. The IMD said it expected a “normal monsoon” but pointed to a “significant probability” of below normal rains.

240. INDIA GIVES 2 MI-24 HELICOPTERS TO AFGHANISTAN

Context:

- ▶ India handed over a pair of Mi-24 helicopters to Afghanistan.
- ▶ They are given with the aim to strengthen the Afghan air force as it battles a deadly Taliban insurgency. The two Mi-24 helicopters are a replacement for the four attack helicopters previously gifted by India to Afghanistan in 2015.

241. KAMI RITA SCALED MOUNT EVEREST FOR 23RD TIME

Context:

- ▶ A Nepalese Sherpa climber Kami Rita has scaled Mount Everest for 23rd time.
- ▶ He broke his own record for the most successful ascents of the world's highest peak.
- ▶ Rita is a native of Thame village located in the shadow of Mount Everest.

242. NAVY SUCCESSFULLY CONDUCTS FIRING TRIAL OF MEDIUM RANGE SURFACE TO AIR MISSILE

Context:

- ▶ The Indian Navy achieved a significant milestone in enhancing its Anti Air Warfare Capability with the maiden cooperative engagement firing of the Medium Range Surface to Air Missile (MRSAM).

- ▶▶ The firing was undertaken on the Western Seaboard by Indian Naval Ships Kochi and Chennai wherein the missiles of both ships were controlled by one ship to intercept different aerial targets at extended ranges.
- ▶▶ The firing trial was carried out by the Indian Navy, DRDO and Israel Aerospace Industries.
- ▶▶ AIR correspondent reports, the successful conduct of the test has been the result of sustained efforts by all stakeholders over the years. The MRSAM has been manufactured by Bharat Dynamics Limited.

243. INDIA EXTENDS FULL SUPPORT FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, SUSTAINABLE PEACE IN AFGHANISTAN

Context:

- ▶▶ India has expressed its full support for sustainable peace, economic development and stability in Afghanistan.
- ▶▶ External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj gave this assurance to Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's Special Envoy and High Peace Council Secretary Umer Daudzai in New Delhi.
- ▶▶ Mr Daudzai briefed the Minister on the outcome of the recently held Loya Jirga in the country.
- ▶▶ Both sides also discussed India's role in Regional Peace Consensus with regards to Afghanistan, progress in peace talks and bilateral relations.
- ▶▶ Mr Daudzai also met National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Foreign Secretary Vijay K Gokhale.

244. VARANASI HAS ONLY ONE AIR QUALITY MONITORING STATION

Context:

- ▶▶ Prime Minister Narendra Modi's constituency Varanasi, which goes to polls, continues to have only one air quality monitoring station, despite being ranked as among the top 3 most polluted cities in the world three years ago, a Right to Information request has found.

Background:

- ▶▶ The Central Pollution Control Board's 2015 dataset (made public in 2016) found Varanasi's air quality to be among the most toxic in the country and that it had only one air quality monitor capable of measuring particulate matter 2.5 and particulate matter 10 levels.
- ▶▶ Out of 227 days measured in 2015, the city had zero 'good-air' days and this was attributed to the heavy levels of industrial pollution.
- ▶▶ Biomass burning, vehicular emissions, brick kilns and diesel generator sets were also major contributors.
- ▶▶ The average air quality for PM 2.5 from 2017-2019 had improved to 104 from 206 in 2016, the maximum PM levels breached continued to be above 200, or in the "very poor" category.

- ▶ In February, a study by IIT Kanpur and the Shakti Foundation showed Varanasi suffered from poor air quality for 70% of the days between October and November 2018 with PM 2.5 levels crossing 170 micrograms per cubic metre against the national average of 60 and the WHO average of 25.

245. TAIWAN LEGALIZES SAME-SEX MARRIAGE IN LANDMARK FIRST FOR ASIA

Context:

- ▶ In a landmark first for Asia, Taiwan's Parliament today passed a bill legalising same-sex marriage.
- ▶ The bill would allow same-sex couples to form 'exclusive permanent unions' and would let them apply for a 'marriage registration' with government agencies.

Background:

- ▶ The island's Constitutional Court had ruled in 2017 that same-sex couples had the right to legally marry. The Parliament was given a two-year deadline and was required to pass the changes by May 24. President Tsai Ing-wen hailed the vote as a big step towards true equality that will make Taiwan a better country. Australia and New Zealand are the only places in the wider Asia-Pacific region to have passed gay marriage laws.
- ▶ Vietnam decriminalised gay marriage celebrations in 2015, but it stopped short of full legal recognition for same-sex unions.

246. INTERNATIONAL AID FOR EDUCATION TO INDIA DOWN BY 26%

Context:

- ▶ International aid to India for education has fallen by more than 26%, compared with a global downturn of 2%, data from United Nations showed. India received \$464 million in 2017, as against \$634 million in 2016. This is according to data compiled by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in a global education aid monitoring report.

247. THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT HAS APPROVED A SCHEME

Context:

- ▶ Saudi Arabia approved permanent residency gives permanent residency to certain expatriates.
- ▶ It will allow them to own real estate in the kingdom and reside with their families without a Saudi sponsor.
- ▶ The 'Privileged Iqama' system will offer a permanent residence scheme.
- ▶ It can be renewed annually to highly skilled expatriates and owners of capital funds

248. IRAN URGES FOR CONCRETE ACTION TO SAFEGUARD NUCLEAR DEAL

CONTEXT:

- ▶ Iran has urged countries including China and Russia to take concrete action to safeguard the 2015 nuclear deal after the US withdrew from the agreement.
- ▶ On a visit to Beijing, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said he would also talk with Chinese officials about bilateral ties and the very dangerous issues that are ongoing in the region today, according to a video published on the Iranian foreign ministry website.
- ▶ The landmark 2015 deal between Iran and world powers including the EU and the United States offered sanctions relief to Iran for scaling back its nuclear programme. In May 2018 President Donald Trump withdrew the US from the deal and reinstated unilateral economic sanctions.

249. ONGOING TRADE WAR WITH US COULD SLASH 1 % OF CHINA'S GDP

Context:

- ▶ A high-ranking Chinese official has said that the ongoing trade war with the US could slash China's GDP by one per cent.
- ▶ Wang Yang, one of the seven members of the elite Politburo Standing Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

Background:

- ▶ Wang is the first official from the top policymaking body to speak so candidly about the possible impact of the trade war.
- ▶ The Chinese economy which is on a downward trend slowed down to 6.8 per cent last year and the government this year officially slashed the GDP growth to be between 6.5 and six per cent.
- ▶ US President Donald Trump, who kicked off the trade war last year, is demanding China to reduce the massive trade deficit which has climbed to over USD 539 billion last year.

250. US APPROVES MISSILE SALES TO SOUTH KOREA, JAPAN

Context:

- ▶ United States has approved more than 600 million dollar in sales of air defense missiles to South Korea and Japan as tensions return with North Korea.
- ▶ The State Department had approved 94 SM-2 missiles used by ships against air threats, along with 12 guidance systems for a total cost of 313.9 million dollar.

- ▶ It separately gave the green light to sell 160 anti-air AMRAAM missiles and related guidance equipment to Japan for 317 million dollar.
- ▶ The sales will support the US foreign policy and national security objectives by assisting key allies and will not alter the basic military balance in the region.

251. TRUMP DELAYS DECISION ON AUTO TARIFFS FOR UP TO 6 MONTHS

Context:

- ▶ US President Donald Trump will delay by six months a decision on imposing steep tariffs on imported autos.
- ▶ The decision marks an attempt by Washington to increase pressure ahead of negotiations with the European Union.

Background:

- ▶ Mr. Trump has directed US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer to him within 180 days on the outcome of negotiations with the EU, Japan and other countries.
- ▶ Trump had been facing a Saturday deadline to announce whether to implement 25 per cent punitive duties on autos. In response to the metal tariffs, the EU, Canada and Mexico have already imposed stinging duties on American exports like motorcycles, orange juice, whiskey and blue jeans. Meanwhile, European Union is prepared to negotiate with US a limited trade agreement including cars.

252. CYRIL RAMAPHOSA RE-ELECTED PRESIDENT

Context:

- ▶ African National Congress (ANC) won South African elections with 57.51% votes and Cyril Ramaphosa elected as South African President.
- ▶ Last year in February 2018, Cyril Ramaphosa was elected as South African President after President Jacob Zuma resigned from the post.

253. BOI REPORTED RS.252 CRORE PROFIT

Context:

- ▶ Bank of India reported a net profit of 252 crore for the quarter ended March 31, compared with a loss of ₹3,969 crore in 2018.
- ▶ The Gross NPA ratio improved from 16.58% in March 2018 to 15.84% in March 2019.
- ▶ Net NPA ratio declined from 8.26% to 5.61%.
- ▶ Provision coverage ratio improved from 65.85% in March 2018 to 76.95% in March 2019.

254. NILEKANI-LED PANEL ON DIGITAL PAYMENTS SUBMITS REPORT TO RBI

Context:

- ▶ A Reserve Bank of India-appointed committee headed by Aadhaar architect Nandan Nilekani has submitted its suggestions on promoting digital payments to Governor Shaktikanta Das.

Background:

- ▶ In January, the RBI had set up the five-member panel on deepening digital payments with a view to encouraging digitisation of payments and enhance financial inclusion through digitisation. In a statement, the Reserve Bank said the committee held its deliberations including consultations with various stakeholders and submitted its report yesterday to Mr Das. It said the RBI will examine the recommendations of the committee and will link the action points, wherever necessary, in its Payment Systems Vision 2021 for implementation.
- ▶ Earlier this week, the RBI released the 'Payment and Settlement Systems in India: Vision 2019 - 2021', for ensuring a safe, secure, convenient, quick and affordable e-payment system with an aim making India a 'cash-lite' society.

255. CBIC INTRODUCED WEIGHTAGE SYSTEM

Context:

- ▶ Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) introduced a weighting system for appointments under compassionate grounds.
- ▶ It will be based on nine criteria like family income, dependents, remaining service period of the deceased, etc. The main objective is to ensure objectivity, transparency, and uniformity in the selection process for appointments on the compassionate ground.

256. WHY AN INDUSTRIAL POLICY IS CRUCIAL

Context:

- ▶ The contribution of manufacturing to GDP in 2017 was only about 16%, a stagnation since the economic reforms began in 1991. The contrast with the major Asian economies is significant.

The Idea of Growth:

- ▶ No major country has managed to reduce poverty or sustain growth without manufacturing driving economic growth. This is because productivity levels in industry (and manufacturing) are much higher than in either agriculture or services.
- ▶ It is also important to note that manufacturing is an engine of economic growth because it offers economies of scale, embodies technological progress and generates forward and backward linkages that create positive spill over effects in the economy.

Perspective from the West:

1. In the U.S. and Europe, after the 2008 crisis, the erstwhile proponents of neo-liberal policies started strategic government efforts to revive their industrial sectors, defying in principle their own prescriptions for free markets and trade.
2. The European Union has identified sector-specific initiatives to promote motor vehicles, transport equipment industries, energy supply industries, chemicals and agro-food industries.
3. Further, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development or UNCTAD finds that over 100 countries have, within the last decade, articulated industrial policies.

The Absence of a Manufacturing:

- ▶▶ India still has no manufacturing policy. It is important to note that focussing (as “Make in India” does) on increasing foreign direct investment and ease of doing business, important though they may be, does not constitute an industrial policy.
- ▶▶ Even neo-classical economists accept government intervention in the case of market failures.
- ▶▶ Mainstream economists point to specific instances of market failure that require a government-driven industrial policy.
- ▶▶ These include the following:
 - A. Deficiencies in capital markets, usually as a result of information asymmetries;
 - B. Lack of adequate investments inhibiting exploitation of scale economies;
 - C. Imperfect information with respect to firm-level investments in learning and training; and
 - D. Lack of information and coordination between technologically interdependent investments.
- ▶▶ Experts opine that the reasons listed above are good why an economy-wide planning mechanism is needed in India. However, the Indian state should steer clear of the “command and control” approach that harks back to pre-1991 days.

Why have an Industrial Policy in India Now?

- A. There is the need to coordinate complementary investments when there are significant economies of scale and capital market imperfections (for example, as envisaged in a Visakhapatnam-Chennai Industrial Corridor).
 - B. Industrial policies are needed to address learning externalities such as subsidies for industrial training (on which we have done poorly).
- ▶▶ As a matter of fact, industrial policy was reinforced by state investments in human capital, particularly general academic as well as vocational education/training aligned with the industrial policy, in most East Asian countries.
 - ▶▶ However, a lack of human capital has been a major constraint upon India historically being able to attract foreign investment (which Southeast Asian economies succeeded in attracting).

- C. The state can play the role of organiser of domestic firms into cartels in their negotiations with foreign firms or governments – this is a role particularly relevant in the 21st century after the big business revolution of the 1990s (with mega-mergers and acquisitions among transnational corporations).
- ▶ As a matter of fact, one objective of China’s industrial policies since the 1990s has been to support the growth of such firms (examples being Lenovo computers, Haier home appliances, and mega-firms making mobile phones).
- D. The role of industrial policy is not only to prevent coordination failures (i.e. ensure complementary investments) but also avoid competing investments in a capital-scarce environment.
- ▶ It is important to note that excess capacity leads to price wars, adversely affecting profits of firms – either leading to bankruptcy of firms or slowing down investment, both happening often in India (witness the aviation sector). Even worse, price wars in the telecom sector in India have slowed profits (even caused losses), which hampers investment in mobile/Internet coverage of rural India where access to mobile phones and broadband Internet, needs rapid expansion. The East Asian state managed this role of industrial policy successfully.
- E. An industrial policy can ensure that the industrial capacity installed is as close to the minimum efficient scale as possible.
- ▶ Choosing too small a scale of capacity can mean a 30-50% reduction in production capacity. Experts point out that the missing middle among Indian enterprises is nothing short of a failure of industrial strategy. Contributing to the missing middle phenomenon was the reservation of products exclusively for production in the small-scale and cottage industries (SSI) sector (with large firms excluded) from India’s 1956 Industrial Policy Resolution
 - ▶ By the end of the 1980s, 836 product groups were in the “reserved” category produced only by SSIs (which encouraged informal enterprises). Astonishingly, in 2005, there were still 500 products in this category, 15 years after the economic reforms were launched. Thereafter the reservation of products of small firms was cut sharply to 16 products. By then, small scale and informality had gotten entrenched in Indian manufacturing. Incentivisation to remain small in scale cost India dearly.
- F. When structural change is needed, industrial policy can facilitate that process.
- ▶ In a fast-changing market, losing firms will block structural changes that are socially beneficial but make their own assets worthless.
 - ▶ It is important to note that East Asian governments prevented such firms from undermining structural change, with moves such as orderly capacity-scraping between competing firms and retraining programmes to limit such resistance.

- ▶▶ Finally, manufacturing will create jobs; its share in total employment fell from 12.8% to 11.5% over 2012 to 2016. Unfortunately, the potential role of industrial policy has been consistently downplayed in developing countries outside of East Asia ever since the early 1980s after the growing dominance of the orthodox paradigm with well-known consequences in much of India, Latin America and also sub-Saharan Africa.

The Asian Story:

- ▶▶ The East Asian miracle was very much founded upon export-oriented manufacturing, employ surplus labour released by agriculture, thus raising wages and reducing poverty rapidly.
- ▶▶ This outcome came from a conscious, deliberately planned strategy (with Five Year Plans).
- ▶▶ The growing participation of East Asian countries in global value chains (GVCs), graduating beyond simple, manufactured consumer goods to more technology- and skill-intensive manufactures for export, was a natural corollary to the industrial policy.
- ▶▶ India has been practically left out of GVCs. Increasing export of manufactures will need to be another rationale for an industrial policy, even though India has to focus more on “make for India”. From 2014 to 2018 there has been an absolute fall in dollar terms in merchandise exports. In this quest for increased exports, economies of scale are critical.
- ▶▶ Such economies were not possible with the policy-induced growth of micro-enterprises and informal units (the unorganised sector accounts for 45% of India’s exports).

Conclusion:

- ▶▶ If evidence is still needed that the state’s role will be critical to manufacturing growth in India, the state’s role in the success story of India’s IT industry must be put on record.
- ▶▶ The government invested in creating high-speed Internet connectivity for IT software parks enabling integration of the Indian IT industry into the U.S. market.
- ▶▶ Second, the government allowed the IT industry to import duty-free both hardware and software. (In retrospect, experts opine that this should never have continued after a few years since it undermined the growth of the electronics hardware manufacturing in India.)
- ▶▶ Third, the IT industry was able to function under the Shops and Establishment Act; hence not subject to the 45 laws relating to labour and the onerous regulatory burden these impose.
- ▶▶ Finally, the IT sector has the benefit of low-cost, high-value human capital created by public investments earlier in technical education.
- ▶▶ Without these, the IT success story would not have occurred.
- ▶▶ These offer insights to the potential for industrial policy when a new government takes over soon.

257. SCORCHING HEAT FORCES ANIMALS OUT OF SESHACHALAM BIOSPHERE

Context:

- ▶ With the summer heat touching 45 degree Celsius, the wild animals in the Seshachalam biosphere, which is spread over Chittoor and Kadapa districts, are facing a torrid time.
- ▶ The phenomenon, which is preceded by deficit rainfall in the region, is forcing the animals to enter the forest fringe villages to quench their thirst.

Why it is in News?

- ▶ With water sources and food depleting, even shy and critically endangered species are foraging into human habitations.

Issues:

- ▶ The intensity of heat this year is said to be the highest in the biosphere.
- ▶ As a result, even shy and critically endangered species such as the pangolin and the slender loris are venturing out of their habitat.
- ▶ Forest officials also have found the slender loris – a nocturnal animal and a rare species to be found close to humans, loitering in a dried up water body in broad daylight. The pangolin is another species that has fallen on hard times in the biosphere, hit by paucity of food and water sources.
- ▶ The oppressive heat has not only led to vanishing of water in the ditches, ponds and streams but also suppressed the moisture content in the soil.
- ▶ The anteater is finding it difficult to gather food, mostly worms, insects, flies, bees and ants.

Slender Loris:

- ▶ Slender lorises (Loris) are a genus of loris native to India and Sri Lanka.
- ▶ The slender loris spends most of its life in trees (arboreal), traveling along the top of branches with slow and precise movements.
- ▶ It is found in tropical rainforests, scrub forest, semi deciduous forest and swamps.
- ▶ It is a nocturnal animal. The species is considered “critically endangered” in forest parlance, and is poached for its eyeballs and others body parts, which are believed to have healing power for multiple human health debilities.
- ▶ They are also illegally smuggled to supply a growing exotic pet trade. Destruction of tropical rain forest habitat is also contributing to declines in population.
- ▶ IUCN has listed them as Endangered, whereas they are listed under the Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act of India, 1972, according them the highest level of legal protection.

Pangolin:

- ▶ Pangolins or scaly anteaters are mammals.

- ▶ Pangolins have large, protective keratin scales covering their skin; they are the only known mammals with this feature. They live in hollow trees or burrows, depending on the species.
- ▶ Pangolins are nocturnal, and their diet consists of mainly ants and termites, which they capture using their long tongues. They tend to be solitary animals, meeting only to mate and produce a litter of one to three offspring, which are raised for about two years.
- ▶ Pangolins are threatened by poaching (for their meat and scales) and heavy deforestation of their natural habitats, and are the most trafficked mammals in the world.
- ▶ Indian Pangolin is classified as Endangered by IUCN.

Conclusion:

- ▶ According to the forest officials, this species is the most smuggled one from India for its scales, which are believed to be in great demand in Vietnam and several South-East Asian nations.
- ▶ Nature lovers deplore that no serious efforts are being taken by the forest officials to provide succour to the animals during summer. Most of the saucer pits and ditches inside the forest are found empty while the summer is at its peak, they lament.

258. FOREIGN TRADE POLICY

Context:

- ▶ The estimates for foreign trade showing a sharp slowdown in merchandise export growth in April, to 0.64% from a year earlier, ought to add to concerns about the economy.
- ▶ If one were to strip away the 31% surge in shipments of petroleum products to overseas markets, India's export of goods actually contracted by over 3% in dollar terms last month.
- ▶ In contrast, overall merchandise exports had expanded 11% year-on-year in March, with the growth in shipments excluding petroleum products exceeding that pace by about 50 basis points.

What is India's foreign trade policy?

- ▶ The Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) was introduced by the Government to grow the Indian export of goods and services, generating employment and increasing value addition in the country. The Government, through the implementation of the policy, seeks to develop the manufacturing and service sectors. The major exports from India are engineering goods, refined petroleum, gems, jewellery, chemicals, agricultural products and textiles, the major Indian imports were crude petroleum, gold, coal briquettes, diamonds and petroleum gas.

Who Regulated the Foreign Trade In India?

- ▶ The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) is the agency of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry of the Government of India, responsible for the execution of the import and export Policies of India.
- ▶ It was earlier known as Chief Controller of Imports & Exports (CCI&E) till 1991.

Types of Foreign Trade:

- ▶ Bilateral trade: This is a trade agreement in which two countries exchange goods and services.
- ▶ Multilateral trade: This is the type of international trade where a country trade with two or more countries.

Basic Function of Foreign Trade:

- ▶ Foreign trade creates an opportunity for the produces to reach beyond the domestic markets.
- ▶ Producers can sell their produce not only in markets located within the country but can also compete in markets located in other countries of the world.

What is the Role of WTO in international trade?

- ▶ World Trade organization (WTO) has a crucial role to play in the international trade, global economics, political and legal issues arising in the international business because of the globalization.
- ▶ The advantage to the countries being members in the WTO is that that they lower trade related barriers among themselves.

How Free Trade Increase the International Trade?

- ▶ It drives economic growth, enhanced efficiency, increased innovation, and the greater fairness that accompanies a rules-based system. These benefits increase as overall trade exports and imports increases.
- ▶ Free trade increases access to higher-quality, lower-priced goods. Cheaper imports, particularly from countries such as China and Mexico, have eased inflationary pressure in the United States. Prices are held down by more than 2 percent for every 1 percent share in the market by imports from low-income countries like China, which leaves more income for Americans to spend on other products.
- ▶ Free trade means more growth. At least half of US imports are not consumer goods; they are inputs for US-based producers, according to economists from the Bureau of Economic Analysis. Freeing trade reduces imported-input costs, thus reducing businesses' production costs and promoting economic growth.
- ▶ Free trade improves efficiency and innovation. Over time, free trade works with other market processes to shift workers and resources to more productive uses, allowing more efficient industries to thrive.
- ▶ The results are higher wages, investment in such things as infrastructure, and a more dynamic economy that continues to create new jobs and opportunities.
- ▶ Free trade drives competitiveness. Free trade does require American businesses and workers to adapt to the shifting demands of the worldwide marketplace. But these adjustments are critical to remaining competitive, and competition is what fuels long-term growth.

- ▶▶ Free trade promotes fairness. When everyone follows the same rules-based system, there is less opportunity for cronyism, or the ability of participating nations to skew trade advantages toward favoured parties.
- ▶▶ In the absence of such a system, bigger and better-connected industries can more easily acquire unfair advantages, such as tax and regulatory loopholes, which shield them from competition.

Issues:

- ▶▶ While the contraction in gem and jewellery exports widened to 13.4% in April, from 0.4% in March, the slump in the leather segment broadened to 15.3% from 6.4%.
- ▶▶ And the pace of growth of garment exports decelerated to 4.4% from 15.1% in March.
- ▶▶ Imports grew by 4.5% to \$41.4 billion in April, accelerating from March's 1.4% pace as purchases of crude oil and gold continued to increase.
- ▶▶ While the 9.3% jump in the oil import bill, from March's 5.6%, can partly be explained by the rise in international crude prices (Brent crude futures, for instance, advanced 6.4% in April), India's insatiable appetite for gold, as reflected in the 54% surge in imports last month, must give policymakers cause for reflection.
- ▶▶ Excluding oil and gold, however, imports shrank by more than 2% last month, signalling that import demand in the real productive sectors is largely becalmed.

Way Forward:

- ▶▶ As a result of merchandise imports outpacing exports, the trade deficit widened to a five-month high of \$15.3 billion. The widening trade shortfall will add pressure on India's burgeoning current account deficit, which at a provisional \$51.9 billion in the first nine months of fiscal 2018-19 had already surpassed the preceding financial year's 12-month shortfall of \$48.7 billion.

Conclusion:

- ▶▶ With stronger headwinds ahead in the form of an escalating trade war between the U.S. and China, and its knock-on impact on global growth, the outlook for export demand is far from reassuring.
- ▶▶ Add the rising military tensions in West Asia and its potential to further push up oil prices, and the scope to contain the trade and current account deficits seems significantly challenging.
- ▶▶ Clearly, this would be one more pressing concern for the new government to address.

259. CENTRE ISSUED DROUGHT ADVISORY

Context:

- ▶ The Centre has issued a drought advisory to Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Tamil Nadu, asking them to use water judiciously. The drought advisory is issued to states when the water level in reservoirs is 20% less than the average of live water storage figures of the past 10 years.

Background:

- ▶ There are 27 reservoirs — 10 in Gujarat and 17 in Maharashtra — under CWC monitoring, with a total live storage capacity of 31.26 BCM. The total live storage available in these reservoirs is 4.10 BCM until May 16, which is 13 per cent of the total live storage capacity. In the southern region, there are 31 reservoirs under CWC monitoring, with a total live storage capacity of 51.59 BCM. The total live storage available in these reservoirs is 6.86 BCM — 13 per cent of the total live storage capacity of these reservoirs.

260. INDIAN NAVY CONDUCTED MISSILE TESTS

Context:

- ▶ The Indian Navy conducted significant missile tests boosting its anti-air warfare capabilities.
- ▶ The first cooperative engagement firing of the Medium Range Surface to Air Missile (MRSAM) or Barak-8 was held on the Western Seaboard. The firing was undertaken on the western seaboard by the INS Kochi and the INS Chennai.

Background:

- ▶ BARAK 8 is an Indian-Israeli surface-to-air missile (SAM), designed to defend against any type of airborne threat including aircraft, helicopters, anti-ship missiles, and UAVs as well as ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and combat jets. Barak 8 was jointly developed by Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), India's Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO), Israel's Administration for the Development of Weapons and Technological Infrastructure, Elta Systems, Rafael and other companies. Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) produces the missiles.

261. 26 MAHARASHTRA DAMS HIT ZERO WATER STORAGE LEVEL AS ON MAY 18

Context:

- ▶ 26 reservoirs in Maharashtra have reached “zero storage” as on May 18, according to statistics put out by the Water Conservation department of the state government. The department's website informed that water storage in Aurangabad Division, which comprises Aurangabad, Beed, Hingoli, Parbhani and Osmanabad districts, was 0.43 per cent as against 23.44 per cent at the same time last year.

Background:

- ▶ The dams in these division are Paithan, Manjara, Majalgaon, Yeldari, Siddeshwar, Lower Terna, Sina Kolegaon and Lower Dhudna, all of which have zero storage at the moment, the department informed. The storage in these dams in May last year was 34.95 per cent in Paithan, 21.24 per cent in Manjara, 17.5 per cent in Majalgaon and 52.03 per cent in Lower Terna.
- ▶ Other dams that have hit the zero storage level as on May 18 are Kadakpurna and Pentakli in Buldhana, Gosikhurd, Dina and Nand in Nagpur Division, Upper Tapi Hathnur in Jalgaon, Waki, Bham, Bhavli and Puneqaon in Nashik Division, Dibhe, Ghod, Pimpalgaon Joge, Wadaj and Temghar in Pune, Bhima, Kundali Tata and Lonavala Tata in Solapur, it informed.
- ▶ Meanwhile, Tisgaon dam in Nashik and Totladoh in Nagpur have 0.01 and 0.08 per cent water respectively. It said water storage in the state's 103 large, medium and small reservoirs stood at 11.84 per cent, against 23.73 per cent last year.

262. ORDINANCE ON MARATHA QUOTA APPROVED

Context:

- ▶ Maharashtra Cabinet approved to circulate an ordinance to amend the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) Reservation Act, 2018.
- ▶ It also approved to recompense the fees to the general category-students, who will be affected after the promulgation of the ordinance.

263. KERALA TO GO PAPERLESS

Context:

- ▶ The Kerala State Assembly is undertaking E- Vidhan, an initiative to digitize all records.
- ▶ The first phase of the project is expected to be completed in 14 months. The project is expected to cost around Rs.40 crore. Once the project is completed, all the Assembly proceedings will go paperless.

264. BRAZILIAN BISHOP RESIGNED

Context:

- ▶ Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of a Brazilian bishop who is under investigation by local authorities.
- ▶ The Vatican announced the resignation of Bishop Vilson Dias de Oliveira and named Archbishop Orlando Brandes of Aparecida as a temporary replacement.
- ▶ de Oliveira is being investigated for extortion, illicit enrichment and the coverup of alleged cases of sexual harassment.

