



AN INITIATIVE BY  
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# **CURRENT AFFAIRS**

**JULY - 2019**

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## 1. GOVERNMENT ACTS & POLICIES

### ARMED FORCES (SPECIAL POWERS) ACT

**Context:** The **Ministry of Home Affairs** has extended the operation of Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act in **Nagaland** for another six months with effect from June 30.

#### What does the AFSPA Mean?

- ▶ In simple terms, AFSPA gives **Armed Forces** the power to maintain public order in “**Disturbed Areas**”.
- ▶ They have the authority to prohibit a gathering of five or more persons in an area, can use force or even open fire after giving due warning if they feel a person is in contravention of the law. If reasonable suspicion exists, the army can also arrest a person without a warrant; enter or search premises without a warrant; and ban the possession of firearms.
- ▶ Any person arrested or taken into custody may be handed over to the officer in charge of the nearest police station along with a report detailing the circumstances that led to the arrest.

#### What is a “Disturbed Area” and who has the power to declare it?

- ▶ A disturbed area is one which is **declared by notification** under Section 3 of the AFSPA.
- ▶ An area can be disturbed due to differences or disputes between members of different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities.
- ▶ The **Central Government** or the **Governor of the State or administrator of the Union Territory** can declare the **whole or part of the State or Union Territory** as a disturbed area.
- ▶ A suitable notification would have to be made in the Official Gazette. As per Section 3, it can be invoked in places where “the use of armed forces in aid of the civil power is necessary”.
- ▶ The **Ministry of Home Affairs** would usually enforce this Act where necessary, but there have been exceptions where the Centre decided to forego its power and leave the decision to the State governments.

#### What’s the origin of AFSPA?

- ▶ The Act came into force in the context of increasing violence in the North-eastern States decades ago, which the State governments found difficult to control.
- ▶ The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Bill was passed by both the Houses of Parliament and it was approved by the President on September 11, 1958.
- ▶ It became known as the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958.

### Which States are, or had come under this Act?

- ▶▶ It is effective in the whole of **Nagaland, Assam, Manipur** (excluding seven assembly constituencies of Imphal) and parts of **Arunachal Pradesh**.
- ▶▶ The Centre revoked it in Meghalaya on April 1, 2018.
- ▶▶ Earlier, the AFSPA was effective in a 20 km area along the Assam-Meghalaya border.
- ▶▶ In Arunachal Pradesh, the impact of AFSPA was reduced to eight police stations instead of 16 police stations and in Tirap, Longding and Changlang districts bordering Assam.
- ▶▶ Tripura withdrew the AFSPA in 2015. Jammu and Kashmir too has a similar Act.

### How has this Act been received by the people?

- ▶▶ It has been a controversial one, with human rights groups opposing it as being aggressive.
- ▶▶ Manipur's Irom Sharmila has been one of its staunchest opponents, going on a hunger strike in November 2000 and continuing her vigil till August 2016.
- ▶▶ Her trigger was an incident in the town of Malom in Manipur, where ten people were killed waiting at a bus stop.

## THE JAMMU AND KASHMIR RESERVATION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019

**Context:** Jammu and Kashmir (Reservation) Amendment Bill, 2019 was passed by both the houses of the Parliament.

### About the Bill:

- ▶▶ The Bill amends the Jammu and Kashmir Reservation Act, 2004.
- ▶▶ The Act provides for reservation in appointment and promotions in state government posts, and admission to professional institutions for certain reserved categories.
- ▶▶ Professional institutions include government medical colleges, dental colleges, and polytechnics.
- ▶▶ **Extension of reservation:** The Act provides for reservation in appointment and promotions in certain state government posts to persons belonging to socially and educationally backward classes.
- ▶▶ It defines socially and educationally backward classes to include persons living in areas adjoining the Actual Line of Control.
- ▶▶ The Bill amends this to include those persons living in areas adjoining the International Border, within the ambit of this reservation.
- ▶▶ Further, the Act states that any person who has been appointed on the basis of residence in an area adjoining the Line of Control, must serve in such areas for at least seven years.

- ▶▶ The Bill extends this condition to persons living in areas adjoining the International Border as well.
- ▶▶ **Exclusion from Reservation:** The Act states that any person whose annual income exceeds three lakh rupees or other amount as notified by the state government, would not be included within socially and educationally backward classes.
- ▶▶ However, this exclusion does not apply to persons living in areas adjoining the Actual Line of Control. The Bill states that in addition, this exclusion will not apply to persons living in areas adjoining the International Border also.

## **NATIONAL POLICY ON SAFETY, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT AT WORKPLACE**

### **Aim:**

- ▶▶ To establish a preventive safety and health culture in the country through elimination of the incidence of work-related injuries, diseases, fatalities, disasters and to enhance the well-being of employees in all the sectors of economic activity in the country.

### **Steps taken Legislation:**

- ▶▶ Mines Act, 1952 has been enacted by Central Government to regulate the objectives of safety and health of workers in mines.
- ▶▶ In respect of factories, a comprehensive legislation in the form of the Factories Act, 1948, for taking care of the occupational safety and health aspects of the workers employed in factories registered under the Factories Act, 1948 has been enacted.

### **Recent tragedy:**

- ▶▶ Meghalaya mining accident.

### **Way Forward:**

- ▶▶ Reforms in labour laws are an ongoing process to update the legislative system to address the need of the hour so as to make them more effective, flexible and in sync with emerging economic and industrial scenario.
- ▶▶ The Ministry has taken steps for drafting four labour codes on Wages, Industrial Relations, Social Security & Welfare, and Occupation Safety, Health and Working conditions respectively, by simplifying, amalgamating and rationalizing the relevant provisions of the existing Central Labour Laws.

## THE DENTIST (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019

**Context:** The Dentist (Amendment) Bill, 2019 was recently passed in the monsoon session of the Parliament.

### About the Bill:

- ▶▶ The Bill amends the Dentists Act, 1948.
- ▶▶ The Act regulates the profession of dentistry and constitutes:
  1. **The Dental Council of India,**
  2. **State Dental Councils and**
  3. **Joint State Dental Councils.**
- ▶▶ A register of dentists is maintained under the Act in two parts, **Part A and Part B.** Persons possessing recognised dental qualifications are registered in Part A and persons not possessing such qualifications are registered in Part B.
- ▶▶ The persons in Part B are Indian citizens who have been practicing as dentists for at least five years prior to a registration date notified by the state government.

### Composition of the Dental Councils:

- ▶▶ Under the Act, composition of the Dental Council of India, State Dental Councils, and Joint State Dental Councils includes representation from dentists registered in Part B.
- ▶▶ The Bill seeks to remove the mandatory requirement of the representation of dentists registered in Part B in these Councils.

## CENTRAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS (RESERVATION IN TEACHERS' CADRE) BILL, 2019

### Why in News?

- ▶▶ The Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Teachers' Cadre) Bill, 2019 has been passed by both the houses of Parliament.

### Highlights:

- ▶▶ The Bill replaces the "The Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Teachers' Cadre) Ordinance, 2019". The new bill considers the University/College as one unit restoring earlier reservation system based on 200-point roster.
- ▶▶ No longer will 'Department/Subject' be treated as one unit.
- ▶▶ This Decision Will:
  - ❖ Allow up of more than 7000 existing vacancies in Central Educational Institutions and pave the way for filling up 3 lakh vacancies in the Government (Central and State) Educational institutions by direct recruitment in Teacher's Cadre.

- ❖ Ensure compliance of the Constitutional Provisions of Articles 14, 16 and 21.
- ❖ Ensure full representation of the Scheduled Castes/ the Scheduled Tribes, the socially and Educationally Backward Classes and Economically Weaker Sections in direct recruitment in teachers' cadres.
- ▶▶ This decision is also expected to improve the teaching standards in the higher educational institutions by attracting all eligible talented candidates belonging SCs/STs/SEBCs/EWS.
- ▶▶ It will also ensure providing of 10% reservation to EWS.

## **SURROGACY (REGULATION) BILL, 2019**

### **Why in News?**

- ▶▶ The Cabinet has approved the introduction of Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2019 that aims to prohibit commercial surrogacy in India.

### **Highlights:**

- ▶▶ The Bill proposes to regulate surrogacy in India by establishing a National Surrogacy Board at the central level and state surrogacy boards and appropriate authorities in the state and Union Territories. The purpose of the Bill is to ensure effective regulation of surrogacy, prohibit commercial surrogacy, and allow ethical surrogacy.
- ▶▶ While commercial surrogacy will be prohibited, including sale and purchase of human embryos and gametes, ethical surrogacy for needy couples will be allowed on fulfilment of stipulated conditions.
- ▶▶ It will also prevent exploitation of surrogate mothers and children born through surrogacy.
- ▶▶ There will not be any financial implications, except for the meetings of the National and State Surrogacy Boards and appropriate authorities, which will be met out of the administrative budgets of respective departments.

### **Concerns with Commercial Surrogacy:**

- ▶▶ Procreation is not just about furthering the family lineage, but also about succession, tradition and legality.
- ▶▶ Having a child is about putting a biological system in place, not just caring for societal mores. There is therefore a need to define the legality and ethicality of the practice.
- ▶▶ Commercial surrogacy can lead to complaints of exploitation of women, especially those from the economically weaker section, because it would involve financial compensation, the adequacy of which can always be challenged.
- ▶▶ Pregnancy remains a biological phenomenon, with its attendant complications, necessitating proper medical care, the grossness of which could be open to challenge in

case something goes wrong. Children born out of surrogacy can also face the problems of citizenship, abandonment and abuse, another aspect that needs to be taken care of.

- ▶▶ There is also the problem of jurisdiction because not all countries permit it. Couples wanting a surrogacy arrangement may travel to a country that permits it.

## **UNLAWFUL ACTIVITIES (PREVENTION) AMENDMENT BILL, 2019**

**Context-** The UAPA Bill that seeks to allow an individual suspected to have terror links to be designated a terrorist

### **Features:**

- ▶▶ The Bill, seek “to introduce fourth schedule to add or remove the name of individual terrorists. will allow the Central government to designate individual terrorist and bring in embargo on arms/assets seizures.
- ▶▶ The individual however can appeal against the inclusion of his/her name and seek a hearing before the review committee, constituted by the Central government under UAPA.

### **Issues with new UAPA Bill:**

- ▶▶ In the name of tackling terror, fundamental rights of an individual can be foregone

### **Issues already with Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, 1967 (UAPA).**

- ▶▶ It casts such a wide net of offences that it makes all kinds of legitimate, constitutionally protected activity an offence: the police can choose who they want to prosecute, when and for what reason.
- ▶▶ It allows for persons to be held in custody for six months before they get to know the case against them. Bail is so stringent as to be almost unavailable, this is an affront to the 'dignity' and the 'presumption of innocence' that our Constitution entitles all of us to.
- ▶▶ It reverses the presumption of innocence and presumes guilt, a guarantee of wrongful imprisonment and false convictions.

## **NATIONAL INVESTIGATION AGENCY (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019**

**Context-** Union government on Monday introduced the National Investigation Agency (Amendment) Bill, 2019 in Lok Sabha

### **Features of Bill:**

- ▶▶ A Bill seeking to further strengthen the National Investigation Agency (NIA) by giving it powers to probe terror attacks targeting Indians and Indian interests on foreign soil
- ▶▶ legislation will also allow the NIA probe Cyber-Crimes and cases of human trafficking.

- ▶▶ agency will be empowered to conduct investigation in any part of the world if any terror attack targeting Indians or Indian interests takes place.

### **National Investigation Agency (NIA):**

- ▶▶ The NIA was set up in 2009 in the wake of the Mumbai terror attack
- ▶▶ NIA Act was enacted in 2008 and the National Investigation Agency (NIA) was born.
- ▶▶ At present NIA is functioning as the Central Counter Terrorism Law Enforcement Agency in India.

## **AADHAAR AND OTHER LAWS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019**

**Context-** Parliament cleared the Aadhaar and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2019

### **Features:**

- ▶▶ which allows **voluntary use of Aadhaar as proof of identity to open bank accounts** and get mobile phone connections.
- ▶▶ The law ensures **no Individual is ever denied any service for not having or producing Aadhaar for authentication.**
- ▶▶ An Aadhaar holder can now opt for offline verification through QR code with consent.
- ▶▶ It had also barred private companies from using the unique identity number for authenticating customers.
- ▶▶ The amendments in the law will enable the **Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI)**—the authority responsible for issuing Aadhaar numbers—to hold back the misuse of 12-digit identification number.
- ▶▶ UIDAI can also impose a penalty of up to ₹1 crore if an entity fails to comply with the Aadhaar law and does not provide information sought by UIDAI.

## **BANNING OF UNREGULATED DEPOSIT SCHEMES BILL, 2019**

### **Why in News?**

- ▶▶ The Union Cabinet has approved the banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill, 2019. It will replace the banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Ordinance, 2019.

### **Impact:**

- ▶▶ The Bill will help tackle the menace of illicit deposit taking activities in the country, which at present are exploiting regulatory gaps and lack of strict administrative measures to dupe poor and gullible people of their hard-earned savings.

### **Salient Features of the Bill:**

- ▶▶ The Bill contains a substantive banning clause which bans Deposit Takers from promoting, operating, issuing advertisements or accepting deposits in any Unregulated Deposit Scheme.
- ▶▶ The principle is that the Bill would ban unregulated deposit taking activities altogether, by making them an offence ex-ante rather than the existing legislative-cum-regulatory framework which only comes into effect ex-post with considerable time lags;
- ▶▶ The Bill creates three different types of offences, namely, running of Unregulated Deposit Schemes, fraudulent default in Regulated Deposit Schemes, and wrongful inducement in relation to Unregulated Deposit Schemes.
- ▶▶ The Bill provides for severe punishment and heavy pecuniary fines to act as deterrent.
- ▶▶ The Bill has adequate provisions for disgorgement or repayment of deposits in cases where such schemes nonetheless manage to raise deposits illegally.
- ▶▶ The Bill provides for attachment of properties / assets by the Competent Authority, and subsequent realization of assets for repayment to depositors;
- ▶▶ Clear-cut time lines have been provided for attachment of property and restitution to depositors; The Bill enables creation of an online central database, for collection and sharing of information on deposit-taking activities in the country;
- ▶▶ The Bill defines “Deposit Taker” and “Deposit” comprehensively;
- ▶▶ “Deposit Takers” include all possible entities (including individuals) receiving or soliciting deposits, except specific entities such as those incorporated by legislation; “Deposit” is defined in such a manner that deposit-takers are restricted from camouflaging public deposits as receipts, and at the same time, not to curb or hinder acceptance of money by an establishment in the ordinary course of its business; and Being a comprehensive Union Law, the Bill adopts best practices from State laws, while entrusting the primary responsibility of implementing the provisions of the legislation to the State Governments.

## **MODEL TENANCY ACT**

### **Why in News?**

- ▶▶ The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has drafted a ‘Model Tenancy Act’, 2019 which envisages to balance the interest and rights of both the owner and tenant and to create an accountable and transparent ecosystem for renting the premises in disciplined and efficient manner.

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### **Model Tenancy Act:**

- ▶▶ Act will enable creation of adequate rental housing stock for various income segments of society including migrants, formal and informal sector workers, professionals, students etc. and increase access to quality rented accommodation, enable gradual formalization of rental housing market.
- ▶▶ It will help overhaul the legal framework vis-à-vis rental housing across the country.
- ▶▶ It is also expected to give a fillip to private participation in rental housing for addressing the huge housing shortage across the country.
- ▶▶ The Draft MTA will also promote growth of rental housing and investment in the sector and promote entrepreneurial opportunities and innovative mechanism of sharing of space. This MTA will be applicable prospectively and will not affect the existing tenancies.

### **Features of Draft Model Tenancy Act:**

- ▶▶ MTA stipulates a robust grievance redressal mechanism comprising of Rent Authority, Rent Court and Rent Tribunal.
- ▶▶ It has been proposed to cap the security deposit equal to a maximum of two month's rent in case of residential properties and, minimum of one month's rent in case of non-residential property.
- ▶▶ After coming into force of this Act, no person shall let or take on rent any premises except by an agreement in writing.
- ▶▶ The Model Act provides for its applicability for the whole of the State i.e. urban as well as rural areas in the State.
- ▶▶ Within two months of executing rental agreement both landowner and tenant are required to intimate to the Rent Authority about the agreement and within seven days a unique identification number will be issued by the Rent Authority to the both the parties.
- ▶▶ A digital platform will be set up in the local vernacular language of the State for submitting tenancy agreement and other documents.
- ▶▶ A copy of the draft Act has also been shared with the States/UTs for seeking their views/comments.
- ▶▶ Once finalized the Model Act will be shared with the States/Union Territory (UTs) for adoption.

### **Significance:**

- ▶▶ As per Census 2011, nearly 1.1 crore houses were lying vacant in the country and making these houses available on rent will complement the vision of 'Housing for All' by 2022.

- ▶▶ The existing rent control laws are restricting the growth of rental housing and discourage the owners from renting out their vacant houses due to fear of repossession.
- ▶▶ One of the potential measures to unlock the vacant house is to bringing transparency and accountability in the existing system of renting of premises and to balance the interests of both the property owner and tenant in a judicious manner.

## **INTER-STATE RIVER WATER DISPUTES (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019**

### **Why in News?**

- ▶▶ Cabinet approves Inter-State River Water disputes (Amendment) Bill, 2019. The Bill seeks to amend the Inter State River Water Disputes Act, 1956 with a view to streamline the adjudication of inter-state river water disputes and make the present institutional architecture robust.

### **Features of the bill:**

- ▶▶ The Bill requires the central government to set up a Disputes Resolution Committee (DRC), for resolving any inter-state water dispute amicably. The DRC will get a period of one year, extendable by six months, to submit its report to the central government.
- ▶▶ Members of the DRC will be from relevant fields, as deemed fit by the central government.
- ▶▶ The Bill proposes to set up an Inter-State River Water Disputes Tribunal for adjudication of water disputes, if a dispute is not resolved through the DRC. This tribunal can have multiple benches.
- ▶▶ All existing tribunals will be dissolved and the water disputes pending adjudication before such existing tribunals will be transferred to this newly formed tribunal. The tribunal shall consist of a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and not more than six nominated members (judges of the Supreme Court or of a High Court), nominated by the Chief Justice of India.

## **MOTOR VEHICLES (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019**

### **Why in News?**

- ▶▶ Minister for Road Transport and Highways has been in the news as he pushes the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, 2019 in Parliament.
- ▶▶ The amendments proposed by the government to the existing Motor Vehicles Act of 1988 essentially focus on improving road safety.

### **Key elements of the Proposed Amendment:**

#### **Minimum Compensation:**

- ▶▶ The Bill proposes to increase the minimum compensation for hit and run cases.

- ▶▶ In particular, in case of death, such compensation would vary from Rs 25,000 to Rs 2 Lakh. In the case of grievous injury, it would vary from Rs 12,500 to Rs 50,000.
- ▶▶ Beyond road safety, the Bill also increases penalties for several offences such as driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs.

#### **Cashless treatment of victims:**

- ▶▶ The Bill also enables the Central government to develop a scheme for cashless treatment of road accident victims during the “golden hour” (first 60 minutes following the injury during which doctors have the best chance of saving a life).

#### **Accident Fund:**

- ▶▶ The government’s insurance scheme is likely to be funded through a Motor Vehicle Accident Fund that the central government is expected to constitute to provide compulsory insurance cover to all road users in India.
- ▶▶ This fund will be available for the treatment of the injured.

#### **Defining Good Samaritan:**

- ▶▶ The Bill also defines a good Samaritan as a person who renders emergency medical or non-medical assistance to a victim at the scene of an accident.
- ▶▶ However, to be seen as one, such assistance must have been given in good faith, voluntarily, and without the expectation of any reward.
- ▶▶ If these conditions are met, such a person will not be liable for any civil or criminal action for any injury to or death of an accident victim, caused due to their negligence in assisting the victim.

#### **National Road Safety Board:**

- ▶▶ The Bill also proposes a National Road Safety Board which will advise the central and state governments on all aspects of road safety and traffic management.
- ▶▶ The Bill also enables the central government to order a recall of motor vehicles if it is found that they are defective and can cause harm to other road users or the environment.
- ▶▶ In case of such a recall, the manufacturers would either have to replace the faulty vehicle or pay full compensation to the customer.

#### **Regulating Digital Intermediaries:**

- ▶▶ The Bill also attempts to plug a policy gap that has been introduced by the emergence of shared economy concepts and technology.
- ▶▶ As such, it defines taxi aggregators as digital intermediaries or market places which can be used by passengers to connect with a driver for transportation purposes.

- ▶▶ These aggregators will be issued licenses by state, but they must also comply with the Information Technology Act, 2000.

## **AMENDMENT TO RIGHT TO INFORMATION (RTI) ACT**

**Context-** Government introduces Bill to amend the RTI Act.

### **Provisions of The Proposed Bill:**

#### **Tenure of CIC and IC:**

- ▶▶ The Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) and Information Commissioner (ICs) have a tenure of five years. The Bill proposes that the tenure of the CICs and ICs should depend on the Central Government.

#### **Salary of CIC and IC:**

- ▶▶ The salaries of CIC and ICs in the Centre are equivalent to salaries of Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners in the Centre.
- ▶▶ Similarly, the salaries of CIC and ICs in states are equivalent to salaries of Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners in the state.
- ▶▶ The new bill says that the salaries of CIC and ICs both in Centre and State must be decided by the Central Government.

#### **Provision of Pension:**

- ▶▶ The Act says that if the CIC and ICs both in State and Centre are receiving a pension or any other retirement benefits for previous government service, then their salaries are reduced by an amount equal to the pension.
- ▶▶ The amendment wants to remove these provisions.
- ▶▶ In the above context, the government service means, services under the central government, state government, corporation established under a central or state law, or company-owned or controlled by the central or state government.

#### **Opposing Arguments:**

- ▶▶ Move will take away independence of the Commissions, highest adjudicating bodies in the matter of the RTI Act.
- ▶▶ The efficacy of the RTI Act, allowing any Indian to seek information from any authority on the payment of Rs 10, hinges closely on the independence of the CIC and its equivalents in the states -- state information commissions that adjudicate the matter in case information is not furnished to applicants within the parameters of the law.
- ▶▶ Government has brought about the bill in complete secrecy and there have been no public consultations on the bill.

## RTI Act 2005

### Background:

- ▶ **The Right to Information Act 2005 or RTI 2005**, came into force in order to encourage a corruption free, transparent and accountable form of government in which the citizens feel a sense of power and safety.
- ▶ **RTI 2005 is applicable to all states of India except for Jammu and Kashmir.**

### Provisions:

- ▶ Under the Act, a citizen can demand from any public or government authority any information (as long as it does not pertain to national security and defence or some personal information) and the authority is supposed to respond within a **period of 30 days** to the application.

### RTI Act Information Exclusions:

- ▶ Under section 8 of the RTI Act, 2005 Govt/public authorities are exempted from sharing following information:
  1. Affecting the Sovereignty, Integrity, Security, Strategic interest, Scientific interest or Economic interest of the State of India
  2. Affecting relation of State of India with foreign State
  3. Forbidden by any court of law in India
  4. Breach of privilege of State assembly or Parliament of India
  5. Intellectual Property Rights, Copyright, Commercial Confidence or Trade Secrets
  6. Available to a person in his fiduciary relationship, unless disclosure is required in larger public interest
  7. Received from foreign Government
  8. Risk the life or physical safety of any person
  9. Impact or obstruct legal investigation
  10. Minutes of Union Cabinet meeting including discussion between Ministers, Secretaries or Govt officers
  11. Personal information i.e. breach of Privacy

### Constitutional Validation:

- ▶ Under section article 19 (1) (a), the Supreme Court of India has held that rights to freedom of speech and expression includes the rights to information. According to this the right to information is implicit in the right to freedom of speech.

- ▶▶ All the citizens must have the **right to get correct information** in every sphere of their life. The apex court of India has ensured this right in the case of state of Uttar Pradesh” Vs Raj Narain (1974) 4 SCC 428. It is impossible for any democratic country to stand without the right to information for its citizen.

### **International Conventions:**

- ▶▶ The United Nation Organization (UN proclaimed a Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.
- ▶▶ This was followed by The International Covenant On Civil and Political Rights.
- ▶▶ Article 19 of the covenant declares that – “Everyone has the’ rights of freedom of opinion and expression the rights includes freedom to hold opinion without interference; and to seek, and receive and **import information** and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers”.

## **PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019**

### **Why in News?**

- ▶▶ Lok Sabha has passed The Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Bill, 2019.

### **Why such Amendment?**

- ▶▶ The Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 was enacted to provide for the constitution of a National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), the State HRC and the Human Rights Courts for protection of human rights.
- ▶▶ Certain State Governments have proposed for amendment as they have been facing difficulties in finding suitable candidates to the post of Chairperson of the respective SHRCs owing to the existing eligibility criteria.
- ▶▶ The proposed amendments will enable both the NHRC and SHRCs to be more compliant with the Paris Principles.

### **Highlights:**

- ▶▶ A person who has been a Judge of the Supreme Court is also made eligible to be appointed as Chairperson of the Commission in addition to the person who has been the CJI;
- ▶▶ To increase the Members of the NHRC from two to three of which, one shall be a woman;
- ▶▶ To include Chairperson of the National Commission for Backward Classes, Chairperson of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights and the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities as deemed Members of the Commission;
- ▶▶ To reduce the term of the Chairperson and Members of the NHRC and the SHRCs from five to three years and shall be eligible for re-appointment;

- ▶▶ To provide that a person who has been a Judge of a High Court is also made eligible to be appointed as Chairperson of the SHRC in addition to the person who has been the Chief Justice of the High Court; and,
- ▶▶ To confer upon State Commissions, the functions relating to human rights being discharged by the UTs, other than the UT of Delhi which will be dealt with by the Commission.

## **CODE ON OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY, HEALTH AND WORKING CONDITIONS BILL, 2019**

### **Why in News?**

- ▶▶ The Minister of State (I/C) for Labour and Employment Shri Santosh Kumar Gangwar introduced The Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Bill, 2019 in Lok Sabha today to amend the laws regulating the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions of the persons employed in an establishment.