265. IRAN FOREIGN MINISTER DISCOUNTS PROSPECT OF WAR WITH US

Context:

- ▶ Iran's foreign minister Jawad Zarif discounted the prospect of a new war in the region. state-run news agency IRNA at the end of his visit to China that there will not be a war as Tehran opposed it and no party was under the illusion the Islamic republic could be confronted.
- ▶ Tensions between Washington and Tehran have been on the rise as the United States has deployed a carrier group and B-52 bombers over what it termed Iranian threats.
- ▶ US President Donald Trump does not want war but the people around him are pushing him towards it under the pretext of making America stronger against Iran.

266. RUSSIA TO PAY 2.7 MILLION EUROS IN GREENPEACE SHIP SETTLEMENT

Context:

- ▶ The Netherlands and Russia have settled a long-running dispute over the seizure of Greenpeace's Arctic Sunrise ship during an oil drilling protest in 2013, with Moscow expected to pay 2.7 million euros in compensation.
- ▶ The settlement was reached in Hague yesterday after talks between Dutch Foreign Minister Stef Blok and Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov. Earlier the Dutch had dragged Moscow to various courts following the incident.
- ▶ The Russian Federation and the Kingdom of the Netherlands have come to a full and final settlement of any and all mutual claims arising from the incident.
- ▶ Russian commandos seized the Dutch-flagged ship in September 2013 and detained 30 Greenpeace activists and journalists on board after a protest at an offshore oil rig owned by Russian state oil giant Gazprom.

267. U.S. LIFTS METAL TARIFFS ON CANADA, MEXICO

Context:

- ▶ President Donald Trump on Friday announced a deal to lift U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminium imports from Canada and Mexico that had created friction between the neighbours and blocked a new North American free trade agreement.

Background:

- ▶ Mexico confirmed it had reached a similar agreement with the U.S. The steep U.S. tariffs imposed last year 25% on steel and 10% on aluminium became a major stumbling block to ratifying a new North American trade pact negotiated last year by the three countries.

- ▶▶ Canada and Mexico agreed to withdraw all complaints lodged against the U.S. at the World Trade Organization (WTO).
- ▶▶ They also agreed to monitor imports to ensure metals that are sold at “dumped prices” — below the cost of production — are not purchased in or shipped through Canada and Mexico.
- ▶▶ The agreement “provides for aggressive monitoring and a mechanism to prevent surges in imports of steel and aluminium.”

268. NPPA SLASHES PRICES OF 9 NON-SCHEDULED CANCER DRUGS BY UP TO 87%

Context:

- ▶▶ National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) has slashed the prices of 9 non-scheduled cancer drugs by up to 87 per cent.
- ▶▶ The decision is in continuation of the efforts to bring down drugs prices.

Background:

- ▶▶ The maximum retail price of 500 mg chemotherapy injection pemetrexed which is used to treat lung cancer, has come down from 22 thousand rupees to 2 thousand 800 rupees.
- ▶▶ The price of 150 mg Erlotinib tablets will cost now 2 thousand 400 rupees instead of 8 thousand 800 rupees.
- ▶▶ The new list of drugs is in continuation of the government’s efforts to curb profiteering on these vital drugs and to make cancer cure affordable for patients and their families. In February this year, the government had capped 42 cancer drugs at 30 per cent.
- ▶▶ At least 72 formulations and more than 390 brands reduced costs following the order. The price cut is expected to benefit about 22 lakh cancer patients in India and will result in annual savings of around 800 crore rupees to the patients.
- ▶▶ The NPPA has approved a formula which restricts the trade margin of the selling price by up to 30 per cent.

269. IBM GARAGE TO CREATE AI-BASED SOLUTIONS

Context:

- ▶▶ IBM India announced that it has tied-up with HDFC ERGO General Insurance Company to co-create new Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based solutions.
- ▶▶ Teams from HDFC ERGO and IBM Services will work together to develop and test new solutions.
- ▶▶ The IBM Garage team comprises insurance industry experts, design thinkers, data scientists, architects, and others.

270. INDIA'S FOREX RESERVES UP BY \$1.3 BILLION

Context:

- ▶▶ India's foreign exchange reserves increased by \$1.368 billion.
- ▶▶ According to the RBI's weekly statistical supplement, the overall forex reserves rose to \$420.055 billion from \$418.687 billion.
- ▶▶ India's forex reserves comprise Foreign Currency Assets (FCAs), gold reserves, Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) and India's reserve position with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

271. UNION MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT TO UNDERTAKE A PROJECT

Context:

- ▶▶ Union Ministry of Environment announced a project to create DNA Database for Indian Rhinos. This is done in order to curb poaching and collect evidence for wildlife crimes including Rhinos. The deadline to meet this project is 2021. The database will be kept in the Wildlife Institute of India(WII) headquartered in Dehradun, Uttarakhand.

272 . IN A FIRST, PRESENCE OF TIGER RECORDED AT GOA NATIONAL PARK

Context:

- ▶▶ For the first time, presence of a tiger has been reported in Goa's Bhagwan Mahaveer National Park. The movement of the tiger was recorded through camera trapping method on May 14.
- ▶▶ The striped tiger presence in the area indicates the level of protection, quality of wildlife habitat and management practices in the national park are of high levels.
- ▶▶ The 240 square kilometer area of the forest was being scanned for the presence of the "elusive big cat". The department has procured more camera traps to strengthen field staff.
- ▶▶ The national park is spread across the western ghats in Sanguem Taluka of Goa along the eastern border of the state.

273. HORNBILLS AMONG TOP SEED DISPERSERS, MOST THREATENED

Context:

- ▶▶ The study carried out in Pakke Tiger Reserve in Arunachal Pradesh noted that hornbills, one among the large-sized frugivores, are the top seed dispersers. Sadly, they are also the most threatened. This is because they are hunted for meat, and the tribal communities use their feathers for head dresses.

Background:

- ▶▶ The study looked at 43 tree species, 48 frugivore bird species that were seen visiting them.
- ▶▶ A single bird species could visit different tree species, and a single tree species would be visited by different bird species. So a complex network of over 400 interactions was created and studied. The trees were classified into small-, medium- and large-seeded.
- ▶▶ The large-seeded trees mainly depended on hornbills and imperial pigeons for their dispersal. The medium-size seeded trees were visited by bulbuls, barbets along with hornbills and imperial pigeons.
- ▶▶ Though the frequency of visits was similar for all four bird species, the number of fruits removed from trees was high for hornbills.

274. INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM DAY: 18 MAY

Context:

- ▶▶ International Museum Day (IMD) is celebrated on 18th May every year.
- ▶▶ It is coordinated by the International Council of Museums (ICOM).
- ▶▶ The objective of International Museum Day (IMD) is to raise awareness that, Museums are an important means of cultural exchange.
- ▶▶ The theme for International Museum Day (IMD) 2019 is Museums as Cultural Hubs: The future of tradition.

275. DR. P.K. MISHRA CONFERRED WITH SASAKAWA AWARD

Context:

- ▶▶ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) conferred Sasakawa Award 2019 for Disaster Risk Reduction to Dr. Pramod Kumar Mishra.
- ▶▶ He is the Additional Principal Secretary to Prime Minister of India.
- ▶▶ The award was announced during the ongoing 6th Session of Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GPDRR) 2019 at Geneva.

276. ICC COMMENTARY PANEL FOR WORLD CUP 2019

Context:

- ▶▶ Former Indian cricketers Sourav Ganguly and Sanjay Manjrekar are inducted into the International Cricket Council's (ICC) commentary panel for World Cup 2019.
- ▶▶ World Cup 2019 will begin from May 30, 2019 in England and Wales.
- ▶▶ The debut commentary will be made by Michael Clarke, a former Australian batsman.

277. WHY HAS THE U.S. RAISED TRADE WAR STAKES?

Context:

- ▶ This article is about trade war between US and China.

Background:

- ▶ On July 6, 2018, the United States administration slapped a tariff of 25% on \$50 billion worth of imports from China.
- ▶ China responded immediately with retaliatory tariffs on a similar scale.
- ▶ On May 10, 2019, U.S. President Donald Trump raised the tariff rate to 25% (from the existing level of 10%) on \$200 billion of imports from China.
- ▶ Currently, Washington is poised to extend tariffs on all imports from China, which implies that approximately \$325 billion of additional goods will enter the U.S. tax net.

Why Did MR. TRUMP Impose Tariffs on China?

- ▶ The American President is a long-time critic of the U.S.'s deficit with its trading partners and believes that countries such as China do not provide a level-playing field for free trade, especially denial of market access.
- ▶ There is also bipartisan consensus in the U.S. that Beijing has taken advantage of the American economy for decades, including by theft of intellectual property, leading to the loss of millions of jobs.

Rising U.S. trade deficit with china:

- ▶ The U.S. trade deficit with China has soared, rising from around \$100 billion in 2000 to \$419 billion in 2018. The Trump administration considers this a threat to economic, hence national, security.
- ▶ In fact, in addition to the tariffs, the White House has curtailed investment from Chinese entities and visas to Chinese nationals (such as researchers) – and these are directly aimed at curbing industrial espionage.
- ▶ The recent controversy over the arrest in Canada of Meng Wanzhou, CFO of China-owned telecommunications giant Huawei, the declaration of a national emergency for the telecommunications sector leading to a restriction on Chinese products in this area, and the placement of Huawei on the infamous Entity List for import control, hints at the level of anxiety that the Trump administration has over Chinese industrial spying.

Can Tariffs Address the Deficit Problem?

- ▶ There are structural reasons why the trade deficit may be hard to reverse.
- ▶ The U.S. earns a bulk of its net income from services, such as finance, travel and tourism, whereas China exports a far greater proportion of manufactured goods.

- ▶ Therefore, even if the intention behind the crackdown on Chinese trade practices is purposeful protectionism — shielding U.S. domestic industries from foreign competition — it is unclear that the massive shifts in global supply chains required to achieve that goal will happen any time soon, or produce the macroeconomic effects that Mr. Trump hopes they will.

How Does the Trump Model of ‘Tariff Economics’ Work?

- ▶ Consider the example of Apple Inc. Apple has approximately 27 China-based suppliers, most of whom manufacture electrical components for the tech giant.
- ▶ If, through the imposition of tariffs on the products that these suppliers manufacture, the effective cost of production for Apple rises to an uneconomical level, Apple might be compelled to look elsewhere for those components.
- ▶ If many such companies are impacted, that could potentially damage China’s economy to the benefit of relatively low-cost economies.
- ▶ However, for this competitive tariff ‘model’ to work in reality, the cost of production would have to come down substantially in the U.S. too.
- ▶ Trump has tweeted that he would offer companies such as Apple “ZERO tax, and indeed a tax incentive,” were they to relocate their production facilities to the U.S.
- ▶ However, an important question arises: Would this suffice, given the relatively higher cost of labour and capital in the U.S.? Possibly not.

What has the Economic Impact of the Tariffs Been?

- ▶ It is important to note that higher tariffs have already had an impact on prices for American companies and individuals.
- ▶ The price of steel and washing machines, for example, has already spiralled upward in the U.S. since the trade war kicked off. Reports suggest China’s retaliatory tariffs, and the resulting steep fall in demand for U.S. export products, have impacted everything from soybean from North Dakota to bourbon from Kentucky and fossil fuels, copper and wood.
- ▶ General Motors has cut jobs at assembly plants in the Midwest owing to hundreds of millions of dollars of additional cost associated with the tariffs.
- ▶ Simultaneously, stock markets have almost inevitably reacted badly to every new announcement of additional tariffs.
- ▶ For example, after the latest failure of bilateral negotiations in Washington, the Dow Jones Industrial Average saw its worst one-day performance in months.
- ▶ However, the impact that tariffs on Chinese have on overall inflation should not be exaggerated. According to reports, researchers at the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco have estimated that “China tariffs have added 0.1% to inflation for consumers and 0.3% for business investment goods”.

- ▶ Similarly, it may be a while before the full, price-based impact on the Chinese economy is felt.
- ▶ A study by Syracuse University in the U.S. shows that for electronic and computer products, for example, “non-Chinese multinational corporations operating in China supply 87% of the products that will be affected by tariffs, while Chinese firms send only 13%”.

How has Corporate America Responded?

- ▶ Apple Inc. fired off a letter to the Trump administration in September 2018 warning that the tariffs were likely to hit many of its core products, including watches, headphones, chargers and adapters.
- ▶ The company said to Robert Lighthizer, Mr. Trump’s senior trade negotiator, “Our concern with these tariffs is that the U.S. will be hardest hit, and that will result in lower U.S. growth and competitiveness and higher prices for U.S. consumers.”
- ▶ More broadly, while industry groups have generally cheered the White House for taking on China over trade secrets theft or deliberate market manipulations, the mounting costs of tariffs has taken a toll on their operations, leading executives such as Rick Helfenbein, CEO of the American Apparel & Footwear Association to describe Trump’s policies as a “self-inflicted wound that will be catastrophic for the nation’s economy”.

What has India’s Position Been?

- ▶ While India had last year (2018) secured an exemption from the U.S. on steel and aluminium tariffs, the U.S. Trade Representative said in March 2019 that India would no longer be eligible for preferential market access to the U.S. under the Generalised System of Preferences programme.
- ▶ This meant New Delhi lost out on \$190 million per year in duty reductions.
- ▶ This comes on the back of repeated allusions by Mr. Trump to India’s high tariff barriers, for example impacting Harley-Davidson motorcycles and medical devices.
- ▶ With an overall bilateral trade value of \$126.2 billion in 2017, the U.S.’s goods and services deficit with India was \$27.3 billion (2017).
- ▶ It is important to note that in June 2018, India joined the EU and other countries in imposing retaliatory duties to counter Washington’s tariff on steel and aluminium.

Way Forward:

- ▶ In 2018, at the G20 summit in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Mr. Trump called a “temporary truce” with President Xi Jinping of China after the bruising year-long trade battle between their countries.
- ▶ The agreement that they reached was effectively to pause the trade war and apply themselves toward agreeing a pact.
- ▶ However, it failed to produce any tangible progress.

Conclusion:

- ▶ In May 2019, negotiators from the two countries met again in Washington, even as Mr. Trump proceeded with his latest round of tariff rate hike on \$200 billion of Chinese imports from 10% to 25%. Unsurprisingly, those talks did not make much headway either. A solution remains elusive for now.

278. TEN YEARS ON: ON END OF SRI LANKA CIVIL WAR

Context:

- ▶ As Sri Lanka completes 10 years since the brutal and decisive war against Tamil militants came to an end, it must be acknowledged that the country has not achieved much tangible progress towards ethnic reconciliation, accountability for war-time excesses and constitutional reform that includes a political solution.
- ▶ The fruits of peace are limited to the revival of economic activity, but the pervasive grievances of the Tamil minority remain.

The Sri Lankan Civil War:

- ▶ It was an armed conflict fought on the island of Sri Lanka.
- ▶ Beginning on 23 July 1983, there was an intermittent insurgency against the government by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (the LTTE, also known as the Tamil Tigers), which fought to create an independent Tamil state called Tamil Eelam in the north and the east of the island. After a 26-year military campaign, the Sri Lankan military defeated the Tamil Tigers in May 2009, bringing the civil war to an end.
- ▶ The origins of the Sri Lankan Civil War lie in the continuous political rancour between the majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamils.
- ▶ The roots of the modern conflict lie in the British colonial rule when the country was known as Ceylon. There was initially little tension among Sri Lanka's two largest ethnic groups, the Sinhalese and the Tamils, when Ponnambalam Arunachalam, a Tamil, was appointed representative of the Sinhalese as well the Tamils in the national legislative council.
- ▶ In 1919 major Sinhalese and Tamil political organizations united to form the Ceylon National Congress, under the leadership of Arunachalam, to press the colonial government for more constitutional reforms.
- ▶ However, British Gov. William Manning actively encouraged the concept of "communal representation" and created the Colombo town seat in 1920, which alternated between the Tamils and the Sinhalese.
- ▶ In the late 1960s documents relating to a separate Tamil state of "Tamil Eelam" began to circulate. At this time Anton Balasingham, an employee of the British High Commission in Colombo, began to participate in separatist activities.

- ▶ He later migrated to Britain, where he became the chief theoretician of the LTTE.
- ▶ In the late 1960s several Tamil youth, among them Velupillai Prabhakaran, also became involved in these activities.
- ▶ They carried out several hit-and-run operations against pro-government Tamil politicians, Sri Lanka police and the civil administration.
- ▶ In July 1987 the LTTE carried out their first suicide attack. Captain Miller of the Black Tigers drove a small truck carrying explosives through the wall of a fortified Sri Lankan army camp, reportedly killing 40 soldiers.
- ▶ The LTTE carried out over 378 suicide attacks, one of the largest suicide campaigns in the world, and the suicide attack became a trademark of the LTTE and a characteristic of the civil war.

Indian Intervention (1987 -1990):

- ▶ India became more actively involved in the late 1980s, and on 5 June 1987 the Indian Air Force airdropped food parcels to Jaffna while it was under siege by Sri Lankan forces.
- ▶ At a time when the Sri Lankan government stated it was close to defeating the LTTE, India dropped 25 tons of food and medicine by parachute into areas held by the LTTE in a direct move of support to the rebels.
- ▶ Negotiations were held, and the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord was signed on 29 July 1987 by Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Sri Lankan President Jayewardene.
- ▶ Under this accord the Sri Lankan government made a number of concessions to Tamil demands, including devolution of power to the provinces, a merger subject to later referendum of the northern and eastern provinces into a single province, and official status for the Tamil language (this was enacted as the 13th Amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka).
- ▶ India agreed to establish order in the north and east through the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) and to cease assisting Tamil insurgents.
- ▶ Militant groups including the LTTE, although initially reluctant, agreed to surrender their arms to the IPKF, which initially oversaw a cease-fire and a modest disarmament of the militant groups. However, following his defeat in Indian parliamentary elections in December 1989, new Prime Minister V.P. Singh ordered the withdrawal of the IPKF, and their last ship left Sri Lanka on 24 March 1990.
- ▶ The 32-month presence of the IPKF in Sri Lanka resulted in the deaths of 1200 Indian soldiers and over 5000 Sri Lankans. The cost for the Indian government was estimated at over ₹10.3 billion.
- ▶ Rajiv Gandhi's assassination: Support for the LTTE in India dropped considerably in 1991, after the assassination of ex-Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi by a female suicide bomber, Thenmozhi Rajaratnam.

2002 Peace Process:

- ▶ On 19 December, amidst efforts by Norway to bring the government and the Tamil Tigers to the negotiating table, the LTTE announced a 30-day cease-fire with the Sri Lankan government and pledged to halt all attacks against government forces.
- ▶ The new government welcomed the move, and reciprocated it two days later, announcing a month-long cease-fire and agreeing to lift a long-standing economic embargo on rebel-held territory. The cease-fire was by no means acceptable to everyone.
- ▶ Buddhist monks started burning Norwegian flags and agitated against the cease-fire and eventually went to form a political party, Jathika Hela Urumaya, with extremist views.

MAVIL ARU Water Dispute:

- ▶ A new crisis leading to the first large-scale fighting since signing of the cease-fire occurred when the LTTE closed the sluice gates of the Mavil Arureservoir on 21 July.
- ▶ Mavil Aru was the waterway that provided water to some regions of eastern Sri Lanka, like Trincomalee. After the cease-fire in 2002, the conflict over Mavil Aru was one of the biggest military confrontations between the Sri Lanka Armed Forces and the LTTE.
- ▶ Its relevance is for geo-strategic reasons: within the Mavil Aru area, Sinhala, Muslim and Tamil populations live side by side.
- ▶ It is also the entrance to Koddigar Bay, the inlet for Trincomalee port and naval base, so the LTTE presence in the area seriously threatened the Sri Lankan security forces' presence and domination. Eventually, following heavy fighting, government troops gained full control of the Mavil Aru reservoir on 15 August.
- ▶ The consequences of the "Operation Watershed" were about 150 civilians killed and more than 50,000 refugees from Mutur and the villages nearby.
- ▶ It was the precedent of the Eelam War IV.

Economic Cost:

- ▶ The total economic cost of the 25-year war is estimated at US\$200 billion.
- ▶ This is approximately 5 times the GDP of Sri Lanka in 2009.
- ▶ Sri Lanka had spent US\$5.5 billion only on Eelam War IV, which saw the end of LTTE.
- ▶ The government had spent US\$2.25 billion to develop the Northern Province under the "Uthuru Wasanthaya" program after the end of war.
- ▶ Measuring the opportunity cost of war, a report by Strategic Foresight Group states that Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) remained stagnant during periods of civil war and that net FDI increased during periods of ceasefire.

Allegations of Genocide:

- ▶ In January 2010, the Permanent People's Tribunal on Sri Lanka held its sessions in Dublin, Ireland.

- ▶ There were four findings:
 1. That the Sri Lankan Government and its military are guilty of War Crimes;
 2. That the Sri Lankan Government and its military are guilty of crimes against humanity;
 3. That the charge of genocide requires further investigation;
 4. That the international community, particularly the UK and USA, share responsibility for the breakdown of the peace process.

Conclusion:

- ▶ As prospects of accountability for past crimes and constitutional reform recede, some sections, including the incumbent regime, may believe economic development may be enough to propel the country forward. But when tensions persist among communities, nothing can make up for the absence of reconciliation and trust among all sections. Never has Sri Lanka needed a shared sense of nationhood among all its peoples more than it does now.

279. INDIA-BOTSWANA OFFICE CONSULTATIONS HELD

Context:

- ▶ The third round of Foreign Office Consultations between India and Botswana was held in New Delhi on 15 May 2019.
- ▶ The entire gamut of bilateral relations, including political, economic, commercial, defence, consular and international cooperation was reviewed.
- ▶ The Indian side was led by Joint Secretary, East and Southern Africa in the Ministry of External Affairs Dr. Neena Malhotra.

Background:

- ▶ The deliberations provided an opportunity to review the entire gamut of bilateral relations, including political, economic, commercial, defence, consular and international cooperation.
- ▶ Ways to further strengthen the existing friendly relations by way of expanding cooperation in development projects were also discussed.
- ▶ Both sides expressed satisfaction on the level of political exchanges and the current excellent state of relationship and cooperation. It was decided to convene next round of Consultations in Botswana on mutually agreed dates.

280. 11th INDIA IRAN JCCM HELD

Context:

- ▶ The 11th Joint Consular Committee Meeting between India and Iran took place in New Delhi on 14 May 2019. The status of ongoing cooperation in consular and visa related issues was reviewed in the meeting. Both sides discussed issues of mutual interest including the early conclusion of Agreement on Mutual Legal Assistance on civil and commercial matters.

281. JEFFREY CONFIRMED AS US' NEXT DEPUTY AG

Context:

- ▶ Jeffrey Rosen was confirmed as the United States' latest Deputy Attorney General by the US Senate. He has previously served at the Department of Transportation as the deputy secretary.
- ▶ He will replace Rod Rosenstein who oversaw Robert Mueller's investigations into Russian collusion in the 2016 Presidential elections.
- ▶ US President Donald Trump nominated Rosen for the job in February 2019.

282. INDIA-SINGAPORE NAVAL DRILL BEGINS IN SOUTH CHINA SEA

Context:

- ▶ The Navies of India and Singapore are participating in the annual maritime bilateral exercise SIMBEX in the South China Sea.
- ▶ Yesterday the sea phase of the bilateral naval drill started and will continue till Wednesday.

Background:

- ▶ Various maritime combat exercises such as firing on aerial or surface targets, advanced aerial tracking, coordinated targeting exercises and tactical exercises on the surface or air scenarios is being conducted during the exercise. Naval ships INS Kolkata and INS Shakti taking part in the bilateral naval exercise, along with long-range maritime patrol aircraft Poseidon-8I. The Singapore side is being represented by RSN ships Steadfast and Valiant, maritime patrol aircraft Fokker-50 and F-16 fighter aircraft. The forces of India and Singapore share robust military ties. The South China Sea waters, which are claimed by many littoral states, have been witnessing muscling in of the Chinese navy. Over the years SIMBEX has stood the test of time in demonstrating the nation's commitment to enhance maritime cooperation between the two navies and bolster bonds of friendship between the two countries.

283. UAE TO CELEBRATE WORLD DAY FOR CULTURAL DIVERSITY ON MAY 21

CONTEXT:

- ▶ On 21st May, the UAE will celebrate World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development to highlight its efforts in promoting tolerance and cultural diversity.
- ▶ The event will coincide with the country's declaration of 2019 as the Year for Tolerance and its hosting of many related events.
- ▶ The UAE has cultural relations with many countries and is an active member of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, UNESCO.

284. BRITISH PM PROMISES NEW DEAL TO SAVE HER BREXIT AGREEMENT

Context:

- ▶ British Prime Minister Theresa May today promised a new and improved deal to save her controversial Brexit agreement through Parliament when it comes up for a fourth vote next month.
- ▶ When the Withdrawal Agreement Bill comes, it will represent a new, bold offer to MPs across the House of Commons, with an improved package of measures that can win new support.

Background:

- ▶ Ms May was open to holding a series of indicative votes in Parliament in a last-ditch effort to try and see her deal through. The British Prime Minister has been struggling to surmount the opposition to the controversial Irish backstop clause in the agreement, which the EU sees an insurance policy against a hard border between its member-country Ireland and the UK after Brexit. However, the Brexiteers within her own Tory party have consistently voted against it over fears that it could be used as an excuse to keep Britain tied to EU norms even after its exit from the 28-member European economic bloc. May warned that even though her new package will be a stronger proposition; it was important for the parliamentary arithmetic to fall into place to avert a chaotic no-deal Brexit and leave the EU with a deal in place by the latest deadline of October 31.

285. SAUDI ARABIA SAYS IT SEEKS TO AVERT WAR, BALL IN IRAN'S COURT

Context:

- ▶ Saudi Arabia has wants to avert war in the region but stands ready to respond with 'all strength', telling Iran that the ball was now in its court.
- ▶ Minister of state for foreign affairs, Adel al-Jubeir and the kingdom wants peace and stability.

Background:

- ▶ In the event the other side chooses war, the Saudi Arabia will respond with all force and determination and will defend itself and its interests. This comes following last week's attacks on Saudi oil assets. Riyadh has accused Tehran of ordering Tuesday's drone strikes on two oil pumping stations in the kingdom, claimed by Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi group.
- ▶ Two days earlier, four vessels, including two Saudi oil tankers, were sabotaged off the coast of the United Arab Emirates.
- ▶ Iran has denied involvement in either operation. Gulf officials say an investigation into the tanker incident is underway.

286. INSURANCE FOR VECTOR BORNE DISEASES LAUNCHED

Prelims:

- ▶▶ National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP)

Context:

- ▶▶ HDFC ERGO General Insurance Company announced the launch of 'Mosquito Disease Protection Policy'.
- ▶▶ This new policy will cover an individual against common mosquito-borne diseases like Dengue Fever, Malaria, Chikungunya, Japanese Encephalitis, Kala-azar, Filariasis and Zika Virus. HDFC ERGO General Insurance Company is India's third-largest non-life insurance provider in the private sector.

287. SIDBI'S PILOT SCHEME FOR FINTECH NBFCS

Prelims:

- ▶▶ What are fintech NBFCS?

Context:

- ▶▶ Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) launched a pilot scheme to extend financial assistance of up to ₹10 crore to fintech Non-Banking Finance Companies (NBFCS).
- ▶▶ Fintech NBFCS are digital loan companies.
- ▶▶ They should have minimum capital risk-weighted assets ratio of 15%.
- ▶▶ Their non-performing assets should be less than or equal to 4%.

288. 'MOST BIRD-LIKE' DINOSAUR EVER FOUND

Prelims:

- ▶▶ Types of Dinosaurs
- ▶▶ List of Indian and madagascan Dinosaurs

Mains:

- ▶▶ What is Mass Extinction? Discuss the causes for the Extinction.

Context:

- ▶▶ Scientists in Germany have found a new species of flying dinosaur that flapped its wings like a raven.
- ▶▶ Archaeopteryx, a small feathered dinosaur, was considered to be the oldest flying bird.
- ▶▶ Scientists have named the new bird-like dinosaur Alconavis poeschli.
- ▶▶ Alconavis poeschli was the most bird-like bird discovered from the Jurassic.

289. DAYS AND EVENTS

- ▶ World Hypertension Day (WHD) is observed every year on 17 May.
- ▶ World Telecommunication and Information Society Day is observed on 17 May.
- ▶ The Second International Day of Light was observed on 16 May.
- ▶ The International Day of Living Together in Peace was observed on 16 May.

290. RISAT-2B TO BE LAUNCHED ON MAY 22 FROM SRIHARIKOTA

Prelims:

- ▶ Recent launches and future launches by ISRO.

Mains:

- ▶ What is precision farming? What are the challenges to precision farming in India?

Context:

- ▶ RISAT-2B, the satellite due to be launched before dawn on May 22 from Sriharikota, will mark the resumption of a vital ring of Indian all-seeing radar imaging satellites after seven years.
- ▶ At least a half-dozen could be foreseen in the near future, mainly to add to the reconnaissance capability from about 500 km in space.
- ▶ A constellation of such space-based radars means a comprehensive vigil over the country.

Background:

- ▶ Many RISATs were planned. RISAT-2B is to be followed by RISAT-2BR1, 2BR2, RISAT-1A, 1B, 2A and so on.
- ▶ If ISRO orbited its first two radar satellites in 2009 and 2012, it plans to deploy four or five of them in 2019 alone.
- ▶ When it is cloudy or dark, 'regular' remote-sensing or optical imaging satellites — which work like a light-dependent camera — cannot perceive hidden or surreptitious objects on the ground.
- ▶ Satellites that are equipped with an active sensor, the synthetic aperture radar (SAR), can sense or 'observe' Earth in a special way from space day and night, rain or cloud. This all-weather seeing feature is what makes them special for security forces and disaster relief agencies.
- ▶ "Radar imaging satellites are at a premium in the Earth observation scene.
- ▶ "Worldwide, quite a few of them are planned to be launched.
- ▶ There is also a large availability of radar images data in the market."

291. SRFI-HCL TIE-UP FOR IMPROVING INDIAN SQUASH

Context:

- ▶ The Squash Rackets Federation of India (SRFI) signed an MoU with HCL on 15 May 2019.
- ▶ The aim of the MoU is to improve the condition of the sport in the country.
- ▶ Through 'HCL Squash Podium Programme', multiple tournaments will be organized at both the senior and junior level. SRFI will conduct 12 PSA World Tour and Challenger Tour events every year across the country.

292. FEMALE REFEREE TEAM TO OFFICIATE AFC CUP GAME

Context:

- ▶ The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) announced that for the first time an all-female referee team will take charge of a men's continental club cup clash.
- ▶ Japanese referee Yoshimi Yamashita and assistants Makoto Bozono and Naomi

293. J&K YOUTH SELECTED FOR AYIMUN CONFERENCE

Context:

- ▶ Bandipora youth Mudasir Nazir Wani has been selected for the Asia Youth International Model United Nations (AYIMUN) conference.
- ▶ He was selected from more than 33,000 applicants across the globe.
- ▶ Mudasir is one of the 2,500 delegates who would be participating in the conference.

294. EASTERN ARMY COMMANDER VISITED MISA CAMP

Context:

- ▶ Lieutenant General MM Naravane, Army Commander Eastern Command visited Misa Camp.
- ▶ He was briefed in detail on the Op-preparedness of the formation.
- ▶ He felicitated the meritorious Officers, Junior Commissioned Officer and Other Ranks by awarding commendation cards.

295. AI SYSTEM IN MCA 21 TO BE INTRODUCED

Context:

- ▶ The government plans to introduce artificial intelligence system in the MCA 21 portal.
- ▶ This would make the compliance process easier as well as ensure routine enforcement activities are done round-the-clock on autopilot basis.
- ▶ MCA 21 is the electronic backbone for the dissemination of information to all stakeholders.

Background:

- ▶ The Union Ministry sought applications from service providers earlier in 2019 to develop as well as operate the upgraded version of MCA 21 system.
- ▶ The MCA 21 system was started in 2006. The first phase of the e-governance initiative of the ministry was implemented by Tata Consultancy Services and the second phase is being implemented by Infosys for the period from January 2013-July 2021.

296.US PLACES CHINESE, PAKISTANI COMPANIES ON ENTITY LIST

Context:

- ▶ The United States of America on May 13, 2019 placed 12 foreign companies, including several entities from China and Pakistan in its entity list to ensure that sensitive technologies do not fall into the hands of those who would threaten its national security. The 12 entities that have made it into the US blacklist include four companies with locations in both China and Hong Kong along with two Chinese, one Pakistani and five Emirati persons.

Background:

- ▶ The Export Administration Regulations (EAR) of the United States contains a list of names of certain foreign persons, including businesses, research institutions, government and private organizations, individuals, and other types of legal persons that are subject to specific license requirements for export, re-export or transfer (in-country) of specified items.
- ▶ These persons comprise the Entity List. On an individual basis, the persons on the Entity List are subject to licensing requirements and policies supplemental to those found elsewhere in the EAR.

297. TRUMP WARNS IRAN OF ITS 'OFFICIAL END'

Prelims:

- ▶ Indo- Iran trade Relations.

Mains:

- ▶ Discuss the impact of recent US sanctions in Iran and what are the effects of that sanctions on India.

Context:

- ▶ U.S. President Donald Trump on Sunday warned he would destroy Iran if it threatens the U.S.
- ▶ “If Iran wants to fight, that will be the official end of Iran. Never threaten the United States again” – Trump

Background:

- ▶ Tensions between the long-time foes resumed a little over a year ago when the U.S. withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), an international deal aimed at

containing Iran's nuclear programme in exchange for stopping crippling sanctions against the country. The Iraqi government reporting that a rocket had been fired into Baghdad's Green Zone an area that includes government buildings as well as the U.S. Embassy. The U.S. had already ordered non-essential staff out of Iraq and the White House had announced in early May that it was sending an aircraft carrier and bombers to West Asia. An Iraqi military spokesperson was quoted by the Associated Press as saying the rocket was fired from east Baghdad, an area controlled by Shia militias, which are backed by Iran.

298. US NAVY DESTROYER SAILED IN SOUTH CHINA

Mains:

- ▶ "India's Involvement in South China Sea dispute has to be seen in the context of 'Offensive-Defence Strategy'." Explain.

Context:

- ▶ Two U.S. guided missile destroyers sailed near disputed islands claimed by China in the South China Sea on 19 May 2019. The USS Preble and USS Chung Hoon traveled within 12 nautical miles of the Gaven and Johnson Reefs. The operation comes amid heightened tensions between the U.S. and China over a possible trade deal.

BACKGROUND:

- ▶ Scarborough Reef, aka Scarborough Shoal, is an uninhabited reef in the South China Sea about 120 miles west of the Philippines surrounded by rich fishing grounds claimed by both China and the Philippines. China seized control of the reef from the Philippines in 2012 as part of an effort to claim control of South China Sea areas near the Spratly Islands and the Paracel Islands. Under international law, a country's territorial water limits extend 12 nautical miles from its coastline. The U.S. Navy will sail what are known FONOPS within that limit to challenge a country's excessive maritime territorial claims.
- ▶ China has placed significant military structures and equipment on seven artificial islands it's built on reefs in the Spratly Islands.

299. SUSHMA TO VISIT KYRGYZSTAN

Prelims:

- ▶ Indo – Kyrgystan bilateral relations.

Context:

- ▶ External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj will visit Kyrgyzstan on 21 May 2019.
- ▶ She will represent India at the 2-day meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).
- ▶ This will be the second CFM meeting that India will be attending as a full member of the SCO.

300. JOKO WIDODO ELECTED PRESIDENT OF INDONESIA FOR SECOND TERM

Prelims:

- ▶ India – Indonesia Relations.

Mains:

- ▶ Explain about Indonesia's Challenges in Addressing Disasters

Context:

- ▶ Indonesia's Joko Widodo has been re-elected as president of the country, beating rival Prabowo Subianto, a retired general.
- ▶ Widodo and his vice-presidential running mate Ma'ruf Amin won the election by a 55.5 percent to 44.5 percent margin over Subianto and Sandiaga Uno.
- ▶ The commission was expected to announce the official results of the April 17 poll tomorrow.
- ▶ But amid fears about unrest and street demonstrations in response to the final count, the final tally was released early with little advance notice.
- ▶ 57-year-old Widodo, had been widely predicted to win according to unofficial results. His challenger 67-year-old Subianto, has vowed to challenge any victory for Widodo, alleging widespread voter fraud, and warned that it could spark street protests across the country.

301. PAKISTAN APPOINTS MUEENUL HAQ AS HIGH COMMISSIONER TO INDIA

Context:

- ▶ Pakistan has appointed career diplomat Mueenul Haq as the High Commissioner to India.
- ▶ Prime Minister Imran Khan yesterday approved appointments of over two dozen ambassadors in various countries including India, China and Japan.
- ▶ Haq, the current ambassador to France, has previously served as chief of protocol at the Foreign Office. The post of High Commissioner to India fell vacant after Sohail Mehmood was appointed Pakistan's new foreign secretary.

302. FAR-RIGHT AUSTRIAN MINISTERS READY TO QUIT

Context:

- ▶ Austrian far-right Ministers were ready to quit their posts, after the country's coalition government collapsed over a corruption scandal days before European elections.
- ▶ Conservative Chancellor Sebastian Kurz has called for fresh elections after a hidden-camera sting forced his far-right deputy to resign, bringing an end to their coalition many on the European right had held up as a model.

- ▶ He could no longer tolerate the Freedom Party (FPO) scandals, Mr. Kurz scrambled to regain control with local media speculating he may oust Interior Minister Herbert Kickl, one of the far-right party's top figures, as a way to impose his authority.

303. KERALA 1ST STATE TO LIST MASALA BOND

Context:

- ▶ Kerala became the first state to tap into masala bond market by listing the Kerala Infrastructure
- ▶ Investment Fund Board (KIIFB)'s masala bond in LSE's International Securities Market (ISM).
- ▶ The masala bond has tenor of 5-year and a 9.723% coupon.
- ▶ The main objective of this initiative was to tap masala bond market and to rebuild the infrastructure in Kerala from the proceeds of masala bond.

304. WORLD METROLOGY DAY: 20 MAY

Context:

- ▶ World Metrology Day is observed every year on 20 May.
- ▶ It commemorates the anniversary of the signing of the Metre Convention in 1875.
- ▶ The theme for World Metrology Day 2019 is The International System of Units - Fundamentally better.

305. NASA'S NEW ROBOT GOT 1ST HARDWARE CHECK

Context:

- ▶ Astrobee, a free-flying robot system has had its first hardware checks on the International Space Station. The system is actually a trio of robots, named Honey, Queen, and Bumble, which are propelled by electric fans. They can return to their docking station to recharge their batteries.

306. ISRO TO CONDUCT SEVEN MEGA MISSIONS IN NEXT 10 YEARS

- ▶ Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) recently announced for its upcoming mission over next 10 years. Apart from much awaited and ambitious Chandrayaan-2 some other mega missions will be conducted.
- ▶ Among these seven mega missions ISRO has defined XPoSat and Aditya-L1 missions only. India's second moon mission, Chandrayaan-2, will be flight ready by May end. ISRO has recently declared that the spacecraft will be launched in July 2019.
- ▶ Apart from XPoSat and Aditya-L1 missions, other four undefined missions are Mangalyaan-2, Venus mission, Lunar Polar Exploration and Exoworlds.

- ▶ The XPoSAt, or the X-ray Polarimeter Satellite, is a dedicated mission to study polarisation which is scheduled for launch next year.
- ▶ Xposat to study cosmic radiation in 2020, Aditya L1 to the Sun in 2021, Mars Orbiter Mission-2 in 2022, Lunar Polar Exploration or Chandrayaan-3 in 2024 and Exoworlds, an exploration outside the solar system in 2028.
- ▶ posat will be a five-year mission, carrying a polarimeter instrument made by Raman Research Institute to measure cosmic radiation. The spacecraft will be placed in a circular 500-700km orbit. Indian mission would land in South polar region on Moon, which is an unexplored place till date. Chandrayaan-2 will carry 13 Indian payloads and one passive experiment from NASA.
- ▶ Chandrayaan-2 costs about `800-crore. It'd orbit around the moon and perform the objectives of remote-sensing the moon.

307.SNEHA SHARMA SHINES IN F4 SEA CHAMP.

Context:

- ▶ India's top woman racer Sneha Sharma jumped into the lead in the ladies' category after Round 3 of the Formula 4 South East Asia Championship.
- ▶ Sneha won the leading trophy in each of the 4 races to grab the Overall Cup for women in the Thailand round.
- ▶ She even clocked a best time of 1:46:6 to finish in the Top Eight against 11 of the finest racers from 10 different countries.

308.PV SINDHU TO SPEARHEAD INDIAN CHALLENGE

Context:

- ▶ In Badminton, Sudirman Cup tournament began at the Guangxi Sports Center Gymnasium in Nanning, China on 19 May 2019.
- ▶ Top shuttlers PV Sindhu and Saina Nehwal will spearhead the Indian challenge at this prestigious tournament. Sudirman Cup is a mixed team Badminton Championship held every two years.

309. 2nd INDIA OPEN BOXING TOURN. BEGAN

Context:

- ▶ The Second India Open International Boxing
- ▶ Tournament began at Sarusajai stadium in Guwahati on 20 May 2019.
- ▶ 16 countries will participate in the tournament where nearly 200 boxers will vying for the podium.
- ▶ india has fielded a strong contingent of 38 men and 37 women in the tournament including Mary Kom in 51-kilogram category.

310. RAFAEL NADAL CLINCHES ITALIAN OPEN 2019 TITLE

Context:

- ▶ In Tennis, defending champion Rafael Nadal of Spain has clinched the Italian Open 2019 title after beating Novak Djokovic 6-0, 4-6, 6-1 in the final in Rome last night.
- ▶ This is Nadal's ninth Italian Open title. It is the 81st title of Nadal's career.
- ▶ Nadal also broke a tie with Djokovic by claiming a record 34th ATP Masters 1000 crown. Whereas, in Women's single Czech's Karolina Pliskova registered two straight-set victory against Britain's Johanna Konta 6-3, 6-4 to claim the Italian Open title

311. TAKING STOCK OF ISLAMIC STATE 2.0

Context:

- ▶ The belief in India and Sri Lanka that they are shielded from radical extremist tendencies needs a relook. On Easter Sunday this year, April 21, Sri Lanka witnessed a series of coordinated bomb blasts, killing over 250 people.
- ▶ It was the heaviest toll in Sri Lanka in terms of lives lost since the civil war ended in 2009, thus ending a decade of peace.

Background:

- ▶ The organised attacks, on three churches and three hotels frequented by tourists, were clearly intended to forward a message.
- ▶ The way they were carried out further indicated that the dynamics were global though the perpetrators were locals. The pattern of attacks on the churches was not dissimilar from Islamic State (IS)-mounted attacks on churches in Surabaya in Indonesia in May last year, and in Jolo in the Philippines this year. The IS's statement soon after the attacks put to rest all speculation. IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi himself was to announce subsequently that the attacks in Sri Lanka were revenge for the fall of the Syrian town of Baghuz, the last IS-ruled village overrun by Syrian forces in March this year.

Radicalism:

- ▶ The question most often asked is why Sri Lanka was chosen by the IS to announce that it was business as usual. An IS attack of this scale had not been seen in this region previously. South Asia today is a virtual cauldron of radical Islamist extremist activity.
- ▶ From Afghanistan through Pakistan to the Maldives to Bangladesh, radical Islamist extremism is an ever present reality.
- ▶ Both India and Sri Lanka, however, prefer to believe that they are shielded from such tendencies. This belief needs a relook.

- ▶ In the case of Sri Lanka, it is by now evident that officials had turned a blind eye to the fact that certain areas such had become hotbeds of Wahabi-Salafi attitudes and practices.
- ▶ Muslim youth here have been radicalised to such an extent that it should have set alarm bells ringing.
- ▶ The example of Zahran Mohammed Hashim, who founded the National Thowheed Jamaath (NTJ) in 2014 in Kattankudy, and within a couple of years expanded its membership multi-fold, was one index of what was happening. He was able to transform the moderate Islamic landscape to a more radicalised one.

Islamic State:

- ▶ The advent of the IS occurred at the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century, at a time when a new breed of terrorists had emerged, inspired by the Egyptian, Sayyid Qutb, and the Palestinian, Abdullah Azzam.
- ▶ Combining this with the practical theology of Afghan warlord Jalaluddin Haqqani made for a potent mixture. In addition to this, the IS introduced the concept of a new Caliphate — especially al-Baghdadi’s vision of a Caliphate based on Islamic history.
- ▶ This further ignited the imagination of Muslim youth across the globe and became a powerful magnet to attract volunteers to their cause.
- ▶ Employing the themes of hijra and bay’ah, Sunni Muslims everywhere were urged to migrate to the Islamic Caliphate. At the peak of its power, the IS held territory both in Iraq and Syria, almost equal in size to the United Kingdom.

IS 2.0 and Pivotal Role of the Net:

- ▶ Islamic State 2.0 remains wedded to this idea of a caliphate, even though the caliphate is no longer in existence. It retains its ability to brainwash over the Internet, making a special virtue of ‘direct-to-home’ jihad. It continues to manage a ‘virtual community’ of fanatical sympathisers who adhere to their doctrine. IS State 2.0 includes several new variations from the original concept.
- ▶ Returnees from the battlefields of Syria and Iraq appear more inclined to follow tactics employed by other ‘oppressed’ Muslim communities, as for instance the Chechens.
- ▶ In Sri Lanka, a close knit web of family relationships has ensured secrecy and prevented leakage of information, thereby opting for methods of old-time anarchists. Reliance on online propaganda and social media has vastly increased. The IS has also refashioned several of its existing relationships. Tactics have varied from ‘lone wolf’ attacks that were seen over the past year and more in the West, to coordinated, large-scale simultaneous attacks on multiple targets, as witnessed in Sri Lanka. IS 2.0 is likely to nurture two types: the less informed rabid supporters and a band of highly radical ideologues who can entice Muslim youth to their cause.

- ▶▶ The path to radicalisation of both segments is through the Internet.
- ▶▶ Time spent alone online listening to propaganda can produce fanaticism of the most extreme variety. It could promote a binary world view of a conflict between ‘believers’ and ‘non-believers’, allowing radical Islamists to set the agenda.

Lessons for India:

- ▶▶ India is already in the cross hairs of the IS, and the announcement that the IS has created a separate ‘province’ should not be ignored.
- ▶▶ Links between IS groups in Sri Lanka and India currently stand exposed and they should be cause for concern.
- ▶▶ The kingpin of the Easter blasts, Hashim, was linked to jihadis in Tamil Nadu and Kerala.
- ▶▶ Indian authorities may do well to revisit the September 2018 criminal conspiracy case registered in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, which contained certain over-arching plans by the IS to target Hindus and non-Muslim activists in India.
- ▶▶ The National Investigation Agency (NIA) during its investigations has since come across links connecting IS units in Kerala and Tamil Nadu with the NTJ in Sri Lanka. These need to be pursued further.
- ▶▶ The number of Indian returnees from Syria may be small, but each of them would have come back having lost all sense of purpose.
- ▶▶ Their memories would only be of relentless artillery barrages, rocket fire and the air strikes that battered IS strongholds into submission. This is bound to nurture feelings of revenge — mainly against the West but extending to other segments as well.
- ▶▶ The attacks on luxury hotels and churches in Sri Lanka do smack of revenge against so-called atrocities on the IS in their Syrian stronghold.

Conclusion:

- ▶▶ The real threat that the IS, however, poses is that it is able to convince the Muslim extremist fringe that their time has come. The idea is the medium.
- ▶▶ As the IS morphs into IS 2.0, territorial flexibility is being replaced with strategic flexibility.
- ▶▶ Radicalisation, in any event, has less to do with numbers than with the intensity of beliefs.
- ▶▶ The struggle is not against presumed disparities or injustices meted out to Muslim minorities. Rather, it reflects the quest for a new militant Islamist identity.
- ▶▶ It has more to do with the internal dynamics of Muslim societies, which across the world appear to be tilting towards radicalist tendencies. Saudi funding and the role of foreign preachers are playing a significant role in this.

312. NOIDA TO BECOME ZERO DISCHARGE CITY

Context:

- ▶ Noida is all set to outdo Nagpur by recycling 100 percent of the sewage water generated in the city.
- ▶ Nagpur, till now, is leading the efforts with recycling more than 90 percent of the sewage water it generates. Noida has a total of six STPs across Sectors 54, 50, and 123, 168, with the capacity to treat a total of 231 MLD of sewage, which is beyond the 175 MLD the city currently generates.

313. SC DISMISSES PIL ON 100% MATCHING OF VVPAT SLIPS WITH EVMS

Context:

- ▶ The Supreme Court today dismissed a PIL filed by a Chennai-based group of technocrats seeking 100 per cent matching of Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) slips with Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) during the counting of votes for Lok Sabha elections on Thursday.
- ▶ A vacation bench, headed by Justice Arun Mishra, a larger bench, headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, had already dealt with the matter and passed an order. The bench said, it cannot override the Chief Justice's order.
- ▶ The apex court had, earlier this month, dismissed a review plea filed by 21 Opposition leaders seeking that random matching be increased to 50 per cent.
- ▶ The court had, last month, directed the Election Commission to increase the random matching from one to five polling booths per assembly segment, saying it would provide greater satisfaction not just to political parties but also to the entire electorate.

314. SC STAYS DELHI HC ORDER DISALLOWING BLACK MONEY LAW TO OPERATE RETROSPECTIVELY

Context:

- ▶ The Supreme Court today stayed the Delhi High Court order which had held that the 2016 black money law cannot be allowed to operate with retrospective effect from July 2015 to book and probe offenders. A vacation bench, headed by Justice Arun Mishra, gave the order while agreeing to hear the appeal of the Centre against the high court judgment.
- ▶ The bench also stayed the May 16th order of the high court, which had restrained the Income Tax department from taking any action against VVIP chopper scam accused Gautam Khaitan, against whom a black money case has been lodged.

- ▶▶ The bench issued a notice to Khaitan and asked him to file his response to the government's petition within six weeks. In its interim order, the Delhi High Court had stayed the Centre's notification to make operational the Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) and Imposition of Tax Act, with effect from July 1, 2015.

315. SUSHMA SWARAJ TO ATTEND SCO FOREIGN MINISTERS MEET IN BISHKEK, KYRGYZSTAN TODAY

Context:

- ▶▶ External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj will attend the meeting of Council of Foreign Ministers of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.
- ▶▶ She had a productive discussion with Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Aidarbekov on all aspects of bilateral relations, including in political and defence, trade and investment, health, capacity building and people-to-people ties. The Council of Foreign Ministers meeting will review the preparations for the forthcoming SCO Summit which will be held in Bishkek next month and also exchange views on topical issues of international and regional importance.
- ▶▶ The participating Foreign Ministers will call on Kyrgyz President Sooranbay Jeenbekov.
- ▶▶ This is the second Council of Foreign Ministers meeting that India is attending as a full member of SCO.

316. PCT HUMANITY ENTERED GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS

Context:

- ▶▶ PCT Humanity, a charity run by an Indian, in the UAE has entered the Guinness Book of World Records. It got recognised for its hunger relief efforts during the holy month of Ramzan in Abu Dhabi. The charity set the new Guinness World Records for 'Longest Line of Hunger Relief Package' in Abu Dhabi.

317. INDIAN PEACEKEEPER TO BE HONOURED POSTHUMOUSLY BY UN

Context:

- ▶▶ An Indian peacekeeper is among the 119 military, police and civilian personnel who will be honoured with a prestigious UN medal this year for courage and sacrifice in the line of duty.
- ▶▶ Police Officer Jitender Kumar made the supreme sacrifice while serving in the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Central African country of Congo. He will be honoured posthumously with the Dag Hammarskjold Medal on Friday as the world organisation observes the International Day of UN Peacekeepers.

Background:

- ▶▶ India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin would collect the medal on behalf of the fallen Indian peacekeeper at a solemn ceremony at the UN in New York.
- ▶▶ India is the fourth largest contributor of uniformed personnel to the UN peacekeeping.
- ▶▶ It currently contributes more than 6,400 military and police personnel to the UN peace operations in Abyei, Cyprus, Congo, Haiti, Lebanon, West Asia, South Sudan and Western Sahara.

318.US APPROVED SALES OF MISSILES TO JAPAN& SOUTH KOREA.

Context:

- ▶▶ The U.S. State Department has cleared \$314 million in possible sales of air defense missiles to South Korea.
- ▶▶ South Korea, a key Asian ally of the United States, asked to buy up to 94 SM-2 missiles used by ships against air threats, along with 12 guidance systems and technical assistance for a total cost of \$313.9 million.
- ▶▶ South Korea already uses SM-2 missiles developed by Raytheon Co but is building more missile defense-capable destroyers equipped with the weapon.
- ▶▶ Also, the DSCA reported that separately, Japan was also cleared to buy \$317 million worth of medium-range air-to-air missiles from Washington.

Background:

- ▶▶ The proposed sale comes after North Korea recently criticized South Korea's defense purchases from the United States, including the arrival of the first F-35 stealth aircraft. North Korea has boasted about its indigenous surface-to-air missiles.
- ▶▶ With denuclearisation talks stalled after a second summit between North Korea and the United States broke down in Hanoi in February, North Korea went ahead with more weapons tests in May month.
- ▶▶ North Korea and South Korea are technically still at war because their 1950-53 conflict ended in a truce, rather than a peace treaty.

319. SRI LANKA MARKED 10 YEARS TO THE CIVIL WAR

Context:

- ▶▶ Sri Lanka marked 10 years since the end of a decades-long civil war that left more than 100,000 people dead.
- ▶▶ The United Nations has urged Sri Lanka to investigate alleged war crimes committed by both sides.

Background:

- ▶ The Sri Lankan Civil War was an armed conflict fought on the island of Sri Lanka. It began on 23rd July 1983 and ended on 18 May 2009.
- ▶ There was an intermittent insurgency against the government by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (the LTTE, also known as the Tamil Tigers), which fought to create an independent Tamil state called Tamil Eelam in the north and the east of the island.
- ▶ After a 26-year military campaign, the Sri Lankan military defeated the Tamil Tigers in May 2009, bringing the civil war to an end.

320. BRIEF ON SIMBEX-2019

Context:

- ▶ IN ships Kolkata and Shakti are continuing their stay at Singapore to participate in the annual Singapore India Maritime Bilateral Exercise SIMBEX-2019.
- ▶ It is being held from 16-22 May 2019.
- ▶ The Singapore side will be represented by RSN ships Steadfast and Valiant, maritime patrol aircraft Fokker-50 (F-50) and F-16 fighter aircraft.

Background:

- ▶ SIMBEX was first initiated in 1993, since then it has become an annual affair.
- ▶ Over the years it has grown in operational and tactical complexity as well as from traditional anti-submarine exercises to more complex maritime exercises.
- ▶ It undertakes anti air or anti surface practice firings, air defence operations, advanced tactical exercises, etc.
- ▶ It has stood test of time in demonstrating commitment between India and Singapore in enhancing maritime cooperation between their navies and bolstering bonds of friendship between the two countries.

321. 8th INDO-MYANMAR COORDINATED PATROL

Context:

- ▶ Myanmar Navy Ship UMS King TabinShweHtee (773) and UMS Inlay (OPV-54) arrived Port Blair on 20 May 2019.
- ▶ The 8th Indo-Myanmar coordinated patrol (IMCOR) is being organised at Andaman and Nicobar Command.
- ▶ The Myanmar delegation is led by Commodore Htein Win.
- ▶ The CORPAT initiative between the two navies is meant to address issues inimical to interest of both nations.

322. OMAN AUTHOR JOKHA ALHARTHI WINS BOOKER INTERNATIONAL PRIZE

Context:

- ▶ An author from Oman has won the prestigious Man Booker International Prize for "Celestial Bodies", the story of three sisters of a desert country confronting its slave-owning past and a complex modern world.
- ▶ Jokha Alharthi, the first Arabic-language writer to take the prize, will split the 50,000 pounds or 64,000 US dollar purse with her UK-based translator, Marilyn Booth.
- ▶ The winning novel was "a book to win over the head and the heart in equal measure.
- ▶ "Celestial Bodies" beat five other finalists from Europe and South America, including last year's winner, Poland's Olga Tokarczuk.
- ▶ The prize is a counterpart to the Man Booker Prize for English-language novels and is open to books in any language that has been translated into English.

323. UK'S MAY TWEAKS BREXIT DEAL IN LAST-DITCH BID TO WIN SUPPORT

Context:

- ▶ The British government is discussing how to tweak its proposed European Union divorce terms in a last-ditch attempt to get Parliament's backing for Prime Minister Theresa May's deal with the bloc.
- ▶ The Cabinet is meeting today to work out details of what Prime Minister May has called a bold offer to win support for her Brexit agreement.
- ▶ The divorce deal has been rejected three times by the Parliament.
- ▶ May will try again in early June by asking lawmakers to vote on a withdrawal agreement bill implementing the departure terms.

324. BANK CREDIT TO INFRA SECTOR GREW 18.5%

Context:

- ▶ Bank credit to infrastructure sector grew by 18.5% to ₹10.55 lakh crore as of 2018-19, the highest since 2012-13 fiscal, as per the RBI data.
- ▶ Outstanding bank credit to the sector was ₹8.91 lakh crore as at March 2018. In FY18 and FY17, growth in bank credit to the sector was negative at 1.7% and 6.1%, respectively.

325. TRIPURA GRAMIN BANK UNDER TOP 3 RURAL BANKS

Context:

- ▶ Tripura Gramin Bank received India's top three Rural Banks (RRBs) in terms of profit, business, and growth. Currently, India has 46 Regional Rural Bank out of which Tripura Gramin Bank ranked 3rd in the country. Tripura Gramin Bank posted a profit for 7 successive years to Rs 125.45 crore in fiscal 2018-19.

326. ANTI-TERRORISM DAY IN INDIA: 21 MAY

Context:

- ▶ Every year May 21 is observed as Anti-Terrorism day in India.
- ▶ The day is observed in the memory of former Indian PM Mr. Rajiv Gandhi who passed away on this day. Former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated at an election rally near Chennai by a suicide bomber from the LTTE on 21 May 1991.