### **Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Bill, 2019:**

- ▶▶ With the ultimate aim of extending the safety and healthy working conditions to all workforce of the country, the Code enhances the ambit of provisions of safety, health, welfare and working conditions from existing about 9 major sectors to all establishments having 10 or more employees.
- ▶▶ The proposed Code enhances the coverage of workers manifold as it would be applicable to all establishments employing 10 or more workers, where any industry, trade, business, manufacture or occupation is carried on, including, IT establishments or establishments of service sector.
- ▶▶ Further the varying threshold of applicability has been made uniform at 10 workers for all establishments except mines and dock where the Code would be applicable even with 1 worker. In order to ensure wider coverage, the definitions of Working Journalists and Cine worker have also been modified to include workers employed in electronic media and all forms of audio-visual production.
- ▶▶ Similarly, the definition of inter-state migrant worker has also been proposed to be modified to include those migrant workers who are being employed directly by the employer from other States without contractor or agent. This proposal would enhance the coverage of the safety, health and working conditions provisions manifold as compared to the present scenario.

## Other Features:

- ▶▶ The Code provides basic broad legislative framework with enabling provisions for framing rules, regulations, standards, and bye-laws as per the requirements of different sectors which has Resulted in reduction of 622 sections to 134 sections in the Code. This would result in simple legislation with flexibility in changing the provisions in tune with emerging technologies and makes the legislation dynamic.
- ▶▶ The Bill proposes one registration for an establishment instead of multiple registrations. Presently 6 labour acts out of 13 provide for separate registration of the establishment. This will create a centralized data base and promote ease of doing business. At present, separate registration is required to be obtained under 6 Acts.
- ▶▶ Employer to provide free of cost annual health checks-up for employees above prescribed age for prescribed tests and for prescribed establishments. Increases productivity as it would be possible to detect diseases.
- ▶▶ Coverage of employees above a certain age for health check-up would promote inclusion.
- ▶▶ First time statutory provision to issue appointment letter to every employee of the establishment with the minimum information prescribed by the appropriate government. The provision of appointment letter will result in formalization of employment and prevent exploitation of the worker.
- ▶▶ The multiple committees under five labour Acts have been substituted by one National Occupational Safety and Health Advisory Board. The National Board is of tripartite nature and has representation from trade unions, employer associations, and State governments. This will result in reduction in multiplicity of bodies/committees in various Acts and simplified and coordinated policy-making.
- ▶▶ Enabling provision for constituting a bi-partite Safety Committee in any class of establishment by appropriate government. It will promote safe and healthy working conditions in an establishment. The participatory nature of the committee will encourage implementation of decisions taken by the management.
- ▶▶ A part of the penalty for contravention of provisions relating to duties of employer leading to death or serious bodily injury to any person may be given to the victim or the legal heirs of the victim by the Court. The part of penalty would help in rehabilitation of injured worker or would provide financial support to the family of deceased.
- ▶▶ Presently, different applicability thresholds exists for welfare provisions like crèche, canteen, first aid, welfare officer etc in different Acts. The proposed Code has envisaged uniform threshold for welfare provisions for all establishment as far as practicably feasible.

- ▶▶ Women permitted to work beyond 7 PM and before 6 AM subject to the safety, holidays, working hours or any other condition as prescribed by appropriate government in respect of prescribed establishments.
- ▶▶ However, only after taking their consent for night work.
- ▶▶ This will promote gender equality and is in tune with demands from the various forums including international organizations as it leads to protective discrimination.
- ▶▶ Further, the condition of taking consent/ willingness of the women employee for night work would avoid any kind of misuse of the provision.
- ▶▶ The provision of one license and one return in place of multiple licenses and returns in existing 13 labour laws subsumed in this Code to save time, resources and efforts of establishments.

## **COMPANIES (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019**

### **Why in News?**

- ▶▶ Lok Sabha passed the Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2019. The legislation is aimed at tightening the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) compliance.

### **Significance of The Bill:**

- ▶▶ The amendment will tighten the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) compliance and would reduce the load of cases before the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT).
- ▶▶ It would ensure a greater accountability, better enforcement of the corporate governance norms and compliance management in corporate sector.
- ▶▶ With the amendments, procedural and technical defaults would be decriminalised while compliance would be incentivised.

### **Highlights of The Bill:**

#### **Re-categorisation of certain Offences:**

- ▶▶ The 2013 Act contains 81 compoundable offences punishable with fine or fine or imprisonment, or both. These offences are heard by courts.
- ▶▶ The Bill re-categorizes 16 of these offences as civil defaults, where adjudicating officers (appointed by the central government) may now levy penalties instead.
- ▶▶ These offences include:
  1. Issuance of shares at a discount, and
  2. Failure to file annual return. Further, the Bill amends the penalties for some other offences.

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### **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):**

- ▶ Under the Act, if companies which have to provide for CSR, do not fully spent the funds, they must disclose the reasons for non-spending in their annual report.
- ▶ Under the Bill, any unspent annual CSR funds must be transferred to one of the funds under Schedule 7 of the Act (e.g., PM Relief Fund) within six months of the financial year.
- ▶ However, if the CSR funds are committed to certain ongoing projects, then the unspent funds will have to be transferred to an Unspent CSR Account within 30 days of the end of the financial year, and spent within three years.
- ▶ Any funds remaining unspent after three years will have to be transferred to one of the funds under Schedule 7 of the Act.
- ▶ Any violation may attract a fine between Rs 50,000 and Rs 25,00,000 and every defaulting officer may be punished with imprisonment of up to three years or fine between Rs 50,000 and Rs 25,00,000, or both.

### **Debarring auditors:**

- ▶ Under the Act, the National Financial Reporting Authority debar a member or firm from practising as a Chartered Accountant for a period between six months to 10 years, for proven misconduct.
- ▶ The Bill amends the punishment to provide for debarment from appointment as an auditor or internal auditor of a company, or performing a company's valuation, for a period between six months to 10 years.

### **Commencement of Business:**

- ▶ The Bill states that a company may not commence business, unless it (i) files a declaration within 180 days of incorporation, confirming that every subscriber to the Memorandum of the company has paid for the shares agreed to be taken by him, and (ii) files a verification of its registered address with the RoC within 30 days of incorporation.
- ▶ If it fails to comply with these provisions and is found not to be carrying out business, its name of the company may be removed from the Register of Companies.

### **Registration of charges:**

- ▶ The Act requires companies to register charges (e.g., mortgages) on their property within 30 days of creation of charge, extendable upto 300 days with the permission of the RoC.
- ▶ The Bill changes the deadline to 60 days (extendable by 60 days).

### **Change in approving authority:**

- ▶ Under the Act, change in period of financial year for a company associated with a foreign company, has to be approved by the National Company Law Tribunal.

- ▶▶ Similarly, any alteration in the incorporation document of a public company which has the effect of converting it to a private company, has to be approved by the Tribunal. Under the Bill, these powers have been transferred to central government.

#### **Compounding:**

- ▶▶ Under the Act, a regional director can compound (settle) offences with a penalty of up to five lakh rupees. The Bill increases this ceiling to Rs 25 lakh.

#### **Bar on holding office:**

- ▶▶ Under the Act, the central government or certain shareholders can apply to the NCLT for relief against mismanagement of the affairs of the company.
- ▶▶ The Bill states that in such a complaint, the government may also make a case against an officer of the company on the ground that he is not fit to hold office in the company, for reasons such as fraud or negligence.
- ▶▶ If the NCLT passes an order against the officer, he will not be eligible to hold office in any company for five years.

#### **Beneficial Ownership:**

- ▶▶ If a person holds beneficial interest of at least 25% shares in a company or exercises significant influence or control over the company, he is required to make a declaration of his interest.
- ▶▶ The Bill requires every company to take steps to identify an individual who is a significant beneficial owner and require their compliance under the Act.

## **CONSUMER PROTECTION BILL, 2019**

#### **Context:**

The Lok Sabha unanimously passed the **Consumer Protection Bill 2019**, which seeks to wholly replace the Consumer Protection Act 1986.

#### **About:**

- ▶▶ The Bill with 109 clauses seeks to establish a **National Level Regulator -Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)** to deal with consumer complaints on a proactive measure.
- ▶▶ The present law does not have a regulator.
- ▶▶ The Bill contains key provisions dealing with class actions, product liability, misleading advertisements, liability for celebrity endorsements etc.
- ▶▶ The Bill also addresses new age developments like e-commerce, direct selling, tele-marketing etc.

## Highlights of The Bill:

### Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA):

- ▶▶ **CCPA is a national level regulator** dealing with matters relating to violation of rights of consumers, unfair trade practices and false or **misleading advertisements** which are prejudicial to the interests of public and consumers.
- ▶▶ **CCPA deals with the rights of consumers as a class.**
- ▶▶ It will have an investigation wing headed by a Director General and has powers of search and seizure.
- ▶▶ It has **power to order recall of goods** which are dangerous, hazardous or unsafe and to direct discontinuation of practices which are unfair and prejudicial to the interests of consumers.
- ▶▶ It also has the power to impose penalties on manufacturers and celebrity endorsers for misleading advertisements.

### Misleading Advertisements:

- ▶▶ The Bill contains provisions to deal with misleading advertisements.
- ▶▶ Misleading advertisements can attract penalty up to rupees ten lakhs from the CCPA under Clause 21.
- ▶▶ It is also an offence punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to five years and with fine which may extend to fifty lakh rupees as per Clause 89.

### Liability of Celebrity Endorsers:

- ▶▶ The endorser can be levied with penalty up to rupees ten lakhs by the CCPA for false and misleading advertisements, under Clause 21.
- ▶▶ However, the **endorser will not be liable if he has exercised due diligence to verify the veracity of the claims** made in the advertisement regarding the product or service being endorsed by him.

### Product Liability:

- ▶▶ A product liability action may be brought by a complainant against a product manufacturer or a product service provider or a product seller, as the case may be, for any harm caused to him on account of a defective product.

### Expanded Definition Of 'Deficiency':

- ▶▶ The Bill expands the definition of 'deficiency' in Clause 2(11) to include:
  1. Any act of negligence or omission or commission by such person which causes loss or injury to the consumer; and
  2. Deliberate withholding of relevant information by such person to the consumer.

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### **Enhanced Pecuniary Jurisdiction:**

- ▶▶ The limits of pecuniary jurisdiction has been expanded in the following manner:
  - ❖ District Forum: Rs. One Crore from Rs. Twenty Lakhs
  - ❖ State Commission: Rs. Ten Crores from Rs. One Crore
  - ❖ National Commission: Above Rs. Ten Crores from Rs. One Crores.

### **Offences:**

- ▶▶ Misleading advertisements are made punishable.
- ▶▶ The Bill also addresses the menace of adulteration, by making manufacture, sale, storage of products mixed with adulterants punishable offences.



## 2. SOCIAL ISSUES

### THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL OFFENCES (POCSO) ACT, 2012

#### About POCSO Act:

- ▶▶ The Act seeks to protect children from offences such as sexual assault, sexual harassment, and pornography.
- ▶▶ The Act defines a child as **any person below eighteen years** of age.
- ▶▶ It defines different forms of sexual abuse, including penetrative **and non-penetrative assault**, as well as **sexual harassment** and **pornography**, and deems a sexual assault to be “**aggravated**” under certain circumstances, such as when the abused child is mentally ill or when the abuse is committed by a person in a position of trust or authority vis-a-vis the child, like a family member, police officer, teacher, or doctor.
- ▶▶ The Act also makes it **mandatory to report** such cases. It makes it the **legal duty of a person** aware of the offence to report the sexual abuse. In case he fails to do so, the person can be punished with six months’ imprisonment or fine.
- ▶▶ The Act provides that each district shall designate a Sessions Court to be a **Special Court**. It shall be established by the state government in consultation with the Chief Justice of the High Court.
- ▶▶ The Court shall, as far as possible, complete the **trial within one year**. The trial shall be held **in camera** and in the presence of the child’s parents or any person trusted by the child.
- ▶▶ The **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights/ State Commission for Protection of Child Rights** is mandated to monitor the implementation of the Act.
- ▶▶ It also provides for **relief and rehabilitation of the child**, as soon as the complaint is made. The Special Juvenile Police Unit or the local police are also required to report the matter to the **Child Welfare Committee** within 24 hours of recording the complaint, for long term rehabilitation of the child.
- ▶▶ Recently the government has introduced in Lok Sabha amendments to the POCSO Act, which provides for death penalty for aggravated sexual assault on children, making it gender neutral and introducing provisions against child pornography and for enhancing punishment for certain offences.

#### POCSO e-box:

- ▶▶ It is a **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) initiative** to help children report such crimes directly to the Commission.

- ▶▶ The **online complaint management** system enables easy reporting and timely action against the offenders under the POCSO Act, 2012.

#### **National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights:**

- ▶▶ This **statutory body** at the National and State level has been set up under the **Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act 2005**.
- ▶▶ It is under the control of the **Ministry of Women & Child Development**, set up in 2007.
- ▶▶ It consists of one Chairman and Six other members (out of which at least two are woman having experience in Child Psychology, Education etc.).

### **ONLY 20% OF NIRBHAYA FUND HAS BEEN USED BY STATES**

#### **Context:**

The States and Union Territories have utilised less than 20% of the budget allocated to them under the Nirbhaya Fund for safety of women by the Central government between 2015 and 2018.

#### **About Nirbhaya Fund:**

- ▶▶ It is a dedicated fund **set up by Ministry of Finance**, in 2013, for implementation of initiatives aimed at enhancing the safety and security for women in the country.
- ▶▶ It is a non-lapsable corpus fund.
- ▶▶ **Ministry of Women and Child Development** is the **nodal Ministry** to appraise schemes under Nirbhaya Fund and also to review and monitor the progress of sanctioned Schemes in conjunction with the line Ministries/Departments.
- ▶▶ **Central Victim Compensation Fund** has been created under Nirbhaya, which is a corpus fund to support States/UTs for their Victim Compensation Scheme. This helps in ensuring adequate and timely support for women survivors of crime and violence.

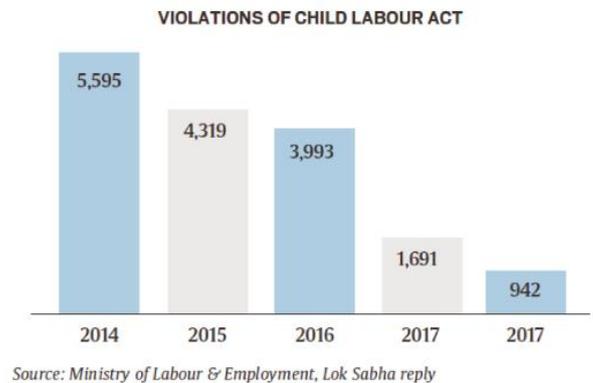
#### **Recent initiatives under Nirbhaya Fund:**

##### **One stop centres:**

- ▶▶ It is a sub-scheme under **National Mission for Empowerment of Women being run by Ministry of Women & Child Development**.
- ▶▶ It is aimed at supporting women affected by violence in private and public spaces, within the family, community and at the workplace.
- ▶▶ Establishment of OSCs was one of the key components of Nirbhaya Fund. Every OSC is integrated with newly operational Women's Helpline (181).

### Safe city project:

- ▶▶ **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** has approved a Safe City project for Lucknow at a total cost of Rs.194.44 crore under the Nirbhaya Fund Scheme.
- ▶▶ This approval is a part of MHA's plans to implement Safe City projects in 8 selected cities, namely, Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad and Lucknow under Nirbhaya Fund with the purpose of strengthening safety and security of women in public places.



- ▶▶ The project is implemented with collaboration of the **Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Urban Development, Ministry of Electronic and Information Technology, respective municipal and police commissioners** of the cities besides civil society organizations.

### Mahila Police Volunteer:

- ▶▶ The **Ministry of Women and Child Development** in collaboration with the **Ministry of Home Affairs** has envisaged engagement of **Mahila Police Volunteers (MPVs)** in the States/UTs who will act as a **link between police and community** and help women in distress.
- ▶▶ **Haryana** is the first state to adopt this initiative.
- ▶▶ For implementing the initiative of Mahila Police Volunteer, fund will be released out of Nirbhaya Fund to the States.

## CHILD LABOUR

### Context:

Instances of child labour detected during inspections have reduced successively from 2014 to 2018, figures presented by the government in Lok Sabha show.

Child labour cases: trend shows decline, govt says will eradicate it

### Constitution on Child Labour:

- ▶▶ The Indian Constitution ensures the right of all children (6-14 years) to free and compulsory education and prohibits their employment in hazardous occupations; and promotes policies protecting children from exploitation.

### **Laws Prohibiting Child Labour:**

- ▶▶ The Child Labour Act was amended in 2016 and the amendment provides for complete prohibition of work or employment of children below age 14 in any occupation and process and prohibition of adolescents in the age group 14-18 in hazardous occupations and processes.
- ▶▶ The Amendment Act also provides for strict punishment of employers for violation of the Act and has made the offence cognisable.

### **National Child Labour Project (NCLP)**

- ▶▶ Under the scheme, children aged 9-14 are rescued/withdrawn from work and enrolled in NCLP Special Training Centres before being mainstreamed into the formal education system.
- ▶▶ Children aged 5-8 are directly linked to the formal education system through close coordination with the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

### **What type of Works:**

- ▶▶ Engaged in manual work, in domestic work in family homes, in rural labour in the agricultural sector including cotton growing, at glass, match box and brass and lock-making factories, in embroidery, rag-picking, beedi rolling, in the carpet-making industry, in mining and stone quarrying, brick kilns and tea gardens amongst others.
- ▶▶ Gender Specific Work girls performing more domestic and home-based work, boys are more often employed in wage labour.

### **Factors which lead to Child Labour:**

- ▶▶ It is a multi-dimensional problem that involves various reasons contributing to it in a variety of ways. continued poverty, illiteracy and ignorance of poor parents, population explosion-large family size, low family income, the tradition of making children learn the family skill, lack of political will and weak/tardy enforcement of laws, unemployment/under-employment, migration, absence of provision for universal compulsory primary education.
- ▶▶ Employers Preference for Child Labour
- ▶▶ The most important objective of the employer is to earn more profit on limited expenditure

### **National Legislations regarding Child Labour:**

- ▶▶ Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016
- ▶▶ National Policy on Child Labour (1987) which focuses upon rehabilitation of such children
- ▶▶ Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015.

- ▶▶ India has recently ratified two of the ILO (International Labour Organisation) Conventions on Child labour i.e. o Minimum Age Convention 1993 o Worst forms of Child Labour Convention 1999.
- ▶▶ Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016
- ▶▶ It amends the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986.
- ▶▶ The major amendments include Extends this ban on employment of children under 14 across all sectors, o Prohibits the employment of adolescents aged 14-18 years in hazardous occupations and Introduces more stringent jail term and fines for offenders: a jail term of six months to two years and a fine up to Rs 50,000.
- ▶▶ The Bill adds a new category of persons called “adolescent”. An adolescent means a person between 14 and 18 years of age. The Bill prohibits employment of adolescents in hazardous occupations as specified (mines, inflammable substance and hazardous processes).
- ▶▶ It brings down the list of hazardous occupations from the earlier 83 to just three: mining, inflammable substances, and hazardous processes under the Factories Act, and the centre will decide which processes are hazardous.
- ▶▶ The Act has a provision of creating Rehabilitation Fund has also been made for the rehabilitation of children.

#### **ILO Convention upon Child Labour:**

- ▶▶ Recently India ratified the two fundamental ILO Conventions concerning the elimination of child labour, India ratify ILO Convention No.138, which requires States party to set a minimum age under which no one shall be admitted to employment or work in any occupation, except for light work and artistic performances.
- ▶▶ Convention No. 182. The latter calls for the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including slavery, forced labour and trafficking; the use of children in armed conflict; the use of a child for prostitution, pornography and in illicit activities (such as drug trafficking); and hazardous work.

#### **Conclusion:**

- ▶▶ The phenomenon of child labour is multi-dimensional complex problem and deep rooted in the socio-economic fabric of the society.
- ▶▶ There are many factors responsible to this complex problem, so a comprehensive integrated approach is required to tackle and combat child labour.
- ▶▶ This can be done only by bringing attitudinal change, and social awareness and rigorous campaign against the problem of child labour.
- ▶▶ Thus, it requires honest effort and strong commitment and support from all concerned.

## LABOUR LAWS IN INDIA

### Context-

Central government for its move to subsume 44 existing labour laws into four codes dealing with wages, social security, industrial safety and welfare, and industrial relations.

The code on wages Bill, which seeks to replace existing laws related to workers' remuneration.

Labour Union- These codes will do away with social security measures of the labour force in the country. It will give a free hand to industrial houses and big companies

### Issues with Labour Law:

- ▶▶ Labour laws involving safety at workplace, wages, social security and industrial relations.
- ▶▶ Distorted the labour market.
- ▶▶ Due to the complex and massive numbers of labour laws, industries prefer to hire contractual labourers not covered under these laws and without any social security or termination protection.
- ▶▶ Another major problem of labour market in India is that there is a growing number of unskilled labourers in the country.
- ▶▶ Current labour reforms are less focus on apprenticeship.
- ▶▶ Labour market in India is suffering from surplus labour force.
- ▶▶ lack of adequate information regarding jobs
- ▶▶ child labour practices
- ▶▶ lack of proper manpower planning etc.

### Polity:

- ▶▶ **Article 246** Labour being in **concurrent list**, many states and even centre have enacted laws. So many laws lead to confusion about regulation giving rise to inspector raj.
- ▶▶ **Article 43A** was inserted by 42nd amendment – directing state to take steps to ensure worker's participation in management of industries.
- ▶▶ **Article 23** forbids forced labor, 24 forbids child labor (in factories, mines and other hazardous occupations) below age of 14 years.

### Important laws related to Industrial relations are

#### Employee State Insurance Act:

- ▶▶ ESI card is issued, insuring worker against any accident at work. There's also ESI corporation.

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### **Employees Provident Fund and Miscellaneous provisions Act:**

- ▶▶ Provident fund is one in which employee pays part of his wage (12 % in most cases) and equal contribution by employer. This is mandatory for establishment employing more than 20 people

### **Factories Act, 1948:**

#### **Child Labor (prohibition and regulation) Act:**

- ▶▶ Prohibits Children below age of 14 to work in hazardous jobs. There are demands for complete ban on child employment

#### **Industrial Disputes Act:**

- ▶▶ One important provision – Industries employing more than 100 people can not terminate employment before approval of government. There is strong demand from industry to revise this limit, to facilitate easy entry and exit.

#### **Minimum Wages Act**

#### **Bonded Labor system (Abolition) Act:**

- ▶▶ System in which onetime payment was made by employer to supplier or leader of group and whole season's or year's services of labor was taken. Still rampant in some businesses like Brick Kilns

#### **Contract Labor (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970:**

- ▶▶ Contract labor is indirectly employed by an establishment through a contractor or agency. So, their relation with principal organization becomes ambiguous. They are generally discriminated against direct employees in terms of wages, job security, status etc. This act attempts to abolish it in certain circumstances and to bring them at par with direct employees.

#### **Apprentices Act, 1961:**

#### **Reforms needed in Labour Law:**

- ▶▶ There is an overlapping of labour laws which gives immense powers to official to harass the employer and leads to corruption.
- ▶▶ Social safety net for workers in order to enable capacity building of workers.
- ▶▶ Disinvestment and FDI: PSE's one of the main objectives was to provide employment even at cost of economy but this very policy was result of demise of PSEs. Same is true for FDI.

#### **Conclusion:**

- ▶▶ The government needs to bring more investor-friendly labour laws at the national level and reforms such as deregulating labour laws.

## WITNESS PROTECTION SCHEME

- ▶▶ Launched by Odisha government
- ▶▶ Aims to provide security to witnesses facing threat during the course of a legal battle.

### Features:

- ▶▶ District -level standing committee, chaired by a district and sessions judge, with the district police head as its member and the head of the prosecution in the district as its member secretary, will take a call on the need for protection.
- ▶▶ The district police chief will submit a report with regard to the seriousness and credibility of the threat to the witness or his/her family members if the person applies in a prescribed form.
- ▶▶ The report will detail the nature of the threat to the witness or his/her family members, their reputation or property.
- ▶▶ Besides, the intent and motive of the person issuing the threat and the resources available with him/her to execute it will figure in the analysis.
- ▶▶ The threat analysis report, prepared with “full confidentiality will reach the competent authority “within five working days of its order for inquiry.
- ▶▶ The **Witness Protection Cell** will then ensure that the identities of the witness and his/her family members, including names, parentage, occupation, address and digital footprints, are fully protected.

## HUMAN RIGHTS COURT IN INDIA

**Context-** SC asks why the delay in setting up Human rights courts

- ▶▶ **Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993** as stated in the preamble of the Act, is the establishment of human rights courts at district level.
- ▶▶ The creation of Human Rights Courts at the district level has a great **potential to protect and realize human rights at the grassroots.**
- ▶▶ purpose of providing speedy trial of offences arising out of violation of human rights.

### Provisions:

#### How it will Establish Court

- ▶▶ **Section 30** of the Act envisages that a state Government may, with the concurrence of the Chief Justice of the High Court, by notification, specify for each district a Court of Sessions to be a Human Rights Court to try the said offences.

#### Special Public Prosecutor:

- ▶▶ Section 31 of the Act provides the State government to specify and appoint a special public prosecutor in that court.

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## Issues:

### Vague Definition:

- ▶▶ The Act refers to the offences arising out of violations of human rights.
- ▶▶ But it does not define or explain the meaning of "offences arising out of violations of human rights". It is vague.
- ▶▶ The Act does not give any clear indication or clarification as to what type of offences actually are to be tried by the Human Rights Courts.

### The Problem is who can take cognizance of the offences.

- ▶▶ What the Act says is in each district, one Sessions Court has to be specified for trying "offences arising out of human rights violation".
- ▶▶ It is silent about taking of cognizance of the offence

### Conclusion:

- ▶▶ The object of establishment of such Courts at district level is to ensure speedy disposal of cases relating to offences arising out of violation of human rights.
- ▶▶ Unless the lawmakers take note of the above anomalies and remove them by proper amendments the aim for which provisions are made for establishment of special courts will not be achieved.

## MARITAL RAPE

### Context:

Delhi High Court said that court cannot direct the government to frame laws as it is the domain of the legislature and not the judiciary.

It said the issue of marital rape has to be dealt by the legislature and not the judiciary.

### What is Marital Rape?

- ▶▶ Marital rape is any unwanted **Sexual Acts by a Spouse or Ex-Spouse**, committed **without consent** and/or against a person's will, obtained by force, or threat of force, intimidation, or when a person is unable to consent

### Sociology of Not Criminalising Marital Rape:

- ▶▶ Mainstream perception that marriage gives the husband constant consent for sexual intercourse.
- ▶▶ Women, therefore, end up being perceived as baby-making machines where their right to bodily autonomy and reproductive rights are inconceivable and preposterous.
- ▶▶ According to **Morton Hunt**, an American psychologist "the typical marital rapist is a man who still believes that husbands are supposed to "rule" their wives.

- ▶▶ The inability of law and legal institutions to deal with marital rape exposes the limits of the law. It shows that the law predominantly serves the aspirations of the dominant class, at the expense of the marginalised and weak.

#### **Other Related Laws:**

- ▶▶ Section 376-A was added in the Indian Penal Code, 1860, which criminalized the rape of a judicially separated wife.

#### **Law Commission:**

- ▶▶ **Law Commission in its 42<sup>nd</sup> Report** advocated the inclusion of sexual intercourse by a man with his minor wife as an offence it was seen as a ray of hope.
- ▶▶ The Joint Committee that reviewed the proposal dismissed the recommendation.

#### **Arguments against Criminalization of Marital Rape:**

- ▶▶ Due to the near impossibility of proving marital rape, its criminalization would only serve as an increased burden to the already overburdened legal system.
- ▶▶ Dissatisfied, angry, vengeful wives might charge their innocent husbands with the offence of marital rape. There is an implied consent to have sexual intercourse when a woman marries a man.
- ▶▶ Marital rape laws would destroy many marriages by preventing any possible reconciliation.

#### **Marital Rape and Constitution:**

##### **Article 21 Right to life:**

- ▶▶ The judicial interpretation has expanded the scope of Article 21 of the Constitution of India by leaps and bounds and right to live with human dignity 21 is within the ambit of this article. Marital rape clearly violates the right to live with dignity of a woman and to that effect, it is submitted, that the exception provided under Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 is violation of Article 21 of the Constitution.

##### **Right to Equality:**

- ▶▶ Exception under Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 discriminates with a wife when it comes to protection from rape.

##### **Conclusion:**

- ▶▶ It is conceded that changing the law on sexual offences is a formidable and sensitive task, and more so, in a country like India, where there is a contemporaneous presence of a varied and differentiated system of personal and religious laws that might come into conflict with the new amendments in the statutory criminal law.
- ▶▶ The immediate need is criminalization of marital rape under the Indian Penal Code. But, mere declaration of a conduct as an offence is not enough.

- ▶▶ Something more is required to be done for sensitizing the judiciary and the police.
- ▶▶ There is also a need to educate the masses about this crime, as the real objective of criminalizing marital rape can only be achieved if the society acknowledges and challenges the prevailing myth that rape by one's spouse is inconsequential.

## MOB LYNCHING

**Context-** The Uttar Pradesh State Law Commission has drafted a stringent law to deal with increasing incidents of **mob lynching**.

### Stats of Lynching

- ▶▶ Around 50 incidents of mob violence have taken place in Uttar Pradesh between 2012 and 2019.

### Recommendation:

- ▶▶ The panel has recommended jail terms ranging from seven years to life imprisonment for assailants and up to three years in prison for police officers and district magistrates who neglect their duty. taking suo motu cognisance of incidents of mob lynching, said the **existing law was not sufficient** and there was a need to not just punish those who commit the crime but to also hold authorities responsible for dereliction of duty if such attacks occur under their watch.

### Terms Define:

- ▶▶ The draft law **defines terms such as “lynching”, “mob”, “victim”, “offensive material” and “hostile environment”** created against the victim or family, including boycott of trade, public humiliation, depriving people of their fundamental rights, and forcing them to leave their homes.

### Compensation:

- ▶▶ Law should contain provisions on providing **compensation to a victim's family** for grievous injury or loss of life and property, and rehabilitation of the victims and their families.

### Courts Stand:

- ▶▶ July 2018 judgment laying down guidelines to prevent mob lynching.
- ▶▶ The top court had decried cases of lynching and cow vigilantism and said mobocracy cannot be allowed in society. **“No citizen can take law into his hands nor become law unto himself,**
- ▶▶ They had also proposed a set of preventive, remedial and punitive measures to curb instances of lynching.

- ▶▶ The court had ordered the appointment of nodal police officers in all districts, efficient patrolling in areas where there was possibility of such incidents, and completion of trial in lynching cases within six months.

#### **Guideline by Supreme Court in Case of Lynching:**

- ▶▶ The states shall designate a senior police officer not below the rank of police superintendent as nodal officer in each district.
- ▶▶ These officers will set up a task force to be assisted by one DSP-rank officer for taking measures to prevent mob violence and lynching.
- ▶▶ The task force will gather intelligence reports on people likely to commit such crimes or who are involved in spreading hate speeches, provocative statements and fake news
- ▶▶ The state governments shall immediately identify districts, sub-divisions and villages where instances of lynching and mob violence have been reported in the recent past.
- ▶▶ The process of identification should be done within a period of three weeks from the date of the judgment.

#### **Remedial Measures:**

- ▶▶ Despite the preventive measures taken by the state police, if it comes to the notice of the local police that an incident of lynching or mob violence has taken place, the jurisdictional police station shall immediately lodge an FIR.

#### **Deterrent Punishment:**

- ▶▶ The trial court must ordinarily award the maximum sentence under the provisions of the IPC.

#### **Punitive Measures:**

- ▶▶ Departmental action must be taken against police or district officials who fail to act against the perpetrators. Such failure will be considered as an act of deliberate negligence and/or misconduct for which appropriate action must be taken. The action shall be taken to its logical conclusion preferably within six months.

#### **Sociology of lynching cases:**

- ▶▶ The victims are always those living on the margins of the society.
- ▶▶ The cow-vigilantes are motivated by an urge to **impose hegemony of values and cultural homogeneity**, by obfuscating diverse practices and beliefs.
- ▶▶ They dare to defy the process of law, as their acts are powered by majoritarian sentiments.
- ▶▶ This is not an issue within the narrow confines of law and order; it plays out on a broader canvass of **socio-cultural dynamics**.
- ▶▶ It is the tussle between rule of law and belief-systems.

- ▶▶ It is the friction between the privileges of the mainstream and the struggles of survival by the marginalized.

### **Conclusion:**

- ▶▶ This is a complex issue which raises the conundrum of whether a democratic government should merely reflect majoritarian will or should pursue higher values of equality and justice.

## **CCTV IN CLASSROOMS- ANALYSIS**

**Context-** Project to install CCTV cameras inside all classrooms in Delhi state schools.

### **Delhi Government Stand:**

#### **Empowering Parents**

- ▶▶ In private schools, parents are empowered by their own education and economic leverage due to the fees they pay. Parental oversight has been the bedrock of effective school management. CCTV surveillance would bring empowerment to parents.

#### **Parent Participation**

- ▶▶ School Management Committees (SMCs), parent bodies mandated by the Right to Education Act. They have been empowered to monitor and supervise basic deliverables of schools, such as teacher attendance, healthy mid-day meals, clean washrooms, drinking water, etc. The CCTV in classrooms project is the next step towards increasing accountability of schools.

#### **Accountability:**

- ▶▶ By sharing feeds with parents, it is actually ensuring that the crores of public money invested into CCTVs are not wasted.
- ▶▶ Often, CCTVs fail to serve their purpose for lack of motivated monitoring.
- ▶▶ Outsourcing of the monitoring to an invested stakeholder like parents is actually a smart innovation.

#### **Child Care:**

- ▶▶ The CCTV feeds can aid parents to identify several problems their children may be facing, including bullying, corporal punishment, inadequate attention spans, teacher absenteeism and even student truancy. It will empower them to not just raise their children better but also to ask the right questions to their child's school.

#### **Issue of Privacy Breach**

- ▶▶ Classrooms cannot be classified as private by any stretch of imagination.
- ▶▶ feed being provided to parents is highly restricted.
- ▶▶ Only the feed for their own children will be provided to parents.

- ▶▶ The feed does not include audio, and can only be accessed live.

### **Deterrence for Crimes**

- ▶▶ If CCTVs can be deterrents to crime outside schools, they can be deterrents within too.

### **Argument Against CCTV Installation in Schools:**

#### **The Aim of Education Isn't Just Disciplinary:**

- ▶▶ While a school is meant to teach discipline, it is also the space where students can make mistakes and subsequently learn from them.
- ▶▶ Creating panopticons inside schools instils fear, not values.

#### **Classrooms Aren't Public Spaces Either:**

- ▶▶ Classrooms cannot be classified as private.
- ▶▶ However, schools are not as public as a footpath.
- ▶▶ The expectation of relative privacy is what allows students the freedom to express themselves, make mistakes, and inculcate creativity and imagination.
- ▶▶ The Delhi government cannot *assume* that constant surveillance of every activity will improve the learning environment.

#### **Lack of digital infrastructure:**

- ▶▶ **Internet penetration in urban India still stands at 64.84%**, including multi-SIM usage. In cases where parents don't have smartphones and internet access, what does the government intend to do?

#### **Phone sharing:**

- ▶▶ Shared access to a phone is a common habit, and the Delhi government has still not clarified, despite our repeated queries, how they intend to verify a parent's identity on the DGS Live app.

#### **Access to Videos:**

- ▶▶ Creating a massive repository of video footage of children is a phenomenally bad idea, and a violation of their privacy.
- ▶▶ In the absence of any legislative and judicial oversight, it can be easily abused.

#### **Conclusion:**

- ▶▶ There should be proper white paper published by Delhi Government regarding CCTV installation so that public understands the motives and undue activity can be restricted.

## EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

### Initiatives by Government:

- ▶▶ Mahila Shakti Kendra scheme empowers rural women through community participation by involvement of Student Volunteers.
- ▶▶ The scheme is envisaged to work at the national and state level technical support to the respective government on issues related to women is provided.
- ▶▶ Swadhar Greh scheme targets the women victims of unfortunate circumstances who are in need of institutional support for rehabilitation so that they could lead their life with dignity.
- ▶▶ Ujjawala is a comprehensive scheme to combat trafficking with the objective to prevent trafficking of women and children for commercial sexual exploitation, to facilitate rescue victims and placing them in safe custody, to provide rehabilitation services by providing basic amenities/needs.
- ▶▶ Working Women Hostel aims at providing safe and affordable accommodation to working women.
- ▶▶ These hostels have Day care facility for the children of inmates too.
- ▶▶ The Ministry provides financial support for establishing such hostels by NGOs or State Governments.
- ▶▶ Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme – The specific objectives of the scheme include preventing gender biased sex selective elimination; ensuring survival and protection of the girl child and ensuring education and participation of the girl child.
- ▶▶ One Stop Centre (OSC) facilitates access to an integrated range of services including police, medical, legal, psychological support and temporary shelter to women affected by violence. The Scheme is funded through Nirbhaya Fund.
- ▶▶ The Scheme is being implemented since 1st April, 2015 to provide 24 hours emergency and non-emergency response to women affected by violence through referral and information about women related government schemes/programmes across the country.
- ▶▶ Mahila Police Volunteers (MPVs) Scheme is implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- ▶▶ It envisages engagement of Mahila Police Volunteers in States/UTs.

## LIFESPAN OF SCHEDULED TRIBE PEOPLE

### Why in News?

- ▶▶ According to data from the National Census 2011 to estimate, by indirect methods, the life expectancy for the Scheduled Tribes (STs) and non-ST population in India is 63.9 years, as against 67 years for general population.
- ▶▶ The reasons for shorter lifespan include gaps in various health and nutritional indicators, education level, poverty level, between ST and non-STs, traditional life styles, remoteness of habitations & dispersed population.

### Steps taken by Government:

- ▶▶ Under National Health Mission (NHM), support is being provided to States for strengthening their healthcare system including for upgradation of existing and setting up new public health infrastructure based on requirements posed by the States/UTs.
- ▶▶ All tribal districts whose composite health index is below the State average have been identified as High Priority Districts (HPDs) and receive more resources per capita under the NHM as compared to the rest of the districts in the State.
- ▶▶ As per the budget announcement 2017-18, 1.5 lakh Health Sub Centres and Primary Health Centres are being transformed into Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs).
- ▶▶ The Ayushman Bharat – Health and Wellness Centres (AB-HWCs) aim to provide an expanded range of services to include care for non – communicable diseases, palliative and rehabilitative care, Oral, Eye and ENT care, etc. Ministry of Tribal Affairs supplements the efforts of Central line Ministries as well as State Governments for addressing needs of education, health and nutrition, skill development, livelihood etc. of tribals/ tribal areas by way of critical gaps filling.

## GOOD SAMARITAN GUIDELINES

### Why in News?

- ▶▶ Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has issued guidelines in pursuance of order of Hon'ble Supreme Court of India to protect the Good Samaritans in case of road accidents.

### Good Samaritan:

- ▶▶ A Good Samaritan is a bystander, who voluntarily comes forward to administer immediate assistance or emergency care to a person injured in an accident, or crash, or emergency medical condition, or emergency situation.

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### **Significance of Good Samaritan law:**

- ▶▶ In the last ten years, road crashes have killed over 13 lakh people in India. According to the Law Commission of India, 50% of these victims died of preventable injuries and could have been saved if they had received care on time.

### **How law came into force:**

- ▶▶ On March 30, 2016, the Supreme Court of India gave “force of law” to the guidelines for the protection of Good Samaritans issued by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.
- ▶▶ The purpose of a Good Samaritan law is to provide legal protection to bystanders who come to the aid and rescue of victims of road crashes.

### **How Good Samaritan is protected:**

- ▶▶ A Good Samaritan will not be liable for any civil or criminal action for any injury or death of the victim
- ▶▶ Good Samaritan who informs police or emergency service regarding an injured person not to be compelled to reveal his personal details
- ▶▶ Disciplinary action against public officials who coerce Good Samaritan to reveal his personal details
- ▶▶ Good Samaritans not to be forced to bear the initial cost of treatment: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) to issue guidelines that no public or private hospital can demand payment for registration and admissions costs from the Good Samaritans
- ▶▶ Hospitals cannot refuse treatment to a victim: Lack of response by a doctor in an emergency situation to be considered as a “Professional Misconduct” and disciplinary action shall be taken against such a doctor
- ▶▶ The Good Samaritan can choose to be an eyewitness and cannot be compelled
- ▶▶ Eye witness to be examined in a single occasion
- ▶▶ Video conferencing may be used for examination of a Good Samaritan

## **JUVENILE JUSTICE**

### **Background:**

- ▶▶ In 2016, a 17-year-old was booked for the murder of his three-year-old neighbour in Mumbai.
- ▶▶ The Mumbai city Juvenile Justice Board as well as a children’s court directed that he be tried as an adult under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2015.

- ▶▶ Last week, the Bombay High Court set aside these orders and directed that the accused be tried as a minor, saying the Act is reformatory and not retributive.

### **When Is A Child Tried as An Adult?**

- ▶▶ The Juvenile Justice Act of 2000 was amended in 2015 with a provision allowing for Children in Conflict with Law (CCL) to be tried as adults under certain circumstances.
- ▶▶ The Act defines a child as someone who is under age 18. For a CCL, age on the date of the offence is the basis for determining whether he or she was a child or an adult.
- ▶▶ The amended Act distinguishes children in the age group 16-18 as a category which can be tried as adults if they are alleged to have committed a heinous offence — one that attracts a minimum punishment of seven years.
- ▶▶ The Act does not, however, make it mandatory for all children in this age group to be tried as adults.

### **Why Was This Distinction Made?**

- ▶▶ The amendment was proposed by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2014 in the backdrop of the gang-rape of a woman inside a bus in Delhi in 2012, leading to her death.
- ▶▶ One of the offenders was a 17-year-old, which led to the Ministry proposing the amendment (although it could not have retrospectively applied to him).
- ▶▶ The Government cited an increase in cases of offenders in that age group; child rights activists objected to the amendment.
- ▶▶ The J S Verma Committee constituted to recommend amendments also stated that it was not inclined to reduce the age of a juvenile from 18 to 16. The amendment was made in 2015.

### **What Was the Basis for The Order That the Accused Be Tried as A Minor?**

- ▶▶ The Bombay High Court observed: “It [trial as an adult] is not a default choice; a conscious, calibrated one. And for that, all the statutory criteria must be fulfilled.”
- ▶▶ As per Section 15 of the JJ Act, there are three criteria that the Juvenile Justice Board in the concerned district should consider while conducting a preliminary assessment to determine whether the child should be tried as an adult or under the juvenile justice system, which prescribes a maximum term of three years in a special home.
- ▶▶ The criteria are whether the child has the mental and physical capacity to commit such an offence; whether the child has the ability to understand its consequences; and the circumstances in which the offence was committed.

- ▶▶ If the Board finds that the child can be tried as an adult, the case is transferred to a designated children’s court, which again decides whether the Board’s decision is correct.

### **How Do These Criteria Relate to This Case?**

- ▶▶ Both the Juvenile Justice Board and the children’s court had relied on the probation officer’s social investigation report and a government hospital’s mental health report.
- ▶▶ The High Court said that neither report brought out “any exceptional circumstances” to compel the juvenile to face trial as an adult. The probation officer’s report, submitted in 2018, had stated the child or his family did not have a criminal record, and called the juvenile “highly manipulative” while also noting that he had “confessed” that the victim was killed “accidentally”.
- ▶▶ It also noted that the juvenile was counselled on focusing on his studies, and that he had taken and passed his exams while lodged in the observation home. The mental health report said the juvenile had “no psychiatric complaints at present”, was “normal”, and “suffers from no mental incapacity” to commit the offence. The court said that while the Board had relied on these two reports, it had undertaken no independent assessment.
- ▶▶ It said that if the Board’s criteria of evaluation were followed, “then every case becomes an open-and-shut case”. It said that only because the statute permits a child of 16 years and above to stand trial as an adult in case of heinous offence, it did not mean that all those children should be subjected to adult punishment. One of the court’s key observations was that “essentially, the trial in the regular court is offence-oriented; in the juvenile court, it is offender-oriented.
- ▶▶ In other words, in the children’s court, societal safety and the child’s future are balanced. For an adult offender, prison is the default opinion; for a juvenile it is the last resort”.

## **SOCIAL STIGMA SIDELINING CHILD RAPE VICTIMS: REPORT**

### **Why in News?**

- ▶▶ A study by the Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR) along with the Human Development Society was recently released.

### **Highlights of The Report:**

- ▶▶ The study covered 100 child victims — 94 girls and 6 boys, aged between 2 and 18 years — of rape cases reported in 2017-18. The study says that social consequences of rape are hugely prejudicial to victims of sexual abuse and their families, as people, in general, do not see victims in the right perspective.

- ▶▶ The study also observed that instead of making the perpetrators responsible for the act, social stigma is attached to victims and their families “who are often pushed to the margins of society”.
- ▶▶ It highlighted “rape” as the most important factor among victims for dropping out of school.
- ▶▶ The principal reason is related to the incident of rape, as 33% (the highest of all) cite legal procedure, social stigma, safety and health concerns following rape as reasons for dropping out of studies.
- ▶▶ While 14% each noted financial crisis and lack of interest in study as the reason; 10% children dropped out due to the need of special schools; 7% did so due to illness of parents and families responsibilities. The sample also has 10% victims who are either living with accused or are planning to marry the culprit.
- ▶▶ Rape victims, mostly girls, suffer from different types of illness, like lower abdominal pain, anaemia or weakness, for which 81% of the parents are “unable to meet healthcare challenges of their children due to lack of money”
- ▶▶ 24% parents are unable to spend long time for treatment, as it adversely affects their work as wage labour and work-related commitments.
- ▶▶ There are 14% parents whose inability to discuss health issues of child with doctors due to social stigma act as an obstruction to fulfilling health needs.
- ▶▶ 57% families of child victims face challenges to their livelihood following the incidence of rape: livelihood challenges are being faced by 56% families of girl’s victims and 67% families of victims who are boys.

## **DEATHS DUE TO MALNUTRITION**

### **Context:**

The recently published National Family Health Survey (NFHS) conducted by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare highlights the State-wise prevalence of malnutrition in women and children.

### **Key Highlights of the report:**

- ▶▶ As per the NFHS-4 report
- ✓ 52.1% - children under 5 years age are underweight
- ✓ 49.3% - children under 5 years age are stunted (not attaining age-appropriate height)
- ✓ 31.3% - children under 5 years age are wasted (not attaining age- appropriate weight)
- ▶▶ More than half (53.9%) of our girls within 15-19 years have low body mass index (BMI);

- ▶▶ Only one in every five mothers (21%) has full ante-natal care;
- ▶▶ One in every two pregnant women (50.3%) within the age-group of 15-49 is anaemic.
- ▶▶ Only one-third (30%) of the mothers consume iron and folic supplement during pregnancy.
- ▶▶ The overall child mortality rate as per NFHS- 4 is 9.4 which is declined from 18.4 as per previous NFHS- 3.
- ▶▶ Malnutrition is not a direct cause of death among children under five years of age.
- ▶▶ However, it can increase morbidity and mortality by reducing resistance to infections.

### **What is Malnutrition?**

- ▶▶ Malnutrition refers to deficiencies, excesses or imbalances in a person's intake of energy and/or nutrients.
- ▶▶ The term malnutrition covers 2 broad groups of conditions. One is 'undernutrition'—which includes stunting (low height for age), wasting (low weight for height), underweight (low weight for age) and micronutrient deficiencies or insufficiencies (a lack of important vitamins and minerals).
- ▶▶ The other is overweight, obesity and diet-related noncommunicable diseases (such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and cancer).

### **About National Family Health Survey (NFHS):**

- ▶▶ The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) is a large-scale, multi-round survey conducted in a representative sample of households throughout India.
- ▶▶ The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW), Government of India, designated IIPS as the nodal agency, responsible for providing coordination and technical guidance for the NFHS.
- ▶▶ NFHS was funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) with supplementary support from United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

### **About POSHAN Abhiyaan:**

- ▶▶ For monitoring the level of malnutrition among the children (0-6 years of age), POSHAN Abhiyaan has been launched under which near real time monitoring is done through ICDS-CAS Mobile based Software Application.
- ▶▶ The ICDS-CAS Application enables the identification of malnutrition children based on auto-plotting of Growth Charts.
- ▶▶ The drill-down dashboard available at National, State, District, Block level contributes towards identifying and addressing the problem of nutrition.

## UKEIRI MOBILITY PROGRAMME: STUDY IN INDIA

**Context:** New India-UK scheme to fund students from UK to visit India

- ▶▶ A new India-UK bilateral pilot scheme has been launched to support Britain's universities to collaborate with Indian partners to send UK students to India during their studies.
- ▶▶ The “**UKEIRI Mobility Programme: Study in India**”, an initiative of Universities UK International (UUKI) and British Council India
- ▶▶ **Aim:** To **generate up to 200 opportunities** for undergraduate students at UK universities to visit India by March 2021.
- ▶▶ Priority for the programme to visit India during their courses will be given to students from traditionally underrepresented groups.
- ▶▶ The programme will be funded by the UK and Indian governments as part of Phase 3 of the UK-India Education Research Initiative (UKEIRI) and delivered by the British Council, Universities UK International and EdCIL in India.



## 3. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & ORGANISATIONS

### G-20 SUMMIT

#### Why in News?

- ▶▶ After the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997-1998, it was acknowledged that the participation of major emerging market countries is needed on discussions on the international financial system, and G7 finance ministers agreed to establish the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meeting in 1999.
- ▶▶ The G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meetings were centered on major economic and monetary policy issues amongst major countries in the global financial system and aimed at promoting cooperation toward achieving stable and sustainable global economic growth for the benefit of all countries. The participating members in the meetings were the same as the current G20 members.

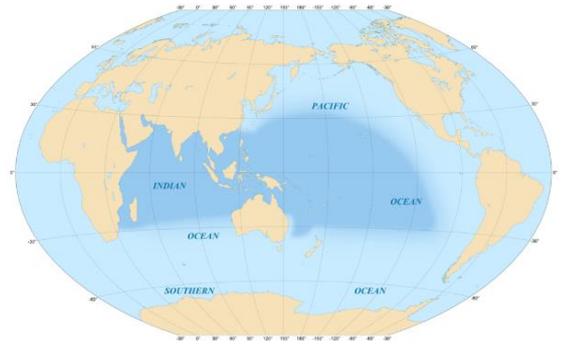
#### G-20:

- ▶▶ The Group of 20 nations (G20) is an international grouping made up of Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, the European Union, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
- ▶▶ The G20 Summit is formally known as the “Summit on Financial Markets and the World Economy”.
- ▶▶ Spain is a permanent guest invitee. It was established in 1999 to broaden the remit of the G7 – a grouping of the world’s most powerful nations, and its primary mandate is to “prevent future international financial crises”.
- ▶▶ The host country of the G20 summit leads the group over the course of one year from December through the following November as the G20 presidency. The G20 presidency also organizes relevant ministerial and working group meetings.
- ▶▶ Leaders initially met twice a year, but this was reduced to once a year since 2011. The leaders’ meetings are usually preceded by ministerial meetings by trade ministers, finance ministers and central bank governors, which are designed to set the agenda for the meetings of the world’s most powerful leaders.

#### Achievements:

- ▶▶ In 2009, when the UK held a special spring summit, former Prime Minister Gordon Brown orchestrated a deal in which world leaders agreed on a \$1.1 trillion injection of financial aid into the global economy.

- ▶▶ The G20 so far has made important progress in reshaping the governance of global finance by implementing macro-prudential policies, developing strict rules on the “too big to fail” problem, increasing the lending capacity of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and collecting richer information on the shadow banking system.
- ▶▶ The G-20 has also played a crucial role in strengthening the international financial regulatory system, including better coordination across countries.



### Challenges:

- ▶▶ The G20 is widely perceived to have failed to address global inequality. The expansion of the G7 to include more emerging economies brought hope that this would be addressed, but in most member states, inequality is widening.
- ▶▶ The G20, like many plurilateral organisations, is often dismissed as a “talking shop”, where leaders offer plenty of bluster, but achieve very little material progress.

### Osaka Meet decisions concerning India:

- ▶▶ 2019 G20 meet happened in Osaka Japan
- ▶▶ Prime Minister Narendra Modi and United States President Donald Trump came closer to resolving trade issues when they met in Osaka, but on technological issues such as data storage and 5G network, India placed itself across the divide from Japan and the U.S., and alongside leaders of BRICS. The initiative for free flow of data, announced by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in January, came after the Reserve Bank of India’s guidelines mandating that the storage of all financial data, including by multinational companies, must be kept on servers in India.

## GEOPOLITICS OF INDO-PACIFIC

### Location:

- ▶▶ Geographically, the Indo-Pacific refers to the Indian and the Pacific Oceans between the east coast of Africa and the American west coast and their several littoral countries.

### Indo Pacific Relevance:

- ▶▶ Term to denote an economic and strategic community, it has been in use among scholars of international relations and geopolitics since the first decade of this century, around the same time as China’s rise.