BACKGROUND:

- ▶ The Purpose of observing World Anti-Terrorism Day is:
 1. To spread the message of global peace and non-violence
 2. Deter vulnerable youth from following cult practices and being misguided
 3. Commemorate and honor the sacrifices made by thousands of soldiers who battled against terrorism
 4. Pay homage to the victims who lost their lives in terrorist attacks
 5. Device ways and hold awareness programs to protect future generations from radical influence.
- ▶ On this day Anti- terrorism pledge is taken in all government offices, PSU and in other public organisations. Events like debates, discussions, symposiums, seminars lectures will be held in schools, colleges and in universities on dangers of terrorism.

327. EVIDENCE OF WATER FOUND ON ULTIMA THULE

Context:

- ▶ NASA has found evidence for a unique mixture of methanol, water ice, and organic molecules on Ultima Thule's surface-the farthest world ever explored by mankind.
- ▶ Researchers are also investigating a range of surface features on Ultima Thule, such as bright spots and patches, hills and troughs, and craters and pits..

Background:

- ▶ Ultima Thule is 4 billion miles from Earth and has captured scientists' curiosity since they discovered it had a snowman-like appearance.

- ▶ NASA's New Horizons spacecraft flew past the icy object nicknamed Ultima Thule in Kuiper belt. Ultima Thule is deep within the so-called Kuiper Belt, or Twilight Zone, well beyond the orbit of Neptune. It is a contact binary, with two distinctly differently shaped lobes. It consists of a large, strangely flat lobe nicknamed "Ultima" connected to a smaller, somewhat rounder lobe dubbed "Thule" at a juncture.
- ▶ The lobes likely once orbited each other until some process brought them together in what scientists have shown to be a "gentle" merger.
- ▶ The alignment of the axes of Ultima and Thule indicates that before the merger the two lobes must have become tidally locked, meaning that the same sides always faced each other as they orbited around the same point.

328. ISRO LAUNCHES EARTH OBSERVATION SATELLITE RISAT-2B

Context:

- ▶ Indian Space Research Organisation has successfully launched its earth observation satellite RISAT-2B from Sriharikota.
- ▶ ISRO's trusted workhorse PSLV-C46 carrying RISAT-2B blasted off from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre at 5:30 this morning.

Background:

- ▶ The 615 kg satellite was released into the orbit 15 minutes after the lift-off. RISAT-2B meant for application in fields such as surveillance, agriculture, forestry and disaster management support. It will replace the RISAT-2, which was launched in 2009.
- ▶ This particular mission is really important in the sense that PSLV has crossed a landmark of launching 50 tonnes into space.
- ▶ There are several new features in RISAT-2B. Dr Sivan said, it is having expanded Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) making it an advanced earth observation satellite, operating in spotlight mode, mode and mosaic mode.

329. NO PROTECTION TO SPECIES THAT LIVE UNDERGROUND, SAYS EXPERT

Context:

- ▶ Bathynellaceans are minute crustaceans (crab family) and they live in the porous spaces of sediments along the waterways. Not more than 0.5-mm long, they are barely visible to the naked eye.
- ▶ Only eight species of these crustacean in seven genera were known in India till the end of 20th century.

Background:

- ▶ Regular surveys initiated in the country since 2000, especially in certain pockets of coastal deltaic belt of the rivers Krishna and Godavari in Andhra Pradesh and South Eastern India, have so far yielded 90 new crustacean taxa.
- ▶ Of these 74 new species have been formally described. They include 34 Copepoda, 31 Bathynellacea, 6 Amphipoda, 2 Isopoda and one Ostracoda species.
- ▶ 13 of the 31 Bathynellid species were endangered by indiscriminate sand mining in the State.

330. ASHISH TO LEAD GYMNASTICS TEAM

Context:

- ▶ A three-member team led by Ashish Kumar will represent India at the second World Challenge Cup Series gymnastics tournament in Osijek, Croatia.
- ▶ It will be held from 23-26 May 2019. Besides Ashish, the Indian contingent will also have Rakesh Kumar Patra and Shraddha Talekar. The World Challenge Cup is a major FIG event with broader participation of 110 gymnasts from 30 different countries.

331. KEVAL SCALED HIGHEST MOUNTAINS IN 6 DAYS

Context:

- ▶ A 28-year-old Indian climber has scaled two mountains above 8,000 metres, including the Mt. Everest, in just six days. Keval Hiren Kakka touched the peak of Mount Lhotse, world's fourth highest mountain on 21 May 2019. He had scaled Mt. Everest on 16 May 2019.

332. NPPA REDUCED PRICES OF 9 CANCER MEDICINES

Context:

- ▶ The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) has reduced the prices of 9 non-scheduled cancer drugs by up to 87%.
- ▶ This decision is in continuation of nodal agency's efforts to bring down drugs prices.
- ▶ In February 2019, the government had capped about 42 cancer drugs at 30%.

Background:

- ▶ It was established by a Government of India Resolution in 1997. It is an office attached to Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP), Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers.
- ▶ It is headquartered in New Delhi. It is an independent Regulator for pricing of drugs. It ensures accessibility and availability of medicines to people at affordable prices.
- ▶ The NPPA currently fixes price of drugs on National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) under schedule-I of Drug Price Control Orders (DPCO). Till date about 1,000 drugs have been price-capped by this mode.

333. RAJASTHAN GOVT TO REVAMP UJALA CLINICS

Context:

- ▶ Rajasthan Government set to revamp 'Ujala Clinics' for adolescents.
- ▶ It will appoint peer educators for counseling the youngsters in order to ensure coordination with other medical and health schemes.
- ▶ Ujjala Clinics function under Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK) in 10 districts of the state.

Background:

- ▶ It is a health program launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for adolescents between the age group 10 and 19 years.
- ▶ The aim of this programme is the adolescent participation and leadership, equity and inclusion, gender equity and strategic partnerships with other sectors and stakeholders.
- ▶ The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare along with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) developed a National Adolescent Health Strategy.
- ▶ It focuses on age groups 10-14 years and 15-19 years with universal coverage
- ▶ Males and females, urban and rural, in school and out of school, married and unmarried and vulnerable and underserved.

334. IMCOR 2019 BEGAN IN PORT BLAIR AT ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR COMMAND

Context:

- ▶ The 2019 Indo-Myanmar coordinated patrol (IMCOR) is taking place from 20 May to 28 May 2019 in Port Blair at Andaman and Nicobar Command. This is the 8th edition of the coordinated patrol (CORPAT) between India and Myanmar.
- ▶ The coordinated patrol (CORPAT) initiative between the Indian Navy and Myanmar Navy seeks to address issues of terrorism, human trafficking, poaching, illegal fishing, drug trafficking and other illegal activities harmful to interest of both nations.
- ▶ The CORPAT series was first started in Mar 2013. Since then it has fostered improved professional interaction and enhanced mutual understanding between the two navies for maritime interoperability.

Background:

- ▶ The Indo-Myanmar coordinated patrol IMCOR began on 20th May 2019. For the Opening Ceremony of 2019 edition, Myanmar Navy Ships arrived on 20 May 2019 in Port Blair at Andaman and Nicobar Command.

- ▶ It will be undertaken by Myanmar ships viz. UMS King TabinShweHtee (773) and UMS Inlay (OPV54) with Indian Naval Ship, INS Saryu.
- ▶ The exercise includes the patrolling effort by participants will be augmented by Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA) from both the navies. The ships deployed would patrol along International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) between the two countries thus, covering a distance of about 725 Kms over a period of four days.
- ▶ During the sea phase of coordinated patrol, prior to Closing Ceremony' of CORPAT onboard Myanmar Naval Ship, the deployed ships will also undertake joint drills and maneuvers.

335. SEND NAMES TO FLY ON MARS

Context:

- ▶ The US space agency has invited public to submit their names to fly aboard the next rover to Red Planet in 2020. Souvenir boarding passes will display names submitted by the people which will also be on microchips aboard the Mars 2020 rover.
- ▶ The rover is scheduled to launch as early as July 2020, with the spacecraft expected to touch down on Mars in February 2021.

336. JOKO WIDODO ELECTED PRESIDENT OF INDONESIA

Context:

- ▶ Indonesia's Joko Widodo has been re-elected as President of the country.
- ▶ He beat his rival Prabowo Subianto, a retired general.
- ▶ Widodo and his vice-presidential running mate Ma'ruf Amin won the election by a 55.5% to 44.5% margin over Prabowo Subianto and Sandiaga Uno.
- ▶ The next top parties by the number of votes are Golkar, and the National Awakening Party (PKB).

337. SARAY: 1st BLACK WOMAN TO CLIMB MT. EVEREST

Context:

- ▶ Saray Khumalo became the first black African women to conquer Mt. Everest in her fourth attempt. She climbed the 8,848-meter mountain after three previous attempts.

Background:

- ▶ She has also conquered Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa, Aconcagua in Argentina and Mount Elbrus in Russia. She is on a hunt to conquer the highest peaks on each continent.
- ▶ In 2003, South African park ranger Sibusiso Vilane became the first black person to reach the top of Mount Everest.

338. BANGLADESH STOPPED VISAS FOR PAKISTANIS

Context:

- ▶ The Bangladesh High Commission in Islamabad has stopped issuing visas to Pakistani nationals for one week.
- ▶ This is a mark of protest as a Bangladeshi diplomat's visa-extension application has not been cleared by the Pakistan government for the last four months.
- ▶ In 2018, Dhaka denied a visa to the Pakistan High Commissioner.

Background:

- ▶ Bangladesh has reportedly refused to accept the 'agreement' from Islamabad for the appointment of a new high commissioner. Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs named Saqlain Syedah as its new High Commissioner to Bangladesh, but Dhaka refused to accept the "agreement", a diplomatic requirement under which a host country has to confirm the appointment of an incoming envoy.
- ▶ Bangladesh, which seceded from Pakistan in 1971, has accused Pakistan of financing terrorism on its soil. Bilateral ties have become so strained. Now it has halted granting visas to all Pakistanis.

339. SRI LANKA EXTENDS EMERGENCY REGULATIONS BY ANOTHER MONTH

- ▶ Sri Lanka has extended by another month the emergency regulations, which were enforced after the Easter Sunday terror attacks. President Maithripala Sirisena issued an extraordinary gazette notice today extending the emergency regulations which was imposed a month ago after suicide blasts at multiple locations in the country which killed over 250 people including 45 foreigners.

Background:

- ▶ The emergency provisions give the military sweeping powers to act against fundamentalist organizations behind the attacks, which was claimed by Islamic state.
- ▶ Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe government will establish a new public-school system within next two years that is not based on language or religion. That all religious educational institutes will be regulated by education ministry. It was also decided to regulate madarasas by Muslim institute regulation board under education ministry. The government has sought to control the madarasas after the attacks and prohibited foreign nationals from religious preaching. That emergency provisions was imposed to allow armed forces for search operations and arrest of suspects which is still continuing. Around ninety people are under arrest including close relatives of suicide bombers who were involved in the attacks.

- ▶ Government has initiated widespread reforms in education sector to curtail differentiation on religious and linguistic basis.
- ▶ Religious education in madars as is believed to be one of the reasons behind fundamentalism which terrorist organizations like Islamic state use as their source of recruitment.

340. IAF SUCCESSFULLY FIRES BRAHMOS AIR VERSION MISSILE FROM FRONTLINE SU-30 MKI FIGHTER AIRCRAFT

- ▶ Indian Air Force today successfully fired the BrahMos air version missile from its frontline Su-30 MKI fighter aircraft.
- ▶ The launch from the aircraft was smooth and the missile followed the desired trajectory before directly hitting the land target.
- ▶ The air launched BrahMos missile is a 2.5 ton supersonic air to surface cruise missile.
- ▶ The Indian Air Force became the first Air Force in the world to have successfully fired an air launched 2.8 Mach surface attack missile of this category on a sea target on November 2017. Today's was the second such live launch of the weapon.
- ▶ The BrahMos missile provides Indian Air Force a much desired capability to strike from large stand-off ranges on any target at sea or on land with pinpoint accuracy by day or night and in all weather conditions.

341. BENGALURU DOCTOR GOT GLOBAL ASIAN AWARD

- ▶ Bengaluru-based medical doctor Hema Divakar was honoured with the 'Global Asian of the Year 2018-19' award in Dubai recently.
- ▶ She was awarded for her yeomen services and contributions to the women's healthcare ecosystem, in India.
- ▶ She received the award at the Asian Business & Social Forum 2019 under the 'In Service of the Society and the Nation' category.

342. JOKHA AL HARTHI WON BOOKER INTERNATIONAL PRIZE

- ▶ Oman Author Jokha Al Harthi won the prestigious Man Booker International Prize for 'Celestial Bodies'.
- ▶ It is the story of three sisters of a desert country confronting its slave-owning past and a complex modern world.
- ▶ She is the first Arabic-language writer to take the prize.
- ▶ She will split the 50,000 pounds or 64,000 US dollar purse with her UK-based translator, Marilyn Booth.

343. GOVT. INVITES NOMINATION FOR VAYOSHRESHTHA SAMMAN FOR SENIOR CITIZENS 2019

Context:

- ▶ The Department of Social Justice And Empowerment had invited nominations for the Vayoshreshtha Samman awards 2019. Nominations for Vayoshreshtha Samman- National Awards for Senior Citizens 2019 for individuals/institutions should be sent by 31st May 2019.
- ▶ The Ministries/Departments of Government of India and their autonomous organisations/State Govts. or UT Administration can nominate the suitable individuals/institutions for the said Awards.

Background:

- ▶ The series of National Award-Vayoshreshtha Samman awards were instituted by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in 2005. In 2013 these were elevated to the level of national awards. It is an annual award which is conferred in thirteen categories.
- ▶ These are conferred to eminent senior citizens and Institutions who are involved in providing distinguished services for the cause of elderly persons.
- ▶ The Department of Social Justice And Empowerment as part of the celebration of the International Day of Older Persons (IDOP) on 1st October every year has been conferring National Award – Vayoshreshtha Samman to eminent senior citizens and institutions involved in rendering distinguished services for the cause of elderly persons. The National Awards are conferred by the President of India.

344. ANIRUDH AND NIKI WON ITF TENNIS TITLE

- ▶ Anirudh Chandrasekar and Niki Poonacha won the 2019 International Tennis Federation (ITF) men's Futures tennis tournament title in Kampala, Uganda.
- ▶ The pair defeated Simon Carr and Ryan James Storrie and secured 6-3, 6-4.
- ▶ It was the maiden international title for Anirudh, while it was fourth doubles title for Poonacha.

345. 2 NEW BADMINTON FORMATS LAUNCHED

- ▶ Recently, Badminton World Federation (BWF) launched two new formats of Badminton named as Air Badminton & Triples.
- ▶ BWF launched Air Badminton at Guangzhou with new dimensions of the court and an innovative shuttlecock called Airshuttle.
- ▶ The Air Badminton will be an outdoor game as compared to traditional badminton which is indoor games.

346. WORLD BIODIVERSITY DAY IS OBSERVED ON 22 MAY

Context:

- ▶▶ The International Day for Biological Diversity (or World Biodiversity Day) is a United Nations-sanctioned international day to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues. The day is observed on May 22 every year. The theme for 2019 is 2019 - Our Biodiversity, Our Food, Our Health.
- ▶▶ Biological Diversity falls within the scope of the UN Post-2015 Development Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals. Agrobiodiversity and its potential to support human nutrition and good health is a critical component of the global sustainability agenda. The critical role of biodiversity in sustainable development was recognized in a Rio+20 outcome document, The World We Want: A Future for All.

Background:

- ▶▶ Theme 2019: Our Biodiversity, Our Food, Our Health:
- ▶▶ This year's International Day for Biological Diversity focuses on biodiversity as the foundation for our food and health and as a key catalyst to transforming food systems and improving human well-being.
- ▶▶ The theme aims to leverage knowledge and spread awareness of the dependency of our food systems, nutrition, and health on biodiversity and healthy ecosystems. The theme also celebrates the diversity provided by our natural systems for human existence and well-being on Earth, while contributing to other Sustainable Development Goals, including climate change mitigation and adaptation, ecosystems restoration, cleaner water, and zero hunger, among others.
- ▶▶ **To conserve and sustainably use biodiversity for the well-being, every individual need to:**
 - ▶▶ Reduce meat consumption
 - ▶▶ Eat and purchase seasonal foods
 - ▶▶ Buy local foods
 - ▶▶ Reduce food waste
 - ▶▶ Compost food scraps
 - ▶▶ Reduce food packaging by using reusable bags or reusing glass jars or containers
 - ▶▶ Avoid single-use plastics like plastic straws, coffee cups, plastic cutlery, take out containers or plastic water bottles
 - ▶▶ Promote local and indigenous biodiversity for food and nutrition

347. CORAL BLEACHING OBSERVED NEAR MANDAPAM, KEEZHAKKARAI, PALK BAY

Context:

- ▶ The National Centre for Coastal Research, an institute under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, in India, has a field research station in the Gulf of Mannar region, and researchers led by Dr. Shanmugaraj have found an alarming pattern of bleaching in the reefs in Mandapam, Keezhakkarai and Palk Bay.
- ▶ They have found that sea surface temperature ranged from 28.7°C to 31°C in the August 2018-February 2019 period and there was no bleaching seen then.

Background:

- ▶ However, when the temperatures rose to between 32°C and 36°C between March 2019 and May 2019, researchers observed a pattern of bleaching in corals, which was different at different layers within the sea.
- ▶ About 12% of coral species observed at depths between 0m and 2m such as *Porites solida*, *Porites lutea*, *Montipora digitata*, *Acropora hyacinthus* were completely bleached. About 5% of species observed at depths between 2m and 4m such as *Acropora formosa*, *Acropora hyacinthus*, *Montipora digitata*, *Montipora foliosa*, *Pocillopora damicornis*, *Goniastrea retiformis*, *Platygyra sinensis*, *Dipsastrea favus*, *Dipsastrea speciosa* were partially bleached.
- ▶ *Porites* species observed in Palk Bay region were completely bleached at depths from zero to 4 metres. Corals at depths over 5m did not face bleaching.

348. EYE IN THE SKY: ON RISAT-2B

Context:

- ▶ With the successful pre-dawn launch of RISAT-2B satellite on May 22, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has added another feather to its cap.
- ▶ 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

ABOUT RISAT – 2B:

- ▶ The PSLV-C46 launcher carrying the 615-kg RISAT-2B blasted off at 5.30 a.m.
- ▶ The satellite reached its designated position and started orbiting in space with an inclination of 37°.
- ▶ After the satellite separated from the launcher, its solar arrays deployed automatically.
- ▶ The RISAT-2B is built to operate for at least five years.
- ▶

- ▶▶ Two important secondary or piggyback trial payloads that would revolutionise its future missions were also included in the launch.
- ▶▶ They are the new Vikram processor from Semiconductor Laboratory (SCL), Chandigarh, that will control future launchers, and a low-cost micro-electronic inertial navigation system from the ISRO Inertial Systems Unit, Thiruvananthapuram.
- ▶▶ This is the third Indian RISAT in 10 years, and follows the Israeli-built RISAT-2 in 2009 and the ISRO-built RISAT-1 in 2012.
- ▶▶ The older RISATs have reached the end of their lives.
- ▶▶ ISRO has planned a series of radar images in the coming months to enhance its space-based observation of Earth and the Indian region.
- ▶▶ ISRO chairman described RISAT-2B as “an advanced Earth Observation satellite with an advanced technology of 3.6-metre radial rib [unfurlable] antenna”.

How will the Satellite Help?

- ▶▶ 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.
- ▶▶ Further, it is important to note that 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.
- ▶▶ While optical remote sensing that relies on visible light for imaging gets obstructed by clouds, RISAT-2B will not.
- ▶▶ As a matter of fact, much like the RISAT-1 satellite that was launched by ISRO in April 2012, RISAT-2B will also use microwave radiation.

Characteristics of Microwaves:

- ▶▶ 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.

Conclusion:

- ▶▶ RISAT-2B will enhance India’s monitoring capabilities for civil and military purposes.

349.A BLUEPRINT FOR A NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

Context:

- ▶ Indian elites show little evidence of having thought coherently and systematically about national strategy.
- ▶ Few writings offer coherent, articulated beliefs or a clear set of operating principles for Indian strategy,” wrote American think tanker George Tanham in a paper prepared for the U.S. government in 1992.

Important things to be known:

- ▶ Most Indian students of strategy and security studies rightly disagree with this rather presumptuous argument, especially since Tanham located the causes of the Indian inability to think strategically in its historical and cultural specificities.
- ▶ Somehow, it is pertinent to ask, even today, whether India thinks about strategic affairs in a systematic, consistent and coherent manner or whether its national security runs on ad hoc arrangements and ‘raw wisdom’.
- ▶ Or is it that the political class has traditionally been too cagey about putting out a national security strategy, even a mere declaratory one as opposed to an operational one, in black and white?

Merit discussion:

- ▶ There are some major shortcomings in India’s national security architecture that must be addressed.
- ▶ As a matter of fact, there is a need to take a relook at some of our key national security institutions and revamp their functioning.
- ▶ The National Security Council (NSC), which was set up in 1998 almost never meets, primarily because it is an advisory body, with the Cabinet Committee on Security being the executive body.
- ▶ If the NSC is to be made more useful, the government’s allocation of business rules should be amended to give more powers to the NSC and its subordinate organisations, such as the Strategic Policy Group.
- ▶ Secondly, the job of the National Security Adviser needs to be reimagined. Although the NSA plays a vital role in national security, he has no legal powers as per the government’s allocation of business rules.
- ▶ The K.C. Pant Task Force in the late 1990s had recommended the creation of an NSA with the rank of a Cabinet Minister.
- ▶ Over the years, the NSA’s powers have increased, even though he is not accountable to Parliament. The institution of the NSA today requires more accountability and legal formality.

- ▶ Also, it is important to note that more national security organisations are not the answer; fundamental structural reforms in national security planning are needed.
- ▶ Take the case of the recently constituted Defence Planning Committee (DPC) tasked to recommend policy measures to improve India's defence capability and preparedness, and national security in general.
- ▶ It is important to note that not only does the DPC have too many responsibilities on its plate, it is also an advisory body.
- ▶ More worryingly, there is a feeling among the armed forces that by having the NSA chair the DPC, the government may have scuttled the demands to appoint a Chief of the Defence Staff, an issue the Hooda document highlights.

HOODA Document:

- ▶ The Congress promised Gen. Hooda that it would adopt his national security strategy document after internal consultations.
- ▶ The document was prepared in less than two months and in consultation with six key core group members and many domain experts.
- ▶ The guiding philosophy of the document is enshrined in the following sentence: "This strategy recognises the centrality of our people. We cannot achieve true security if large sections of our population are faced with discrimination, inequality, lack of opportunities, and buffeted by the risks of climate change, technology disruption, and water and energy scarcity."
- ▶ This is by far the most comprehensive treatment of national security in the Indian context.
- ▶ The document offers a comprehensive definition of national security ranging from challenges posed by new technologies to social unrest to inequality.
- ▶ At a time when national security is referred to in strictly military terms, it is heartening to see that a strategy document written by a former Army general, the man behind the 2016 surgical strikes, defines security in an out-of-the box and inclusive manner.
- ▶ A glance at the key themes shows how well-designed the document is: "assuming our rightful place in global affairs", "achieving a secure neighbourhood", "peaceful resolution of internal conflicts", "protecting our people" and "strengthening our capabilities".
- ▶ Furthermore, the key recommendations in the document are both timely and well-thought-out.
- ▶ On the issue of military jointmanship, it recommends that "the three services should undertake a comprehensive review of their current and future force structures to transform the army, navy and air force into an integrated warfighting force."
- ▶ It argues that it would take "a cultural change in the way the DRDO is currently operating" to improve domestic defence production.

- ▶ While discussing emerging national security threats, the document differs with the BJP-led government's decision to set up a Defence Cyber Agency instead of a Cyber Command as was originally recommended.
- ▶ On the Kashmir question too, the document seems to differ with the incumbent government's muscular policy, and Gen. Hooda's wise words should be a wakeup call for everyone: "Killing terrorists is an integral part of military operations to ensure that the state does not descend into chaos. However, this is not the primary measure of success or conflict resolution. Serious efforts are required for countering radicalisation. There is a need to initiate structured programmes that bring together civil society members, family groups, educationists, religious teachers and even surrendered terrorists in an effort to roll back radicalisation."

Conclusion:

- ▶ One hopes that this document is the beginning of a tradition in India of thinking about national security and strategy more systematically, consistently and comprehensively.

350.1st KASHMIRI WOMAN TO SUMMIT EVEREST

Context:

- ▶ Nahida Manzoor created history by becoming the first Kashmiri woman to successfully summit the World's highest peak, Mount Everest.
- ▶ Nahida Manzoor went with her Sherpa Guide Nima Kancha.
- ▶ On March 4, 2019, she had started crowdfunding to support her dream journey as she required Rs 30 lakh for the adventure.

351. INDIA RANKED 117 IN KIDSRIGHT INDEX

Context:

- ▶ India stands in a lowly 117th position out of 181 countries in the KidsRight Index.
- ▶ It is an annual global index which ranks how countries adhere to and are equipped to improve child rights.
- ▶ Countries are judged on five indicators: right to life, right to education, right to health, right to protection and enabling environment for child rights.
- ▶ Iceland topped the index.

Background:

- ▶ Kids Rights Index is an initiative started by Kids Right Foundation with Erasmus University, Rotterdam.
- ▶ The index is prepared on the basis of five indicators
- ▶ Right to Life

- ▶▶ Right to Education
- ▶▶ Right to Health
- ▶▶ Right to Protection
- ▶▶ India scored 0.64 out of 1 in the overall category
- ▶▶ Iceland has scored 0.967 and Portugal has scored 94.8.

352. FL LT. BHAWANA: 1ST WOMAN TO FLY FIGHTER JETS

Context:

- ▶▶ Bhawana Kanth became the first woman pilot of the Indian Air Force (IAF) to qualify
- ▶▶ to undertake combat missions on a fighter jet.
- ▶▶ She has completed operational syllabus for carrying out combat missions on Mig-21 Bison aircraft during day time. Bhawana joined the fighter squadron in November 2017 and flew the first solo on MiG-21 Bison in March last year.

353. FOUR NEW SC JUDGES SWORN IN

Context:

- ▶▶ Four new judges of the Supreme Court were today administered the oath of office by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi.
- ▶▶ Justices BR Gavai, Surya Kant, Aniruddha Bose and AS Bopanna were administered the oath of office in the presence of several other sitting apex court judges.
- ▶▶ With the swearing-in, the number of judges in the Supreme Court stands at 31, the full sanctioned strength of the top court.

354. AFFILIATION SIGNED BETWEEN AR AND ICG

Mains:

- ▶▶ What is Disturbed Areas Act (DAA)? What is the Current status and issues of AFSPA and DAA in various states.

Context:

- ▶▶ The Director Generals of Assam Rifles and Indian Coast Guard (ICG) signed an Affiliation Charter between 3rd (Naga Hills) Battalion of Assam Rifles and Indian Coast Guard Ship 'Shaurya'.
- ▶▶ Assam Rifles have 46 Battalions manning the Indo-Myanmar border. ICG, with 142 ships & 62 aircraft is one of the youngest Armed Force under Ministry of Defence.

Background:

- ▶▶ The training will involve the exchange of information and personnel of the two Forces and building camaraderie.

- ▶▶ The two will work together in humanitarian missions and other areas.
- ▶▶ A combat battalion of Assam Rifles will soon be training onboard ICGS Shaurya (16), an offshore patrol vessel in Chennai.
- ▶▶ In due course of time, arrangements will be made for the exchange of personnel including those with an understanding of Land Border Management (LBM) with Assam Rifles battalions.
- ▶▶ Over-Seas Deployment (OSD) of AR personnel on board an ICG ship, bilateral meetings between the two forces, and participation of experts from both sides in such meetings.

355. UNION CABINET TO MEET TODAY; RECOMMEND DISSOLUTION OF 16th LOK SABHA

Context:

- ▶▶ The Union Cabinet will meet this evening to recommend the dissolution of the 16th Lok Sabha.
- ▶▶ The meet is being held a day after the counting of votes for the Lok Sabha elections in which the NDA is all set to retain power. After the Cabinet's recommendation is passed in the form of a resolution, President Ram Nath Kovind will dissolve the present Lok Sabha.
- ▶▶ The term of the 16th Lok Sabha will end on the 3rd June and the 17th Lok Sabha has to be constituted before that date. The process to form a new House will be initiated when the Chief Election Commissioner along with Election Commissioners will meet the President in the next few days to hand over the list of newly-elected members.
- ▶▶ After the meeting of the Union Cabinet, the Council of Ministers, which also comprises Ministers of State will meet at the office of the Prime Minister.

356. MOU FOR JOINT COLLABORATION ON CANCER RESEARCH

Mains:

- ▶▶ What do you understand by precision medicine and how can it help in cancer treatment and other various chronic and life-threatening diseases? Explain.