- ▶▶ The Pacific and the Indian Oceans are now bringing about a dynamic
- ▶▶ coupling as seas of freedom and of prosperity.
- ▶▶ US and India two countries have the ability and the responsibility to ensure that it broadens yet further and to nurture and enrich these seas to become seas of clearest transparency.

#### **Australia:**

- ▶▶ Australia began re-imagining its security and trade policies through a new regional lens in 2011-2012, that Indo-Pacific became its way to position itself to play a larger role in Asia, as an ally of the US and Japan.
- ▶▶ White Paper on ‘Australia and the Asian century’, following it with a national security policy document, ‘Strong and Secure – A Strategy for
- ▶▶ Australia’s National Interest’ at the beginning of 2013. Both dealt in detail with the term Indo-Pacific.
- ▶▶ western Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean would come to be considered as one strategic arc. This conception is being driven by the increased economic interaction between South, Northeast and Southeast Asia and the importance of the lines of energy supply to Asia from the Middle East.” Australia stance partnership between US and India is in the interests of a “free and open Indo-Pacific”.
- ▶▶ India as more reliable than China:
- ▶▶ Australia need to collaborate with India to ensure that the Indo- Pacific is increasingly a place of peace, stability, and growing prosperity— so that it does not become a region of disorder, conflict, and predatory economics.”

#### **US stance:**

- ▶▶ Indo-Pacific was being used more frequently by the Trump Administration, entirely replacing the earlier “Asia-Pacific”, a move recognised by analysts as redefining the region away from China’s economic and strategic dominance.
- ▶▶ Indo-Pacific had been described as a region where “geopolitical competition between free and repressive visions of world order is taking place” – China and North Korea on one side and all others on the other.
- ▶▶ US National Security Strategy document, in 2017, the Indo-Pacific is described as the region from the “west coast of India to the west coast of the United States”.

#### **Indian Stance:**

- ▶▶ The move away from Asia-Pacific also seemed to elevate India to a position of prominence in the region, as a US ally that would help to contain China’s dominance.

- ▶▶ Adoption of the term also appeared to challenge India to play a larger role in the region, for instance in the Quad, or the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue that informally brings together for strategic talks and military exercises, the US, Japan, Australia and India.
- ▶▶ India Says that Indo-Pacific is for peace, security, stability, prosperity and rules, not against anybody.
- ▶▶ India looks at it as a wider region, which extends all the way to West Asia and the east coast of Africa. For India, as important as securing the east, is its western maritime security, where the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea meet

## U.S.A. GRANTS INDIA NON-NATO ALLY STATUS

**Context:** Recently U.S. Senate has passed a legislative provision (under The National Defense Authorization Act or NDAA) that brings India at par with America's NATO allies.

### About NATO:

- ▶▶ The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), also called the North Atlantic Alliance, is an intergovernmental military alliance between 29 North American and European countries.
- ▶▶ The organization implements the North Atlantic Treaty that was signed in April 1949. NATO constitutes a system of collective defence whereby its independent member states agree to mutual defence in response to an attack by any external party.
- ▶▶ NATO's Headquarters are located in Haren, Brussels, Belgium, while the headquarters of Allied Command Operations is near Mons, Belgium.
- ▶▶ Montenegro is the latest country to join the alliance in 2017.

### What Is Non-NATO Ally Status?

- ▶▶ It is a designation given by the United States government to close allies that have strategic working relationships with the US Armed Forces but are not members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). While the status does not automatically include a mutual defense pact with the United States, it still confers a variety of military and financial advantages that otherwise are not obtainable by non-NATO countries.

### Significance for India:

- ▶▶ The move brings India on par with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies and countries such as Israel and South Korea for increasing defence cooperation.
- ▶▶ Increased cooperation between the United States and India in the areas of humanitarian assistance, counter-terrorism, counter-piracy and maritime security in the Indian Ocean.

### Prior Moves by USA:

- ▶▶ Trump administration had granted **Strategic Trade Authorization Tier 1** status to India, which is largely accorded to NATO allies. The move identified India's growing status as a US defence partner. In 2016, India was recognized as a "**Major Defence Partner**" by the United States. This allowed India to buy more advanced and sensitive technologies that is on par with that of US' closest allies and partners.

### IRAN'S NUCLEAR DEFIANCE

**Context:** Iran has announced that it has amassed more low-enriched uranium than allowed under a nuclear deal signed with the US and other countries in 2015.

- ▶▶ The deliberate violation of the provisions of that agreement, Iran has said, was in response to the reimposition of economic and other sanctions by the US after it unilaterally pulled out of the deal last year.
- ▶▶ Iran's latest move has put further strains on an already precarious agreement that seeks to prevent it from acquiring nuclear weapons in exchange for the easing of economic sanctions. But Iran has kept the room open for negotiations, saying its move was "reversible".

### What Is Enriched Uranium, And How Much Has Iran Accumulated?

- ▶▶ Uranium is the most common fuel used in nuclear reactors, and is required for nuclear electricity generation as well as to make nuclear weapons.
- ▶▶ On the other hand, naturally occurring uranium, which is predominantly composed of a stabler isotope, uranium-238, is not fissionable, meaning its nucleus cannot be split in a way that can sustain a chain reaction.
- ▶▶ To be used in nuclear reactors, natural uranium has to be 'enriched' with uranium-235 that can sustain fission chain reactions.
- ▶▶ Naturally occurring uranium has less than 1% of the uranium-235 isotope.
- ▶▶ Even a small amount of enrichment, in the range of 3% to 5%, called "low enrichment", is sufficient to run nuclear power reactors which allow only controlled fission reactions.
- ▶▶ For making nuclear weapons, however, "highly enriched" uranium — with more than 90% uranium-235 — is needed.
- ▶▶ More enrichment means more uranium-235 nuclei are available to be split, which in turn means greater heat and energy can be generated.
- ▶▶ Under the 2015 nuclear deal, Iran is required to ensure that, for the next 15 years, its stockpile of uranium is not enriched beyond 3.67%.

- ▶▶ Further, this stockpile of 3.67% enriched uranium itself is not supposed to exceed 300 kg.
- ▶▶ It is this 300-kg limit that Iran has now said it has exceeded.
- ▶▶ However, it has not specified how much more low-enriched uranium it has created.
- ▶▶ Iran has also said that its next step would be to enrich uranium beyond the 3.67% limit.

### **Under What Circumstances Was the Deal with Iran Signed?**

- ▶▶ The deal signed in July 2015 was an attempt by the US and other major world powers to ensure that Iran did not acquire nuclear weapons, which it has been suspected of trying to do for several years now.
- ▶▶ The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which is a sort of an international regulatory body on nuclear energy, had in 2003 reported the possibility of Iran secretly trying to develop nuclear weapons at one of its nuclear facilities. That had invited economic sanctions from the US and other countries.
- ▶▶ After protracted negotiations that lasted over a decade, Iran and the US reached an agreement to restrict Tehran's nuclear programme to only civilian uses in exchange for lifting of the sanctions.
- ▶▶ Apart from the US, the other parties to the deal are Russia, the UK, France, China and Germany, together called the P5+1.
- ▶▶ The complex agreement specifies a large number of steps that Iran needs to take and requirements that it needs to meet to keep the economically crippling sanctions away.
- ▶▶ Most of the provisions of this agreement are supposed to run for the next 15 years, but some, like international monitoring of Iran's uranium mines and mills, or of its nuclear power production facilities, are meant to be in force for the next 25 years.
- ▶▶ In return, the US agreed to cease its sanctions against Iran's oil and banking sector, allowing their re-entry into the international systems.
- ▶▶ It also allowed the sale of commercial passenger aircraft to Iran, which had been put on hold. The UN and European Union also eased their own sanctions on Iran.

### **Why Did the US Withdraw from The Deal and Reimpose Sanctions?**

- ▶▶ The agreement was negotiated when the Barack Obama administration was in power in the US. Current President Donald Trump has never shied away from expressing his discomfort with the deal, which he claims, was detrimental to the American interests.
- ▶▶ The Trump administration has advocated tougher provisions in the agreement, particularly with regard to the expiry dates on restrictions related to uranium enrichment. It does not want these restrictions to have any end-date.

- ▶▶ After its offer to renegotiate the deal did not find acceptance from Iran, the US withdrew from the deal last year. It also slapped fresh sanctions on Iran.
- ▶▶ The five other countries, however, continued to be parties to the deal, thereby weakening the impact of US sanctions.
- ▶▶ However, these sanctions were still damaging enough for Iran to finally respond after a year.

### **What Happens to The Deal Now?**

- ▶▶ Iran's defiance of the provisions of the agreement is being seen as largely a bargaining ploy in its ongoing confrontation with the US, especially since it has explicitly said that it was open to reversing its decision if the sanctions against it were lifted.
- ▶▶ It is being seen as an attempt to put pressure on the other parties to convince the US of the need to keep the agreement, however fragile, in place.
- ▶▶ The Trump administration, however, has maintained a hardened stance towards Iran, and, in the absence of a diplomatic breakthrough, this could result in the unravelling of the deal.

## **INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE (ICJ)**

**Context-** Kulbhushan Jadhav case verdict on July 17

### **About ICJ:**

- ▶▶ The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations (UN). It was established in June 1945 by the Charter of the United Nations and began work in April 1946.
- ▶▶ The seat of the Court is at the Peace Palace in The Hague (Netherlands). Of the six principal organs of the United Nations, it is the only one not located in New York.

### **Functions:**

- ▶▶ The Court's role is to settle, in accordance with international law, legal disputes submitted to it by States and to give advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by authorized United Nations organs and specialized agencies. It has the jurisdiction to settle disputes between countries and examine cases pertaining to violation of human rights according to the tenets of international law. It is the judicial arm of the United Nations.

### **Composition:**

- ▶▶ The Court is composed of 15 judges, who are elected for terms of office of nine years by the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council.

- ▶▶ These organs vote simultaneously but separately. In order to be elected, a candidate must receive an absolute majority of the votes in both bodies.
- ▶▶ In order to ensure a measure of continuity, one third of the Court is elected every three years. Judges are eligible for re-election. Of the 15 judges, it is mandated that three should be from Africa, two from Latin America and the Caribbean, three from Asia, five from Western Europe and other states, and two from Eastern Europe.

### **Qualification of Judges:**

- ▶▶ All nominees should have a 'high moral character,' and credentials commensurate with those expected from the highest judicial officials of those countries. The Charter also makes it mandatory for judges to have recognised competence in international law.

### **Kulbhushan Jadhav Case:**

- ▶▶ Mr. Jadhav, a retired Indian Navy officer was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on charges of espionage and terrorism in April 2017.
- ▶▶ India approached the ICJ in May 2017 against Pakistan for **denying consular access** to Mr. Jadhav.
- ▶▶ India challenged the “**farcical trial**” by the military court against Mr. Jadhav.
- ▶▶ India based its case on two broad issues —
- ▶▶ Breach of Vienna Convention on consular access
- ▶▶ The process of resolution

### **Pakistan Stand**

- ▶▶ Pakistan on its part insisted that the Indian Navy officer was a "spy" and not a businessman. Pakistan had rejected India's plea for consular access to Jadhav at the ICJ, claiming that New Delhi wants to get the information gathered by its "spy".

## **COFFEE TABLE BOOK FOR PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN INDIA AND THE UN WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME**

### **Why in News?**

- ▶▶ **Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare** has launched a Coffee Table Book to commemorate five decades of partnership between the Ministry and the UN World Food Programme towards addressing food and nutritional security in India.

### **Coffee Table Book:**

- ▶▶ The Book showcases key milestones achieved by the Government of India in its efforts to make the nation free from hunger and malnutrition and WFP's role in this endeavour.

- ▶▶ Some of the major turning points in India's journey towards food and nutrition security captured in the book include the Green Revolution, the White revolution, improvements in livestock and dairy development and digitization of food safety nets.

### **World Food Programme:**

- ▶▶ The World Food Programme (WFP) is the **Food-Assistance branch of the United Nations**.
- ▶▶ It is the world's largest humanitarian organization addressing hunger and promoting food security. According to the WFP, it provides food assistance to an average of 91.4 million people in 83 countries each year.
- ▶▶ From its headquarters in Rome and from more than 80 country offices around the world, the WFP works to help people who cannot produce or obtain enough food for themselves and their families. It is a member of the United Nations Development Group and part of its executive committee.

## **INDIA-RUSSIA STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DIALOGUE (IRSED)**

### **Why in News?**

- ▶▶ The Second India-Russia Strategic Economic Dialogue (IRSED) shall be held on 10 July in New Delhi, under the chairmanship of Dr. Rajiv Kumar, Vice-Chairman, National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog and Mr. Timur Maksimov, Deputy Minister of the Economic Development of the Russian Federation.

### **India – Russia Strategic Economic Dialogue:**

- ▶▶ The IRSED was established following a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between NITI Aayog and the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation during the 19th edition of the Annual India-Russia Bilateral Summit in 2018
- ▶▶ The First India-Russia Strategic Economic Dialogue was held in St. Petersburg between November 25-26, 2018, and was chaired by Mr. Maxim Oreshkin, Minister of Economic Development of the Russian Federation, and Dr. Rajiv Kumar, Vice-Chairman, NITI Aayog.
- ▶▶ The Second meeting of the IRSED shall be focussing on six core areas of cooperation, namely, Development of Transport Infrastructure and Technologies; Development of Agriculture and Agro-Processing sector; Small and Medium Business support; Digital Transformation and Frontier Technologies; Cooperation in Trade, Banking, Finance, and Industry; and Tourism & Connectivity.

## INDIA AGAIN ABSTAINS AT U.N. VOTE ON SEXUAL MINORITIES

### Context:

India abstained at the vote for extending the mandate of an important UN official who reports on violence and discrimination against sexual minorities.

### Issue:

- ▶▶ Human Rights Council (HRC) celebrated the United Nations Human Rights Council's vote to renew for a second three-year term the mandate of the U.N. Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- ▶▶ **India's abstention at the resolution** for term renewal of the Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in the UN Human Rights Council.
- ▶▶ Indian delegation had supported some amendments brought by countries that opposed the work of the Independent Expert.

### U.N. Independent Expert on Protection Against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (IE SOGI):

- ▶▶ Established in 2016 by the U.N. Human Rights Council, the IE SOGI.
- ▶▶ working collaboratively with U.N. and regional leaders, has helped nations develop policies and actions to protect people from discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The Independent Expert oversees the implementation of international human rights law, raises awareness, engages in dialogue with stakeholders and provides advisory and technical assistance.

### Connecting Dots in India

- ▶▶ Indian Supreme Court struck down Section 377 and decriminalised the LGBTQ community.

## NEXT DALAI LAMA MUST BE CHOSEN WITHIN CHINA, INDIA SHOULD NOT INTERVENE-CHINA

### Context:

China has affirmed that the successor of the Dalai Lama has to be decided within China and any interference by India will impact bilateral ties.

### About:

- ▶▶ The Dalai Lamas are believed by Tibetan Buddhists to be manifestations of **Avalokiteshvara** or Chenrezig, the Bodhisattva of Compassion and the patron saint of Tibet.

- ▶▶ Bodhisattvas are realized beings, inspired by the wish to attain complete enlightenment, who have vowed to be reborn in the world to help all living beings.

### **The Dalai Lamas in Tibetan Buddhism:**

- ▶▶ The Dalai Lama is a highly influential figure.
- ▶▶ All of the Dalai Lamas are thought to be **manifestations of the bodhisattva** of compassion, Avalokitesvara.
- ▶▶ The 14 generations of Dalai Lamas, spanning six centuries, are linked through their acts of compassion. For Buddhists, the ultimate goal is enlightenment, or “nirvana” – a liberation from the cycle of birth and death.
- ▶▶ East Asian and Tibetan Buddhists, as part of the **Mahayana sect**, believe bodhisattvas have reached this highest realization.
- ▶▶ **Mahayana Buddhists believe bodhisattvas choose to be reborn, to experience the pain and suffering of the world, in order to help other beings attain enlightenment.**

### **China and Dalai Lama:**

- ▶▶ Today the selection process for the next Dalai Lama remains uncertain.
- ▶▶ In 1950 China’s communist government invaded Tibet. The Dalai Lama fled in 1959 and set up a government in exile. The Dalai Lama is revered by Tibetan people and his exile has created anger inside Tibet. China’s threats to **manipulate the selection process** is believed to be a way to impose control on the Tibetan people.
- ▶▶ In 1995, the Chinese government caused the disappearance of the Dalai Lama’s choice for the successor of the Panchen Lama, the second most important tulku lineage in Tibetan Buddhism, when he was 6 years old. The Chinese government **appointed their own Panchen Lama.**
- ▶▶ China also wants to appoint its own Dalai Lama. But it is important to Tibetan Buddhists that they are in charge of the selection process.

## **PAKISTAN OPENS AIRSPACE; HOW THIS WILL IMPACT INDIAN AIRLINES?**

**Context:** Pakistan opened its airspace for the first time since February 26. The country had imposed restrictions on its airspace in response to the non-military counter-terrorism airstrike by the Indian Air Force against terror camps in Balakot.

- ▶▶ A NOTAM, or Notice to Airmen, was last issued by the Pakistani Civil Aviation Authority closing the airspace.

- ▶▶ This was cancelled early on 16<sup>th</sup> July, effective around 1 am Indian Standard Time (IST). According to flight tracking portal Flightradar24, several inbound Air India flights from Europe were using routes passing through the Pakistan airspace to return to Delhi.

#### **Impact of Such Move by Pakistan:**

- ▶▶ The move is expected to result in the reduction of flight times by around 70-80 minutes for flights that earlier used Pakistan's airspace for transit.
- ▶▶ Indian carriers lost crores of rupees due to the restrictions that had resulted in longer flight times and higher fuel burns. Initially, Pakistan had completely closed its airspace. However, it later relaxed the restrictions on overflying the country partially. Out of the total 11 air routes in Pakistan's territory, it has opened up two since March. One of these is westbound waypoint over Arabian Sea towards Karachi, Hingol, Gwadar, and the other one is eastbound over Karachi, Badin into Gujarat, India towards Ahmedabad.

#### **Routes affected by Pakistan Restrictions on Airspace:**

- ▶▶ The closure of routes affected hundreds of east-west flights flying over the subcontinent but westbound flights from airports in northern India such as Delhi, Lucknow, Amritsar etc have been worst affected.
- ▶▶ Due to the closure of routes that allowed westbound flights from airports in north India to enter Pakistani airspace — instead of taking a detour to Gujarat or Maharashtra and then turning right for Europe, North America or West Asia — most flights had seen their durations rise by at least 70-80 minutes. Air India's flights from Delhi to Chicago had a planned stoppage in Europe for refuelling. Further, IndiGo's flight from Delhi to Istanbul, which was to be the first non-stop flight on route by an Indian carrier was forced to make a refuelling stop at Doha. Similarly, SpiceJet, which was only Indian airline flying the Delhi-Kabul route had cancelled the flight.

## **TRUMP'S OFFER TO MEDIATE IN KASHMIR ISSUE**

**Context-** Trump's remarks that Prime minister Modi had asked the U.S. President to mediate on the Kashmir issue.

#### **Indian Stand:**

- ▶▶ India government categorically stated that no such request has been made by the Prime Minister to the U.S. President.
- ▶▶ All outstanding issues between India and Pakistan "can be discussed **only bilaterally**"
- ▶▶ Indian government emphasized that the Shimla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration provide the basis for resolving all issues between India and Pakistan bilaterally,

### Pakistan stand:

- ▶▶ Pakistan has continued to view the “**internationalisation**” of the **Kashmir issue** as its best bet towards reversing J&K’s accession to India, and has used every global forum to criticise India’s “illegal occupation” of Kashmir.

### Why Trump Might Have Given Such Statements?

- ▶▶ Mr. Trump’s comment in March that the U.S. successfully mediated for the release of captured fighter pilot Abhinandan by Pakistan may have even given him some hope that the U.S. could play a larger role on the Kashmir issue, and New Delhi would need to address that.
- ▶▶ Trump took the **line favoured by his Pakistani interlocutors on Kashmir** as a way of enhancing his own plans for a **pullout from Afghanistan with Pakistan’s help** on security and talks with the Taliban. The US also played a role in forcing China to agree to the designation of Jaish chief Masood Azhar as a “global terrorist”.

### Why India Insists on Bilateralism with Pakistan

- ▶▶ The Indian position has historically stemmed from its **mistrust of outsiders meddling in its internal affairs**, the strongly felt need to protect its secular nationhood project, and suspicion that mediators viewed Kashmir through Pakistani eyes.
- ▶▶ The framework for bilateral resolution of problems between India and Pakistan was written into the 1972 **Simla Agreement** and reiterated 27 years later in the **Lahore Declaration**.

### The American ‘Hand’, Playing Out Earlier Too:

- ▶▶ In 1993, Robin Raphel, who headed the State Department’s newly created South Asia division in the first Clinton Administration, sought to junk the Instrument of Accession, and asserted that for the US, **Kashmir was “disputed territory”, undermining years of Indian diplomatic efforts**.
- ▶▶ In 1999, the year after India and Pakistan went nuclear, it was US intervention that brought the Kargil crisis to an end. The Vajpayee government had been in touch with the Clinton Administration to get the Nawaz Sharif government to call off the intrusion in Kargil, even as the Indian Army fought the Pakistani forces.
- ▶▶ In 2008, when **Barack Obama** was a candidate for his first term in the White House, he told Time in response to a question on Taliban attacks in Afghanistan from across the Pakistan border: “Working with Pakistan and India to try to resolve Kashmir crisis in a serious way... [is among the] critical tasks for the next administration.

## MEETING OF BRICS MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

### Why in News?

- ▶▶ The BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs Meeting took place on 26th July 2019 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

### Highlights:

- ▶▶ India was represented by Gen (retd) VK Singh who at the meeting who is the Minister of State for Road Transport and Highways.
- ▶▶ A common understanding was made to further deepen BRICS three-pillar-driven cooperation in the areas of security, peace, economy and people-to-people exchanges.
- ▶▶ Reaffirmation to the commitment to upholding the international law was made along with advance sustainable development and protection of human rights and freedom.
- ▶▶ They decided to make a dedicated effort to prevent the financing of terrorist networks and condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.
- ▶▶ BRICS is an informal grouping of five major emerging national economies Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa formed in 2006.
- ▶▶ Originally the first four countries were grouped as "BRIC" (or "the BRICs"), and after the induction of South Africa in 2010 it became BRICS. BRICS countries represent 41% of the global population and contribute about 23% of the gross world product.

## INDIA AND BENIN RELATIONSHIP

### Why in News?

- ▶▶ The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, reached Cotonou, Benin on the first leg of his state visits to three West African nations – Benin, Gambia and Guinea.
- ▶▶ This visit is the first-ever visit of Head of State/Head of Government of India to each of the three countries.

### MOUs/agreements:

- ▶▶ MOUs exchanged between India and Benin:
  - ✓ Cultural Exchange Programme between the two countries for the years 2019-2023
  - ✓ MOU on Cooperation in the field of Export Credit and Investment Insurance
  - ✓ MOU between Benin & Telecommunications Consultants India Limited (TCIL) for participation in the e- VBAB Network Project (Technology upgradation of Pan Africa e-Network Project (PAeNP)- Phase-I) of Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. Agreement on mutual exemption from the visa requirement for holders of Diplomatic, Official/Service Passports

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## India and Benin:

- ▶▶ India is keen to strengthen economic partnership with Benin. India has emerged as the largest trading partner of Benin with two-way trade crossing US\$ 800 million.
- ▶▶ Around 100 Indian or Indian-owned companies are operating in Benin. More Indian companies are interested to enter the Benin market, especially in mining. India seeks Benin's support to help them grow their business. President announced fresh Line of Credit worth US\$ 100 million for developmental projects in Benin. He also announced extension of e-visa facility to Benin.
- ▶▶ India also offered to extend free tele-education courses to 15,000 Beninese students and tele-medicine courses to 1000 doctors and paramedics in Africa. In addition, the two sides discussed defence and security cooperation and India offered further training assistance to Benin to expand its anti-piracy capacity.
- ▶▶ India thanked Benin for its support for India's candidature for permanent membership of the UN Security Council. Both countries reiterated their commitment to stand together in the global fight against terrorism and piracy.



## 4. ECONOMY

### GOODS & SERVICES TAX

#### Why in News?

- ▶▶ 2nd anniversary of Goods & Services Tax to be celebrated on 1st July 2019

#### GST:

- ▶▶ GST is one indirect tax for the whole nation, which will make India one unified common market. GST is a single tax on the supply of goods and services, right from the manufacturer to the consumer.
- ▶▶ Credits of input taxes paid at each stage will be available in the subsequent stage of value addition, which makes GST essentially a tax only on value addition at each stage.
- ▶▶ The final consumer will thus bear only the GST charged by the last dealer in the supply chain, with set-off benefits at all the previous stages.

#### Taxes at the Centre and State level are subsumed into GST:

- ▶▶ At the Central level, the following taxes are being subsumed:
  - ❖ Central Excise Duty
  - ❖ Additional Excise Duty
  - ❖ Service Tax
  - ❖ Additional Customs Duty commonly known as Countervailing Duty, and
  - ❖ Special Additional Duty of Customs.
- ▶▶ At the State level, the following taxes are being subsumed:
  - ❖ Subsuming of State Value Added Tax/Sales Tax,
  - ❖ Entertainment Tax (other than the tax levied by the local bodies), Central Sales Tax (levied by the Centre and collected by the States),
  - ❖ Octroi and Entry tax,
  - ❖ Purchase Tax,
  - ❖ Luxury tax, and
  - ❖ Taxes on lottery, betting and gambling.

#### Benefits of GST:

##### For business and industry:

- ▶▶ **Easy compliance:** A robust and comprehensive IT system would be the foundation of the GST regime in India.
- ▶▶ Therefore, all tax payer services such as registrations, returns, payments, etc. would be available to the taxpayers online, which would make compliance easy and transparent.

- ▶▶ **Uniformity of Tax Rates and Structures:** GST will ensure that indirect tax rates and structures are common across the country, thereby increasing certainty and ease of doing business. In other words, GST would make doing business in the country tax neutral, irrespective of the choice of place of doing business.
- ▶▶ **Removal of cascading:** A system of seamless tax-credits throughout the value-chain, and across boundaries of States, would ensure that there is minimal cascading of taxes. This would reduce hidden costs of doing business.
- ▶▶ **Improved competitiveness:** Reduction in transaction costs of doing business would eventually lead to an improved competitiveness for the trade and industry.
- ▶▶ **Gain to manufacturers and exporters:** The subsuming of major Central and State taxes in GST, complete and comprehensive set-off of input goods and services and phasing out of Central Sales Tax (CST) would reduce the cost of locally manufactured goods and services. This will increase the competitiveness of Indian goods and services in the international market and give boost to Indian exports. The uniformity in tax rates and procedures across the country will also go a long way in reducing the compliance cost.

#### **For Central and State Governments:**

- ▶▶ **Simple and easy to administer:** Multiple indirect taxes at the Central and State levels are being replaced by GST. Backed with a robust end-to-end IT system, GST would be simpler and easier to administer than all other indirect taxes of the Centre and State levied so far.
- ▶▶ **Better controls on leakage:** GST will result in better tax compliance due to a robust IT infrastructure.
- ▶▶ Due to the seamless transfer of input tax credit from one stage to another in the chain of value addition, there is an in-built mechanism in the design of GST that would incentivize tax compliance by traders.
- ▶▶ **Higher revenue efficiency:** GST is expected to decrease the cost of collection of tax revenues of the Government, and will therefore, lead to higher revenue efficiency.

#### **For the consumer:**

- ▶▶ **Single and transparent tax proportionate to the value of goods and services:** Due to multiple indirect taxes being levied by the Centre and State, with incomplete or no input tax credits available at progressive stages of value addition, the cost of most goods and services in the country today are laden with many hidden taxes. Under GST, there would be only one tax from the manufacturer to the consumer, leading to transparency of taxes paid to the final consumer.

- ▶▶ **Relief in overall tax burden:** Because of efficiency gains and prevention of leakages, the overall tax burden on most commodities will come down, which will benefit consumers.

#### **GST Council:**

- ▶▶ As per Article 279A (4), the Council will make recommendations to the Union and the States on important issues related to GST, like the goods and services that may be subjected or exempted from GST, model GST Laws, principles that govern Place of Supply, threshold limits, GST rates including the floor rates with bands, special rates for raising additional resources during natural calamities/disasters, special provisions for certain States, etc.
- ▶▶ As per Article 279A of the amended Constitution, the GST Council will be a joint forum of the Centre and the States. This Council shall consist of the following members namely: –
  - ▶▶ Union Finance Minister... Chairperson
  - ▶▶ The Union Minister of State, in-charge of Revenue of finance... Member
  - ▶▶ The Minister In-charge of finance or taxation or any other Minister nominated by each State Government.

### **NATIONAL WAREHOUSING GRID**

#### **Why in News?**

- ▶▶ The government is likely to introduce warehousing schemes at village and National level to build an efficient storage infrastructure.
- ▶▶ A National Warehousing Grid along the National Highways may also be introduced in the Budget.

#### **National Warehousing Grid:**

- ▶▶ The Centre's scheme aims at broad integration of the warehousing capacities in India.
- ▶▶ Approximately 90% of the warehousing space is controlled by unorganised players, with small warehouses of less than 10,000 sq ft area.
- ▶▶ An action plan has already been approved by the Centre on sectoral basis for the construction of steel silos with a capacity of 100 lakh metric tonnes in PPP mode for modernizing storage infrastructure and improving shelf life of stored food grains.

#### **Significance of scheme:**

- ▶▶ Practically, much of the country's warehousing capacity outside of the agri sector is in the unorganised sector, with small warehouses of less than 10,000 sq ft area.

- ▶▶ Currently, of the total warehousing space of about 180 million sq ft in the country, the industrial segment accounts for about 86% and the agricultural sector the rest 14%, according to NITI statistics.
- ▶▶ Two-thirds of the warehousing capacity in the food storage segment is owned by the public sector.
- ▶▶ Apart from conventional storing services, India's warehousing capacity is increasingly being used to offer value-added services such as the consolidation and breaking up of cargo, packaging, labelling, bar coding and reverse logistics.

#### **Plugging deficiencies:**

- ▶▶ The project is aimed at plugging deficiencies given that India's current cold storage capacity at 25 MT is barely sufficient for 10% of the fruits and vegetables produced in the country.
- ▶▶ The lack of adequate storage infrastructure is an important reason for the high cost of food products and wastage.
- ▶▶ Nearly 60% of the modern warehousing capacity in India is concentrated in top six cities, namely Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Mumbai, Delhi-NCR and Pune, with Hyderabad and Kolkata being the other major markets, according to Care Ratings.
- ▶▶ This trend is driven by the concentration of industrial activity and presence of sizeable urban population around these clusters.

#### **Beneficiaries:**

- ▶▶ The prime beneficiaries of the new wave of growth in warehousing include peripheral locations of Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities.
- ▶▶ Much of the fresh investments would go into creating storage facilities for retail and consumer goods.

#### **Forthcoming Challenges:**

- ▶▶ The primary challenge that India's warehousing market currently faces is acquisition of a feasible land parcel, given that land cost constitutes the largest component of a warehousing project.
- ▶▶ While rental values that a warehouse owner can charge are primarily driven by demand and supply factors, land prices are inherently dependent on multiple factors like development control regulations, infrastructure development and the best alternative usage of land.

## NATIONAL COMMON MOBILITY CARD

### Why in News?

- ▶ National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) – One Nation, One Card for transport mobility is an initiative of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs to enable seamless travel by different metros and other transport systems across the country besides retail shopping and purchases.

### Highlights:

- ▶ The Indigenous Automatic Fare Collection System based on One Nation One Card Model is the first of its kind in India.
- ▶ These are bank issued cards on Debit/Credit/Prepaid card product platform.
- ▶ The customer may use this single card for payments across all segments including metro, bus, suburban railways, toll, parking, smart city and retail.
- ▶ The stored value on card supports offline transaction across all travel needs with minimal financial risk to involved stakeholders. The service area feature of this card supports operator specific applications e.g. monthly passes, season tickets etc.

### Benefits of NCMC:

- ▶ NCMC Ecosystem offers the value proposition for customers as they need not to carry multiple cards for different usage. Further, the super quick contactless transactions will improve the seamless experience.
- ▶ For operators, NCMC ecosystem brings common standards for implementation without vendor lock-in.
- ▶ This will also help in higher digital payments penetration, savings on closed loop card lifecycle management cost and reduced operating cost. The rich data insights may be used by operators for business intelligence leading to efficient operation.
- ▶ With NCMC Ecosystem, Banks will get an access to segments which are highly driven by cash but stickiness in nature. NCMC Ecosystem will further help government in digitization of low value payments and reduced cost for the entire ecosystem.

## NATIONAL MANUFACTURING COMPETITIVENESS PROGRAMME

### Why in News?

- ▶ National Manufacturing Competitiveness Programme (NMCP) aims to support the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in their endeavor to become competitive.

## Objectives:

- ▶▶ The objective of NMCP is to develop global competitiveness among Indian MSMEs.
- ▶▶ This programme targets at enhancing the entire value chain of the MSME sector through the following components: Lean Manufacturing Competitiveness Scheme for MSMEs;
- ▶▶ Promotion of Information & Communication Tools (ICT) in MSME sector;
- ▶▶ Technology and Quality Up gradation Support to MSMEs;
- ▶▶ Design Clinics scheme for MSMEs;
- ▶▶ Enabling Manufacturing Sector to be Competitive through Quality Management Standards (QMS) and Quality Technology Tools (QTT);
- ▶▶ Marketing Assistance and Technology Up gradation Scheme for MSMEs;
- ▶▶ National campaign for building awareness on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR);
- ▶▶ Support for Entrepreneurial and Managerial Development of SMEs through Incubators.
- ▶▶ Bar Code under Market Development Assistance (MDA) scheme.

## NATIONAL ELECTRIC MOBILITY MISSION PLAN

### Why in News?

- ▶▶ The National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP) 2020 is a National Mission document providing the vision and the roadmap for the faster adoption of electric vehicles and their manufacturing in the country.

### Highlights:

- ▶▶ The plan has been designed to enhance national fuel security
- ▶▶ To provide affordable and environmentally friendly transportation
- ▶▶ To enable the Indian automotive industry to achieve global manufacturing leadership.
- ▶▶ As part of the NEMMP 2020, Department of Heavy Industry formulated a Scheme viz. Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India (FAME India) Scheme in the year 2015 to promote manufacturing of electric and hybrid vehicle technology and to ensure sustainable growth of the same.
- ▶▶ FAME-India Scheme Phase – II for promotion of Electric Mobility in the country.
- ▶▶ The scheme proposes to give a push to electric vehicles (EVs) in public transport.
- ▶▶ It seeks to encourage adoption of EVs by way of market creation and demand aggregation.

### Targets:

- ▶▶ Target of deploying 5 to 7 million electric vehicles in the country by 2020
- ▶▶ Emphasizes importance of government incentives and coordination between industry and academia.

- ▶▶ Target of 400,000 passenger battery electric cars (BEVs) by 2020 ~ avoiding 120 million barrels of oil and 4 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>
- ▶▶ Lowering of vehicular emissions by 1.3 percent by 2020
- ▶▶ Total investment required – INR 20,000 – 23,000 cr (approx 3 billion USD)

#### **FAME India:**

- ▶▶ FAME India is a part of the National Electric Mobility Mission Plan. Main thrust of FAME is to encourage electric vehicles by providing subsidies.
- ▶▶ Vehicles in most segments – two wheelers, three wheelers, electric and hybrid cars and electric buses obtained the subsidy benefit of the scheme.
- ▶▶ FAME focuses on 4 areas i.e. Technology development, Demand Creation, Pilot Projects and Charging Infrastructure.

### **SCHEME FOR TRANS-DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH FOR INDIA'S DEVELOPING ECONOMY (STRIDE)**

#### **Why in News?**

- ▶▶ The University Grants Commission (UGC) has approved a new scheme – ‘Scheme for Trans-disciplinary Research for India’s Developing Economy’ (STRIDE)

#### **STRIDE:**

- ▶▶ STRIDE will provide support to research projects that are socially relevant, locally need-based, nationally important and globally significant.
- ▶▶ STRIDE shall support research capacity building as well as basic, applied and transformational action research that can contribute to national priorities with focus on inclusive human development.
- ▶▶ STRIDE shall support creation, development and integration of new ideas, concepts and practices for public good and strengthening civil society.
- ▶▶ STRIDE scheme will strengthen research culture and innovation in colleges and Universities and help students and faculty to contribute towards India’s developing economy with help of collaborative research.

#### **STRIDE Objectives:**

- ▶▶ To identify young talent, strengthen research culture, build capacity, promote innovation and support trans-disciplinary research for India’s developing economy and national development.
- ▶▶ To fund multi institutional network high-impact research projects in humanities and human sciences.

### STRIDE Components:

- ▶▶ Component-1 will endeavour to identify the motivated young talents with research and innovation aptitude in universities and colleges. The Scheme will provide research capacity building in diverse disciplines by mentoring, nurturing and supporting young talents to innovate pragmatic solutions for local, regional, national and global problems. This component is open to all disciplines for grant upto 1 crore.
- ▶▶ Component-2 will be mainly to enhance problem solving skills with help of social innovation and action research to improve wellbeing of people and contribute for India's developing economy. Collaborations between universities, government, voluntary organizations and industries is encouraged under this scheme. This component is open to all disciplines for grant upto 50 lakh – 1 crore.
- ▶▶ Component-3 will fund high impact research projects in the identified thrust areas in humanities and human sciences through national network of eminent scientists from leading institutions. Grant available for this component is upto 1 crore for one HEI and upto 5 crores for multi institutional network.

## BLUEPRINT TO ACHIEVE PRIME MINISTER'S VISION FOR \$5 TRILLION ECONOMY

**Context:** The Economic Survey lays down the strategic blueprint for fructifying the Prime Minister's vision of India becoming a \$5 trillion economy by 2025.

- ▶▶ The theme of the Survey is about enabling a “**shifting of gears**” to sustained economic growth for objective of US\$5 trillion by 2024-25.
- ▶▶ The Survey departs from traditional thinking by viewing the economy as being either in a virtuous or a vicious cycle, and thus never in equilibrium.
- ▶▶ Rather than viewing the national priorities of fostering economic growth, demand, exports and job creation as separate problems, the Survey views these macroeconomic phenomena as complementary to each other.
- ▶▶ The cover design captures the idea of complementary inter-linkages between these macroeconomic variables using the pictorial description of several inter-linked gears.
- ▶▶ The team for Economic Survey 2018-19 has been guided by “**Blue Sky Thinking.**”
- ▶▶ The Survey adopts an unfettered approach in thinking about the appropriate economic model for India.
- ▶▶ This endeavor is reflected in the **Sky-Blue Cover of the Survey.**

- ▶▶ Learning from the global financial crisis, the economy has been viewed as either in a virtuous cycle or a vicious cycle and therefore the concept of equilibrium economics has been disbanded.
- ▶▶ Second, rather than trying to tackle various economic challenges of demand, jobs, exports et cetera in silos, the Survey makes the case that these phenomena are all complimentary.
- ▶▶ Therefore, creating the virtuous cycle with investment, especially private investment, as the main driver can enable growth in each of these important macro variables.
- ▶▶ In an uncertain world, three key elements are necessary: a vision, a strategic blueprint to achieve the vision, and practical tools to recalibrate constantly to the strategic blueprint.
- ▶▶ The Prime Minister has laid out the vision and Economic Survey 2018 -19 lays out the strategic blueprint to achieve that vision along with the tactical tools to stay on the path of the strategic blueprint.
- ▶▶ Among these, treating people as humans and not as robots as in classical economics, creating data as a public good, enhancing the legal system for enforcement of contracts, insuring consistency of policy with the blueprint are some tools that have been discussed, the Survey adds.
- ▶▶ Treating people as humans and not as robots as in classical economics, creating data as a public good, enhancing the legal system for enforcement of contracts, insuring consistency of policy with the blueprint are some aspects that have been discussed in the Survey.
- ▶▶ This year's Survey also utilizes advances in Behavioural Economics to address issues of gender equality, a healthy and a beautiful India, savings, tax compliance and credit quality.
- ▶▶ It recognizes the role of social norms in the success of initiatives such as Beti Bacho Beti Padhao, Swacch Bharat Mission and Jan Dhan Yojana to effect behavioral change.

## WIND ENERGY IN INDIA

**Context-** India's emerging green economy will require additional investments of around \$80 billion till 2022, growing more than threefold to \$250 billion during 2023-30,

**Aim:**

- ▶▶ The country has an installed **Renewable Energy Capacity** of about 80 gigawatts (GW) and is running the world's largest renewable energy programme with plans to achieve 175GW by 2022 and 500GW by 2030, as part of its climate commitments.
- ▶▶ **Policy-** National Off-Shore Wind Policy was notified in 2015

### Offshore Wind Farming:

- ▶▶ Two Types viz. shallow water and deep-sea farming
- ▶▶ **Advantages of Offshore wind farming**
  - ❖ Stronger Winds for efficient generation of power;
  - ❖ No impact on real estate value of land as in case of onshore wind farming;
  - ❖ Its ability to fulfill the demand of the heavily populated coastal regions

### Issues

- ▶▶ Heavy investments, better technology needed, maintenance issues etc.
- ▶▶ challenges of assigning no-go areas for commercial shipping

### Why so much Investment in Wind energy now?

- ▶▶ The push for green energy also comes against the backdrop of the **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)**-plus arrangement extending its compact for production cuts.
- ▶▶ The production cut extension will have a wide-ranging impact on energy markets, given that OPEC accounts for around 40% of the global output.
- ▶▶ It is expected to have a particular fallout on India due to the OPEC accounting for around 83% of the country's total crude oil imports.

### Global Energy Landscape:

- ▶▶ **London Stock Exchange (LSE)** has classified oil and gas stocks as **non-renewable energy**. The move marks a fundamental change in the global investment culture against the backdrop of growing climate concerns with several countries focusing on renewable energy.
- ▶▶ India has also emerged as the voice of consuming nations amid global uncertainties in the energy markets with supplies from **Iran and Venezuela drying up** and **tension escalating in the Persian Gulf**.

### Efficiency and Universal access of Energy:

- ▶▶ Energy intensity of India's GDP has been declining in the recent past, which is reflective of **increases in the efficiency of energy use**.
- ▶▶ India cannot become an upper-middle-income country without
  1. Rapidly raising its share of the global energy consumption commensurate with its share of the global population, and
  2. Ensuring universal access to adequate modern commercial energy at affordable prices.

## Conclusion:

- ▶▶ Having greater energy efficiency is crucial for India that is now the biggest emitter of greenhouse gases after the US and China, and which is also among nations most vulnerable to climate change.
- ▶▶ India plans to reduce its carbon footprint by 33-35% from its 2005 levels by 2030, as part of its commitments to the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change** adopted by 195 countries in Paris in 2015.

## TRADE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR EXPORT SCHEME (TIES)

### Why in News?

- ▶▶ The **Department of Commerce**, under the Union **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**, has approved financial assistance for three trade promotion centres under the TIES.

### Highlights:

- ▶▶ Establishment of Main Exhibition Building (Phase-II) at **Trade cum Permanent Exhibition Centre at Imphal, Manipur** by Manipur Industrial Development Corporation (MANIDCO).
- ▶▶ Expansion of Chennai Trade Centre by Tamil Nadu Trade Promotion Organisation
- ▶▶ Establishment of Trade Promotion Centre at Minto Hall, Bhopal by M.P. State Tourism Development Corporation

### Trade Infrastructure for Export Scheme (TIES):

- ▶▶ Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry launched the Trade Infrastructure for Export Scheme (TIES) in March, 2017.
- ▶▶ After delinking of the **Assistance to States for Development of Export Infrastructure and Allied Activities (ASIDE) Scheme** in 2015, the State Governments had been consistently requesting the support of the Centre in creation of export infrastructure.
- ▶▶ The scheme would provide assistance for setting up and up-gradation of infrastructure projects with overwhelming export linkages like the Border Haats, Land customs stations, quality testing and certification labs, cold chains, trade promotion centres, dry ports, export warehousing and packaging, SEZs and ports/airports cargo terminuses.
- ▶▶ The proposals of the implementing agencies for funding will be considered by an inter-ministerial Empowered Committee.

## WORKING GROUP ON CORE INVESTMENT COMPANIES

### Why in News?

- ▶▶ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has constituted a working group to review the regulatory guidelines and supervisory framework applicable for Core Investment Companies (CIC).

### Terms of Reference:

- ▶▶ To examine the current regulatory framework for CICs in terms of adequacy, efficacy and effectiveness of every component thereof and suggest changes therein.
- ▶▶ To assess the appropriateness of and suggest changes to the current approach of the Reserve Bank of India towards registration of CICs including the practice of multiple CICs being allowed within a group.
- ▶▶ To suggest measures to strengthen corporate governance and disclosure requirements for CICs.
- ▶▶ To assess the adequacy of supervisory returns submitted by CICs and suggest changes therein.
- ▶▶ To suggest appropriate measures to enhance RBI's off-site surveillance and on-site supervision over CICs.
- ▶▶ The working group, headed by **Tapan Ray**, shall submit its report by October 31, 2019.

### Core Investment Company:

- ▶▶ Core Investment Companies (CICs) are a specialized Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs).
- ▶▶ They have asset size of Rs 100 crore and above.
- ▶▶ Their main business is acquisition of shares and securities with certain conditions.
- ▶▶ It holds not less than 90% of its net assets in the form of investment in equity shares, preference shares, bonds, debentures, debt or loans in group companies.
- ▶▶ Its investments in the equity shares (including instruments compulsorily convertible into equity shares within a period not exceeding 10 years from the date of issue) in group companies constitutes not less than 60% of its net assets .
- ▶▶ It does not trade in its investments in shares, bonds, debentures, debt or loans in group companies except through block sale for the purpose of dilution or disinvestment.
- ▶▶ It does not carry on any other financial activity referred to in RBI Act, 1934 except investment in bank deposits, money market instruments, government securities, loans to and investments in debt issuances of group companies or guarantees issued on behalf of group companies.
- ▶▶ It accepts public funds.

## SFURTI, ASPIRE & PRADHAN MANTRI MATSYA SAMPADA YOJANA

### Why in News?

- ▶▶ The Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman said that the Government aims to set up more Common Facility Centres (CFCs) under the 'Scheme of Fund for Upgradation and Regeneration of Traditional Industries' (SFURTI).
- ▶▶ It will facilitate cluster-based development to make the traditional industries more productive, profitable and capable for generating sustained employment opportunities.
- ▶▶ The focused sectors are Bamboo, Honey and Khadi clusters.
- ▶▶ SFURTI envisions setting up of 100 new clusters during 2019-20 to enable 50,000 artisans to join the economic value chain.

### SFURTI:

- ▶▶ SFURTI is Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries.
- ▶▶ Ministry of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), Govt. of India has launched this scheme in the year 2005 with the view to promote Cluster development.
- ▶▶ As per the revised guidelines, the following schemes are being merged into SFURTI:
- ▶▶ The Scheme for Enhancing Productivity and Competitiveness of Khadi Industry and Artisans
- ▶▶ The Scheme for Product Development, Design Intervention and Packaging (PRODIP)
- ▶▶ The Scheme for Rural Industries Service Center (RISC) and
- ▶▶ Other small interventions like Ready Warp Units, Ready to Wear Mission, etc.

### Objectives of Scheme:

- ▶▶ To organize the traditional industries and artisans into clusters to make them competitive and provide support for their long-term sustainability and economy of scale;
- ▶▶ To provide sustained employment for traditional industry artisans and rural entrepreneurs;
- ▶▶ To enhance marketability of products of such clusters by providing support for new products, design intervention and improved packaging and also the improvement of marketing infrastructure;
- ▶▶ To equip traditional artisans of the associated clusters with the improved skills and capabilities through training and exposure visits;
- ▶▶ To strengthen the cluster governance systems with the active participation of the stakeholders, so that they are able to gauge the emerging challenges and opportunities and respond to them in a coherent manner;

- ▶▶ To build up innovated and traditional skills, improved technologies, advanced processes, market intelligence and new models of public – private partnerships, so as to gradually replicate similar models of cluster – based regenerated traditional industries
- ▶▶ To make a paradigm shift from a supply driven selling model to a market driven model with the right branding, focus product mix and correct positioning and right pricing to make the offering holistic and optimal for each of the focus categories.
- ▶▶ To tap the E-Commerce as a major marketing channel given the outreach and the growing market penetration of E-Commerce, there is a need to devise a quick strategy to make its presence felt in the E – Retail space.

#### **ASPIRE:**

- ▶▶ The Scheme for Promotion of Innovation, Rural Industry and Entrepreneurship’ (ASPIRE) has been consolidated for setting up of Livelihood Business Incubators (LBIs) and Technology Business Incubators (TBIs).
- ▶▶ The Scheme contemplates setting up 80 Livelihood Business Incubators (LBIs) and 20 Technology Business Incubators (TBIs) in 2019-20 to develop 75,000 skilled entrepreneurs in agro-rural industry sectors.

#### **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana:**

- ▶▶ Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) – Through the Scheme the Department of Fisheries will establish a robust fisheries management framework.
- ▶▶ This will address critical gaps in strengthening the value chain, including infrastructure, modernization, traceability, production, productivity, post-harvest management, and quality control.

### **ETHANOL AND SUGAR MILLS**

**Context-** Recently Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways exhorted sugar mills to switch to producing ethanol.

#### **Issues:**

- ▶▶ The surplus production of sugar is a major problem.
- ▶▶ It is not possible to reduce it, and it is also hard to change crop patterns.
- ▶▶ Sugar mills must decide whether they want to make sugar or ethanol from sugar cane juice. In Brazil, the price of sugar is ₹22 per kg while in India; we have fixed Rs 32-34 per Kg. Hence in the world market, nobody is willing to buy our sugar and as a result, we are making losses.”

### Benefits:

- ▶▶ Would prove beneficial for tackling the problems stemming from surplus production and falling prices. Steady rise in ethanol blending is set not only to **save import of crude oil** thus saving of precious foreign currency reserves, but also encourage use of additional cane juice and other raw materials efficiently in addition to protect environment from release of motor vehicle obnoxious gas.

### Maharashtra Sugar Mills:

- ▶▶ Maharashtra is slow in giving permission to sugar factories for converting sugar cane juice to ethanol and B class molasses to ethanol.
- ▶▶ As a result, a number of sugar factories could not start adopting this policy.

### Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme:

- ▶▶ The 5% mandatory ethanol blending with petrol
- ▶▶ The EBP Programme is presently being implemented in a total of 13 States with blending level of about 2% against a mandatory target of 5%.
- ▶▶ A stable EBP programme would ensure sustainable benefits for the sugarcane farmers across the nation. It will ensure an alternative market for the farmers who frequently get adversely affected in case of bumper crop of sugarcane and lack of its demand in the market. It will also provide an incentive to small and medium farmers to increase efforts towards sugarcane crop as better returns would be ensured.

## CAPITAL TO RISK-WEIGHTED ASSETS (CRAR)

### CRAR:

- ▶▶ Capital to Risk (Weighted) Assets Ratio (CRAR) is also known as Capital adequacy Ratio, the ratio of a bank's capital to its risk.
- ▶▶ The banking regulator tracks a bank's CAR to ensure that the bank can absorb a reasonable amount of loss and complies with statutory Capital requirements. Higher CRAR indicates a bank is better capitalized. The Capital to risk weighted assets ratio is arrived at by dividing the capital of the bank with aggregated risk weighted assets for credit risk, market risk and operational risk. The capital to risk-weighted assets ratio is calculated by adding a bank's tier 1 capital and tier 2 capitals and dividing the total by its total risk-weighted assets.
- ▶▶ As per RBI guidelines, banks are required to maintain a minimum Capital to Risk-weighted Assets (CRAR) of 9% on an ongoing basis.
- ▶▶ Out of the 9 per cent of CAR, 7 per cent has to be met by Tier 1 capital while the remaining 2 per cent by Tier 2 capital.

## PONZI SCAMS

### Background:

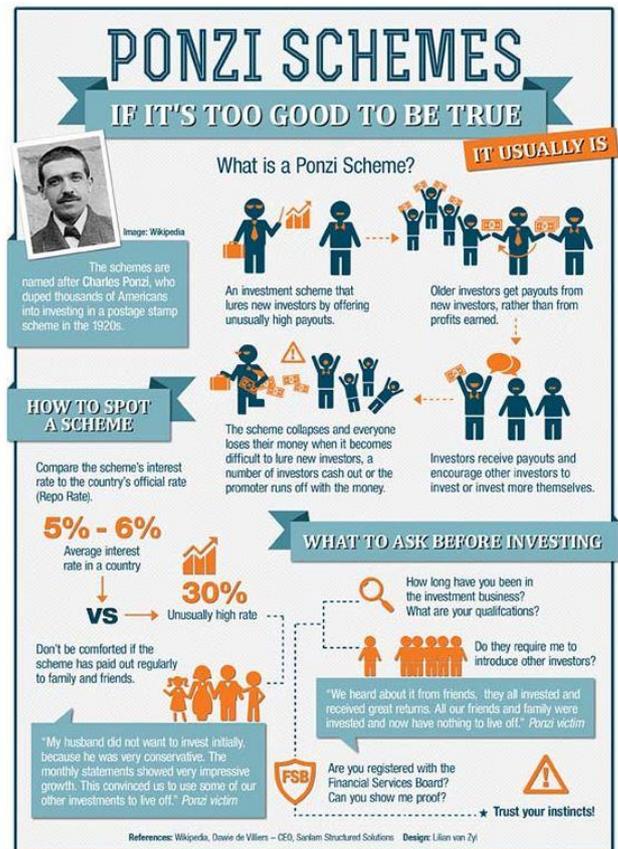
- ▶▶ The Union Cabinet Wednesday approved Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill with an aim to tackle the menace of illicit deposit- taking activities in the country.