Context:

- ▶▶ An MoU for supporting joint collaborative research programmes in the area of Cancer was signed on 22 May 2019. It was signed between the Department of Biotechnology and the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE). This MoU shall help strengthen the various initiatives specifically for cancer.

Background:

- ▶▶ The MoU was signed between Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and Cancer Research UK (CRUK) for India-UK Cancer Research Initiative for collaboration in cancer research for the next five years.

- ▶ Under it, both CRUK and DBT will invest 5 million pounds each in this five-year pilot project and seek further investment from other potential funding partners.
- ▶ India-UK Cancer Research Initiative will identify core set of research challenges that address issues of affordability, prevention and care of cancer patients by bringing together leading Indian and UK experts in clinical research, demographic research, new technologies and physical sciences.
- ▶ The initiative will provide funding to develop new research alliances and undertake impactful research to enable significant progress against cancer outcomes. It will also provide a catalysing platform for scientists and researchers in India and UK to co-create solutions for affordable cancer care that improve cancer outcomes around the globe.

357. NAVAL DRILLS IN WESTERN PACIFIC HELD

Context:

- ▶ U.S. Navy ships conducted joint drills with warships from allies Japan, Australia and South Korea in their first combined exercise in the Western Pacific.
- ▶ The six-day exercise involves two Japanese destroyers, two Australian frigates and a destroyer from South Korea, with as many as 3,000 sailors participating.

Background:

- ▶ The drill, dubbed Malabar, is an annual event between the US and India, and Japan is joining it this year for the first time since 2007.
- ▶ Last year, the drill was held in the Bay of Bengal near India.
- ▶ Japan's southwestern island chain, which hosts the biggest concentration of US military personnel in Asia, blocks China's east coast access to the Western Pacific. Japan's military is reinforcing with radar stations and anti-ship missile batteries.
- ▶ Lying around 220km (137 miles) west of Taiwan are a group of uninhabited isles, known as the Senkaku in Japan and the Diaoyu in China, which are controlled by Tokyo and claimed by Beijing.
- ▶ China claims most of the South China Sea, through which \$5 trillion in ship-borne trade passes every year. The Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei have overlapping claims, as well as close military ties with the United States.

358. CHINA DELIVERED FIGHTER JET TO PAKISTAN

Mains:

- ▶ Write about China Pakistan Economic Corridor & Its effects on India

Context:

- ▶ China has delivered the first overhauled multi-role JF-17 fighter jet to Islamabad.
- ▶ This is a part of a project undertaken by the two countries over a decade ago for the development and manufacture of the aircraft.
- ▶ China and Pakistan had begun joint development and manufacture of the single-engine light JF-17 jets over a decade ago.

Background:

- ▶ In recent years JF-17 has become a mainstay of PAF when after US has restricted its sales of F-16 war planes post 1990 arms embargo imposed on Pakistan under Pressler Amendment. Pakistan is reported to have over 100 JF-17 planes with more in pipeline.
- ▶ More than a decade ago China and Pakistan had begun joint development and manufacture of single-engine light JF-17 jets.
- ▶ In 2007 Beijing delivered its first batch and a number of them were later commissioned by PAF.
- ▶ After over a decade of use, it was time for first JF-17s to undergo overhauls and first overhaul started in November 2017 after a contract was signed between two nations in 2016.

359. TRAFFIC JAM-LIKE SITUATION AT MT. EVEREST

Context:

- ▶ Mt Everest witnessed a traffic-jam like situation as over 200 mountaineers attempted to reach the summit point.
- ▶ Climbers from many countries reached above the Camp IV early morning and complained of waiting for more than two hours in queues.
- ▶ The government issued a record number of 381 climbing permits to the mountaineers representing 44 teams this spring season.
- ▶ The long, winding line to the peak added risk to what is already one of the most dangerous mountains, raising the possibility of frostbite and oxygen depletion.
- ▶ At least two climbers died after having reached the summit on Wednesday, and their deaths may have been related to the delays.

360. INDIA STOPPED IMPORTING OIL FROM IRAN AFTER US WAIVERS EXPIRED: ENVOY

Mains:

- ▶ Write about China Pakistan Economic Corridor & Its effects on India?

Context:

- ▶ India has stopped importing oil from Iran after American waivers granted to eight buyers expired early this month.
- ▶ This was stated by Indian Ambassador to the US Harsh Vardhan Shringla at a news conference in Washington.

Background:

- ▶ New Delhi understands that the move was a priority for the US, although it comes at a cost as India really needs to find alternative sources of energy.
- ▶ India depends heavily on West Asia for its energy needs and is against any further escalation of tension in the region. The Indian envoy added that he was confident that US sanctions would not affect its partnership in developing Iran's Chabahar port.
- ▶ The Chabahar port is a lifeline for Afghanistan that provides both humanitarian assistance and supplies to the war-torn country.

361. MOONS' FORMATION BROUGHT WATER

Context:

- ▶ A cosmic body that hit the Earth and led to the formation of the Moon about 4.4 billion years ago may have also delivered large quantities of water to our home planet, scientists have found. The Earth is the only terrestrial planet with a large amount of water and a relatively large moon, which stabilises the Earth's axis.
- ▶ Both were essential for Earth to develop life.

Background:

- ▶ The Earth formed in the 'dry' inner solar system, and so it is somewhat surprising that there is water on Earth.
- ▶ To understand why this the case, we have to go back in time when the solar system was formed about 4.5 billion years ago.
- ▶ From earlier studies, we know that the solar system became structured such that the 'dry' materials were separated from the 'wet' materials: the so-called 'carbonaceous' meteorites, which are relatively rich in water, come from the outer solar system, whereas the drier 'non-carbonaceous' meteorites come from the inner solar system.

- ▶▶ While previous studies have shown that carbonaceous materials were likely responsible for delivering the water to Earth, it was unknown when and how this carbonaceous material—and thus the water—came to Earth.

362. BRAHMOS MISSILE SUCCESSFULLY FIRED

Context:

- ▶▶ IAF successfully fired the BrahMos air version missile from its frontline Su-30 MKI fighter aircraft. The launch from the aircraft was smooth and the missile followed the desired trajectory before directly hitting the land target. The air-launched BrahMos missile is a 2.5-ton supersonic air to surface cruise missile with ranges of close to 300 km.

Background:

- ▶▶ India is developing the supersonic BrahMos missile with Russia, and according to media reports wants to soon start selling it abroad.
- ▶▶ BrahMos is a supersonic medium-range liquid-fuelled ramjet-powered cruise missile that can be launched from sea, land and air. It is a two-stage missile, with a solid-fueled first stage to bring it to supersonic speed. Surface-launched missiles can carry a 200-kg warhead, while the air-launched variant can carry a payload of 300 kg. It is manufactured in Hyderabad by BrahMos Aerospace, a joint venture between India's DRDO and Russia's NPO Mashinostroyeniya. BrahMos is named for the Brahmaputra and Moskva rivers of India and Russia respectively.

363. SPACEX LAUNCHES FIRST SATELLITES FOR MUSK'S STARLINK INTERNET SERVICE

Context:

- ▶▶ High-tech entrepreneur Elon Musk's SpaceX Company launched a Falcon 9 rocket from Florida on Thursday on a mission to carry the first batch of five dozen small satellites into low-Earth orbit for his new Starlink internet service.
- ▶▶ The rocket blasted off from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station at about 10:30 p.m. local time (0230 GMT Friday), marking a milestone in a global enterprise aimed at generating cash for Mr. Musk's larger ambitions in space.

Background:

- ▶▶ The Falcon 9 was due to release its cargo of 60 satellites into orbit about an hour after Thursday's launch. Each one weighs 500 pounds (227 kg), making it the heaviest payload for any SpaceX rocket to date. Those satellites are designed to form the initial phase a planned constellation capable of beaming signals for high-speed internet service from space to paying customers around the globe.

- ▶▶ SpaceX would begin approaching customers later this year or next year. As many as 2,000 satellites will be launched per year, with the ultimate objective of placing up to 12,000 into orbit.

364. KARNATAKA BANK LAUNCHED SAVINGS BANK PRODUCT

Context:

- ▶▶ Karnataka Bank launched a new savings bank product called 'KBL SB Salary' for salaried class with three variants of Executive, Prime, and Classic.
- ▶▶ All these 3 variants of KBL SB Salary Scheme are available for the Salaried People with a host of Digitally Powered features and without any Minimum Balance Criteria.
- ▶▶ No annual charge on Debit Cards is a major feature.

365. SHYAM SARAN TO BE CONFERRED WITH AWARD

Context:

- ▶▶ Former foreign secretary Shyam Saran will be conferred with Japan's second highest national award. He will be awarded for his contributions to strengthen the strategic ties and enhancing mutual understanding between India and Japan.
- ▶▶ The Government of Japan announced that in its 2019 Spring Imperial Decorations, it will confer Saran, 'the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star'.

366. INDRA NOOYI RECEIVED DOCTORATE FROM YALE

Context:

- ▶▶ Former PepsiCo Chairman and CEO Indra Nooyi was presented with the Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters by Yale University.
- ▶▶ She was presented the doctorate for her achievements in business.
- ▶▶ Nooyi received a degree in Master of Public and Private Management from the university's Yale School of Management in 1980.

367. KENYA'S OLYMPIC COACH BANNED FOR 10 YEARS

Context:

- ▶▶ The coach of Kenya's Olympic track team in 2016, Michael Rotich, has been banned for 10 years for corruption.
- ▶▶ He asked for \$12,000 to give athletes advance notice to help them beat doping tests.
- ▶▶ Rotich was banned by the IAAF ethics board following a three-year investigation.
- ▶▶ Rotich promised to help British runners dope with EPO.

368. 32-TEAM FORMAT IN 2022 WORLD CUP

Context:

- ▶ FIFA shrugged off any possibility of expansion from 32 to 48 teams at the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.
- ▶ On January 10, 2017, FIFA Council unanimously decided in favour of expanding the FIFA World Cup to a 48-team competition as of the 2026 edition.

369. CHAMLING LOST AFTER 25 YEARS

Context:

- ▶ Longest serving CM of any state Pawan Kumar Chamling-led Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) lost after 25 years to Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) in the state Assembly elections.
- ▶ In the 32-member assembly, SKM gained majority by winning 17 seats, while SDF won 15.
- ▶ Notably, in 2009 Assembly elections, SDF had won all 32 seats in the state.

370. REMYA: KERALA'S ONLY DALIT WOMAN MP

Context:

- ▶ Remya Haridas has created history by becoming the only woman to have elected to parliament from Kerala. She is also the second ever Dalit woman MP to have elected from Kerala.
- ▶ She was one of the toppers of Gandhi's 'Talent Hunt' in search for upcoming leaders held in 2010. She has won against nearly insurmountable odds from Alathur, Kerala.

371. IAF'S AN-32 FLEET ALLOWED TO USE BIO-JET FUEL

Context:

- ▶ Indian Air Force formidable workhorse, the Russian made AN-32 aircraft was today formally fleet certified to fly on blended aviation fuel containing up to ten per cent of indigenous bio-jet fuel.
- ▶ The approval certificate was received at the aero-engine test facilities at Chandigarh by Air Commodore Sanjiv Ghuratia.
- ▶ The IAF has undertaken a series of evaluation tests and trials with this green aviation fuel for the last one year.
- ▶ The scope of these checks was in consonance with the international aviation standards. Today's approval is an acknowledgement of the meticulous testing using the indigenous bio-jet fuel by the IAF.

372. DRDO TEST FIRES GUIDED BOMB FROM SUKHOI COMBAT JET

Context:

- ▶ Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully test-fired an indigenously-developed 500 kg class guided bomb from a Sukhoi combat jet at Pokhran in Rajasthan.
- ▶ The guided bomb achieved the desired range and hit the target with high precision.
- ▶ All the mission objectives have been met during the test firing of the bomb, adding it is capable of carrying different warheads. The test firing of the guided bomb came two days after the Indian Air Force successfully test fired the aerial version of the supersonic BrahMos cruise missile from a Sukhoi jet at the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- ▶ The 2.5-tonne air-to-surface missile has a range of around 300 km, and it will significantly enhance the IAF's combat capability.

373. MICROSOFT STOPPED ONLINE SALE OF HUAWEI LAPTOPS AFTER US BAN ON CHINESE TECH COMPANIES

Context:

- ▶ Microsoft has removed the Huawei laptops it sold on its online store. The move of Microsoft is to comply with the US President's executive order to crack down on Chinese tech companies.
- ▶ Microsoft has declined to comment on the issue and also on reports of a potential Windows ban on Huawei. However, some offline Microsoft stores are reportedly still selling stocked Huawei laptops. Microsoft's potential Windows ban could also affect Huawei's server solutions. Microsoft and Huawei both operate a hybrid cloud solution for Microsoft's Azure stack, using Microsoft-certified Huawei servers.
- ▶ Google cut off Huawei's Android license but Microsoft stayed silent on whether it will prevent the Chinese company from obtaining Windows licenses. For now, Huawei has been granted a 90-day extension to provide software updates to Android-powered handsets and maintain continued operation of existing networks and equipment. However, this narrow extension does not seem to apply to Windows licenses for laptops.

374. THERESA MAY TO RESIGN AS PRIME MINISTER

Context:

- ▶ British Prime Minister has announced that she would resign as the UK's Conservative leader on June 7 "in the best interests of the country", paving the way for a contest to decide the new Prime Minister after she failed to win over her ministers with a revised strategy to withdraw Britain from the European Union.

- ▶ UK Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt during a meeting with May at Downing Street on Thursday said to have expressed his dissatisfaction with her renewed attempt at getting her controversial Brexit Withdrawal Agreement Bill through the House of Commons.

375. JAPAN WELCOMES TRUMP WITH A CHARM CAMPAIGN, GOLF AND SUMO

Context:

- ▶ Under the threat of potentially devastating U.S. tariffs on autos, Japan is ready to roll out the newest phase of its charm offensive targeting President Donald Trump as it welcomes him on a state visit tailor-made to his whims and ego.
- ▶ Offering high honors, golf and the chance to present a “Trump Cup” at a sumo wrestling championship, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, arguably Mr. Trump’s closest friend on the world stage, will continue a years-long campaign that so far appears to have spared Japan from far more debilitating U.S. actions.
- ▶ Behind the smiles and personal friendship, however, lurks deep uneasiness over Mr. Trump’s threat to impose tariffs on Japanese autos and auto parts on national security grounds, a move that would be far more devastating to the Japanese economy than earlier tariffs on steel and aluminium.
- ▶ With Trump’s relations with the leaders of the U.K., Germany, Canada and other allies strained, Mr. Abe has worked more than any other leader to try to keep Mr. Trump engaged with international institutions, adding that it is critical for Japan’s survival.

376. WHO HAS DECLARED ALGERIA AND ARGENTINA AS MALARIA-FREE COUNTRIES

Context:

- ▶ World Health Organization officially declared Algeria and Argentina as malaria-free countries after recording no new cases for more than three years.
- ▶ Now, the numbers of malaria free countries increased to 38 from 36.

Background:

- ▶ Argentina reported the last indigenous case in 2010 while in Algeria it was reported in 2013.
- ▶ Algeria is the second African nation to have eliminated the disease after Mauritius which achieved the goal in 1973.
- ▶ Malaria parasite was discovered by French physician Dr. Charles Louis Alphonse Laveran in 1880.

377. WORLD TURTLE DAY IS OBSERVED ON 23RD MAY.

Context:

- ▶ It is sponsored yearly since 2000 by American Tortoise Rescue.
- ▶ May 24 is observed as National Brother's Day in the United States to honor the brothers in one's life.

378. UN CELEBRATED MAY 23 AS AN INTERNATIONAL DAY TO END OBSTETRIC FISTULA

- ▶ United Nations celebrated May 23 as an International Day to End Obstetric Fistula (IDEOF). In 2003, the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF), formerly known as
- ▶ the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) and its partners had launched a global campaign to End Obstetric Fistula.

Background:

- ▶ The theme for 2019 is "Fistula is a human rights violation, end it now". In 2012, United Nations announced to celebrate May 23 as International Day to End Obstetric Fistula every year starting from 2013.
- ▶ An obstetric fistula is a hole between the vagina and rectum or bladder that is caused by prolonged obstructed labor, leaving a woman incontinent of urine or feces or both.
- ▶ Obstructed labor means, labor that goes unattended, the labor can last up to six or seven days.

379. UN DOWNGRADED THE GLOBAL ECONOMY GROWTH FORECAST TO 2.7% IN 2019

- ▶ United Nations (UN) in its mid-year report on economic prospects named "World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) 2019 Mid-year Update" diminished the global economic growth forecasts for 2019 to 2.7% and for 2020 to 2.9%.
- ▶ In the January predictions, the economic growth was projected at 3% for both years.

Background:

- ▶ The reason behind the lowering of the forecast is high trade tensions, uncertainty over political policies and a complicated confluence of internal and external factors affecting most of the developed and developing economies. Among developed economies, United States' will grow at 2.3%, while the European Union's overall economy will expand at 1.5%, Japan at 0.8% and Russia at 1.4%. For India, LIN has cut the growth rate by 0.6% to be at 7% for 2019 from the earlier prediction of 7.6% in the January edition. But despite of downward revision, India remains the fastest growing major economy in the world, ahead of China's growth rate of 6.3%.

380. ADB SIGNED AGREEMENT WITH IRFC

Context:

- ▶ Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed an agreement with Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC). It will provide \$750 million long-term financing for the Railways Track Electrification Project as part of a broad modernization program. It is the largest single non-sovereign loan ever.

381. PCB STUDY TO FIND OUT REASON BEHIND FISH KILLS IN PERIYAR

Context:

- ▶ The Kerala State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) has decided to carry out a comprehensive scientific study involving multiple agencies to ascertain the exact cause behind the frequent fish kills in the Periyar. The study will start by the start of the next summer season. It will mainly focus on the Eloor-Edayar industrial stretch along the Periyar, which had witnessed several fish kills in the past.

382. VOLCANO ON INDONESIA'S BALI ERUPTS, FLIGHTS CANCELLED

Context:

- ▶ An eruption of the Mount Agung volcano that spread ash over the south of the Indonesian island. The national disaster agency announced the eruption on Friday night lasted about four minutes and 30 seconds and spread lava and incandescent rocks about 3 kilometers from the crater. Nine villages experienced thick ash fall.

383. 18 HIDDEN PLANETS UNCOVERED BY NASA

Context:

- ▶ German scientists have discovered 18 Earth-sized planets beyond solar system.
- ▶ Scientists re-analysed part of NASA's Kepler Telescope data using new method developed by them. They estimate the method may lead to over 100 more exoplanet discoveries from entire Kepler dataset.

384. SCIENTISTS BROKE SUPERCONDUCTIVITY RECORD

Context:

- ▶ International researchers have broken the record for superconductivity at the highest temperature recorded to date at around -23°C.
- ▶ They created a new material, called lanthanum superhydrides, to achieve the same.

- ▶▶ The material was, however, placed under extremely high pressure ranging between 150-170 gigapascals to reach the new record.

385. RESEARCHERS SUSPECTS GAS INSULATION COULD BE PROTECTING AN OCEAN INSIDE PLUTO

- ▶▶ Researchers said that computer simulations provide compelling evidence that an insulating layer of gas hydrates could keep a subsurface ocean from freezing beneath Pluto's icy exterior.
- ▶▶ The researchers conducted computer simulations covering a timescale of 4.6 billion years when the solar system began to form.
- ▶▶ The simulations showed the thermal and structural evolution of Pluto's interior and the time required for a subsurface ocean to freeze and for the icy shell covering it to become uniformly thick.
- ▶▶ They simulated two scenarios: one where an insulating layer of gas hydrates existed between the ocean and the icy shell, and one where it did not.

Background:

- ▶▶ In July 2015, NASA's New Horizons spacecraft flew through Pluto's system, providing the first-ever close-up images of this distant dwarf planet and its moons.
- ▶▶ The images showed Pluto's unexpected topography, including a white-colored ellipsoidal basin named Sputnik Planitia, located near the equator and roughly the size of Texas.
- ▶▶ Because of its location and topography, scientists believe a subsurface ocean exists beneath the ice shell which is thinned at Sputnik Planitia.
- ▶▶ However, these observations are contradictory to the age of the dwarf planet because the ocean should have frozen a long time ago and the inner surface of the ice shell facing the ocean should have also been flattened.
- ▶▶ The simulation's results support the possibility of a long-lived liquid ocean existing beneath the icy crust of Sputnik Planitia.

386. SETHU CROWNED INDIAN WOMEN'S LEAGUE CHAMPION

Context:

- ▶▶ Sethu FC clinched their first ever Indian Women's League trophy defeating Manipur Police.
- ▶▶ The match was held at the Guru Nanak Stadium, in Ludhiana, Punjab.
- ▶▶ The third edition of the Indian Women's League (IWL) was held in Ludhiana, Punjab.
- ▶▶ The Indian Women's League is the top division women's professional football league in India.
- ▶▶ The league is ran by the All India Football Federation.

387. INDIA BAGS 57 MEDALS AT INDIA OPEN INTERNATIONAL TOURNAMENT

Context:

- ▶ India bags a total of 57 medals including 12 Gold, 18 Silver and 27 Bronze at India Open International Boxing tournament in Guwahati.
- ▶ MC Mary Kom, Shiva Thapa, L Sarita Devi and Naman Tanwar won gold in their respective finals.
- ▶ The London Olympic bronze medallist blew away the challenge of Vanlal Duati in a facile 5-0 win.
- ▶ This was Mary's second gold in the tournament, having won in 48 kg last year in the capital.
- ▶ On the other hand, Deepak defeated Govind Kumar in 49 kg final while in 52 kg category - Amit Panghal defeated Sachin.
- ▶ In women's 54 kg, local favourite Jamuna Boro defeated Sandhyarani and also qualified for the World Championship. In men's 69 kg Aashish clinched the Gold, while in women's 57 kg category Neeraj won the final.

388. FULL CIRCLE: ON THE CHANGE IN KILOGRAM'S DEFINITION

Context:

- ▶ As of May 20, the kilogram joined a bunch of other units – second, metre, ampere, kelvin, mole and candela that will no longer be compared with physical objects as standards of reference.

Why it is in News?

- ▶ The change comes after nearly 130 years: in 1889 a platinum-iridium cylinder was used to define how much mass one kilogram represented.
- ▶ Now, a more abstract definition of the kilogram has been adopted in terms of fundamental constants, namely, the Planck's constant h , and the metre and second which already have been defined in terms of universal constants such as the speed of light.

Background:

- ▶ Earlier, if a mass had to be verified to match with a standard kilogram, it would be placed on one of the pans of a common balance, while the prototype would have to be placed in the other pan – and mass would be measured against mass.

Presently how it Used?

- ▶ Now, by using a Kibble balance, which balances mass against electromagnetic force, to measure the mass of an unknown piece, the very methodology of verification has been altered.
- ▶ The constants involved are known precisely and are universal numbers.

- ▶ Hence, whether the mass is measured on earth or, say, on the moon, it can be determined with precision.

Points to be known:

- ▶ This is the culmination of a series of historical changes, which are also described by Richard S. Davis et al in their 2016 article in the journal Metrologia.
- ▶ Originally the definition of mass was in terms of what was then thought of as a universal physical constant.
- ▶ In 1791, 1 kg was defined as the mass of one litre of distilled water at its melting point. Thus, the density of water was the physical constant on which this definition hinged.
- ▶ In 1799, the kilogram came to be defined using a cylinder of platinum – the first time an artefact was used for this purpose. But it was also defined as equivalent to the mass of one litre of distilled water at atmospheric pressure and at about 4 degrees Celsius, the temperature at which water has the maximum density.
- ▶ This was done away with in 1889 when the community adopted the International Prototype of the Kilogram – a cylinder made of an alloy that's 90% platinum and 10% iridium.

Conclusion:

- ▶ The reference to the 'physical constant', i.e. mass of one litre of water, was abandoned.
- ▶ Now, as a culmination of this historical process, we come back full circle and find that the kilogram is defined again in terms of a fundamental physical constant – the Planck's constant. Planck's constant is a robust number to match.
- ▶ Not until the art of travelling at relativistic speeds, close to the speed of light, is mastered, will we have to redefine these abstract definitions. Until then, it looks like metrologists are on a stable berth.

389. 17th LOK SABHA TO WITNESS 78 WOMAN MPS

- ▶ Seventy-eight seats have been won by women candidates in the 17th Lok Sabha elections, the highest since the first Lok Sabha in 1952.
- ▶ Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal are sending the highest number of women to the house, 11 each. A total of 724 women candidates contested, with Congress fielding the maximum 54 women, followed by BJP at 53.

390. NAVEEN TO TAKE OATH FOR 5th TERM AS ODISHA CM

- ▶ Naveen Patnaik is all set to take oath as chief minister of the State for a record fifth term in a row.
- ▶ The Biju Janata Dal headed by him has won a decisive victory in the assembly polls bagging 112 of the 146 assembly seats.

- ▶ The 15th State Assembly which was formed on June 12, 2014, will complete its term on 11th June 2019.

391. CHANDRANI MURMU BECAME YOUNGEST LOK SABHA MP

- ▶ BJD's Chandrani Murmu became the youngest ever Lok Sabha MP.
- ▶ The 25-year-old BTech graduate won the reserved Keonjhar, Odisha's seat by defeating a two-time MP.
- ▶ The Keonjhar Lok Sabha seat is reserved for Scheduled Tribes.

392. INT SEMINAR ON NOISE ORGANISE

- ▶ International Centre for Automotive Technology (ICAT) organized an international seminar-cum-workshop on Automotive Noise, Vibration and Harshness (iNVH).
- ▶ It was held on 23-24 May 2019 at ICAT, Manesar.
- ▶ This event was the fifth in a series of biennial training programmes on Automotive NVH, organized by ICAT.

393. INDIA PARTICIPATED IN SCO MASS FORUM

- ▶ The Second Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Mass Media Forum is being held at Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan from 23-26 May, 2019.
- ▶ A Delegation from I&B Ministry comprising of Shri TVK Reddy and Shri Ankur Lahoty is representing India at the Forum.
- ▶ The Forum was inaugurated by the President of Kyrgyz Republic Mr. S. Jeenbeko.

394. GUIDED BOMB SUCCESSFULLY TEST-FIRED

- ▶ DRDO successfully flight tested a 500 kg class Inertial Guided Bomb from Su-30 MKI Aircraft from the Pokhran test range, Rajasthan.
- ▶ The guided bomb achieved the desired range and hit the target with high precision.
- ▶ All the mission objectives have been met. The weapon system is capable of carrying different warheads.

395. DELHI HC RULED THAT UNITED NATIONS IS NOT A STATE

- ▶ The Delhi High Court has ruled that the United Nations is not a State under Article 12 of the Constitution of India and is not amenable to its jurisdiction under Article 226 of the Constitution.

Background:

- ▶ Justice Suresh Kumar Kait gave the decision while adjudicating a plea filed by a former UNO employee who was found guilty of misconduct.

- ▶ Sanjaya Bahel, convicted by a US Federal Court and sentenced to 97 months of imprisonment and two years of mandatory probation, was released and deported to India in May 2014. In his petition, he claimed that due process was not followed in his case.
- ▶ He had in November 2018, written a letter to the Ministry of External Affairs seeking a grant of permission to initiate legal action against the United Nations Organization (UNO) under section 86 of Civil Procedure Code, 1908. The provision provides that a foreign State may be sued in any Court with the consent of the Central government.

396. PRESIDENT TRUMP, PM MODI TO MEET AT G-20 SUMMIT

- ▶ US President Donald Trump and PM Narendra Modi agreed to meet at the G-20 Summit in Japan in June 2019.
- ▶ Both the leaders pledged to further strengthen the US-India strategic partnership and build on the achievements of the last two years.
- ▶ The G-20 Summit meeting is slated for June 28 and 29, 2019.

397. CYRIL RAMAPHOSA SWORN IN AS SOUTH AFRICA'S PRESIDENT

- ▶ Cyril Ramaphosa was sworn in for a five-year term as South Africa's President yesterday. Head of the African National Congress Ramaphosa was officially elected as President by Parliament during its first sitting following the sixth general elections.
- ▶ Former president Jacob Zuma, resigned in February last year amid allegations of corruption. Ramaphosa is expected to announce his new Cabinet today.
- ▶ The South Africa Constitution requires voters to choose a party, which then selects members to go to the National Assembly, where they choose the President.

398. US PRESIDENT TRUMP REACHES JAPAN ON FOUR-DAY VISIT

- ▶ US President Donald Trump reached Japan for a four-day visit.
- ▶ Japanese and US officials hail the relationship between Trump and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe as unprecedented.
- ▶ The visual highlight is likely to be Trump's visit tomorrow to the final day of the sumo tournament where he is expected to present the cup to the winner.
- ▶ President Trump will meet Japan's new Emperor Naruhito, who ascended the Chrysanthemum Throne at the beginning of the month following his father's historic abdication for health reasons. The formal diplomatic part of the trip is limited to a short bilateral meeting the two leaders will brief.