### What is Ponzi scams?

- ▶▶ is a form of fraud that lures investors and pays profits to earlier investors with funds from more recent investors.
- ▶▶ The scheme leads victims to believe that profits are coming from product sales or other means, and they remain unaware that other investors are the source of funds.

### Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill:

- ▶▶ The bill will help tackle the menace of illicit deposit taking activities in the country, which at present are exploiting regulatory gaps and lack of strict administrative measures to dupe poor and gullible people of their hard earned money.
- ▶▶ The proposed legislation will have adequate provisions for punishment and disgorgement/repayment of deposits in cases where such schemes nonetheless manage to raise deposits illegally
- ▶▶ SEBI and RBI approved deposits will be allowed.



## BANNING OF UNREGULATED DEPOSIT SCHEMES BILL, 2019

### Why in News?

- ▶▶ The Union Cabinet has approved the banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill, 2019. It will replace the banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Ordinance, 2019.

### Impact:

- ▶▶ The Bill will help tackle the menace of illicit deposit taking activities in the country, which at present are exploiting regulatory gaps and lack of strict administrative measures to dupe poor and gullible people of their hard-earned savings.

### **Salient Features of the Bill:**

- ▶▶ The Bill contains a substantive banning clause which bans Deposit Takers from promoting, operating, issuing advertisements or accepting deposits in any Unregulated Deposit Scheme.
- ▶▶ The principle is that the Bill would ban unregulated deposit taking activities altogether, by making them an offence ex-ante rather than the existing legislative-cum-regulatory framework which only comes into effect ex-post with considerable time lags;
- ▶▶ The Bill creates three different types of offences, namely, running of Unregulated Deposit Schemes, fraudulent default in Regulated Deposit Schemes, and wrongful inducement in relation to Unregulated Deposit Schemes. The Bill provides for severe punishment and heavy pecuniary fines to act as deterrent. The Bill has adequate provisions for disgorgement or repayment of deposits in cases where such schemes nonetheless manage to raise deposits illegally. The Bill provides for attachment of properties / assets by the Competent Authority, and subsequent realization of assets for repayment to depositors;
- ▶▶ Clear-cut time lines have been provided for attachment of property and restitution to depositors; The Bill enables creation of an online central database, for collection and sharing of information on deposit-taking activities in the country;
- ▶▶ The Bill defines “Deposit Taker” and “Deposit” comprehensively;
- ▶▶ “Deposit Takers” include all possible entities (including individuals) receiving or soliciting deposits, except specific entities such as those incorporated by legislation;
- ▶▶ “Deposit” is defined in such a manner that deposit-takers are restricted from camouflaging public deposits as receipts, and at the same time, not to curb or hinder acceptance of money by an establishment in the ordinary course of its business; and
- ▶▶ Being a comprehensive Union Law, the Bill adopts best practices from State laws, while entrusting the primary responsibility of implementing the provisions of the legislation to the State Governments.

### **NATIONAL RURAL BANK OF INDIA.**

**Context-** Govt is thinking of formation of National Rural Bank of India in order to consolidate in Regional rural Banks (RRB).

### **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance (2003)**

- ▶▶ The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance (2003) in its 55th Report recommended that Government may consider the setting up of an apex body viz. National Rural Bank of India.

## Why there is need of formation of National Rural Bank of India.

- ▶▶ National Rural Bank of India can act as apex body to monitor the **Regional Rural Banks (RRBs)**

## Steps taken by the Government to strengthen the RRBs:

- ▶▶ Government had initiated the process of structural consolidation of RRBs in 2004-05 by amalgamating RRBs of the same Sponsor Bank within a State.
- ▶▶ Recapitalization support is provided to RRBs to augment their capital so as to comply with regulatory capital requirements.
- ▶▶ Periodic review of financial performance of RRBs,
- ▶▶ Regular Capacity building efforts are undertaken by NABARD like training at Bankers Institute of Rural Development (BIRD), conduct of Organizational Development Initiative (ODI), exposure visits, etc.
- ▶▶ NABARD provides regular policy support to RRBs in matters relating to human resources and an arrangement has been made for redressal of grievances through Joint Consultative Committee (JCC).

## What is Regional Rural Banks (RRBs)

- ▶▶ Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) are financial institutions which ensure adequate credit for agriculture and other rural sectors.
- ▶▶ Regional Rural Banks were set up on the basis of the recommendations of the Narasimham Working Group (1975), and after the legislations of the Regional Rural Banks Act, 1976.
- ▶▶ The first Regional Rural Bank “Prathama Grameen Bank” was set up on October 2, 1975. At present there are 82 RRBs in India.

## Equity in RRBs

- ▶▶ The equity of a regional rural bank is held by the Central Government, concerned State Government and the Sponsor Bank in the proportion of 50:15:35.

## Significance:

- ▶▶ The RRBs combine the characteristics of a cooperative in terms of the familiarity of the rural problems and a commercial bank in terms of its professionalism and ability to mobilise financial resources.
- ▶▶ The main objectives of RRB's are to provide credit and other facilities, especially to the small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers artisans and small entrepreneurs in rural areas with the objective of bridging the credit gap in rural areas, checking the outflow of rural deposits to urban areas and reduce regional imbalances and increase rural employment generation.

## EXPORT PROMOTION SCHEME

### Why in News?

- ▶▶ The Government of India has launched a scheme namely, Trade Infrastructure for Export Scheme (TIES) with the objective to assist Central and State Government Agencies for creation of appropriate infrastructure for growth of exports from the States.

### Highlights:

- ▶▶ The Scheme provides financial assistance in the form of grant-in-aid to Central/State Government-owned agencies for setting up or for up-gradation of export infrastructure as per the guidelines of the Scheme.
- ▶▶ The scheme can be availed by the States through their Implementing Agencies, for infrastructure projects with overwhelming export linkages like the Border Haats, Land customs stations, quality testing and certification labs, etc.
- ▶▶ The Government of India strives to ensure a continuous dialogue with the State Governments and Union Territories on measures for promoting exports.
- ▶▶ Also for providing an international trade enabling environment in the States, and to create a framework for making the States active partners in boosting exports from India.
- ▶▶ Under the Foreign Trade Policy (FTP), DGFT operates various Export promotion schemes such as Advance Authorization, Duty Free Import Authorization, Export Promotion of Capital Goods, Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS) and Services Exports from India Scheme (SEIS).
- ▶▶ To give effect to these schemes, Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs has issued various exemption notifications.

### Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS):

- ▶▶ MEIS was introduced in the FTP from 01.04.2015, providing rewards for exporters of specified goods. The objective of the MEIS is to offset infrastructural inefficiencies and associated costs involved in exporting goods/products which are produced/manufactured in India. The scheme incentivizes exporters in terms of Duty Credit Scrips at the rate of 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 % of FOB Value of exports realized.
- ▶▶ These scrips are transferable and can be used to pay certain Central Duties/taxes including Customs Duties.

### Agriculture Export Policy:

- ▶▶ The Agriculture Export Policy was launched in 2018 to harness export potential of Indian agriculture, through suitable policy instruments, to make India global power in agriculture and raise farmers' income

- ▶▶ This comprehensive “Agriculture Export Policy” aims to increase agricultural exports by integrating Indian farmers and agricultural products with the global value chains.

## **PANEL FAVOURS CRYPTOCURRENCY BAN IN INDIA**

**Context:** The committee headed by finance secretary **Subhash Chandra Garg** has proposed a draft bill “Banning of Cryptocurrency & Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill, 2019”

### **Highlights of The Committee Recommendations:**

- ▶▶ Proposed banning of private cryptocurrencies in India by enacting a law and imposing fines and penalties for carrying on activities related to cryptocurrencies.
- ▶▶ Proposed a draft bill “**Banning of Cryptocurrency & Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill, 2019**”, which has been placed in the public domain.
- ▶▶ The committee has, taken a lenient view on the government launching an official digital currency, asking it to keep an open mind on the matter
- ▶▶ It suggested the use of **distributed-ledger technology (DLT)** or blockchain in India, by banks and other financial firms for processes such as loan-issuance tracking, collateral management, fraud detection and claims management in insurance and reconciliation systems in the securities market.

**The committee identifies the potential use cases for blockchain technology in areas such as:**

- ✓ Payments systems including cross-border and small value payments;
- ✓ Data identity management or know-your-customer requirements by various financial entities.
- ✓ Insurance
- ✓ Collateral and ownership (including land) registries
- ✓ Loan issuance and tracking
- ✓ e-stamping, Trade financing
- ✓ Post-trade reporting
- ✓ Securities and commodities and
- ✓ Internal systems of financial service providers.
- ✓ The advantages of using DLT are mainly seen in terms of reducing administration and transaction costs, obviating duplication and improving accuracy of data, improving the speed and efficiency of transactions and detecting fraud.

## PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENT IN DEFENCE PRODUCTION

### Why in News?

- ▶▶ The defence industry sector was opened up to 100% for private sector participation in May 2001 through licensing.

### Highlights:

- ▶▶ Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) had been revised in 2016 wherein specific provisions have been introduced for stimulating growth of the domestic defence industry.
- ▶▶ A new category of procurement 'Buy {Indian-IDD (Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured)}' has been introduced in DPP-2016 to promote indigenous design and development of defence equipment.
- ▶▶ 'Buy (Indian)', 'Buy and Make (Indian)' & 'Make' categories of capital acquisition have been given preference over 'Buy (Global)' & 'Buy & Make (Global)' categories.
- ▶▶ The 'Strategic Partnership (SP)' model has been notified by the government to establish longstanding strategic partnerships with Indian entities through a transparent and competitive process, in order to tie up with Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) to seek technology transfers to set up domestic manufacturing infrastructure and supply chains.
- ▶▶ The 'Make' Procedure has been simplified with provisions for funding of 90% of development cost by the Government to Indian industry and reserving projects not exceeding development cost of Rs.10 crore (Government funded) and Rs.3 crore (Industry funded) for MSMEs.
- ▶▶ Separate procedure for 'Make-II' subcategory has been notified wherein a number of industry friendly provisions such as relaxation of eligibility criterion, minimal documentation, provision for considering proposals suggested by industry/individual, etc. have been introduced.
- ▶▶ The Government will establish two defence industrial corridors to serve as an engine of economic development and growth of defence industrial base in India.
- ▶▶ An innovation ecosystem for Defence titled Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) has been launched in April, 2018. iDEX is aimed at creation of an ecosystem to foster innovation and technology development in Defence and Aerospace by engaging Industries including MSMEs, Start-ups, Individual Innovators, R&D institutes and Academia and provide them grants/funding and other support to carry out R&D.
- ▶▶ The Mission Raksha Gyan Shakti has been introduced to encourage IPR culture in indigenous defence industry.

- ▶▶ A Policy for indigenisation of components and spares used in Defence Platforms has been notified in April 2019.
- ▶▶ A Defence Investor Cell has been created in the Defence Ministry to provide all necessary information including addressing queries related to investment opportunities, procedures and regulatory requirements for investment in the sector.
- ▶▶ FDI is now allowed under automatic route up to 49% and beyond 49% through Government route. Export clearance process has been streamlined and a scheme for the promotion of defence exports has been notified.
- ▶▶ Technology Development Fund (TDF) has been set up by the GOI to encourage participation of public/private industries especially MSMEs, through provision of grants.
- ▶▶ Offset guidelines have been made flexible by allowing change of Indian Offset Partners (IOPs) and offset components, even in signed contracts. Foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) are now not required to indicate the details of IOPs and products at the time of signing of contracts. 'Services' as an avenue of offset have been reinstated.

### WILFUL DEFAULTER

**Context:** Rajya Sabha was informed by the Minister of Finance informed about the mechanisms in place to deter wilful defaulters, curb incidence of wilful defaults, and effect recovery from wilful defaulters.

#### What is willful defaulter?

- ▶▶ Under Indian law, wilful defaulters are classified as firms or individuals who own large businesses and deliberately avoid repayments.

#### Stats:

- ▶▶ India's state-owned banks had classified **₹1.50 trillion** worth of loans as "wilful defaults" in 2018-19, with the biggest lender State Bank of India accounting for nearly a one third.
- ▶▶ The State Bank of India saw the highest number of wilful defaults at ₹46,158 crore, while Punjab National Bank stood second at ₹25,090 crore, with Bank of India at ₹9,890 crore,

#### Government Action on Wilful Defaulter:

- ▶▶ Wilful defaulters are not sanctioned any additional facilities by banks or financial institutions, and they are debarred from launching ventures for five years.
- ▶▶ The government has debarred wilful defaulters and companies with wayward borrowers from accessing capital markets to raise funds or participate in insolvency resolution process.
- ▶▶ Bank chiefs can also authorise look-out notices for defaulters to prevent them from leaving the country.

### **Mechanisms in Place to Deter Wilful Defaulters:**

- ▶▶ PSBs have been asked to examine all accounts exceeding Rs. 50 crore, if classified as Non-Performing Asset (NPA), from the angle of possible fraud and to immediately initiate examination of the issue of wilful default once a fraud is reported.
- ▶▶ For effective action against wilful defaulters fleeing Indian jurisdiction, the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018 has been enacted to provide for attachment and confiscation of property of fugitive offenders and has disentitled them from defending any civil claim.
- ▶▶ Government has advised PSBs to decide on publishing photographs of wilful defaulters, in terms of RBI's instructions and as per their Board-approved policy.

## **INSOLVENCY AND BANKRUPTCY BOARD OF INDIA (IBBI)**

### **Why in News?**

- ▶▶ The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) notified the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Insolvency Resolution Process for Corporate Persons) (Amendment) Regulations, 2019 and the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Liquidation Process) (Amendment) Regulations, 2019.
- ▶▶ Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Insolvency Resolution Process for Corporate Persons) (Amendment) Regulations, 2019:
- ▶▶ The amendments specify the process for withdrawal of applications before constitution of committee of creditors (CoC), after constitution of CoC but before issue of invitation for expression of interest, and after issue of invitation for expression of interest.
- ▶▶ While approving a resolution plan or deciding to liquidate the corporate debtor, the CoC may: approve a plan providing for contribution for meeting the liquidation costs
- ▶▶ recommend sale of the corporate debtor or sale of business of the corporate debtor as a going concern, and fix, in consultation with the RP, the fee payable to the liquidator, if an order for liquidation is passed by the Adjudicating Authority
- ▶▶ Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Liquidation Process) (Amendment) Regulations, 2019:
- ▶▶ The amendments specify the process for (i) sale of corporate debtor as going concern, and (ii) sale of business of corporate debtor as going concern under liquidation.
- ▶▶ These also provide that where a corporate debtor is sold as a going concern, the liquidation process shall be closed without dissolution of the corporate debtor.

- ▶▶ The amendments require completion of liquidation process within one year of its commencement, notwithstanding pendency of applications for avoidance transactions.
- ▶▶ To ensure that the liquidation process completes at the earliest, it: provides a model timeline for each task in the liquidation process specifies a maximum time of 90 days from the order of liquidation for completion of compromise or arrangement, if any, proposed by the stakeholders under section 230 of the Companies Act, 2013.
- ▶▶ The amendments require the financial creditors, who are financial institutions, to contribute towards the liquidation cost, where the corporate debtor does not have adequate liquid resources to complete liquidation, in proportion to the financial debts owed to them by the corporate debtor, in case the CoC did not approve a plan for such contribution during corporate insolvency resolution process.
- ▶▶ However, such contribution along with interest at bank rate thereon shall form part of liquidation cost, which is paid in priority.
- ▶▶ The amendments provide for constitution of a Stakeholders' Consultation Committee, whose advice is not binding on the liquidator.
- ▶▶ The amendments require that a stakeholder may submit its claim or update its claim submitted during the corporate insolvency resolution process, as on the liquidation commencement date.
- ▶▶ The amendments have introduced a comprehensive compliance certificate to be submitted along with the final report to the Adjudicating Authority

## 5. ENVIRONMENT

### EUROPE HEATWAVE

**Context:** A massive heatwave has gripped Western European countries and caused severe heat warnings in several parts of Europe.

#### What is a Heatwave?

▶▶ A heat wave is a period of **Unusually Hot Weather** that typically lasts two or more days. To be considered a heat wave, the temperatures have to be outside the historical averages for a given area.

▶▶ Classifying a heat wave varies from country to country, because what is seen as extremely hot in one place may seem within normal range in another.

▶▶ WMO listed several factors to be considered while analysing heatwave. These include defining a specific threshold for variables such as temperature to be considered extreme, as well as a human perspective of extremes.



#### How India Meteorological Department Declares Heatwave?

▶▶ The India Meteorological Department does not consider a heatwave unless the maximum temperature crosses 40°C in the plains and 30°C in the hills.

▶▶ Where the normal maximum is 40°C or less, the heatwave departure from normal is 5°C to 6°C and the severe heatwave departure is 7°C or more.

▶▶ Where the normal maximum is more than 40°C, the heatwave departure from normal is 4°C to 5°C while the severe heatwave departure is 6°C or more.

▶▶ In places where the maximum temperature reaches 45°C or more, the IMD declares a heatwave irrespective of the normal.

#### What are the health hazards of heatwave?

▶▶ The heat poses a risk to people's health, agriculture and the environment. It is the departure from normal — or what people are used to — that makes heatwaves dangerous.

▶▶ Babies and older people are particularly vulnerable because their bodies are not as well able to regulate their own temperatures as those of young adults.

▶▶ High temperatures can cause exhaustion, heat stroke, organ failure, and breathing problems.

## The European Heatwave:

- ▶ According to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) the heatwave in Europe is a result of **Warm Air Masses from Africa** and more such events are expected to follow during this northern hemisphere summer.
- ▶ The heatwave in Europe follows extreme heat episodes in India, Pakistan, parts of the Middle East and Australia. According to WMO it's too early to blame Climate Change for these trends. However, the WMO agreed that the heatwave is consistent with climate scenarios which predict more frequent, drawn out and intense heat events as greenhouse gas concentrations lead to a rise in global temperatures. Apart from heatwaves, various climate models have predicted alternating periods of prolonged droughts and heavy flooding in some areas.

## **PLASTIC WASTE MANAGEMENT RULES, 2016, (AMENDED 2018)**

### **Context:**

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has pulled up 52 companies — including Amazon, Flipkart, Danone Foods and Beverages and Patanjali Ayurveda Limited — **for not specifying a time line or a plan to collect the plastic waste that results from their Business Activities.**

### **Plastic Waste- Stats:**

- ▶ **Plastic Infrastructure Report, 2017**, India consumes close to 12.8 million tonnes of plastic per annum, of which, close to 5 million tonnes is rendered as waste every year.
- ▶ **70% of the plastic waste industry is informal in nature** and no action plan for formalising the industry has been pushed in the last two years.

### **Issues with Policies on Plastic:**

- ▶ Under Good and Service Tax (GST), plastic waste was put under a 5 per cent bracket, hurting the informal sector, which already lacks a concrete action plan.
- ▶ The status of plastic waste management in the country is grim even after the rules gave emphasis on **Banning Plastics below 50 Microns**, phasing out use of multi-layered packaging and introducing **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** for producers, importers and brand owners to ensure environmentally sound management of plastic products until the end of their lives.

### **Features of Plastic Waste Management Rules:**

- ▶ Companies that use plastic in their processes — packaging and production — have a responsibility to ensure that any resulting plastic waste is safely disposed of.

## Extended Producers Responsibility (EPR)

- ❖ EPR is a practice and policy approach in which producers are made responsible for collecting and processing their manufactured products upon end of their lifetime. Responsibility may be fiscal, physical or a combination of both.
- ❖ Companies have to specify collection targets as well as a time line for this process within a year of the rules coming into effect.
- ▶▶ The Rules also mandate the responsibilities of local bodies, gram panchayats, waste generators and retailers to manage such waste.

## Issues with Plastic Waste Management Rules:

- ▶▶ **Rule 15** (Explicit pricing of carrying bags) has been omitted in the amendment.
  - ❖ It earlier required every vendor, who sold commodities in a carry bag, to register with their respective urban local body and pay a minimum fee of Rs 48,000 annum (4000/month) after the announcement of the bye-laws.
- ▶▶ Under **Section 9 (3)**, the term '**Non-Recyclable Multi-Layered Plastic if any**' has been substituted by 'multi-layered plastic which is non-recyclable or non-energy recoverable or with no alternate use'. This gives plastic producers a scope to argue that their products can be put to some other use, if not recycled.

## Issue with Extended Producers Responsibility (EPR):

- ▶▶ As per **CSE's publication on Model Framework for Segregation**, major changes required in the plastic waste rules are concerning EPR.
- ▶▶ EPR targets have to be accounted for at the national level, irrespective of which state the products are sold or consumed in. The amendment does not address these issues.
- ▶▶ No example of deposit refund scheme system has been implemented in any state.
- ▶▶ The producers have been reluctant in taking the onus of the waste despite various interventions across the country by government and civic societies.

## Model Framework for Offset Mechanism:

- ▶▶ The amount of equivalent plastic and packaging that the producers and brand owners are able to recover and recycle will be used as an offset.
- ▶▶ Such mechanisms will be **product and brand neutral** and the collection will not be confined to the packaging of the producer or brand owners' products only and can be carried out in any location(s) of their choosing.
- ▶▶ This offset mechanism must be included EPR in the rules by the producers and brand owners: By working with the government for promoting segregation at source through propagation;

- ▶▶ Taking the onus of implementation and devising their EPR plans and setting up a team to monitor.
- ▶▶ Supporting the implementation of segregation and account-keeping of plastic waste.

### **Concept of Producer Responsibility Organisations (PROs):**

- ▶▶ A PRO is a third-party organisation that facilitates the responsibility of producers to take back waste from open market, recycle or process, and file compliance.
- ▶▶ With a PRO, producers do not physically take back the product, but instead support the process financially.

### **PRO In E- Waste and Plastic Waste:**

- ▶▶ PROs have been tried and tested when it comes to managing e-waste.
- ▶▶ Their roles and activities are defined in the **Guidelines for PRO** under e-waste management rules.
- ▶▶ **PRO does not find a mention in the Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2018.**
- ▶▶ CPCB has started registering PROs for plastic waste management.

### **Global Examples of PROs Operating Successfully:**

- ▶▶ Europe has set precedent when it comes to plastic-generating corporations establishing PROs to collect plastics and facilitate processing. Long-term agreements are facilitated, enabling PROs to establish infrastructure for collection, guaranteed by secured reimbursements from the brands liable for collection as per the policy.

### **Problems with PROs:**

- ▶▶ PRO would experience great challenges on the ground due to low level of source segregation
- ▶▶ Success would lie in creating a strong monitoring and reporting structure for both PROs and recyclers.

### **Conclusion:**

- ▶▶ It is imperative to develop a **Phase-Wise Implementation of the EPR programme** with yearly targets and a system of nationwide offsets and credit to ensure effective implementation of the rules.
- ▶▶ With a worldwide crisis due to plastic waste, India has to find a way to curb its plastic pollution at the earliest and that is only possible when all the stakeholders take the responsibility of ensuring minimisation, reuse and recycling of plastic to the maximum.

## PLAN BEE

### What is Plan Bee?

- ▶▶ Plan Bee, is an amplifying system imitating the buzz of a swarm of honey bees to keep wild elephants away from Railway Tracks.



### Award:

- ▶▶ For Plan Bee, Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) earned the best innovation award in Indian Railways for the 201819 fiscal year.

### Why Plan Bee?

- ▶▶ There are 29 earmarked elephant corridors with the operating zone of NFR spread across the north-eastern states and parts of Bihar and West Bengal.
- ▶▶ Trains are required to slow down at these corridors and adhere to speed specified on signs
- ▶▶ But elephants have ventured into the path of trains even in non corridor areas, often leading to accidents resulting in elephant deaths.

### About Elephant:

- ▶▶ **Elephant as National Heritage Animal of India in 2010**
- ▶▶ The status was recommended by a task force on elephant project

### Types of Elephant:

- ▶▶ Indian Elephant: *elephas maximus indicus*
- ▶▶ Sri Lankan Elephant: *elephas maximus maxicus*
- ▶▶ Mainland Asian Elephants: *elephas maximus sumatranus*

### Conservation of Elephants in India – Project Elephant:

- ▶▶ There are 30 thousand elephants spread across 16 Elephant states in India.
- ▶▶ Maximum number of elephants is in Kerala, followed by Karnataka and Assam.
- ▶▶ Three key areas:
  1. Protection of wild elephants, their habitat and corridors
  2. Address the issue of man-animal conflict and
  3. Welfare of domesticated elephants
- ▶▶ This Project Elephant is being implemented in 13 states.

### Elephant Reserves:

- ▶▶ There are a total of 28 elephant reserves.
- ▶▶ ERs, maximum number is in Assam and Odisha with five each.

### Elephant Corridors:

- ▶▶ 183 identified elephant corridors in India
- ▶▶ State corridors: maximum number of them are located in **Meghalaya**
- ▶▶ Among, inter-state corridors, maximum are shared by **Jharkhand and Odisha**
- ▶▶ Maximum International corridors India shares with **Bangladesh**

## HIMALAYAN CONCLAVE

**Context-** Himalayan Conclave is being held in Mussoorie, Uttarakhand

### Objective

- ▶▶ The objective is to discuss various issues related to the development of Himalayan States.
- ▶▶ The main agenda for the conclave are **conservation of Himalayan ecology, biodiversity** and cultural heritage and water conservation, with focus on conserving rivers, glaciers, lakes and water bodies besides reviving water resources which have dried up over the years.

### Related Schemes:

#### National Mission for sustaining the Himalayan ecosystem:

- ▶▶ The National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem (**NMSHE**) is one of the eight missions under the **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)**.
- ▶▶ **NMSHE** is a multi-pronged, cross-cutting mission across various sectors.
- ▶▶ It contributes to the sustainable development of the country by enhancing the understanding of climate change, its likely impacts and adaptation actions required for the Himalayas- a region on which a significant proportion of India's population depends for sustenance.

## VANISHING WILDLIFE: 22 SPECIES HAVE GONE EXTINCT IN INDIA

### Context:

The data tabled in the Lok Sabha by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change states that four species of fauna and 18 species of flora have gone extinct in India in the past few centuries.

### Highlights of the BSI report:

- ▶▶ As per information given by the BSI (Botanical survey of India), 18 species of plants — four non-flowering and 14 flowering — have gone extinct.
- ▶▶ The notable species among them are:
  1. *Lastreopsis wattii*, a fern in Manipur discovered by George Watt in 1882.

2. Three species from the genus *Ophiorrhiza* (*Ophiorrhiza brunonis*, *Ophiorrhiza caudate* and *Ophiorrhiza radican*), all discovered from peninsular India.
  3. *Corypha taliera* Roxb, a palm species discovered in Myanmar and the Bengal region by William Roxburgh is also extinct.
  4. Among mammals, the cheetah (*Acionyx jubatus*) and the Sumatran rhinoceros (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*) are considered extinct in India.
  5. The pink-headed duck (*Rhodonessa caryophyllaceai*) is feared extinct since 1950 and the Himalayan quail (*Ophrysia supercilios*) was last reported in 1876.
- ▶▶ The major factors that have led to these extinctions are competition, predation, natural selection, and human induced factors like hunting, habitat degradation.

#### Other important facts:

- ▶▶ As per Botanical Survey of India (BSI) said India is home to 11.5% of all flora in the world.
- ▶▶ As per Zoological survey of India (ZSI), India has about 6.49% of all the fauna species in the world.
- ▶▶ According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, since 1750 more than double the number of plants has disappeared from the wild than birds, mammals and amphibians combined.

## INTERNATIONAL TIGER DAY: INDIA ACHIEVES TIGER CENSUS TARGET 4 YEARS BEFORE DEADLINE

#### Context:

Prime Minister released tiger estimation figures and said that India has achieved the target of doubling the tiger count four years ahead of the deadline.

The country now has 2,967 tigers, which has been the result of a growth of 33 per cent in the fourth cycle of the Tiger Census.

#### Background:

- ▶▶ India along with 12 other tiger range countries had committed to doubling the population of tigers in their respective countries by 2022, as part of the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF) **programme Tx2**.

#### Status of Tigers in India, 2018:

- ▶▶ The **four-year tiger census report** shows that the numbers of the big cat have increased across all landscapes.
- ▶▶ The total count has risen to 2,967 from 2,226 in 2014 – an increase of 741 individuals (aged more than one year), or 33%, in four years.

- ▶▶ This is by far the biggest increase in terms of both numbers and percentage since the four-yearly census using **camera traps and the capture-mark-recapture method** began in 2006. Tiger numbers are always projected in a range — 2,967, is the mean of an estimated range of 2,603 to 3,346. The 2018 figure has a great degree of credibility because, according to the report, as many as 2,461 individual tigers (83% of the total) have actually been photographed by trap cameras. The **report does not contain numbers of other predators like leopards**. But better tiger numbers are generally seen as indicating good prey bases and habitat.

#### **Method Used to Collect Data:**

- ▶▶ The population estimates were prepared by collecting field data on tiger sign intensity, prey abundance, human disturbance and habitat characteristics in various forest beats. This was followed by estimates based on camera trap images.

#### **State Wise Data:**

- ▶▶ The growth of tiger has not been uniform across all 18 states where tigers are found.
- ▶▶ MP had the highest rise of 218 tigers, reaching an estimated 526, followed by Karnataka with 524. The two states have the highest population of the predator.
- ▶▶ The numbers have also increased in Uttarakhand (442), Maharashtra (312) and Tamil Nadu (264). The count has decreased drastically from 46 to 19 in Chhattisgarh. In Odisha, it has been on a continual decline over the years and now stands at 28. No tigers were found in Buxa (West Bengal), Dampa (Mizoram) and Palamau (Jharkhand), reserves.
- ▶▶ Since state boundaries do not apply to the movement of tigers, conservationists prefer to talk about tiger numbers in terms of landscapes rather than of states.

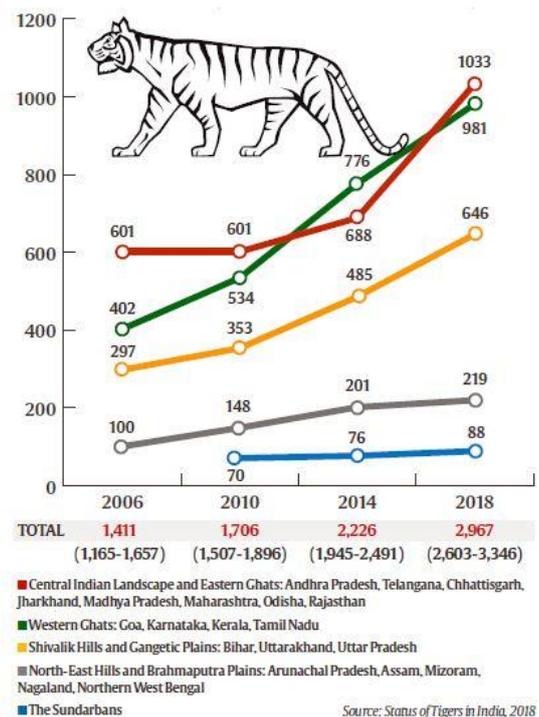
#### **Tiger Bearing Habitats (Tiger Landscapes) in India:**

- ▶▶ The tiger bearing habitats were divided into **five landscape regions**—
- 1. Shivalik-Gangetic plains,**
  - 2. Central India and the Eastern Ghats,**
  - 3. Western Ghats,**
  - 4. North Eastern Hills and Brahmaputra Flood Plains and**
  - 5. the Sundarbans.**

#### **Why There is A Need for Tiger Census?**

- ▶▶ The tiger sits at the peak of the food chain, and its conservation is important to ensure the well-being of the forest ecosystem. The tiger estimation exercise includes habitat assessment and prey estimation.

- ▶▶ The numbers reflect the success or failure of conservation efforts. This is an especially important indicator in a fast-growing economy like India where the pressures of development often run counter to the demands of conservation.
- ▶▶ **The Global Tiger Forum**, an international collaboration of tiger-bearing countries, has set a goal of doubling the count of wild tigers by 2022.
- ▶▶ **More than 80% of the world's wild tigers are in India**, and it's crucial to keep track of their numbers.



### About Global Tiger Forum:

- ▶▶ The Global Tiger Forum (GTF) is the only inter-governmental international body established with members from willing countries to embark on a global campaign to protect the Tiger.
- ▶▶ The GTF was formed in 1993 on recommendations from an international symposium on Tiger Conservation at New Delhi, India.
- ▶▶ The first meeting of the **Tiger Range countries** to setup the forum was held in 1994, in which India was elected to the Chair and was asked to form an interim secretariat.
- ▶▶ In 1997, the GTF became an independent organization.
- ▶▶ GTF was set up to highlight the rationale for tiger preservation and provide leadership and common approach throughout the world in order to safeguard the survival of the tiger, its prey, and its habitat.

### Tiger Range Countries:

- ▶▶ There are 13 Tiger Range Countries (TRCs) viz., **Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, Thailand and Vietnam.**

## GRAIN BY GRAIN - CSE'S REPORT ON ENVIRONMENTAL RATING OF INDIA'S FERTILIZER INDUSTRY

**Context:** 'Grain by Grain' Report which is the complete assessment of the environmental performance of fertilizer industry in India was released by Centre for Science & Environment (CSE).

### About:

- ▶▶ The report - 'Grain by Grain' - is the complete assessment of the environmental performance of fertilizer industry in India.
- ▶▶ This first of its kind of environmental rating of Indian fertilizer industry has been done by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), along with its Green rating project (GRP).
- ▶▶ It rated India's all 28 operational fertilizer plants on around 50 parameters.
- ▶▶ This is the seventh rating project undertaken by GRP. The Project has, earlier, rated the pulp and paper, automobile, chloro-alkali, cement, iron and steel and thermal power sectors.

### Key Highlights of The Report:

- ▶▶ The widespread production and use of the common fertiliser chemical urea in India's large agriculture sector has led to alarming levels of nitrogen pollution of surface water and groundwater in many Indian states.
- ▶▶ Nitrogen is found in most chemical fertilisers and contributes to groundwater contamination, damaging the environment and people's health globally, just as many regions around the world face acute water shortages.
- ▶▶ Chemicals such as urea form the bulk of fertilisers in India, which remains the world's second-largest consumer of the chemicals after China, according to the report.
- ▶▶ Report calls for the government to liberalise the industry to make it more competitive, potentially leading to greater efficiencies and more environmentally sound production practices.
- ▶▶ India's fertilizer sector is among the best in the world in energy use and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. However, its staggering records on water use, water pollution and plant safety is a cause of concern.
- ▶▶ It found Grasim Industries Ltd's Indo Gulf Fertilizers unit at Jasdishpur, Uttar Pradesh as the best, followed by Hazira unit of KRIBHCO in Gujarat and Panambur unit of Mangalore Chemicals and Fertilizers Ltd. in Karnataka.

### **TAMIL YEOMAN- STATE BUTTERFLY**

**Context:** Tamil Nadu (TN) now officially has a State Butterfly- the 'Tamil yeoman' or 'TamizhMaravan'

#### About 'Tamil Yeoman':

- ▶▶ **Cirrochroathais, the Tamil yeoman**, is a species of nymphalid butterfly found in forested areas of **Tropical Sri Lanka And India**.



- ▶▶ It is the state butterfly of Tamil Nadu.
- ▶▶ The species is **endemic** to Western Ghats

#### Other Facts related to TN:

- ▶▶ State Tree: **Palm**
- ▶▶ State Bird: **Emerald Dove**
- ▶▶ State Animal: **Nilgiri Tahr**
- ▶▶ State Flower: **Gloriosa**

### NORTHERN WHITE RHINOCEROS IN OL PEJETA

**Context:** Technology Lab Focused on wildlife Protection Opens on Ol Pejeta Conservancy

- ▶▶ The **World's First Technology Hub** that will provide the space, resources, and networks to explore innovative technology solutions to conservation problems has been launched in Kenya's Ol Pejeta Conservancy.



#### Northern White Rhinoceros:

- ▶▶ It is one of two subspecies of the white rhinoceros (the other being the southern white rhinoceros).
- ▶▶ Formerly found in several countries in East and Central Africa south of the Sahara, this subspecies is a grazer in grasslands and savanna woodlands.
- ▶▶ According to the latest **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)** assessment from 2011, the subspecies is considered "**Critically Endangered (Possibly Extinct in the Wild)**).

### KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK

**Context:** Rhino Protection Force deployed in **Kaziranga National Park (NP)**.

- ▶▶ An 82-member special protection force trained to combat poachers and understand animal behaviour was deployed in the Kaziranga National Park
- ▶▶ The SRPF is basically a tiger protection force named after the rhino since the threat of poaching is more for the one-horned herbivore

#### About Kaziranga NP:

- ▶▶ It is a **National Park** in the Golaghat and Nagaon districts of the state of **Assam**, India.
- ▶▶ The sanctuary, which hosts **Two-Thirds of the world's Great One-Horned Rhinoceroses**, is a **World Heritage Site**.

- ▶▶ Kaziranga is home to the **Highest Density of Tigers** among protected areas in the world, and was declared a Tiger Reserve in 2006.
- ▶▶ The park is home to large breeding populations of elephants, wild water buffalo, and swamp deer. Kaziranga is recognized as an **Important Bird Area by Bird Life International** for conservation of avifaunal species.

## ONE-HORNED RHINOCEROS

- ▶▶ The **Indian Rhinoceros** (*Rhinoceros Unicornis*), also called the **Greater One-Horned Rhinoceros and Great Indian Rhinoceros**, is a rhinoceros native to the Indian subcontinent.
- ▶▶ Its preferred **Habitat** is **Alluvial Flood Plains** and areas containing **Tall Grasslands** along the **Foothills of the Himalayas**.
- ▶▶ 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**.



## HUMPBACK WHALES

**Context:** Scientists identified 33 known **Tumour Suppressing Genes in humpback whales** that showed evidence of advantageous changes.



### About Humpback Whales:

- ▶▶ It is a species of **baleen** whale. One of the larger rorqual species, adult's range in length from 12–16 m
- ▶▶ The humpback has a **distinctive body shape**, with **long pectoral fins and a knobbly head**. It is known for breaching and other distinctive surface behaviors
- ▶▶ They **feed in polar waters**, and **migrate to tropical or subtropical waters** to breed and give birth, fasting and living off their fat reserves.
- ▶▶ Their diet consists mostly of **krill and small fish**
- ▶▶ Once hunted to the brink of extinction, its population fell by an estimated 90% before a 1966 moratorium
- ▶▶ In August 2008, the **IUCN** changed humpback's status from **Vulnerable to Least Concern**.

## GANGETIC DOLPHIN- MAHANANDA RIVER



**Context:** A population of **endangered Gangetic river dolphins** has been found for the first time in the **Mahananda river, a tributary of the Ganga**, in Bihar's Kishanganj district.

### About Gangetic River Dolphins:

- ▶▶ The Ganges river dolphin is primarily found in the Ganges and Brahmaputra Rivers and their tributaries in **Bangladesh, India and Nepal**
- ▶▶ It has been recognized by the government of India as its **National Aquatic Animal**
- ▶▶ It is one of the four freshwater dolphin species in the world. The other three are found in **Yangtze river, Indus river in Pakistan and Amazon river.**
- ▶▶ IUCN status: **Endangered**
- ▶▶ It is also placed in **Schedule-I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.**

### Major threats:

- ❖ Fishing nets
- ❖ Hunting for their oil and meat
- ❖ Water pollution
- ▶▶ **Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary** located in Bihar's Bhagalpur district of Bihar is India's only dolphin sanctuary is spread over 50 km along the Ganges.

## HOG DEER

- ▶▶ The **Hog Deer** or Pada is an **endangered Species** in the **IUCN Red List** and is protected under Schedule I of the **Indian Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.**
- ▶▶ Hog Deer has lost ground in most of its distribution range. Presently, its small and fragmented population is known to be **found in Cambodia.**
- ▶▶ A Small and isolated population of Under 250 was reported from Cambodia. However, it was widely distributed throughout the **Southeast Asian Countries** at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.



## WAYANAD SANCTUARY

**Context:** Recently, Elephant sustained injuries after a truck knocked it down at Ponkuzhi on the Kerala- Karnataka border under the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary

- ▶▶ It is an animal sanctuary and the **second largest wildlife sanctuary** in Wayanad, **Kerala**.
- ▶▶ A variety of large wild animals such as **Indian bison, elephant, deer and tiger** are found there.
- ▶▶ Established in 1973, the sanctuary is now an integral part of the **Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve**. It is bounded by protected area network of **Nagarhole and Bandipur of Karnataka** in the northeast, and on the southeast by **Mudumalai of Tamil Nadu**.
- ▶▶ It is part of the **Deccan Plateau** and the vegetation is predominantly of the south Indian **moist deciduous teak forests**.
- ▶▶ The wildlife sanctuary comes under **Protect Elephant** and one can spot herd of elephants roaming in the area.

## ASSAM TEMPLE TURTLES SET FREE IN THE WILD

**Context:** Five species of rare turtles crammed in a small pool within the complex of a Shiva temple in central Assam's Nagaon have been rehabilitated in a wildlife sanctuary.

- ▶▶ A team from Nagaon Wildlife Division and green group Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA), in coordination with the Nagaon Shivasthan Temple Committee, recently released 67 turtles at the Bura Chapori Wildlife Sanctuary in Sonitpur district.
- ▶▶ The turtles belong to five species – **Indian flapshell, peacock softshell, Indian tent, brown-roofed and black softshell**.

### About Bura Chapori Wildlife Sanctuary:

- ▶▶ It is a protected area located in the state of **Assam in India**.
- ▶▶ This wildlife sanctuary covers 44.06 km<sup>2</sup>, on the south bank of the **Brahmaputra River** in Sonitpur district.
- ▶▶ The area was declared a Reserved forest in 1974, it became a sanctuary in 1995
- ▶▶ **Biodiversity:** It is considered to be an ideal habitat for the **Bengal florican**. It is a paradise for many migratory birds. Reptiles and fish are also found here.
- ▶▶ **Mammals:** Indian rhinoceros, tiger, leopard, wild buffalo, hog deer, wild pigs and occasionally a herd of elephants.
- ▶▶ **Birds:** Bengal florican, black-necked stork, mallard, openbill stork, teal, whistling duck and many others.

- ▶▶ **Indian flapshell:** It is a freshwater species of turtle found in South Asia; **IUCN status:** Least Concern
- ▶▶ **Peacock softshell:** It is a species of turtle found in South Asia, and is listed on the **IUCN Red List** as a vulnerable species.
- ▶▶ **Indian tent turtle:** The species is endemic to India and Bangladesh and listed on the **IUCN Red List** as a least concern species.
- ▶▶ **Brown-roofed turtle:** The species is endemic to South Asia; **IUCN status:** Near Threatened
- ▶▶ **Black softshell turtle:** It is a species of freshwater turtle found in India (Assam) and Bangladesh; **IUCN status:** Extinct in the Wild

### RED FOX

**Context:** Researchers have found that substances used in rat poison in half of the red foxes they studied, according to the scientists at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences



#### About Red Fox:

- ▶▶ It is the **largest of the True Foxes** and one of the most widely distributed members of the order Carnivora
- ▶▶ It is present across the **entire Northern Hemisphere** from the Arctic Circle to North Africa, North America and Eurasia.
- ▶▶ It is listed as **least Concern** by the IUCN
- ▶▶ Its range has increased alongside human expansion, having been introduced to Australia, where it is considered harmful to native mammals and bird populations.
- ▶▶ Due to its presence in Australia, it is included on the list of the "**world's 100 Worst Invasive Species**".

### GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD

**Context:** The Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change on July 12 told the Lok Sabha that it had initiated a Rs 33.85 crore project to conserve and protect the 130 Great Indian Bustards left in India



#### About Great Indian Bustard:

- ▶▶ It is a bustard found on the Indian subcontinent.

- ▶▶ **Specifications:** A **large bird** with a horizontal body and long bare legs, giving it an ostrich like appearance, this bird is among the heaviest of the flying birds.
- ▶▶ Once common on the dry plains of the Indian subcontinent, as few as 150 individuals were estimated to survive in 2018 (reduced from an estimated 250 individuals in 2011)
- ▶▶ The species is **critically endangered** by hunting and loss of its habitat, which consists of large expanses of dry grassland and scrub.
- ▶▶ These birds are often found associated in the same habitat as **Blackbuck**.
- ▶▶ It is protected under **Wildlife Protection Act 1972** of India.

### **VIKRAMSHILA GANGETIC DOLPHIN SANCTUARY (VGDS)**

**Context:** Speed restrictions and sound alerts mooted for protection of dolphins

- ▶▶ The **Ministry of Shipping** plans to safeguard the population of the Ganges River Dolphin in the **Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary (VGDS)** by restricting the speeds of vessels and blowing sirens and horns.
- ▶▶ **National Waterway-1:** connecting **Haldia to Varanasi** passes through the Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary (VGDS).

#### **Steps taken by the Government:**

- ▶▶ Vessel speed would be **restricted to 2.7 knots** in VGDS area to reduce the noise generation from propeller. If any aquatic mammal/dolphin is spotted, then the measures will be taken to push it away through sirens/signals.
- ▶▶ Vessels to be **fitted with propeller guards** and dolphin deflectors to minimise dolphin accidents. Using **Non-Toxic Paints** for painting vessels.

#### **Key Facts:**

- ▶▶ The **Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary (VGDS)**, from Sultanganj to Kahalganj on the Ganga in **Bihar is the only dolphin sanctuary** in the country.
- ▶▶ The sanctuary is a 50 km stretch of the **Ganges River** from Sultanganj to Kahalgaon.
- ▶▶ Designated in 1991, it is protected area for the **endangered Gangetic dolphins** in Asia. **Once** found in abundance, only a few hundred remain, of which half are found here

#### **About Gangetic Dolphins:**

- ▶▶ It is primarily found in the **Ganges and Brahmaputra Rivers** and their tributaries in **India, Bangladesh and Nepal**.
- ▶▶ It has been declared as the **National Aquatic Animal of India**.

IUCN Red List of Threatened Species	Endangered
Wildlife Protection Act, 1972	Schedule-I
CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora)	Appendix I

## POBITORA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

**Context:** Pobitora wildlife Sanctuary has been temporarily closed due to the ongoing Assam floods.

### About Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary:

- ▶▶ It is situated in the flood plains of River Brahmaputra in the district of Morigaon in Assam.
- ▶▶ It harbours the **highest density of Rhino in the world** and second highest concentration of Rhino in Assam after Kaziranga National Park.
- ▶▶ Besides Rhinoceros, the other mammals found are Leopard, Leopard cat, Fishing cat, Jungle cat, Feral Buffalo, Wild pigs, Chinese pangolins etc.
- ▶▶ Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary is an Important Bird Area.
- ▶▶ Pobitora is running a successful Rhino breeding program within its sanctuary.
- ▶▶ It is running under Indian Government as "**Indian Rhino vision 2020**".

## CERCOPITHECUS ROLOWAY MONKEY

**Context:** IUCN added more than 7000 animals, fish and plants to its endangered "Red List"

### About Roloway Monkey:

- ▶▶ It is endemic to tropical West Africa
- ▶▶ It has a white beard, chest, and throat; there are a white stripe along each thigh and a deep reddish or orange patch on its back.
- ▶▶ On the inside of the thighs, the fur is whitish, yellowish, or reddish.
- ▶▶ The body length ranges from 40 to 55 cm and its weight is between 4 and 7 kg.
- ▶▶ Roloway monkeys consume a diverse array of varying insects, fruit, seeds, and flowers. They can feed on the plant parts of roughly 130 species of trees, climbers, and epiphytes.



IUCN RED LIST	CRITICALLY ENDANGERED
CITES	APPENDIX I

## 6. SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

### DRAGONFLY MISSION

#### Why in News?

- ▶▶ The National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Dragonfly mission, (which will be launched in 2026 and land in 2034) plans to fly a drone copter to Saturn's largest moon Titan in search of the building blocks of life.

#### Dragonfly Mission:

- ▶▶ Dragonfly mission will study whether the moon of Saturn (Titan) could now be, or once was, home to life. Dragonfly will fly to dozens of promising locations on Titan looking for prebiotic chemical processes common on both Titan and Earth.
- ▶▶ This will be the first time Nasa will fly a multi-rotor vehicle for science on other planets.
- ▶▶ It will explore diverse environments from organic dunes (hill of loose sand built by the flow of water or air) to the floor of an impact crater where liquid water and complex organic materials (key to life) once existed together (possibly tens of thousands of years).
- ▶▶ The craft will land first at the equatorial "Shangri-La" dune, exploring the region in short trips before building up to longer "leapfrog" flights of five miles (8 kilometres).
- ▶▶ It will investigate the Titan's atmospheric and surface properties and its subsurface ocean and liquid reservoirs and will also search for chemical evidence of past life.

#### Titan:

- ▶▶ Titan is the largest moon of Saturn and the second largest moon in our solar system.
- ▶▶ Titan's atmosphere is made mostly of nitrogen, like Earth's, but is four times denser.
- ▶▶ Unlike Earth, it has clouds and rain of methane.
- ▶▶ It's surface pressure is also 50% higher than Earth.

### MOSAIC Mission

#### Why in News?

- ▶▶ Scientists from 17 nations will take part in the year-long MOSAIC mission as they anchor the RV Polarstern ship to a large piece of Arctic sea ice to study climate change.

#### MOSAIC Mission:

- ▶▶ The MOSAIC mission stands for Multidisciplinary drifting Observatory for the Study of Arctic Climate. It is a one-year-long expedition into the Central Arctic, planned to take place from 2019 to 2020.

- ▶▶ For the first time a modern research icebreaker will operate in the direct vicinity of the North Pole year-round, including the nearly half year long polar night during winter.
- ▶▶ It comes about 125 years after Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen first managed to seal his wooden expedition ship, Fram, into the ice during a three-year expedition to the North Pole. MOSAiC will contribute to a quantum leap in our understanding of the coupled Arctic climate system and its representation in global climate models.
- ▶▶ The focus of MOSAiC lies on direct in-situ observations of the climate processes that couple the atmosphere, ocean, sea ice, bio-geochemistry and ecosystem.

### Why Study Arctic Climate?

- ▶▶ The Arctic is a key area of global climate change, with warming rates exceeding twice the global average. The observed rate of climate change in the Arctic is not well reproduced in climate models.
- ▶▶ Many processes in the Arctic climate system are poorly represented in climate models because they are not sufficiently understood.
- ▶▶ Understanding of Arctic climate processes is limited by a lack of year round observations in the central Arctic.

### **HYDROGEN-ENRICHED COMPRESSED NATURAL GAS (HCNG)**

#### Why in News?

- ▶▶ Delhi will be the first city in the country to roll out hydrogen-enriched compressed natural gas (HCNG) buses for public transport from November 2020.

#### Highlights:

- ▶▶ It will start as a pilot project with 50 CNG buses retrofitted with HCNG.
- ▶▶ Also, the Delhi government along with Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) and Indraprastha Gas Limited (IGL) began work to set up India's first semi-commercial HCNG station.

#### HCNG:

- ▶▶ The blending of hydrogen with CNG provides a blended gas termed as HCNG.
- ▶▶ HCNG stands for hydrogen-enriched compressed natural gas and it combines the advantages of both hydrogen and methane.
- ▶▶ HCNG allows customers early hydrogen deployment with nearly commercial technology. It is being treated as a first step towards a future hydrogen economy.
- ▶▶ Hydrogen has been regarded as a future secondary fuel for power system due to carbon-free operation.

- ▶▶ The rapid increase in the emission of greenhouse gases and very strict environmental legislation are major motivating factors for the usage of hydrogen in fuel cells and internal combustion engines.
- ▶▶ Hydrogen is an excellent additive to improve the combustion of hydrocarbon fuel due to its low ignition energy, high reactivity, diffusivity and burning velocity.

## NASA'S PUNCH MISSION

### Why in News?

- ▶▶ NASA has selected an US based Indian researcher to lead its PUNCH mission which will image the Sun.