- ▶ They are also poised to meet families of people abducted by North Korea during the Cold War era to train Pyongyang's spies.
- ▶ President Trump will also address troops at a US base in Japan, highlighting the military alliance between the two allies at a time when tensions are running higher with North Korea after the failure of the Hanoi summit in February.
- ▶ US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer is expected to hold talks with his Japanese counterpart on the side-lines of the visit.

399. RBI ALLOWS MODERN CURRENCY CHESTS TO HIKE SERVICE CHARGES

- ▶ Reserve Bank of India announced that it will allow large modern currency chests to increase the service charges on cash deposited by non-chest bank branches from the existing rate of Rs5 per packet of 100 pieces to a higher rate subject to a maximum of Rs8 per packet.
- ▶ For this, only a currency chest (CC) that fulfils the minimum standards will be eligible to be classified as a large modern CC.
- ▶ The increased rates can be charged only after such classification by the issue office concerned.

400. ONE BILLION-YEAR-OLD FUNGI IS FOUND TO BE EARTH'S OLDEST FUNGUS

- ▶ Microfossils of a globular spore connected to a T-shaped filament excavated in an Arctic region of northwestern Canada represent the oldest-known fungus.
- ▶ This discovery sheds light on the origins of an important branch in earth's tree of life.
- ▶ Scientists said that the multicellular fungus that they named Oursaphaira Giralda, a forerunner to an immensely diverse group that today includes the likes of mushrooms, yeasts, and molds, lived in an estuary environment about 900 million to 1 billion years ago.
- ▶ Until now, the oldest-known fungus fossil was one about 410 million years old from Scotland.
- ▶ The microscopic fossils, contained in shale rock from the Northwest Territories of Canada, date back to the Proterozoic era, before the advent of complex life forms. The study was published in Nature.

401. BRAHMOS MISSILE SUCCESSFULLY TEST FIRED

- ▶ A BrahMos Supersonic Cruise Missile was successfully test-fired by a Unit of Eastern Command, Indian Army from Car Nicobar Islands as part of joint training by 3 defence forces.
- ▶ The Combat missile was test fired on a specially designed target chosen at a range of 270 km.
- ▶ It validated deep penetration capability by the supersonic cruise missile and accurate engagement of targets in depth.

402. AN-32 CERTIFIED TO OPERATE ON BIO-JET FUEL

- ▶ IAF's AN-32 aircraft was formally fleet certified to fly on blended aviation fuel containing up to 10% of indigenous bio-jet fuel.
- ▶ The approval certificate was received at the aero-engine test facilities at Chandigarh by Air Commodore Sanjiv Ghuratia.
- ▶ This will promote the 'Make in India' mission as this bio-fuel would be produced from Tree Borne Oils sourced from tribal areas and farmers.

403. SPACEX SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCHES, DEPLOYS 60 INTERNET SATELLITES

- ▶ SpaceX sent a packed rocket of 60 satellites into space.
- ▶ The launch was "the heaviest payload a Falcon 9 rocket has ever launched.
- ▶ The satellites represent the company's ambitious plan to build an interconnected satellite network to beam high-speed internet to anywhere on the planet.
- ▶ The Falcon 9 rocket launched from the company's pad in Cape Canaveral, Florida.
- ▶ SpaceX deployed the 60 Starlink satellites in a "very low Earth orbit" of 440 kilometers above the surface.
- ▶ The full Starlink network would consist of 11,943 satellites flying close to the planet, closer than the International Space Station.

404. MARY KOM, SARITA WON GOLD AT INDIA OPEN

- ▶ Six-time world champion MC Mary Kom and Sarita Devi won gold medals at the second India Open boxing tournament.
- ▶ The tournament concluded on 24 May 2019.
- ▶ India won medals in 52 kg, 81 kg, 91 kg and +91 kg men's categories.
- ▶ While, 51 kg, 57 kg and 75 kg in women's to conclude the campaign with 12 of the 18 gold medals available.

405. 5th SMART CITIES INDIA 2019 EXPO INAUGURATED

- ▶ The 5th Smart Cities India 2019 expo, including Transport India, Solar India, Buildings India and Water India expos, was inaugurated by Durga Shanker Mishra on 23 May 2019.
- ▶ It is organised by India Trade Promotion Organization (ITPO) and Exhibitions India Group.
- ▶ The event displays a vast array of products and solutions relevant to building smart cities in India.

406. PRIYANKA MOHITE SCALED MOUNT MAKALU

- ▶ Priyanka Mohite, a mountaineer from Satara, Maharashtra became the first Indian woman to successfully scale Mount Makalu.
- ▶ Mount Makalu is the fifth-highest mountain in the world at 8,481 metres.
- ▶ In 2013, Mohite had become the youngest girl from her state to have conquered the 8,848m Mount Everest — the highest peak in the world— becoming only the third-youngest Indian to do so.

407. INDIA BANS JAMAAT-UL-MUJAHIDEEN BANGLADESH TERROR OUTFIT

- ▶ 27 May 2019 Current Affairs: Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh also called as Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen India or Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Hindustan declared as a banned terrorist organization by the government, the Home Ministry
- ▶ In a notification, the home ministry said the outfit has committed acts of terrorism, promoted acts of terrorism and has been engaged in radicalization and recruitment of youths for terrorist activities in India.
- ▶ The Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh or Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen India or Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Hindustan and all its manifestations have been inserted in the First Schedule to the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.

408. LIEUTENANT GENERAL SHAILESH TINAIKAR OF INDIA APPOINTED TO HEAD UN PEACEKEEPING OPERATION IN SOUTH SUDAN

- ▶ The commandant of the Indian Army Infantry School, Lieutenant General Shailesh Tinaikar, aged 57 appointed as the new force commander of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) by the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.
- ▶ He will succeed Lieutenant General Frank Kamanzi of Rwanda.
- ▶ He will command over 16,000 peacekeepers which include nearly 2,400 from India.

- ▶ He has an experience with the Indian Armed Forces for more than 34 years. ii. In 1983, he graduated from the Indian Military Academy.
- ▶ He obtained a Master of Philosophy degree in Defence and Strategic Studies from the University of Madras. He served the UN Angola Verification Mission III from 1996 to 1997 and UN Mission in Sudan from 2008 to 2009.

409. JAMAAT-UL-MUJAHIDEEN BANGLADESH BANNED

- ▶ Bangladesh-based terror outfit — the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) — was banned by the government of India under the anti-terror law UAPA.
- ▶ JMB was involved in the 2016 terror attack at a cafe in Bangladesh's capital city Dhaka.
- ▶ The outfit has committed and promoted acts of terrorism and has been engaged in radicalisation and recruitment of youths for terrorist activities in India.

410. CHINA, PAKISTAN SIGN SEVERAL MOUS IN DIVERSE SECTORS

- ▶ Chinese Vice President Wang Qishan met Pakistan President Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Imran Khan in Islamabad and signed several Memorandums of Understanding, MoUs.
- ▶ These MoUs include cooperation in economic and technical affairs, Disaster Management and assistance in agriculture sector of Lasbella University. The Chinese leader reached Islamabad today on a three-day official visit. After visiting Pakistan, he will also visit Germany and the Netherlands.

411. RACE FOR NEXT BRITISH PM CENTRES ON BATTLE OVER ‘NO-DEAL BREXIT’

- ▶ The prospect of a “no deal” Brexit was fast becoming the central battle of the race to succeed Prime Minister Theresa May, as Environment Minister Michael Gove became the latest candidate to declare. Ms. May said was quitting over her failure to deliver Brexit, potentially opening the way for a new leader who could seek a more divisive split with the European Union (EU) and lead to confrontation with the bloc or a possible parliamentary election.

412. SWEDEN TO HOST WORLD LEADERS CONFERENCE TO COMBAT ANTI-SEMITISM IN OCTOBER 2020

- ▶ Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Lofven announced that Sweden will host an International Conference against Anti-Semitism in memory of the Holocaust in October 2020.
- ▶ It will be held in Malmo, Southern Sweden, on October 27 and 28, 20 years after the Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust and 75 years after the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp.

- ▶▶ The decision to fight against anti-Semitism is taken after the relations with Israel have been in trouble since the Nordic state's recognition of a Palestinian state by Lofven's Government in 2014. After the attacks in Paris and Copenhagen in 2015, the Simon Wiesenthal Centre had called for a European conference against anti-Semitism.

413. RBI APPROVED MODERN CURRENCY CHESTS TO HIKE THE RATE OF SERVICE CHARGES

- ▶▶ The Reserve Bank of India has announced that it is to allow large modern currency chests to increase the service charges on cash deposited by non-chest bank branches from the existing rate of Rs.5 per packet of 100 pieces to a higher rate subject to a maximum of Rs.8 per packet.
- ▶▶ For this, only a currency chest (CC) that fulfills the minimum standards will be eligible to be classified as a large modern currency chest. The increased rates can be charged only after such classification by the issue office concerned.

What is a Currency Chest?

- ▶▶ Distribution of notes and coins throughout the country is done through designated bank branches, called chests. The chest is a receptacle in a commercial bank to store notes and coins on behalf of the Reserve Bank. Deposit into chest leads to the credit of the commercial bank's account and withdrawal, debit.

Functions of Currency Chests:

- ▶▶ To meet currency requirement of public
- ▶▶ To withdraw unfit notes
- ▶▶ To provide an exchange facility from one denomination to another
- ▶▶ To make payment requirement of the government
- ▶▶ To exchange the mutilated notes
- ▶▶ To avoid frequent movement of cash
- ▶▶ Apart from having its own chests at certain places, RBI also has arrangements with other banks which are entrusted with the custody of the currency notes and coins for the same purpose.

414. RBI PROPOSES GUIDELINES FOR LARGE NON-BANKING FINANCIAL COMPANIES

- ▶▶ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released draft guidelines on liquidity risk management framework for non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and core investment companies (CICs) with an aim to help them deal with severe liquidity problems and prevent re-occurrence of IL&FS type of debt crisis.

- ▶▶ The guidelines were released after an analysis of the recent developments in the NBFC sector.

Background:

- ▶▶ Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) regime:
- ▶▶ The proposal said that a Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) regime would be introduced in all deposit-taking Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) and non-deposit taking shadow banks with an asset size of Rs.5,000 crore and above in a phased manner.
- ▶▶ The LCR regime RBI will be implemented in a calibrated manner through a glide path over a period of four years commencing April 2020 and up to April 2024.

High-Quality Liquid Assets (HQLA):

- ▶▶ An NBFC shall maintain an adequate level of unencumbered High-Quality Liquid Assets (HQLA), so that under a significantly severe liquidity stress scenario that can be converted into cash to meet its liquidity needs for a 30 calendar-day time horizon.
- ▶▶ HQLA means liquid assets that can be readily sold or immediately converted into cash at little or no loss of value or used as collateral to obtain funds in a range of stress scenarios.

Asset Liability Management (ALM):

- ▶▶ The draft guidelines also cover the application of generic asset liability management (ALM) principles, granular maturity buckets in the liquidity statements and tolerance limits, liquidity risk monitoring tool and adoption of the 'stock' approach to liquidity.

Asset-Liability Management Committee (ALCO):

- ▶▶ RBI also proposed that Asset-Liability Management Committee (ALCO) consisting of the NBFC's top management should be responsible for ensuring adherence to the risk tolerance/limits set by the Board as well as implementing the liquidity risk management strategy of the NBFC.

Why the guidelines:

- ▶▶ Since 2018, the IL&FS crisis erupted banks have been averse in lending to this sector, which has further put NBFC's in a tight spot. There are rising concerns that NBFCs may run out of money, which will further lead to defaults.
- ▶▶ Many large NBFCs, such as DHFL and Indiabulls Finance came under severe liquidity pressure which compelled them to bring down their reliance on commercial papers (CPs). The CPS is a debt instrument which is issued by companies to raise funds for a time period of up to 1 year.
- ▶▶ As per estimates about Rs.1 lakh crore of commercial papers (CPs) raised by NBFCs from investors will be coming up for redemption in the next 3 months. But since NBFCs are cash-strapped, there is a looming fear that they will default on CPs.

415. INDIA PROJECTED TO GROW AT 7.1%

- ▶ The World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) 2019 Mid-year Update was released by the United Nations on 21 May 2019.
- ▶ India's economy is projected to grow at 7.1% in the fiscal year 2020.
- ▶ As per the report, the Indian economy, which generates two-thirds of the regional output in South Asia, expanded by 7.2% in 2018.

416. HIGH-LEVEL PANEL PITCHES FOR 'ELEPHANT BONDS'

- ▶ A government-appointed advisory group has suggested issuance of 'Elephant Bonds' wherein people declaring undisclosed income will have to mandatorily invest half of that amount in these securities.
- ▶ These recommendations are part of a report prepared by the 12-member group, set up by the commerce ministry in September 2018.

417. MODERN CURRENCY CHESTS TO HIKE SERVICE CHARGES

- ▶ The Reserve Bank of India allowed large modern currency chests to increase the service charges on cash deposited by non-chest bank branches from the existing rate of ₹5 per packet of 100 pieces to a higher rate subject to a maximum of 8 per packet.
- ▶ For this, only a currency chest (CC) that fulfils the minimum standards will be eligible to be classified as a large modern CC.

418. CORPORATION BANK LAUNCHES CORP SME SUVIDHA FOR MSMES

- ▶ Corporation Bank launched 'Corp SME Suvidha', a product for GST-registered MSMEs.
- ▶ The product has been designed as part of the bank's efforts to provide the best products to the MSME sector.
- ▶ PV Bharathi, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation bank, launched the product in Mangaluru recently.

419. PUNE SCIENTIST WINS GERMAN CHEMISTRY PRIZE

- ▶ Ankur Patwardhan from Pune has bagged the second prize of €25,000 for a project at the 'Elsevier Foundation-ISC3 Green and Sustainable Chemistry Challenge'.
- ▶ His project named 'Butterfly attractant for pollination and ecosystem health' is about the relationship between chemistry and ecosystem.
- ▶ He is also the president of a committee on Mahabaleshwar-Panchgani Eco-Sensitive Zone.

420. LIQUID HYDROGEN STORAGE TANK LAUNCHED

- ▶ ISRO Chairman K Sivan flagged off the shipment of India's largest liquid hydrogen storage tank at the VRV Asia Pacific's manufacturing plant at Sri City in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh.
- ▶ VRV Asia Pacific manufactured the storage tank with a Liquid Nitrogen shield, in a collaborative effort with Satish Dhawan Space Centre.
- ▶ Liquid hydrogen is used as fuel for satellite launch vehicles.

421. NEWSPACE INDIA OFFICIALLY INAUGURATED

- ▶ New Space India Limited (NSIL), the commercial arm of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), was officially inaugurated in Bengaluru on 23 May 2019.
- ▶ NSIL's main objective is to scale up industry participation in Indian space programmes.
- ▶ NSIL will act as an aggregator for all space-related activities in industry and develop private entrepreneurship in space-related technologies.

422. NASA UNVEILS SCHEDULE FOR 'ARTEMIS'

- ▶ NASA unveiled the schedule for the 'Artemis' program that will return astronauts to the Moon, including eight scheduled launches and a mini-station in lunar orbit by 2024.
- ▶ Artemis 1 will be an uncrewed mission around the Moon planned for 2020.
- ▶ Artemis 2 will orbit the moon with a crew around 2022; followed finally by Artemis 3 that will put astronauts on lunar soil in 2024.

423. DRDO SUCCESSFULLY FLIGHT TESTED INERTIAL GUIDED BOMB FROM AN SU-30 MKI AIRCRAFT

- ▶ Defence Research and Defence Organisation (DRDO) successfully flight tested a 500 kg class Inertial Guided Bomb from a Su-30 MKI aircraft at the Pokhran test range in Rajasthan.
- ▶ The indigenously-developed guided bomb achieved the desired range and hit the target at a distance of 30 km away with high precision.
- ▶ All the mission objectives have been met. The weapon system is capable of carrying different warheads. India has carried out several such trials in 2019. DRDO is engaged in developing defence technologies covering various disciplines.
- ▶ The test firing of the guided bomb comes two days after the Indian Air Force (IAF) successfully test fired the aerial version of the supersonic BrahMos cruise missile from a Sukhoi jet at the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- ▶ The 2.5-tonne air-to-surface missile has a range of around 300 km, and it will significantly enhance the IAF's combat capability.

424. NSIL, THE COMMERCIAL ARM OF ISRO, WAS INAUGURATED IN BENGALURU

- ▶ NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), the commercial arm of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), was inaugurated in Bengaluru. NSIL's main objective is to scale up industry participation in Indian space programs. NSIL was inaugurated by ISRO's honorary adviser, Dr.K Kasturirangan in the presence of chairman Dr. K Sivan.

Background:

- ▶ NSIL was incorporated on March 6, 2019, for commercially utilizing research and development activities carried out by ISRO in the area of space with an authorized share capital of Rs.100 crore and initially paid-up capital of Rs.10 crore.
- ▶ NSIL will act as an aggregator for all space-related activities in industry and develop private entrepreneurship in space-related technologies.
- ▶ It will be responsible for manufacturing the and production of Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) and Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) through technology transfer mechanisms.
- ▶ It will also cater to emerging global commercial SSLV market demand, providing satellite building and satellite-based services, including the supply of sub-systems for various domestic and international application needs and will enable space technology spin-offs through Indian industry interface.
- ▶ NSIL would soon be organizing an interactive workshop with industry in Bengaluru, wherein it would seek industry's feedback as well as their expression of interest to take a newer and larger share of work with ISRO.

425. NEW MEDICINAL PLANTS FOUND IN MANIPUR

- ▶ Scientists attempting to document indigenous medicinal knowledge of Zeliangrong ethnic group in Manipur have found new medicinal plants.
- ▶ Scientists identified plants like Gynura cusimbua, Hedyotis scandens, Mussaenda glabra and Schima wallichii whose medicinal usage are reported for the first time.
- ▶ Zeliangrong ethnic group is one of the 32 tribes in Manipur.

426. DAYS AND EVENTS

- ▶ International Commonwealth Day was observed in Commonwealth countries on 24 May.
- ▶ International Missing Children's Day is observed every year on 25 May.

AWARDS

427. INDIA BAGS 57 MEDALS AT INDIA OPEN INTERNATIONAL TOURNAMENT

- ▶ India bags a total of 57 medals including 12 Gold, 18 Silver and 27 Bronze at India Open International Boxing tournament in Guwahati.
- ▶ MC Mary Kom, Shiva Thapa, L Sarita Devi, and Naman Tanwar won gold in their respective finals. This was Mary's second gold in the tournament, having won in 48 kg last year in the capital. On the other hand, Deepak defeated Govind Kumar in 49 kg final while in 52 kg category- Amit Panghal defeated Sachin.

428. JITENDER KUMAR POSTHUMOUSLY WITH UN MEDAL

- ▶ Police Officer Jitender Kumar posthumously was honoured with the Dag Hammarskjold Medal by the United Nations on 24 May 2019.
- ▶ He made the supreme sacrifice while serving in the UN Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).
- ▶ India is the fourth largest contributor of uniformed personnel to the UN peacekeeping.

429. NALINI MALANI WINS JOAN MIRÓ PRIZE FOR 2019

- ▶ Indian artist Nalini Malani has won the biennial Joan Miró Prize for 2019.
- ▶ The award is named after Spanish painter and sculptor Joan Miró, one of the most influential artists the 20th century.
- ▶ The award is given by Fundació Joan Miró, the Spanish art museum along with the bank La Caixa. La Caixa will provide Malani a €70,000 (Rs 54.5 lakh) award.

430. APURVI CHANDELA BAGS GOLD MEDAL IN 10M AIR RIFLE IN ISSF WORLD CUP

- ▶ India won third International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) World Cup Rifle and Pistol tournament in Munich, Germany.
- ▶ Apurvi Chandela won gold in the women's 10m Air Rifle competition after a closely-fought contest. She shot a score of 251 in the final to outshine Wang Luyao of China, who shot 250.8.
- ▶ This was Apurvi's second ISSF World Cup gold of the year followed by a world record score in New Delhi.
- ▶ After the first round of qualifying in the women's 25m Pistol, Asian Games champion Rahi Sarnobat stood in the second position with a score of 294.

431. INDIA'S MAHESH MANGAONKAR WON SEKISUI OPEN

- ▶▶ India's Mahesh Mangaonkar for the second time in the Sekisui Open in Kriens, Switzerland.
- ▶▶ Three years back he had won it the first time.
- ▶▶ Sekisui Open is a Challenger tour event of the Professional Squash Association (PSA), the world body which governs the sports.
- ▶▶ Top-seeded Mahesh beat third seed Bernat Jaume of Spain in four games 11-9, 3-11, 11-5, 11-5 yesterday to win his 8th PSA title.

432. PROF. BHARGAVA AWARDED 2019 DR LEE JONG-WOOK MEMORIAL PRIZE

- ▶▶ Director General of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) Professor Balram Bhargava jointly won the 2019 Dr. Lee Jong-wook Memorial Prize for Public Health at the 72nd World Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland.
- ▶▶ He bagged the award for his achievements as a clinician, innovator, researcher, and trainer.

Background:

- ▶▶ He has been awarded the SN Bose Centenary award, Tata Innovation Fellowship and Vasvik Award for Biomedical Technology Innovation, Ranbaxy Award and the OP Bhasin Award in the field of Health and Medical Sciences.
- ▶▶ He has been awarded the Padma Shri high civilian award by the Honourable President of India and the UNESCO Equatorial Guinea International Prize for research in Life Sciences at Paris.

Dr. Lee Jong-wook Memorial Prize:

- ▶▶ The Dr. LEE Jong-wook Memorial Prize for Public Health was established in 2008. It is awarded to individuals, institutions, and governmental or nongovernmental organizations who have made an outstanding contribution to public health.
- ▶▶ The Prize aims at rewarding work that has extended far beyond the call of normal duties, and it is not intended as a reward for an excellent performance of duties normally expected of an official position of a governmental or intergovernmental institution.
- ▶▶ The prize is awarded once a year and consists of a plaque from the Founder and a sum of money which will not exceed US\$ 100 000. It will be presented at a special ceremony during the World Health Assembly.

433. BAYERN MUNICH CLINCHED 2019 GERMAN CUP

- ▶ Bayern Munich clinched German Cup 2019. Bayern Munich defeated RB Leipzig. Bayern Munich won the final 3–0 for their 19th DFB-Pokal title. With the win, Bayern completed their 12th domestic double.
- ▶ Therefore, the team will play away to 2018–19 Bundesliga runners-up Borussia Dortmund in the 2019 DFL-Supercup in August 2019. Because Bayern qualified for the Champions League through the Bundesliga, the sixth-place team in the Bundesliga, VfL Wolfsburg, earned qualification for the group stage of the 2019–20 edition of the UEFA Europa League, and the league's third second-round spot went to the team in seventh, Eintracht Frankfurt.

434. IT'S TIME TO TAKE STOCK OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

Context:

- ▶ The biggest election in the world has finally come to a successful end for which the three Election Commissioners and their 12 million staff deserve appreciation.
- ▶ Unfortunately, what deserved to be remembered as a subject of national pride became mired in several controversies. At the top of the list was the unprecedented attack on the Election Commission (EC) which was accused of being soft on the top leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for repeated violations of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC).

About Election:

- ▶ At the top of the list was the unprecedented attack on the Election Commission (EC) which was accused of being soft on the top leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for repeated violations of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC).
- ▶ Questions were also raised about the prolonged election of seven phases.
- ▶ The EC has always maintained that the most pressing concern is voter security.
- ▶ All political parties demand that Central armed police forces be deployed, but due to their limited availability they have to be rotated, which necessitates multi-phase elections.
- ▶ If the numbers of these forces were adequate, the EC could conduct elections in one day.
- ▶ After all, the MCC is difficult to operationalise in the age of social media in staggered elections.
- ▶ This is a trade-off the EC is fully aware of.
- ▶ Further, the cost-benefit analysis of multi-phase versus short phase elections in the face of new challenges can be done afresh.

The highlight of Elections:

- ▶ The highlight of 2019 was the highest ever voter turnout in a general election so far (67.11%), even though there was a lower turnout than usual in many constituencies, possibly because of oppressive weather, and varied turnouts across phases.

- ▶ This proves that the EC's voter education programme (Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation) is effective.

A cause for alarm: / The Role of Money Power:

- ▶ In this election, the role of money power was alarming.
- ▶ It is becoming more and more expensive to contest elections and the problem of black money is alive.
- ▶ Even before the first phase had started, it was evident that Indian democracy is overwhelmed by the overarching role of money, media and mafia.
- ▶ The EC seized crores worth of money, liquor and drugs.
- ▶ As a matter of fact, as on May 24, 2019, money, drugs/narcotics, liquor, precious metals and freebies worth an estimated ₹3,475.76 crore were seized.
- ▶ The figure in 2014 was ₹1,200 crore. According to EC data, Tamil Nadu (₹952 crore), Gujarat (553.76 crore), Delhi (₹430.39 crore), Punjab (286.41 crore) and Andhra Pradesh (₹232.02 crore) were the top five States/Union Territories that accounted for the total
- ▶ seizures. A cause for worry is that drugs/narcotics formed a large part of the seizures, with Gujarat topping the list (almost 524.35 crore).

Code violations:

- ▶ Some experts opine that what was most painful was witnessing the EC repeatedly coming under the scanner due to its delayed and often perfunctory actions on violations of the MCC.
- ▶ As a matter of fact, the Election Commission of India, has for many years been lauded for its conduct of free and fair elections in the world's largest democracy which have been held with precision and integrity. However, this time, the Election Commission of India it was criticised both nationally and internationally.
- ▶ For example, the check on the Prime Minister's helicopter in Odisha on April 16th, 2019 should have been used by the EC to demonstrate its commitment to equality of all before the law. But it chose a different course.
- ▶ It is also important to note that the Election Commission of India was also questioned for its stand on the sample size for Voter-Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) verification.
- ▶ Its line was that tallying VVPAT paper slips with the EVM count one per Assembly constituency was based on scientific methodology and endorsed by the Indian Statistical Institute. However, Opposition parties went to the Supreme Court which advised the EC to raise the mandatory random counting to five VVPATs per Assembly segment laying emphasis on "better voter confidence and credibility of electoral process". The court believed that the move would ensure the "greatest degree of accuracy and satisfaction". Rather than being on the defensive, the EC should have discussed this issue with political parties, with an open mind.

As the election progressed, the opposition made two demands:

- ▶▶ The five machines must be counted in the beginning and
- ▶▶ In case of even one mismatch, all machines in the Assembly segment must be counted. The EC examined these proposals only to reject them as being unfeasible.
- ▶▶ Experts opine that the top court's repeated interventions (as many as six) also have long-term implications given that Article 329 of the Constitution bars courts from interfering in electoral matters after the election process has been set in motion.
- ▶▶ However, the court had to intervene repeatedly for course correction.
- ▶▶ The Supreme Court expressed displeasure over the EC's stand on April 15th, 2019 when it submitted that it was "toothless" and "powerless" to act on hate speeches.
- ▶▶ When the court set the EC a deadline of May 6th, 2019 to act on this, the EC took strong and unprecedented action against some political leaders, debarring them from campaigning for up to three days by invoking Article 324.
- ▶▶ This action was laudable, however, when it came to acting on complaints against the Prime Minister and the BJP president, it reacted differently, giving the two leaders 'clean chits', and casting a shadow on its own reputation for fearless independence.
- ▶▶ Much later, it was shown that at least one Election Commissioner had dissented in five out of 11 EC decisions concerning violations of the MCC.
- ▶▶ It is important to note that in the absence of unanimity, decisions can be taken by a majority vote, and his dissent did not change the result. But dissent is good news for a constitutional body as it is a healthy sign of objective deliberation and democratic functioning.
- ▶▶ As a matter of fact, his demand for his dissenting note to be made public was worthy of positive consideration.

Conclusion:

- ▶▶ The ascendant role of money power, paid and fake news, communal polarisation and hate rhetoric pose a serious challenge to the very foundations of our electoral system.
- ▶▶ As soon as the dust settles, India must introspect over these issues and find answers.
- ▶▶ A democracy is only as credible as the strength of the institutions fundamental to its legitimacy.
- ▶▶ It is hoped that the 17th Lok Sabha will take it upon itself to reform the electoral process and enable the world's largest democracy to become the world's greatest.

435. MT. EVEREST: LEARN FROM TRAGEDY, TIGHTEN SAFETY MEASURES

Context:

- ▶ Mount Everest, the world's highest peak at 8,848 metres, draws adventurers from all over.
- ▶ But the mountain on the Nepal-China border is fast becoming a dangerous place to visit even for the hardened mountaineer.
- ▶ The inherent risks were this month highlighted with a photograph by Nirmal Purja, a Gorkha ex-soldier.

A look at Specifics:

- ▶ This season, at least 10 climbers have died or gone missing, including four Indians.
- ▶ Experts have been calling for Nepal to restrict the number of permits.
- ▶ Nepal awarded a record 381 for this spring, each fetching \$11,000 (climbing from the Tibet side is more expensive). Recently, 200 climbers ascended the summit, which is a new record for a single day. Last year (2018), 807 managed to reach the summit.
- ▶ In the year, 2012, the United Nations estimated that there were more than 26,000 visitors to the Everest region, and this figure has grown manifold since then.

Stuck due to Bad Weather?

- ▶ Nepal officials argue that permits are not issued recklessly, and that jams such as this year's near the summit are on account of spells of bad weather, which result in mountaineers being compelled to summit within a narrow time-frame.
- ▶ Waiting in sub-zero temperatures at the rarefied altitude can be fatal — this season's deaths were mostly due to frostbite, exhaustion, dehydration and lack of oxygen.
- ▶ As a matter of fact, this year's drama has caught the public imagination, as happened in 1996 when eight persons died in a single day amid an unexpected storm — events of and around that day were the subject of Jon Krakauer's bestselling book, Into Thin Air.

Conclusion:

- ▶ The adventure industry that is built around the human desire to scale the peak has meant many amateurs take up the challenge, confident that support teams and specialised equipment will make up for their lack of adequate mountaineering experience.
- ▶ The fallout is that in case of a disaster not only are some of them unable to manage, but they hold up others, putting them in harm's way.
- ▶ The commercial operations have led to the Everest being called the world's highest garbage dump as many climbers discard non-critical gear and fail to clean up the mess.
- ▶ The authorities must learn from this year's tragedies and work out an optimum number of climbers and strengthen safety measures.

436. PEMA KHANDU TO TAKE OATH AS CM OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH.

Context:

- ▶ Pema Khandu will be sworn-in as the Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh on 29 May 2019 for the second time.
- ▶ After having a landslide victory in the Assembly elections with 41 seats in the 60-seat house, the BJP held its Legislature Party Meeting in Itanagar on 27 May 2019.
- ▶ Mr. Khandu met Governor Dr. BD Mishra and staked claim to form the government.

437. IAF ALL-WOMAN CREW FLIES MI-17 CHOPPER

Context:

- ▶ On 27 May 2019, an all-woman crew of Indian Air Force (IAF) flew a Mi-17 V5 helicopter for the first time in India.
- ▶ Flight Lieutenant Parul Bhardwaj (Captain), Flying
- ▶ Officer Aman Nidhi (co-pilot) and Flight Lieutenant Hina Jaiswal (flight engineer) were part of the crew. The crew flew the helicopter for a Battle Inoculation Training Mission at a forward airbase in South Western Air Command.

438. INDIA ELECTED IN UN EXECUTIVE BOARD

Context:

- ▶ India has been elected to the Executive Board of the first UN-Habitat Assembly.
- ▶ It was elected at the Plenary Session of the Assembly which started on 27 May 2019 in Nairobi, Kenya. The special theme for the UN-Habitat Assembly is Innovation for Better Quality of Life in Cities and Communities.

Background:

- ▶ During the first session, The Assembly is expected to establish the Executive Board of UN-Habitat and elect its members, to review and approve the UN-Habitat Strategic Plan 2020-2025 and also review the Progress in the implementation of New Urban Agenda, among other things. A State which is a member of a Specialized Agency and the Observer Members States of the United Nations may participate in the deliberations of the UN-Habitat Assembly in the capacity of an observer.
- ▶ The Assembly will also be attended by United Nations Agencies, Local authorities and non-state actors including civil society, youth and women group representatives, the private sector and the Academia.

439. NSIC SIGNS MOU WITH MINISTRY OF MSME FOR THE YEAR 2018-19

Context:

- ▶ The National Small Industries Corporation Limited, NSIC today signed an MoU with Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises for the year 2019-20.
- ▶ The MoU envisages provision of enhanced services by NSIC under its marketing, financial, technology and other support services schemes for MSMEs in the country.
- ▶ The Corporation projects to increase revenue from operation by 22 per cent from two thousand 540 crore rupees in the year 2018-19 to three thousand 100 crore rupees in the year 2019-20.
- ▶ The Corporation also plans to enhance its activities in the areas of imparting entrepreneurship and skill development training by targeting 45 per cent growth in the number of trainees.

440. TRIBUNAL FOR ADJUDICATING BAN ON LTTE

Context:

- ▶ The government has constituted the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Tribunal to adjudicate
- ▶ whether or not there is sufficient cause for declaring the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) as an unlawful association.
- ▶ The Tribunal is comprised of Delhi High Court Justice Sangita Dhingra Sehgal.
- ▶ The government of India has extended ban on LTTE in India for a period of five years.

441. INDIA'S FIRST TREE AMBULANCE INITIATED IN CHENNAI BY GREEN MAN OF INDIA

Context:

- ▶ International Day for Biological Diversity tree ambulance was inaugurated in Chennai, Tamil Nadu by Vice President of India, Venkaiah Naidu.
- ▶ The initiative was proposed by Green man of India, Dr K Abdul Ghani and it is sponsored by the SASA Group.
- ▶ The ambulance can be availed through the number 9941006786 and volunteers can register on www.treeambulance.org.
- ▶ Services provided by Tree Ambulance first-aid treatment are uprooted tree planting, seed bank, seed ball distribution, plant distribution, aiding tree plantation, shifting trees, a survey of trees and removal of dead trees.
- ▶ The reallocation of trees will be done free of cost. iii. The ambulance has helpers and a plant expert, who carry gardening tools, water, manure, and pesticide with them.

Background:

- ▶ Due to some kind of disaster each year, like cyclones Vardah and Gaja, trees used to get uprooted in the city and not even one of them is replanted due to which Chennai has lowest green cover among all the metropolitan cities in the country.
- ▶ Also, there are hundreds of dead trees in Chennai which poses a hazard to the public.

442. SRI LANKA SIGNS TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT WITH INDIA AND JAPAN

Context:

- ▶ Sri Lanka has signed a tripartite agreement with India and Japan for development of eastern terminal of Colombo port. The Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) was signed in Colombo today by Sri Lankan ports minister Sagala Ratnayake, Indian high commissioner to Sri Lanka Taranjit Singh Sandhu and a Japanese representative.
- ▶ As per the agreement, Sri Lanka Port Authority (SLPA) will hold 51 per cent majority stake in the port development while Japan and India will have combined stake of 49 per cent.
- ▶ The three governments have decided to work out details at joint working group meetings and advance their cooperation towards early commencement of work and operation of the terminal. The deal is significant as over 70% of India's transshipment business is handled at Colombo ports. One of the terminals is controlled by Chinese company and there was a long-pending proposal to handover the development of Eastern terminal to an Indian company. The deal is part of Memorandum of economic cooperation signed between India and Sri Lanka in 2017.

443. RBI EXTENDS RTGS TIMINGS FROM 4:30 PM TO 6 PM

Context:

- ▶ To facilitate high-value fund transfers, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced an extension of timings for customer transactions through Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) by one and half hours from 4:30 PM to 06 PM.
- ▶ In a notification, issued from Mumbai RBI that new timing will be effective from 1st June.
- ▶ The RTGS is an online fund transfer system, supported by the RBI, which enables money transaction on a real-time basis.
- ▶ The minimum amount for the transaction under this system is Rs 2 lakh. There is no upper limit on the value of funds that can be transferred via the RTGS system.

444. GOVT PROJECTED RISE IN NON-GST REVENUE

Context:

- ▶ The Centre has projected a sharp increase of 26.6% in non-Goods and Services Tax collection in 2022-23.
- ▶ In the same year, total GST collection is expected to gross Rs 9,80,807 crore, a growth of just 2.3% compared to 12.1% and 12.3% in FY21 and FY22, respectively.
- ▶ The government has estimated to mop up Rs 7.61 lakh crore in GST collection during 2019-20.

445. MALAYSIA'S LAST MALE RHINO DIED

Context:

- ▶ Malaysia's last male Sumatran rhinoceros died on May 27, dashing efforts to save the critically endangered species in the country.
- ▶ The rhino, named Tam, was about 30 years old and lived at a wildlife reserve in Sabah state on Borneo island since his capture in 2008.
- ▶ Another female rhino, Puntung, died in captivity in 2017.

446. RIVERS LOADED WITH ANTIBIOTICS WASTE

Context:

- ▶ Rivers worldwide are polluted with antibiotics that exceed environmental safety thresholds by up to 300 times, according to research.
- ▶ Scientists found one or more common antibiotics in two-thirds of 711 samples taken from rivers in 72 countries.
- ▶ At one location in Bangladesh, concentrations of another widely used antibiotic, metronidazole, were 300 times above the limit.

447. RAHI SARNOBAT WON GOLD IN WC

Context:

- ▶ Indian shooter Rahi Sarnobat won the gold in 25m Pistol event at the ISSF World Cup 2019 in Munich.
- ▶ She also sealed a quota place for India in the event for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.
- ▶ Rahi scored a total of 37, beating Ukraine's Olena Kostevych, who was champion at the 2004 Athens Olympics.

448. SAURABH CHAUDHARY WON GOLD

Context:

- ▶ In ISSF shooting World Cup 2019, in Munich Germany, India's Saurabh Chaudhary has won 10m Air Pistol Gold. He scored 246.3 bettering his previous best of 245 points that was set in New Delhi World Cup Shooting in February this year. He has already secured a berth for the Tokyo Olympics. This is India's second Gold in the championship.

449. LEWIS HAMILTON WON MONACO GRAND PRIX

Context:

- ▶ Lewis Hamilton won the Monaco Grand Prix to extend his championship.
- ▶ He defeated Mercedes teammate Valtteri Bottas.
- ▶ Hamilton struggled with grip and was under constant pressure from Red Bull's Max Verstappen. But earlier he picked up a five-second time penalty.

450. GUY GUNARATNE RECEIVED THE 2019 SWANSEA UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL DYLAN THOMAS PRIZE

Context:

- ▶ Sri Lankan writer Guy Gunaratne was announced as the winner of 2019 Swansea University International Dylan Thomas Prize.
- ▶ He won the award for his debut novel 'In Our Mad and Furious City'. Guy Gunaratne is a 35 years old British-Sri-Lankan human rights documentary filmmaker, turned debut novelist. He won over 5 other shortlisted authors.
- ▶ The other titles shortlisted for the Swansea prize were: House of Stone by Novuyo Rosa Tshuma, Friday Black by Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah, Trinity by Louisa Hall, FOLK by Zoe Gilbert and Melmoth by Sarah Perry.
- ▶ 2018's winner Kayo Chingonyi won for his critically-acclaimed debut poetry collection, Kumukanda, which explores black masculinity.

Background:

- ▶ It is awarded every year for the best published literary work in the English language, written by an author aged 39 or under.
- ▶ The prize includes a prize sum of £30,000 and celebrates the international world of fiction in all its forms including novels, poetry, drama, and short stories.
- ▶ The year 2019 marks the 11th year of worlds largest English language literary prize for young authors.

451. DRDO SUCCESSFULLY TEST-FIRED THE NEW VERSION OF THE AKASH

Context:

- ▶ The Defence Research Development Organization (DRDO) successfully test-fired the new version of the Akash surface-to-air defence missile system with a new indigenously-developed seeker in Balasore off the Odisha coast on 27 May.
- ▶ This is the second successful test of the missile.
- ▶ The medium range multi-target engagement capable missile was developed as part of the Integrated Guided-Missile Development Programme (IGMDP) other than Nag, Agni, Trishul, and Prithvi missiles.

Background:

- ▶ The supersonic missile has a range of around 25 km and up to the altitude of 18,000 metres.
- ▶ The missile uses high-energy solid propellant for the booster and ramjet-rocket propulsion for the sustainer phase.
- ▶ The missile system is said to be highly mobile.
- ▶ Several variants of the missile, Akash MK1, Akash-MK2, with improved accuracy and higher ranges are under development by the DRDO.

452. RUSSIA LAUNCHED THE WORLD'S LARGEST NUCLEAR- POWERED ICEBREAKER 'URAL'

Context:

- ▶ Russia launched the world's largest nuclear-powered icebreaker 'Ural' at the Baltic Shipyard in St Petersburg in order to improve its ability to tap the Arctic's commercial potential.
- ▶ Russia is preparing for shipping via the Northern Sea Route (NSR).

Background:

- ▶ The Northern Sea Route is a shipping route officially defined by Russian legislation as lying east of Novaya Zemlya and specifically running along the Russian Arctic coast from the Kara Sea, along Siberia, to the Bering Strait.
- ▶ The entire route lies in Arctic waters and within Russia's exclusive economic zone.
- ▶ According to a U.S. Geological Survey estimates, the Arctic region has about 22% of the world's undiscovered oil and gas and it probably holds oil and gas reserves equivalent to 412 billion barrels of oil.

453. NASA UNVEILED THE PLANS ABOUT THE ARTEMIS PROGRAM

Context:

- ▶ NASA unveiled the calendar for the "Artemis" programme that will return astronauts to the Moon for the first time in half a century, including eight scheduled launches and a mini-station in lunar orbit by 2024.

Background:

- ▶ In addition to these missions, which will be all NASA's efforts, there will be five launches carrying the building blocks of the lunar mini-station "Gateway" which will serve as a staging point for the Moon landing.
- ▶ It is located about 250,000 miles from Earth.
- ▶ These will be carried out between 2022 and 2024 by private space companies, which NASA will pay for their services.
- ▶ The orbital station will initially consist of a simple power and propulsion element and a small habitat module. In 2024, astronauts will stop there en route to the Moon. They will then descend to the surface on a lander.
- ▶ A part of the lander will remain on the Moon while the other part will take off and allow the astronauts to return to their station, where they will board the Orion capsule and return to Earth.

454. AN-32 AIRCRAFT TO FLY ON BLENDED AVIATION FUEL CONTAINING UP TO 10% OF INDIGENOUS BIO-JET FUEL

Context:

- ▶ The Russian made AN-32 aircraft, IAF's formidable workhorse has formally been certified to fly on blended aviation fuel containing up to 10% of indigenous bio-jet fuel.
- ▶ P.Jayapal, Chief Executive of the Centre for Military Airworthiness and Certification (CEMILAC) handed over the approval certificate to Air Commodore Sanjiv Ghuratia VSM, Air Officer Commanding at the aero-engine test facilities at Chandigarh.
- ▶ This is a huge step in promoting the Make in India mission as this bio-fuel would be produced from Tree Borne Oils (TBOs) sourced from tribal areas and farmers, augmenting their income substantially.

Background:

- ▶ The IAF has undertaken a series of evaluation tests and trials with this green aviation fuel for the last one year.
- ▶ The scope of these checks was in consonance with international aviation standards. IAF followed meticulous testing standards for the use of indigenous bio-jet fuel by the IAF.

- ▶ The indigenous bio-jet fuel was first produced by the CSIR-IIP lab at Dehradun in 2013, but could not be tested or certified for commercial use on aircraft due to lack of test facilities in the civil aviation sector.
- ▶ On 27 July 2018, Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal BS Dhanoa had formally announced IAF's intention to permit the use of all its resources for testing and certifying the indigenous fuel. Since then, IAF's flight test crew and engineers have been evaluating the performance of this fuel against international standards.

455. ORCHHA TOWN OF MADHYA PRADESH ADDED TO THE TENTATIVE LIST OF UNESCO'S WORLD HERITAGE SITES

Context:

- ▶ The architectural heritage of Orchha town in Madhya Pradesh added to the Tentative List of UNESCO's World Heritage Sites.
- ▶ The architectural heritage of Orchha town depicts a unique style of the Bundela dynasty.
- ▶ The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) had sent a proposal to UNESCO to include the architectural heritage of Orchha town in its list of World Heritage Sites on April 15, 2019.
- ▶ For a historical site to be a part of UNESCO's World Heritage sites, it must be first included in the tentative list. Once included another proposal is sent to UNESCO, only then the site is included in the UNESCO's World Heritage sites.

Background:

- ▶ Situated on the banks of the Betwa river, Orchha is around 80 km from MP's Tikamgarh district and 15 km from Jhansi district of UP.
- ▶ Orchha town is located in Niwari district of MP's Bundelkhand region. ii. It was built by King Rudra Pratap Singh of Bundela dynasty in the 16th century. Bundela architecture has Mughal influence due to the closeness of both the dynasties. Veer Singh Dev, King of Bundela dynasty, was a close friend of Mughal emperor Jahangir. It is famous for its Chaturbhuj Temple, Orchha Fort complex and Raja Mahal. It is the only place in India where Lord Rama is worshipped as a king with a dedicated temple in his name called Sri Ram Raja Mandir.

UNESCO's World Heritage Sites List:

- ▶ UNESCO inaugurated the list by adopting a treaty known as 'The World Heritage Convention' in 1972. It aims to identify and protect the world's natural and cultural heritages.
- ▶ The list of World Heritage Sites is maintained by the 'World Heritage Programme', administered by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee.
- ▶ At present, there are 38 UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India (1 mixed, 7 Natural and 30 Cultural).

456. GOVERNMENT'S KEY AGENDA MUST BE TO ACCELERATE GROWTH

Context:

- ▶▶ Fast-growing economy can generate surpluses needed to create jobs and sustain social safety nets
- ▶▶ As in the revised new base estimates, the growth rate in 2016-17 was 8.2%; in 2018-19 it was 7%. Accelerating economic growth must be on top of the agenda of the new government.
- ▶▶ It is only a fast-growing economy that will generate the surpluses which are necessary to address many of our socio-economic problems and to provide social safety nets.

Why it is News?

- ▶▶ Now that the general election is over, the time has come to pay serious attention to the economy.
- ▶▶ The national income numbers continue to be controversial. No serious policy decision can be taken with ambiguous numbers.

A decline in investment rate:

- ▶▶ For faster growth, what is critically needed is a higher investment rate.
- ▶▶ In current prices, the ratio of Gross Fixed Capital Formation to Gross Domestic Product has stayed low at 28.5% between 2015-16 and 2017-18.
- ▶▶ Further, in 2018-19 it is estimated at 28.9%. In 2007-08, it was as high as 35.8%. In constant prices, the ratio, has, however, shown a smaller decline from the peak.
- ▶▶ It is true that for a time growth can come out of better utilisation of existing capacity. But for sustained growth, the ratio has to go up, and that too substantially.
- ▶▶ Further, there are several studies which indicate a fall in corporate investment. Every year the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) publishes a forecast of corporate investment.
- ▶▶ It uses the data made available by banks and other financial institutions on the phasing of capital expenditures of projects sanctioned by them.
- ▶▶ As a matter of fact, an article in the March 2019 issue of the RBI Bulletin says that in 2017-18, the capital expenditures of the corporate sector were estimated at 1,487 billion.
- ▶▶ There has been a steady decline from 2,050 billion in 2014-15.
- ▶▶ The industry-wide distribution of projects sanctioned by banks and other institutions in 2017-18 shows that the power sector accounted for 38.2% of the total expenditure. Pure manufacturing had only a small share.
- ▶▶ Experts opine that all these point to the urgent need to accelerate investment.

Jobs and Growth:

- ▶▶ Employment numbers have always been somewhat worrisome because of the presence of heavy underemployment in the country.
- ▶▶ Perhaps there has been some shift of employment from the unorganised to the organised segment. But this does not alter the overall situation.
- ▶▶ The answer to the problem of jobs is only growth.
- ▶▶ It is generally argued that growth will happen only if there is an adequate increase in demand.
- ▶▶ While this is true in relation to some sectors, there are many sectors including infrastructure where new investment will spur growth.
- ▶▶ In this context, the main concern is the slowdown in rural demand, which can affect the off-take of consumer goods. The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code was another significant step taken in the last few years. Even here there are some bottlenecks and the government must address them. Land reforms which enable entrepreneurs to buy land speedily have been suggested. Some steps in this regard have been taken in the past.
- ▶▶ Compulsory acquisition of land is the antithesis of competition and should be resorted to only in limited cases where public interest is involved. Labour reforms should wait until the economy has picked up steam and moved to a higher growth path. Only in these circumstances will there be less resistance.

Issues:

- ▶▶ Much of public investment happens outside the Budget.
- ▶▶ In 2019-20, capital expenditures of the Central government to GDP are expected to be 1.6%.
- ▶▶ This ratio has not shown much change. It is important to note that the bulk of public investment comes from public sector enterprises, including the Railways. What is needed is for the government to interact with all public sector units and prepare a programme of public investment for 2019-20. As a matter of fact, public sector units can take a longer-term view than the private sector.
- ▶▶ A strong public investment programme can be a catalyst of private investment.
- ▶▶ In a situation such as the present one, it can crowd in private investment.
- ▶▶ There has to be sector- or industry-wise discussions between the government and industrialists to understand the bottlenecks that each industry faces in making investment and take actions to remove them. In current, banks are under stress and the ratio of non-performing assets (NPAs) has risen.
- ▶▶ Experts opine that this needs to be resolved as early as possible so that banks can get back to lending at a significant pace. In the absence of term lending financial institutions, banks provide both working capital and long-term loans.

- ▶▶ That is why resolving the issue of NPAs is critically important for larger flow of long-term funds. Further, the government must also infuse adequate capital into banks at one go.
- ▶▶ As a matter of fact, there are mechanisms such as resolution councils or committees which can help to resolve the NPA problem without the bank management coming under scrutiny of investigative agencies.
- ▶▶ Over the medium term, experts opine that one can consider reviving the setting up of separate long-term financial institutions, partly funded by government.

Way forward:

- ▶▶ Banks are under stress and the ratio of non-performing assets (NPAs) has risen.
- ▶▶ We need to resolve this issue as early as possible so that banks can get back to lending at a significant pace. In the absence of term lending financial institutions, banks provide both working capital and long-term loans.
- ▶▶ That is why resolving the issue of NPAs is critically important for larger flow of long-term funds. The government must infuse adequate capital into banks at one go.
- ▶▶ There are mechanisms such as resolution councils or committees which can help to resolve the NPA problem without the bank management coming under scrutiny of investigative agencies.
- ▶▶ Over the medium term we should consider reviving the setting up of separate long-term financial institutions, partly funded by government.
- ▶▶ Coming to the medium term, reforms have been moving in the right direction. The introduction of the Goods and Services Tax is a major step.
- ▶▶ But glitches still remain in its implementation.
- ▶▶ The government should get tax authorities, industrialists, traders and, particularly, exporters to sort out the issues together.
- ▶▶ The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code was another significant step taken in the last few years.

Conclusion:

- ▶▶ The government should move in the direction of removing some of the subsidies and schemes which are similar in nature to minimum income, consolidate them, add to them what is fiscally feasible and provide the funds directly to the poor.
- ▶▶ The bigger problem is to define the 'poor' and, more particularly, identify them. But a move in this direction must be part of the agenda.
- ▶▶ Besides economic factors, non-economic factors are also critically important to revive what are often described as 'animal spirits'.
- ▶▶ Investment today is based on expectations of future earnings. Thus it is an act of faith in the future.
- ▶▶ For this to happen there must be social and political tranquility.

457. IAF CHIEF PAID TRIBUTE TO KARGIL HEROES BY FLYING MISSING MAN FORMATION

Context:

- ▶ The Indian Air Force (IAF) Chief Air Chief Marshal B.S. Dhanoa visits Air Force Station in Bhisiana and Sarsawa to pay homage to the air warriors who made supreme sacrifice during Operation Safed Sagar at Kargil.
- ▶ It took India two months of a joint effort between the Indian army and Air Force to evict the intruders.
- ▶ Dhanoa paid tribute to Late Squadron Leader Ajay Ahuja and other fallen heroes who lost their life 20 years back during the Kargil war. CAS B.S. Dhanoa flew the 'missing man' formation flypast in a Mig-21 aircraft. He was accompanied by Air Marshal R Nambiar, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief (AOC-in-C) Western Air Command in the 'missing man' flypast organised at Air Force Station in Bhisiana in Bhatinda to honour the valour and supreme sacrifice of men killed in action during Operation Safed Sagar at Kargil, J&K. On 28 May the CAS visited Air Force Station Sarsawa and flew in a Mi-17 V5 'Missing Man' formation flypast to commemorate the Kargil martyrs.

Background:

- ▶ India detected infiltrators in Kashmir's Kargil area in the latter half of May and sent a five-man Indian army team led by Lieutenant Saurav Kalia to investigate.
- ▶ The Indian government on 25 May ordered air strikes to dislodge the infiltrators, believed to be Pakistani army regulars from the Northern Light Infantry.
- ▶ On 28 May 1999, Squadron Leader Ajay Ahuja who was at that time the Flight Commander of 17 Squadron laid down his life along with Squadron Leader R Pundhir, Flight Lieutenant S Muhilan, Sergeant R K Sahu and Sergeant PVNR Prasad died in that Mi-17 helicopter while attempting to evict the infiltrators in Drass sector (J&K).

458. INDIA UPDATED TRAVEL ADVISORY FOR SL

Context:

- ▶ The External Affairs Ministry says the security situation is gradually returning to normal in the island nation but Indian nationals travelling there need to be careful and vigilant.
- ▶ Indian nationals requiring any assistance can get in touch round the clock with the High Commission in Colombo, the Assistant High Commission in Kandy and the Consulates in Jaffna and Hambantota.

459. IAF SIGNS MOU WITH ISRO FOR CREW SELECTION, TRAINING FOR GAGANYAAN PROGRAMME

Context:

- ▶ Indian Air Force has signed an MoU with ISRO for crew selection and training for the prestigious Gaganyaan Programme. Air Vice Marshal R G K Kapoor handed over the MoU to R Hutton, Project Director of Gaganyaan Programme.
- ▶ Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his Independence Day address last year, had announced the launch of Gaganyaan - India's maiden human spaceflight programme by 2022.
- ▶ This programme will provide a unique micro-gravity platform in space for conducting experiments and test for future technologies.

460. ARMY CONDUCTS CSA CAMP 2019

Context:

- ▶ Western Command Children Summer Adventure Camp 2019 is being organised at Manali from 27 May to 02 June 2019.
- ▶ The seven day camp is being conducted under the aegis of Rising Star Brigade.
- ▶ This camp aims to provide a wholesome outdoor exposure to young boys and girls through educational, recreational and adventure activities.

461. BS DHANOA WILL BE CHAIRMAN COSC

Context:

- ▶ Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa received the baton of Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee from outgoing Chairman COSC.
- ▶ Air Chief Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa, an alumnus of Rashtriya Indian Military College and the National Defence Academy, was commissioned in the Flying Branch of Indian Air Force in June 1978.

462. PM MODI TO HOST XI JINPING FOR AN SUMMIT

Context:

- ▶ PM Modi will host Chinese President Xi Jinping this year for an informal summit, a foreign ministry spokesman said after meeting several times over the past year to try to defuse tension.
- ▶ The two held their first informal summit in Wuhan in April 2018 and at that meeting President Jinping had accepted PM Modi's invitation to come to India for a second meeting.

463. INDIA, SRI LANKA AND JAPAN SIGNED A DEAL TO DEVELOP CONTAINER TERMINAL AT COLOMBO

Context:

- ▶ Sri Lanka, Japan, and India signed an agreement to jointly develop the East Container Terminal at the Colombo Port on 28th May.
- ▶ The joint initiative is estimated to cost between \$500 million and \$700 million.
- ▶ The signing of the Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) is significant, given that the countries had been negotiating the deal since last year with little success.
- ▶ As per the agreement, the Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA) retains 100% ownership of the East Container Terminal (ECT), while the Terminal Operations Company is jointly owned.
- ▶ Sri Lanka will hold a 51% stake in the project and the joint venture partners will retain 49%.

Background:

- ▶ Sri Lanka has been one of the countries which became part of China's Belt and Road Initiative, an ambitious plan announced in 2013 by President Xi Jinping.
- ▶ However, China's politically controversial investments in Sri Lanka became an election issue in 2015 and fuelled infighting between politicians in the capital.
- ▶ India, the US, and several other countries have been highlighting the concerns over the BRI projects which may leave a number of smaller countries in debt traps.
- ▶ India's involvement in the latest project also became a reason for political infighting in the country.

India's Involvement:

- ▶ Over 70% of the trans-shipment business at the strategically located ECT is linked to India. However, in 2018, India's possible role in developing the terminal had become a major flashpoint within the government.
- ▶ President Maithripala Sirisena had opposed any Indian involvement in the project, as roping in foreign actors for developing national assets remains a politically sensitive call in the island, especially among nationalist trade unions.

Japan is to lend loan:

- ▶ Japan is likely to provide a 40-year soft loan with a 0.1% interest rate. The SLPA described the envisaged Japanese loan as one of the best loan terms Sri Lanka has obtained.
- ▶ Japan had cooperated since the 1980s to develop the port's container terminals.

464. US RULES OUT EXEMPTIONS FROM IRANIAN SANCTIONS

Context:

- ▶ The US has ruled out giving any exemption from its punitive sanctions to some countries for buying oil from Iran, saying America's maximum pressure campaign was working and the Trump administration remains unwavering in its tough policy on Tehran.
- ▶ US President Trump refused to give waivers to countries like India from buying oil from Iran in an attempt to reduce Iran's oil exports to zero.

465. US REMOVES INDIA FROM ITS CURRENCY WATCH LIST

Context:

- ▶ India maintains ample reserves according to the IMF metrics for reserve adequacy, the US treasury department said in a report.
- ▶ India for the first time was placed by the US in its currency monitoring list of countries with potentially questionable foreign exchange policies in May 2018 along with five other countries i.e Switzerland, China, Japan, South Korea and Germany.

466. US-UAE DEFENSE AGREEMENT COMES INTO FORCE

Context:

- ▶ The United States and the United Arab Emirates have announced that mutual defence cooperation agreement (DCA) has come into force, amid increasing tensions between Washington and Tehran.
- ▶ At the joint statement DCA will enhance military coordination between the United States and the United Arab Emirates, further advancing an already robust military, political, and economic partnership at a critical time.
- ▶ the United States and the United Arab Emirates share a deep interest in promoting prosperity and stability in the region.
- ▶ The DCA will advance that interest by fostering closer collaboration on defence and security matters and supporting efforts by both nations to maintain security in the Gulf region. US national security advisor John Bolton was in Abu Dhabi yesterday, meeting his Emirati counterpart, Sheikh Tahnoun bin Zayed Al Nahyan.
- ▶ This came on the eve of emergency Arab and Gulf summits called by Saudi Arabia to discuss the stand-off and ways to isolate Tehran.

467. MAHATHIR URGES US TO TALK WITH CHINA, ACCEPT ITS GREATNESS

Context:

- ▶ Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad called for talks to resolve the ongoing trade dispute between Washington and Beijing and urged the world to accept China's technological prowess.
- ▶ The U.S. cannot expect to always be at the top in technology, and countries need to talk to deal with a powerful China, referred to the Chinese telecom giant Huawei and said nations with differing ideologies must be able to get along.
- ▶ For months, the world's two biggest economies have been locked in a standoff over trade balances and technology, including allegations that China uses unfair tactics, such as stealing trade secrets.

468. SINO-INDIA IT AND DT INDUSTRY COOPERATION FORUM 2019 WAS HELD IN GUIYANG, CHINA

Context:

- ▶ To create a new chapter in India-China cooperation in the new era of digital transition, 2019 Sino-India IT and DT Industry Cooperation Forum was held on 27th May in Guiyang, China.
- ▶ The objective was to create a new chapter in India-China cooperation in the new era of the digital transition.
- ▶ To make progress and boost development, the big data, and artificial intelligence, the countries need to have in-depth exchanges.
- ▶ NIIT Technology, Shanghai signed cooperation agreements with Guizhou University and Guiyang Education Bureau.

Background:

- ▶ The National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) has also opened an Information Technology (IT) corridor for the purpose of better exchanges between two countries in the IT sector.
- ▶ The idea is also to help Indian companies especially small and medium enterprises to connect with China businesses looking for partners in the IT sector.
- ▶ This event was held on the sidelines of the International Big Data Industry Expo 2019. The 4-day event is being attended by 448 enterprises from 59 different countries.

469. AGREEMENT FOR RAJASTHAN WITH WORLD BANK

Context:

- ▶ India signs Loan Agreement with the World Bank for Strengthening the Public Financial Management in Rajasthan Project.
- ▶ The objective is to improve Budget execution, enhanced accountability and greater efficiency in Revenue Administration in Rajasthan.
- ▶ Project size is USD 31 million, USD 21.7 million will be financed by the World Bank & USD 9.3 million by State Budget. Tenure -5 years.

470. INTERNATIONAL DAY OF UN PEACEKEEPERS, 29 MAY

- ▶ The first UN peacekeeping mission was established on 29th May 1948.
- ▶ The objective is to pay tribute to the invaluable contribution by the uniformed and civilian personnel and to honour more than 3,800 peacekeepers who have lost their lives while rendering peacekeeping services.
- ▶ The theme of 2019 is “Protecting Civilians, Protecting Peace”.

471. NEPAL CELEBRATING ITS 12TH REPUBLIC DAY

Context:

- ▶ Nepal is celebrating its 12th Republic Day today. A number of programmes are being organised in different parts of the country to mark the occasion.
- ▶ The main function was held at Army Pavilion in Kathmandu, which was attended by the President Bidya Devi Bhandari, Prime Minister K.P.Sharma Oli, cabinet ministers, senior government officials, heads and representatives of various diplomatic missions and other dignitaries.
- ▶ On Jesth 15, 2065 of Nepali Calendar (May 28, 2008) the Constituent Assembly of the Himalayan nation declared Nepal a Federal Democratic Republic, abolishing the 240 year-old monarchy. Since then, Nepal celebrates Jesth 15 as Republic Day every year.

472. WHO RECOGNIZED 'BURN-OUT' AS MEDICAL CONDITION AND 'GAMING DISORDER' A RECOGNISED ILLNESS

Context:

- ▶ Recently, the World Health Organization (WHO) in its World Health Assembly held in Geneva, had for the first time recognized 'burn out' as a medical condition in its International Classification of Diseases (ICD), which was extensively used as a benchmark for diagnosis and health insurers.

- ▶ WHO in its catalogue of diseases and injuries defined burn-out as a syndrome conceptualised as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed.
- ▶ The updated list of International Classification of Diseases (ICD) dubbed as ICD-11 which was drafted last year after the recommendations from health experts around the world.
- ▶ The ICD-11 which will take effect in January 2022, contains several other additions, including classification of "compulsive sexual behaviour as a mental disorder.
- ▶ WHO had also the first time recognised video gaming as an addiction, listing it alongside gambling and drugs like cocaine

473. MALAYSIA TO SEND BACK HUNDREDS OF TONNES OF IMPORTED PLASTIC WASTE

Mains:

- ▶ Explain about the Alliance to End Plastic Waste (AEPW)? Write its Significance?

Context:

- ▶ The Malaysian government said that hundreds of tonnes of imported plastic waste will be shipped back to where it came from insisting that the country did not want to be a global dumping ground.
- ▶ The announcement was made by the Malaysian Minister for Energy, Science, Technology, Environment, and Climate Change Yeo Bee Yin.
- ▶ The Ministry said 450 tonnes of contaminated plastic waste in 10 containers from Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, Japan, Saudi Arabia, and the United States will be shipped back.
- ▶ Plastic imports to Malaysia have tripled since 2016, to 8,70,000 tonnes in 2018. The Malaysian government also urged the developed countries to review their management of plastic waste and stop shipping garbage to developing countries.
- ▶ Processing such materials produce toxic fumes. Villagers near the recycle plant are suffering from asthma and itchiness.

Background:

- ▶ Malaysia sent back five containers filled with plastic waste to Spain in April.
- ▶ 150 illegal waste recycling plants had been shut down.
- ▶ As little as nine percent of plastic produced between 1950 and 2015 has been recycled.
- ▶ Pictures of coral reefs smothered in plastic bags and river systems choked with PET bottles are produced to create awareness of the need to deal with the problem.

474. MEGHALAYA CM CONRAD SANGMA LAUNCHED A NEW PROJECT TO BOOST MEDICINAL PLANT CULTIVATION

Mains:

- ▶ Discuss the role of pollinators in agricultural and horticultural production. Examine the reasons for declining population of pollinators. Suggest measures to improve the situation?

Context:

- ▶ Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma launched a new project to boost medicinal and aromatic plants cultivation named "Aroma Mission".
- ▶ "Aroma Mission" a project of Rs.18 crore launched to give importance for agriculture and allied sectors so that farmers earn the benefits from it.

Background:

- ▶ CM inaugurated a processing unit of essential oils and insisted institutions like CSIR-CIMAP to undertake more researches in this field.
- ▶ Broomsticks and bay leaves were categorized as 'Agro Forestry' items.
- ▶ Cultivation of lemon grass and citronella plant will be undertaken on 50-acre plots in every district of the state.
- ▶ Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (CIMAP) is a plant research laboratory of Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).

475. NEW SPECIES OF WASP IDENTIFIED IN GOA

Context:

- ▶ A new species of wasp from the genus Kudakrumia has been recently identified by scientists in Goa.
- ▶ The wasp, Kudakrumia rangnekari, was named after Goa-based researcher Parag Rangnekar.
- ▶ The butterflies of this unique region resulted in a record of 220 species, of which 13 species had not been described before.
- ▶ The holotype is from Kotigao Wildlife Sanctuary of Goa of northern Western Ghats and the paratype is from Ranipuram hill of Kerala of southern Western Ghats.

476. SCIENTISTS GIVE THE THUMBS-UP FOR ANTHROPOCENE EPOCH

Context:

- ▶ On May 21, a 34-member panel of the Anthropocene Working Group (AWG) voted 29-4 in favour of designating a new geological epoch — the Anthropocene.
- ▶ The vote signals the end of the Holocene Epoch, which began 11,700 years ago.

- ▶ According to Nature, the panel plans to submit a formal proposal for the new epoch by 2021 to the International Commission on Stratigraphy, which oversees the official geologic time chart.
- ▶ That nearly 90% voted in favour of a naming the new epoch to reflect how the Earth has been shaped by human activity, is not surprising, as an informal vote had already conducted three years ago in Cape Town at the 2016 International Geological Congress. The term 'Anthropocene' was coined in 2000 by Nobel Laureate Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer to denote the present geological time interval in which human activity has profoundly altered many conditions and processes on Earth.

477. IVO KARLOVIC-OLDEST MAN TO WIN A MATCH AT THE FRENCH OPEN 2019 FOR 46 YEARS

Context:

- ▶ Croatia's Ivo Karlovic became the oldest man to win a match at the French Open 2019 for 46 years on 28 May. He beat Spain's fellow veteran Feliciano Lopez in a first-round duel. Forty-year-old Ivo Karlovic became the oldest player to win a match at Roland Garros and defeated 37-year-old Feliciano Lopez to secure 7-6(4), 7-5, 6-7(7), 7-5 in three hours and six minutes to reach the second round at the clay-court Grand Slam for the sixth time. This was the oldest men's match in combined age at Roland Garros during the Open Era, and the seventh-oldest match at a Grand Slam. Karlovic hit 35 aces and saved five of the six break points he faced to win his first match since Indian Wells.

Background:

- ▶ Karlovic became the oldest man to win at Roland Garros since Torben Ulrich in 1973 at the age of 44. He is also the oldest male player to win a Grand Slam match since Ken Rosewall, also 44, did so at the 1978 Australian Open. The last player to contest a Grand Slam singles match having turned 40 was American Jimmy Connors at the U.S. Open in 1992.

478. BIMSTEC LEADERS TO HOLD BILATERAL MEETINGS WITH PM MODI

Context:

- ▶ Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a bilateral meeting with President of Kyrgyz Republic, Sooronbay Jeenbekov at Rashtrapati Bhawan. This was his first engagement after being sworn in as Prime Minister for the second term. The Kyrgyz President had attended the oath-taking ceremony as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Chair. Mr Modi will hold separate bilateral meetings in New Delhi with Bangladesh President Md. Abdul Hamid, Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister of Mauritius Pravind Kumar Jugnauth.

- ▶ He will also hold bilateral meetings with Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and Bhutan Prime Minister Lotay Tshering.

479. INDIA'S FIRST ALL WOMAN CREW FLIES MI - 17 V5 MEDIUM LIFT HELICOPTER

Context:

- ▶ Three women officers of Indian Air Force were part of India's first all-women crew to fly a medium-lift helicopter Mi-17 V5.
- ▶ Flight Lieutenant Parul Bhardwaj (Captain), Flying Officer Aman Nidhi (co-pilot) and Flight Lieutenant Hina Jaiswal (Flight Engineer) were three women IAF officers flew the chopper, which took off from a forward air base in South Western air command.
- ▶ All three women officers flew a Mi-17 V5 helicopter for Battle Inoculation Training mission.
- ▶ Under this mission, the helicopter had taken off and landed from restricted areas at a forward airbase in South Western air command.
- ▶ Flight Lieutenant Parul Bhardwaj became the first woman pilot to fly the Mi-17 V5.
- ▶ Flight Lieutenant Hina Jaiswal became the first woman flight engineer of the IAF.
- ▶ Flying officer Aman Nidhi from Jharkhand also became the first woman IAF pilot from the state.

480. CENTRE SETS UP TRIBUNAL FOR ADJUDICATING BAN ON LTTE

Context:

- ▶ The Centre set up a tribunal for adjudicating whether or not there is sufficient reason to continue the ban on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).
- ▶ A tribunal has been set up by the Government of India under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (37 of 1967) for the purpose of adjudicating whether or not there is sufficient cause for declaring the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam as an unlawful association.
- ▶ The Tribunal constituted by GoI is comprised of a sitting Judge of Delhi High Court (HC) Justice Sangita Dhingra Sehgal.

Background:

- ▶ LTTE has been banned in India since 1991, after the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi by its member.
- ▶ In early May 2019, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) issued a notification about extending a ban on LTTE in India for a further period of five years.
- ▶ As per the notification GoI under the provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967 declared LTTE as an unlawful association.

481. TRUMP ANNOUNCES TARIFFS ON ALL MEXICO GOODS

Context:

- ▶ US President Donald Trump has announced tariffs on all goods coming from Mexico in a bid to curb illegal immigration.
- ▶ Mr. Trump announced that from 10 June a five per cent tariff would be imposed and slowly raised until the Illegal Immigration problem is remedied.
- ▶ President Trump has declared a national emergency to tackle what he claims is a crisis at the US southern border. Border agents say they are overwhelmed, but critics say they are mishandling and mistreating migrants.

482. WHO CONCLUDED THAT BURNOUT IS NOT A MEDICAL CONDITION

Context:

- ▶ The World Health Organization (WHO) has for the first time recognised "burn out" in its International Classification of Diseases (ICD), collectively known as the ICD-11.
- ▶ The decision was taken during the World Health Assembly (WHA) in Geneva.

Background:

- ▶ WHO has now defined burnout as "a syndrome conceptualised as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed". Burn-out refers specifically to phenomena in the occupational context and should not be applied to describe experiences in other areas of life.
- ▶ **The syndrome was characterised by:**
- ▶ Feelings of Energy Depletion or Exhaustion
- ▶ Increased the mental distance from one's job or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job reduced professional efficacy.

International Classification of Diseases (ICD):

- ▶ It is the global health information standard for mortality and morbidity statistics. It was created in 1948 and WHO was entrusted with it. ICD is revised periodically and this year is currently its 10th revision.
- ▶ It is widely used as a benchmark for diagnosis and health insurers. The updated 'CD list, dubbed as ICD-11, was drafted in 2018 following recommendations from health experts from all around the world.
- ▶ It was approved on 25 May 2019 and will take effect in January 2022.

483. UN EXTENDS SANCTIONS AGAINST SOUTH SUDAN

Context:

- ▶ The UN Security Council has extended an arms embargo and sanctions on South Sudan for a year, despite resistance from African countries, Russia and China.
- ▶ A US-drafted resolution was adopted yesterday by a vote of 10 in favour with five abstentions. Resolutions in the 15-member council require a minimum of nine votes for adoption.
- ▶ The measure renews until May 31, 2020, an arms embargo on South Sudan along with an assets freeze and global travel ban slapped on eight South Sudanese nationals for their role in fuelling the war.

484. SAUDI KING SALMAN URGES INTERNATIONAL EFFORT TO THWART IRAN

Context:

- ▶ Saudi Arabia's King Salman opened an emergency summit of Gulf Arab leaders in Mecca with a call for the international community to use all means to confront Iran. But, the kingdom extends its hand for peace. King Salman was speaking at the first of three high-level summits in Mecca that were urgently convened after a spike in tensions between Saudi Arabia and its rival Iran.
- ▶ The alleged sabotage of four oil tankers off the coast of the United Arab Emirates and a drone attack on a key Saudi oil pipeline earlier this month requires serious efforts to protect the security and the gains of the six energy-rich Arab nations.
- ▶ Iran denies being involved in the attacks. Attending GCC summit were the leaders of Kuwait and Bahrain, as well as senior officials from the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Qatar.
- ▶ The meeting will be immediately followed with an emergency summit of the 22-nation Arab League, minus Syria whose membership remains suspended.
- ▶ Another summit is expected 31st may, focusing largely on Palestinian statehood and independence. It will bring together leaders from the 57-nation Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which is headquartered in Saudi Arabia.

485. HUAWEI CHALLENGED U.S.S NDDA BILL AS SANCTIONS FIGHT RAMPS UP

Context:

- ▶ World's largest telecom equipment maker Huawei filed a motion in a US court to declare National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) as "unconstitutional". The U.S. court had agreed on a schedule to hold hearings in September on motions by opposing sides.

Background:

- ▶ The NDAA bill, passed by the U.S. Congress in 2018, places a broad ban on federal agencies and their contractors from using Huawei equipment on national security grounds, citing the company's ties with the Chinese government. In its petition, Huawei said that NDAA illegally targets without opportunity for rebuttal or escape. It provides no opportunity to present evidence as defence. The company repeatedly denied it is controlled by the Chinese government, military or intelligence services. In early May 2019, the U.S. Commerce Department put Huawei on a trade blacklist that bans companies from doing business with the Chinese firm, a move which immediately disrupted the global tech sector. The ban affected the company's more than 1,200 suppliers and threatened to affect its 3 billion customers in 170 countries. Huawei, which has been given a 90-day reprieve from the ban, has denied its products pose a security threat and protested Washington's attempts to limit its business.

486. 'HAWA AANE DE' LAUNCHED TO SPREAD AWARENESS.

Context:

- ▶ Union Environment Ministry on 29th May launched the song 'Hawa Aane De' to spread awareness about Air pollution. The song was launched by Secretary, Ministry of Environment C K Mishra ahead of the World Environment Day on 5th of June. **The theme of Environment Day for 2019 is Air Pollution.**

487. MAY 28 OBSERVED AS WORLD HUNGER DAY

Context:

- ▶ World Food Day is celebrated every year around the world on 16 October in honor of the date of the founding of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 1945.
- ▶ The day is celebrated widely by many other organizations concerned with food security, including the World Food Programme and the International Fund for Agricultural Development. **The theme for World Hunger Day 2019 is Sustainability.**

Background:

- ▶ The main aim is to raise awareness of chronic hunger and celebrate the achievements of millions of people who are already taking actions to end their own hunger. Hunger is not just about food. Hunger and poverty are inextricably linked to a nexus of issues including decent work opportunities, health, education, social justice, the rights of women and girls, the environment and climate change. The Hunger Project uses an innovative, holistic approach that tackles all these issues and empowers people living in hunger to become the agents of their own development and lift their communities above the poverty line for good this is the sustainable end of poverty.

488. GOA CELEBRATES ITS STATEHOOD DAY.

Context:

- ▶ Goa celebrated its statehood day on 30th May. It was on this day in 1987 Goa became the 25th state of the Indian Union. Before this, Goa, along with Daman and Diu, was a union territory. Statehood helped in shaping Goa's distinct identity. It's a day to reflect on people's achievements and evolve a strategy to achieve a prosperous and advanced state - Pramod Sawant, Goa chief minister.

489. MANU BHAKER CLINCHES TOKYO OLYMPICS QUOTA.

Context:

- ▶ Manu Bhaker was able to capture Olympic quota place in women's air pistol in the shooting World Cup in Munich on 29th May although she missed a medal by 0.1 point.
- ▶ Despite shooting a 10.3, the best among the four shooters at the halfway stage of the final, Manu bowed out as she was overtaken by the slender margin by Anna Korakaki of Greece, the eventual gold- medallist.

490. CHELSEA CLINCHED THE UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE 2019 CUP

Context:

- ▶ Chelsea clinched the UEFA Europa League 2019 Cup. It scored four goals in a devastating second-half display to beat Arsenal 4-1 on 29 May at the Baku Olympic Stadium in Azerbaijan.
- ▶ It gave Italian manager Maurizio Sarri a major trophy in his first season in charge and Chelsea a first European title since the 2013 Europa League. The triumph in Baku means Chelsea have won three European titles in seven years, with the Champions League triumph in 2012 followed by their first Europa League victory in 2013. By contrast, Arsenal have lost five of their six major European finals, with their only victory coming in the 1994 Cup Winners' Cup against Parma.

491. N KUMAR, TNAU V-C, CONFERRED WITH 'LIFETIME RECOGNITION AWARD' BY THE CONFEDERATION OF HORTICULTURE ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

Context:

- ▶ Lifetime Recognition Award by the Confederation of Horticulture Association of India was given to Professor N. Kumar, Vice-Chancellor of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University.
- ▶ The award has been conferred for his outstanding contribution in the field of horticulture and academic leadership focused on human resource development in agriculture at the International Conference on Innovative horticulture at Pantnagar,

- ▶ Uttarakhand, according to a varsity release.
- ▶ He began his career as an Assistant Professor in Horticulture during 1979 at TNAU and by consistent and meritorious performance. He managed to occupy the position of Dean of Horticultural College and Research Institute, TNAU in 2009-2013 before becoming the 13th Vice-Chancellor of the renowned Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore. He has secured spearheaded 20 externally funded projects including 5 International Projects.

492. LINE OF CONTROL

Context:

- ▶ Grace full business across the Line of Control will require both infrastructural and policy-level interventions.

Lakshman Rekha:

- ▶ In the last decade, the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir has often been re-interpreted as the line of commerce and co-operation. This paradigm shift was the result of initiation of two confidence-building measures (CBMs) between India and Pakistan cross-LoC trade and cross-LoC travel. It was representative of a constructive bilateral engagement process in the midst of political upheavals. Stakeholders were hopeful that while cross-LoC travel would connect divided families, cross-LoC trade would foster economic ties between Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) that would eventually help reap the peace dividend.

Steps taken by Government:

- ▶ April 18 2019, the government of India announced the suspension from midnight of trade at the two designated points expressing concerns over 'illegal inflows of weapons, narcotics and currency' in the country. 'A stricter regulatory regime' is expected for re-initiation of trade.

Important points to be known:

- ▶ Cross-LoC trade is an intra-Jammu and Kashmir trade, in the form of barter of goods on a reciprocal basis. Started on October 21, 2008, the trade has been conducted through a standard operating procedure (SOP) mutually agreed by New Delhi and Islamabad.
- ▶ The SOP enlists the 21 categories of items to be traded on zero tariffs.
- ▶ LoC trade takes place four days a week, wherein traders are allowed to exchange 70 trucks per day. The trade-in (import) and trade-out (export) goods have to be balanced to zero for each trading firm within a period of three months.

About data:

- ▶ The total number of traders registered at the Salamabad Trade Facilitation Centre (TFC), Uri, and Chakan-da-Bagh TFC, Poonch, is approximately 600.

- ▶▶ Since 2008, trade has shown an average year-on-year growth of about 19%, reaching a cumulative value of over 6,500 crore to date.
- ▶▶ Furthermore, it has generated more than 1.6 lakh job days.
- ▶▶ To date, more than 1 lakh trucks laden with goods have been exchanged, generating approximate freight revenue of ₹66.50 crore for transporters of Jammu and Kashmir.
- ▶▶ Experts opine that these figures are indicative of the potential that this trade holds for social and economic development within Jammu and Kashmir.

Changes to be done:

- ▶▶ Despite its success in generating economic benefits, the operational and policy level deficiencies render the trade vulnerable to misconceptions and malpractices.
- ▶▶ Lack of clarity in the SOP towards rules of origin, items list, goods and services tax (GST)/local taxation mechanisms are some of the limitations.
- ▶▶ To further symbolize, a practice of ‘trade number selling’ was prevalent at the TFCs wherein few trading firms sell their registration/token numbers to other trading firms to send the latter’s goods across the LoC out of turn in the roster system.
- ▶▶ This practice has created a gap between the number of genuine traders and traders involved only in ‘trade number selling’.

Way Forward:

- ▶▶ Streamlining LoC trade would require both infrastructural and policy level interventions.
- ▶▶ A revision in the SOP is required to highlight the trader re-registration process; we need clarity on the ‘rules of origin’ of goods; tradeable commodities need to be identified that will benefit the local economy of Jammu and Kashmir, and further eight-digit HS (harmonised system) codes must be assigned to ensure clarity on the items. The SOP must also specify the modality of movement of trucks across the LoC as well as clarity on filing of GST/other local taxes. A token system on a first-come-first-serve basis should be explored. This will check the misuse of trade registration number in the roster system. Digitisation of the TFCs must take place to make the process of record keeping easy, transparent and accessible to various regulatory agencies. The digitised TFCs should be enabled with a ‘trader notification system’ for timely reminders to achieve zero barter balance for continuation of trade.
- ▶▶ In case of non-compliance, a strict ‘trader de-listing policy’ needs to be put in place wherein any trader with a negative balance in barter for more than the designated time period can be suspended from conducting trade.
- ▶▶ Regular meetings must also be held between the trade facilitation officers of both sides of the LoC to ensure co-ordination of such activities and exchange of the list of suspended/banned traders.

Conclusion:

- ▶ Infrastructure upgradation such as installation of truck scanners, functional CCTV cameras for security, and calibration of weighbridges, are essential to check the inflow of banned items, narcotics and weapons.
- ▶ The gains made by India and Pakistan through initiation of cross-LoC trade and travel have manifested themselves in the form of recent talks of opening the Sharda Peeth corridor in PoK as another CBM.
- ▶ An important lesson is to be learnt here, optics and rhetoric aside, is that the sustenance of a CBM requires regular policy and operational-level interventions.

493. THE SECOND COMING: ON NARENDRA MODI'S UPCOMING SWEARING-IN

Context:

- ▶ Prime Minister decision to invite leaders of the other six BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) countries to the swearing-in ceremony of his Council of Ministers sends out several messages on his new government's foreign policy focus.
- ▶ To begin with, as the Foreign Ministry's announcement notes, the invitation to Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand is a continuation of the "neighbourhood first" policy behind Mr. Modi's invite to leaders of South Asia for his 2014 swearing-in ceremony.

Back ground:

- ▶ The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a regional organization comprising seven Member States lying in the littoral and adjacent areas of the Bay of Bengal constituting a contiguous regional unity.
- ▶ This sub-regional organization came into being on 6 June 1997 through the Bangkok Declaration.
- ▶ **It constitutes seven Member States:** five deriving from South Asia, including Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and two from Southeast Asia, including Myanmar and Thailand.
- ▶ Initially, the economic bloc was formed with four Member States with the acronym 'BIST-EC' (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation).
- ▶ However, following the inclusion of Myanmar on 22 December 1997 during a special Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok, the Group was renamed 'BIMST-EC' (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation).

- ▶ With the admission of Nepal and Bhutan at the 6th Ministerial Meeting (February 2004, Thailand), the name of the grouping was changed to ‘Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation’ (BIMSTEC).
- ▶ The regional group constitutes a bridge between South and South East Asia and represents a reinforcement of relations among these countries.
- ▶ BIMSTEC has also established a platform for intra-regional cooperation between SAARC and ASEAN members.
- ▶ The BIMSTEC region is home to around 1.5 billion people which constitute around 22% of the global population with a combined gross domestic product (GDP) of 2.7 trillion economy.
- ▶ In the last five years, BIMSTEC Member States have been able to sustain an average 6.5% economic growth trajectory despite global financial meltdown.

Other country members:

- ▶ By not inviting leaders of Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Maldives on this occasion, the government is underlining that its regional preferences have shifted from the SAARC grouping to BIMSTEC, given the logjam at SAARC because of India-Pakistan tensions.
- ▶ Further, unlike in 2014, when he invited Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif with an element of hope and a desire to turn the page on bitter bilateral ties, Mr. Modi is signalling that he does not hold the same optimism in 2019.
- ▶ Further, it is important to note that Thailand is not just a member of BIMSTEC but also holds the chair of ASEAN this year (2019), and an invitation is as much about India’s “Act East” initiative and outreach to East Asia.

Separate invitation:

- ▶ The separate invitation to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation chairperson, President Sooronbay Jeenbekov of Kyrgyzstan, indicates India’s commitment to the Central Asian grouping led by China and Russia, with Mr. Modi slated to attend the SCO summit in June, 2019. The other separate invitation to Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth of Mauritius, who visited India in January this year (2019) as chief guest at the Pravasi Bharatiya conference, is an affirmation of the close affinity between the two countries.
- ▶ It would be unwise, however, to read meanings into Mr. Modi’s choice of international dignitaries beyond this symbolism.

Way forward:

- ▶ It is important to note that India’s engagement with both BIMSTEC and the SCO, which India joined as an observer in 2005, is at a promising but incipient stage.
- ▶ As a matter of fact, after its formation in 1997, BIMSTEC made very little progress and didn’t even have a fully working secretariat until recently.

- ▶▶ Its deliberations on subregional connectivity have been delayed owing to concerns in Bhutan, while Nepal and Thailand sent only observers to the military exercises last year (2018) due to other misgivings.
- ▶▶ Even so, India sees BIMSTEC as a possible alternative to SAARC, which has failed to meet for five years.
- ▶▶ Further, the SCO, which inducted India and Pakistan as full members last year (2018), is yet to demonstrate its utility for India, but is seen as a possible balancer at a time when the U.S. is taking a more aggressive position on trade, sanctions against Iran, Venezuela and Russia, all of which are sources of concern for India.

Conclusion:

- ▶▶ As a result, the attendance at Mr. Modi's swearing-in ceremony on the 30th of May, 2019, and the bilateral meetings that will follow on the very next day, may represent little by way of actual outcomes.
- ▶▶ Rather, it is a statement of intent on new avenues of India's multilateral engagements.