### PUNCH Mission:

- ▶▶ PUNCH stands for “Polarimeter to Unify the Corona and Heliosphere,” is focused on understanding the transition of particles from the Sun’s outer corona to the solar wind that fills interplanetary space.
- ▶▶ It will consist of a constellation of four microsattellites that through continuous 3D deep-field imaging, will observe the corona and heliosphere as elements of a single, connected system.
- ▶▶ This is a landmark mission will image regions beyond the Sun’s outer corona.
- ▶▶ The Sun and the solar wind are one interconnected system, but these have until recently been studied using entirely different technologies and scientific approaches.

### Significance:

- ▶▶ Other missions such as NASA’s Parker Solar Probe and the ESA-NASA joint project, Solar Orbiter, which is due to be launched in 2020, can study the structures of the Sun’s atmosphere.
- ▶▶ The PUNCH mission enhances these by tracking these structures in real time.
- ▶▶ Since the Sun’s corona is much fainter than its surface layers, it cannot be viewed by the instruments directly. So, PUNCH will block out the light from the Sun to view its corona and the structures in it. Constellation of satellites:
- ▶▶ PUNCH will consist of a ‘constellation’ of four suitcase-sized microsats that will orbit the Earth in formation and study how the corona, which is the atmosphere of the Sun, connects with the interplanetary medium.
- ▶▶ The mission is expected to be launched in 2022.

## FLY ASH

### Why in News?

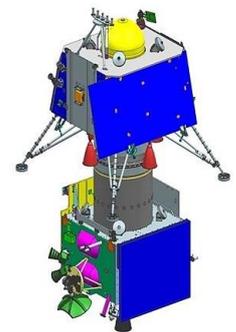
- ▶▶ The National Green Tribunal has sought a report from the authorities on the current status on disposal and management of fly ash.

### Fly Ash:

- ▶▶ Fly ash is a major source of PM 2.5 (fine, respirable pollution particles) in summer. It becomes airborne, and gets transported to a radius of 10 to 20 kms.
- ▶▶ It can settle on water and other surfaces. Fly ash contains heavy metals from coal, a large amount of PM 2.5 and black carbon (BC). Fly ash, the end product of combustion during the process of power generation in the coal based thermal power plants, is a proven resource material for many applications of construction industries and currently is being utilized in manufacturing of Portland Cement, bricks/blocks/tiles manufacturing, road embankment construction and low-lying area development, etc.

## CHANDRAYAAN-2

- ▶▶ Developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)
- ▶▶ Advanced version of the previous Chandrayaan-1 mission to Moon.
- ▶▶ mission is planned to be launched to the Moon by a **Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mark III (GSLV Mk III)**
- ▶▶ Two-module system comprising of an Orbiter Craft module (OC) and a Lander Craft module (LC) carrying the Rover developed by ISRO.



### Objectives:

- ▶▶ The primary objectives of Chandrayaan-2 are to demonstrate the ability to soft-land on the lunar surface and operate a robotic rover on the surface.
- ▶▶ Scientific goals include studies of lunar topography, mineralogy, elemental abundance, the lunar exosphere, and signatures of hydroxyl and water ice.

### Other Nations:

- ▶▶ Only **USA Russia** and **China** were able to soft land successfully on the lunar surface and these landings were near the lunar equator.

### Recent Developments:

- ▶▶ A crucial test before the launch called “Lander Sensor Performance Test (LSPT)” was conducted by ISRO over an artificial lunar site setup at Challakere, Karnataka.
- ▶▶ It is to test how the sensor will guide the lander when it starts descending on the lunar terrain.

- ▶▶ As the plane descends over the artificial terrain, the sensors must show how they will guide the soft landing of the lunar craft at the right spot, speed and position.

#### **Sensor in the Lander:**

- ▶▶ It helps assess height from the landing spot, decides speed of the lander and helps lander navigate boulder or uneven surfaces.

## **BLACK GOLD**

#### **Why in News?**

- ▶▶ Using gold nanoparticles Indian scientists have developed a new material called “black gold”, which can potentially be used for applications ranging from solar energy harvesting to desalinating seawater, according to a study.

#### **Black Gold:**

- ▶▶ To develop the material, the team from Mumbai-based Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) rearranged size and gaps between gold nanoparticles.
- ▶▶ It has unique properties such as capacity to absorb light and carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>).
- ▶▶ Gold does not have these properties therefore ‘black gold’ is being called a new material.
- ▶▶ In appearance it is black, hence the name ‘black gold’, according to the findings published in Chemical Science
- ▶▶ The researchers varied inter-particle distance between gold nanoparticles using a cycle-by-cycle growth approach by optimizing the nucleation-growth step.
- ▶▶ They used dendritic fibrous nano silica, whose fibres were used as the deposition site for Gold Nanoparticles.

#### **Features of Black Gold:**

- ▶▶ One of the most fascinating properties of the new material is its ability to absorb the entire visible and near-infrared region of solar light.
- ▶▶ It does so because of inter-particle plasmonic coupling as well as heterogeneity in nanoparticles size. Black gold could also act as a catalyst and could convert CO<sub>2</sub> into methane at atmospheric pressure and temperature using solar energy.
- ▶▶ If we develop an artificial tree with leaves made out of black gold, it can perform artificial photosynthesis, capturing carbon dioxide and converting it into fuel and other useful chemicals. The efficiency of conversion of CO<sub>2</sub> into fuel, at present, is low but researchers believe it could be improved in future.
- ▶▶ The material can be used as a nano-heater to convert seawater into potable water with good efficiency, the researchers said.

## HUMAN GENETICS AND GENOME ANALYSIS

**Context:** The **Department of Biotechnology (DBT)** has initiated a programme called Human Genetics and Genome Analysis for reducing India's disease burden

### About the Programme:

- ▶▶ Private DNA testing laboratories offering recreational genetics tests are already burgeoning in India.
- ▶▶ Now, the **department of biotechnology (DBT)** has initiated a programme called **human genetics and genome analysis** in which the country's genetic resource is being utilized to develop baseline data initially on various ethnic groups for disease susceptibility.
- ▶▶ The focus is on improving human health by promoting the development and dissemination of genomic methodologies and tools for prediction and prevention of human disease, and for therapeutic intervention.
- ▶▶ The aim is to improve disease management through lifestyle modulation, improvement in public health, reduction of disease burden, and lowering of treatment cost with more genetic laboratories and trained personnel in the area.

### About Recreational Genetics:

- ▶▶ Recreational genetics is a term used to describe personal genetics tests which can be used to determine a person's genetic make-up.
- ▶▶ The information from such a test can be used to unearth details about ancestry and inherited traits, among other things.
- ▶▶ Recreational genetics may also be called recreational DNA testing.
- ▶▶ Genetic testing can reveal how one's genes behave and respond, personal genetic information can provide data that can help people make more informed health-related decisions about their lifestyle, goals, dietary habits, fitness, nutrition and weight management. While recreational genetic tests are common in the US and several European countries, in India the genetic testing market is still at a nascent stage.

## MICRODOTS

### Why in News?

- ▶▶ The government has come out with draft rules to make microdots mandatory in vehicles.
- ▶▶ This move will also ensure that consumers have a way of identifying original parts from fake ones and that contributes to overall safety as well.

### Microdots Technology:

- ▶▶ The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways issued a draft notification on amending the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989, and allowing motor vehicles and their parts, components, assemblies, sub-assemblies to be affixed with permanent and nearly invisible microdots.
- ▶▶ These microdots can be read physically with a microscope and identified with ultraviolet light.
- ▶▶ Microdots are a globally proven technology to ensure originality in spare parts of machines and components, including in the automobile sector.
- ▶▶ The government has envisaged that with microdots becoming a permanent feature in vehicles, identifying them would become easier in case they are stolen.

### How it works?

- ▶▶ The microdots and adhesive are to become a permanent fixture/affixation which cannot be removed without damaging the asset itself.
- ▶▶ The microdots are to comply with AIS 155 requirements, if affixed.
- ▶▶ The technology involves spraying thousands of microscopic dots onto vehicles or other assets to form a unique identification.
- ▶▶ Each microdot carries this identification which is registered to the owner, but is not visible to the naked eye.
- ▶▶ Act, 1999 (GI Act) is a sui generis Act for protection of GI in India.
- ▶▶ India, as a member of the WTO enacted the Act to comply with the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights.
- ▶▶ Geographical Indications protection is granted through the TRIPS Agreement. See also the Paris Convention, the Madrid Agreement, the Lisbon Agreement, the Gene.

### OUMUAMUA

- ▶▶ It is an **Interstellar Cigar- Shaped Object** spotted in 2017, scientists have concluded that it is not an alien spaceship, however its composition remains a mystery.
- ▶▶ The reddish object estimated to be 800m long, was first spotted by astronomers in Hawaii
- ▶▶ It was **dark and faint**, with **No visible ‘coma’** (Atmosphere of dust and gas around a comet’s core) or **‘tail’** (Elongated Cloud that points away from the Sun) signature identifiers of comets as they approach the inner Solar System.

## RAMANUJAN MACHINE

**Context:** Scientists from **Technion – Israel Institute of Technology** have developed a concept they have named the **Ramanujan Machine**, after the Indian mathematician.

### About Ramanujan Machine:

- ▶▶ It is **not really a machine but an algorithm**, and performs a very unconventional function.
- ▶▶ **Functions:** With most computer programs, humans input a problem and expect the algorithm to work out a solution.
- ▶▶ With the Ramanujan Machine, it works the other way around.
- ▶▶ Feed in a constant, say the **well-known pi**, and the algorithm will come up with an equation involving an infinite series whose value, it will propose, is exactly pi.

### Why Ramanujan?

- ▶▶ The Ramanujan machine is named for famed Indian mathematician **Srinivasa Ramanujan**, a **self-taught mathematician** who grew up in India and was "discovered" by fellow mathematician G.H. Hardy.
- ▶▶ After moving to England, he became a fixture at Cambridge, where he shook up the math world with his unorthodox mathematics—instead of pounding away at math proofs, he obtained results to famous problems through intuition and then let others find the proofs for them.
- ▶▶ Because of this, he was sometimes described as a **conjecture machine**, pulling formulas out of thin air as if they received from a higher being—sometimes in dreams.
- ▶▶ In this new effort, the researchers in Israel have sought to replicate this approach using computing power.

## MIND MACHINE INTERFACE

**Context:** Elon Musk unveils project on mind-machine interface- NEURALINK

Elon Musk revealed his secretive Neuralink startup is making progress on an interface linking brains with computers

### About Neuralink:

- ▶▶ **Neuralink** unveiled an **early version of a tiny sensor with hair-thin strands** that could be implanted in a brain through a small incision by a robot built for the high-precision task.
- ▶▶ Those strands are **tiny electrodes** and the robot is being developed to insert threads in the brain.

- ▶▶ The **chip will communicate wirelessly** with an earpiece, which relays information to a smartphone application
- ▶▶ **Goals:** To let a person with the implants control a smartphone with thought, but the technology could eventually extend to other devices such as robotic arms

### **MERCK'S VACCINE (VSV-EBOV)**

**Context:** Preliminary data from vaccination in Congo suggest the vaccine has **97.5% efficacy in preventing Ebola.**

- ▶▶ When Ebola struck the Democratic Republic of Congo on August 1, 2018, the decision to use Merck's vaccine was approved.
- ▶▶ It has not been licensed in any country for clinical use, was taken without much thought as it was the only vaccine that been tested in phase-3 trials.

#### **About:**

- ▶▶ It is an experimental vaccine for protection against **Ebola virus disease.**
- ▶▶ It consists of a vesicular stomatitis virus (VSV), which has been genetically engineered to express a glycoprotein from the Zaire ebolavirus so as to provoke a neutralizing immune response to the Ebola virus.
- ▶▶ The vaccine was developed by the **Public Health Agency of Canada** and licensed to NewLink Genetics.

## 7. ART & CULTURE

### KHASI TRIBE

- ▶▶ **Origin:** They are an **Indigenous Ethnic Group of Meghalaya** in north-eastern India, with a significant population in the bordering state of Assam, and in certain parts of Bangladesh.
- ▶▶ **Culture:** The Main Difference of Khasis with other tribes is that the descendants are recognized from **Mother and not from Father.**
- ▶▶ According to Khasi law and tradition **the Mother Inherits the Children and Property** but not the father.



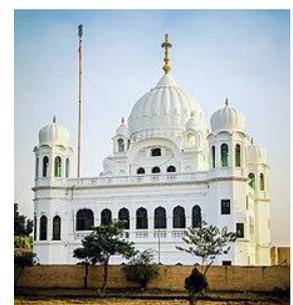
<b>Place / Location</b>	Meghalaya in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Manipur, West Bengal and Jammu & Kashmir, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam.
<b>Population</b>	879,000 Almost Fifty Percent of the Population of Meghalaya
<b>Languages Spoken</b>	Khasi is the Language spoke by Khasis
<b>Religion / God</b>	Khasi Pantheon is the God Simply referred to as U Blei ("The God")
<b>Food</b>	Rice & Beer

- ▶▶ **Occupation: JHUM** (shifting cultivation) is being practiced. They have a peasant-based Economy
- ▶▶ **Languages: Khasi** is a language spoken by Khasis, which is an **Austro- Asiatic language.** It is a part of the Mon- Khmer group of languages.
- ▶▶ **Festivals:** The major festival celebrated by Khasis is **Nongkrem.** It is a five-day religious festival which falls in the month of November every year.

### KARTARPUR CORRIDOR

#### About the Project:

- ▶▶ The proposed project will connect the **Dera Baba Nanak Sahib Gurdwara** in India's state of Punjab to the Gurdwara
- ▶▶ Darbar Sahib Kartarpur shrine in Narowal district of Pakistan's Punjab province which is reportedly to be completed before the **550<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev.**
- ▶▶ It runs across the **Ravi River.**



- ▶▶ The Kartarpur Corridor, seeks to visa-free access from India to the shrine inside Pakistan.
- ▶▶ **About Gurdwara:** It was ordered by **Maharaja of Patiala** between 1921-1929 and is believed to be place where Nanak ji spent about last 18 years of his life.
- ▶▶ Government of India has decided to commemorate 550th Birth Anniversary of Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji at national as well as international level by building Kartarpur Corridor.

## CLASSICAL LANGUAGES

**Context:** The proposal of Classical language status for **Marathi** is under active consideration

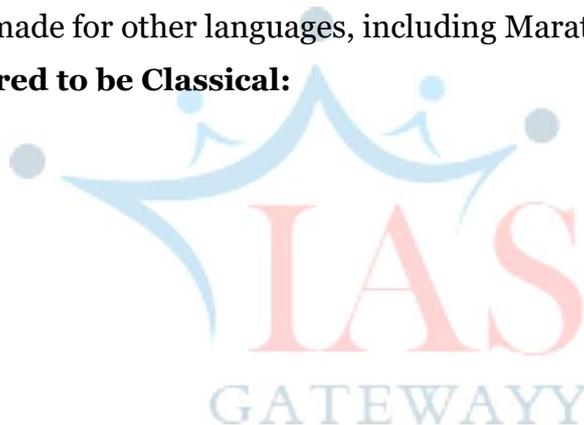


### About Classical Languages:

- ▶▶ In 2004, the Government of India declared that languages that met certain requirements could be accorded the status of a "**Classical Language in India**". Over the next few years, several languages were granted the Classical status, and demands have been made for other languages, including Marathi.

### Languages thus far declared to be Classical:

- ▶▶ Tamil (in 2004)
- ▶▶ Sanskrit (in 2005)
- ▶▶ Kannada (in 2008)
- ▶▶ Telugu (in 2008)
- ▶▶ Malayalam (in 2013)
- ▶▶ Odia (in 2014)



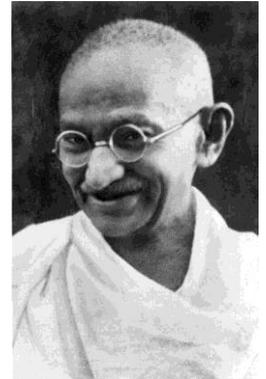
### Criteria for Classical Languages in India:

- ▶▶ The Government of India Currently follows the Following criteria to determine the Eligibility of language to be considered for classification as "**Classical Language**".
- ▶▶ **High Antiquity** of its early texts / which is considered a valuable heritage by generations of speakers.
- ▶▶ **The Literary Tradition be original** and not borrowed from another speech community.
- ▶▶ The classical language and literature being **distinct from modern**, there may also be a discontinuity between the classical language and its later forms or its offshoots.

## GANDHIPEDIA

**Context:** An encyclopedia on Mahatma Gandhi in the offing: Centre.

- ▶▶ A “**Gandhipedia**” was being developed in order to **sensitize society, particularly the youth**, about Gandhian values.
- ▶▶ To mark the the **150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Gandhi** with several programmes throughout the year, an encyclopedia-like “Gandhipedia” would be among the efforts to spread his values.
- ▶▶ “A Gandhipedia is also being developed by **National Council for Science Museums** to sensitise youth and society at large about positive Gandhian values,”



## JAGANNATH RATH YATRA

- ▶▶ Jagannath Rath Yatra festival is dedicated to Lord Jagannath (Lord Krishna), his sister Goddess Subhadra and his elder brother Lord Balabhadra or Balaram.
- ▶▶ Traditional Oriya calendar begins on the second day of Shukla Paksha of the Hindu lunar month of Ashadha. **This year it will start on 4 July, 2019** and ends on 15 July, 2019.
- ▶▶ Lord Jagannath is considered as one of the reincarnation of avatars of **Lord Vishnu**.
- ▶▶ Idols are taken out on a chariot and the three chariots are pulled by the devotees through the streets of Puri to the Gundicha temple a few kilometres away.

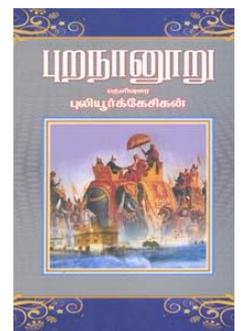


## PURANANURU

**Context:** Finance Minister in her budget speech quoted a famous poem from Sangam Era work of 'Purananuru' to drive home her point on the tax policy

### About Purananuru:

- ▶▶ The Purananuru is a collection of **400 Poems** composed by multiple ancient Tamil poets.
- ▶▶ It is one of the eight books in the secular anthology of Sangam literature.
- ▶▶ It also known as **Puram, Purappaattu, and Purambu Naanuru**, is a Tamil poetic work in the Eight Anthologies (**Ettuthokai**), one of the two divisions of the Eighteen Greater Texts (**Pathinenmelkanakku**) collection.
- ▶▶ It is a **treatise on kingship**: what a king should be, how he should act, how he should treat his subjects and how he should show his generosity.



- ▶▶ The Sangam Collection is classified into Eighteen Greater Texts (**Patinenmelkanakku**) and Eighteen Lesser Texts (**Pathinenkilkanakku**) and each classification has eighteen collections, as an anthology of Tamil literature, belonging to the Sangam period.
- ▶▶ It is dated between **1<sup>st</sup> century BCE and 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE**

## UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE

**Context:** Pink City Jaipur gets UNESCO World Heritage tag,

- ▶▶ The announcement was made after the **43<sup>rd</sup> Session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee** examined the nomination of the **Walled City of Jaipur** for inclusion in the World Heritage list.



### About Walled City Jaipur:

- ▶▶ The historic walled city of **Jaipur** in **Rajasthan**, was founded in **1727 AD** under the patronage of Sawai Jai Singh II.
- ▶▶ It serves as the capital city of the culturally-rich state of Rajasthan.
- ▶▶ In town planning, it shows an interchange of ancient **Hindu, Mughal and Contemporary Western Ideas** that resulted in the form of the city
- ▶▶ It is an exceptional example of a **late Medieval Trade town in South Asia** and defined new concepts for a thriving trade and commercial hub.
- ▶▶ In addition, the city is associated with living traditions in the form of crafts that have national and international recognition
- ▶▶ The city was proposed to be nominated for its value of being an exemplary development in town planning and architecture that demonstrates an amalgamation and important exchange of ideas in the late medieval period.

### World Heritage Committee:

- ▶▶ It is composed of representatives of 21 States Parties to the **World Heritage Convention** who meet annually. The Committee is in charge of implementing the Convention. Till date, 1,092 sites in 167 countries have been inscribed on the World Heritage List

## PADMANABHASWAMY TEMPLE

**Context:** The Hindu's special volume on Padmanabhaswamy temple was recently released



### About Padmanabhaswamy temple:

- ▶▶ It is located in **Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.**

- ▶▶ The temple is built in an intricate fusion of the indigenous **Kerala style and the Tamil style** (kovil) of architecture associated with the temples located in the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu, featuring high walls, and a 16th-century Gopuram.
- ▶▶ The Supreme Principal Deity **Para brahman, Maha Vishnu/Adi Narayana** is enshrined in the "**Anantha Shayanam**" posture, the eternal yogic sleep on the serpent Adishesha.
- ▶▶ Sree Padmanabhaswamy is the tutelary deity of the royal family of Travancore

### **KODAIKANAL MALAI POONDU**

**Context:** The Geographical Indications Registry has granted the Geographical Indication (GI) tag to **Kodaikanal Malai Poondu (Kodaikanal Hill Garlic)**.



- ▶▶ Its scientific name *Allium Sativum*, this particular garlic is known for its medicinal and preservative properties.
- ▶▶ **Properties:** It has **anti-oxidant and anti-microbial potential**, which is attributed to the presence of higher amount of organosulfur compounds, phenols and flavonoids compared to other garlic varieties.
- ▶▶ **Characteristics:** Its usually **white or pale yellow** and each bulb weighs 20-30g on an average.
- ▶▶ **Geographical Location:**
  - ▶▶ The **hill altitude, the misty condition** and the soil prevailing in the Kodaikanal region are responsible for its medicinal property and the long storage shelf life of the garlic.
  - ▶▶ In India, garlic is planted as both **kharif (June-July) and rabi (October-November)** crop and it depends on the regions.
  - ▶▶ It is planted as a rabi crop in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Bengal and hilly regions.
  - ▶▶ It is both kharif and rabi crop in T.N., Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

#### **Geographical Indications:**

- ▶▶ A GI tag indicates that the product originates from a definite territory in India and has unique characteristics or quality.

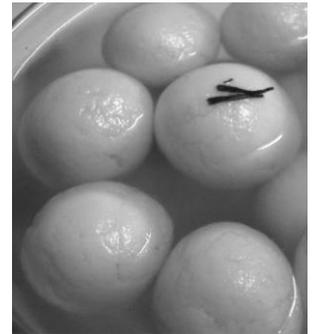
#### **Having a GI tag:**

- ▶▶ Prevents unauthorized use of a registered Geographical Indication by others

- ▶▶ Boosts exports of Indian Geographical indications by providing legal protection
- ▶▶ Also enables seeking legal protection in other WTO member countries.
- ▶▶ Some of the examples of Geographical Indications in India include Basmati Rice, Darjeeling Tea, Kancheepuram silk saree, Alphonso Mango, Nagpur Orange and Kolhapuri Chappal.

## ODISHA RASAGULLA

**Context:** The rasagola, a popular dessert of Odisha, has received the geographical indication tag from the Registrar of Geographical Indication



- ▶▶ Both **Odisha and West Bengal** have been contesting the origin of the rasagola.
- ▶▶ Historical records submitted say the '**Odisha Rasagola**' is associated with world famous Puri Jagannath Temple.

### About Odisha Rasagola:

- ▶▶ Odisha Rasagola' is a **sweet from the state of Odisha** made of chhena (cottage cheese) cooked in sugar syrup, which is very soft to feel, is juicy and non- chewy in consistency and can be swallowed without teeth pressure.
- ▶▶ Colour development of the '**Odisha Rasagola**' is very specific, where without addition of external colour
- ▶▶ Various intensely-coloured rasagolas are prepared using the principle of caramelisation of sugar with specific methods of preparation
- ▶▶ Odisha Rasagolas are white in colour with round shape (non- spherical) but off white rasagolas in various shades are plentifully prepared by cooking the rasagola at 110 degree Celsius for about 40 minutes in which caramalisation of sugar takes place giving the off white colour.

## CHUNDAN VALLAM

**Context:** Preparations are in full swing for the **67th edition of the Nehru Trophy Boat Race** and the race will be held on **Punnamada Lake**

### Chundan Vallam:

- ▶▶ It is known outside Kerala as **Kerala snake boats**, are one of the icons of Kerala culture used in the **Vallamkali boat race**

### Punnamada Lake:

- ▶▶ It is popularly known as **Punnamada Kayal** is an extension of the **Vembanad Lake**.

- ▶▶ The lake is renowned for the famous boat race called **Nehru Trophy boat race**.
- ▶▶ This breath-taking lake spread over the Kuttanad region in the Alappuzha district attracts a large number of tourists during the festive month of Onam celebration.
- ▶▶ During this period a large number of tourists flock around this mesmerizing lake.

## **AWARD OF SENIOR/JUNIOR FELLOWSHIPS TO OUTSTANDING ARTISTES IN THE FIELDS OF CULTURE**

**Context:** Ministry of Culture and Tourism has announced inclusion of Nepali and Santhali languages in the Scheme for grant of Senior/Junior Fellowships of Culture Ministry.

### **Scheme:**

- ▶▶ **Ministry of Culture and Tourism** has announced to include the remaining 02 languages from the **8<sup>th</sup> Schedule** of the Indian Constitution i.e. **Nepali and Santhali** in the Sub-Field of Field “**Literature**” in the scheme component ‘**Award of Senior/Junior Fellowships to Outstanding Artistes in the Fields of Culture**’
- ▶▶ “Literary Arts” is one of the Fields under this Scheme where candidates can apply for research in **22 languages** as their Sub-Field.
- ▶▶ These 22 languages include the following 20 languages from the 8th Schedule of **Articles 344(1) and 251 of the Indian Constitution along with English and Khasi:**
- ▶▶ The following 20 languages are as follows:
- ▶▶ Assamese, (2) Bengali, (3) Bodo, (4) Dogri, (5) Gujarati, (6) Hindi, (7) Kannada, (8) Kashmiri, (9) Konkani, (10) Maithili, (11) Malayalam, (12) Manipuri, (13) Marathi, (14) Oriya, (15) Punjabi, (16) Sanskrit, (17) Sindhi (18) Tamil, (19) Telugu and (20) Urdu.

## **JAIPUR CITY DECLARED AS A WORLD HERITAGE SITE**

### **Why in News?**

- ▶▶ Jaipur City, Rajasthan got inscribed on the World Heritage List of UNESCO during the 43rd Session of the World Heritage Committee held at Baku, Azerbaijan.

### **Highlights:**

- ▶▶ India’s nomination of the Jaipur City, Rajasthan got inscribed on the World Heritage List of UNESCO during the 43rd Session of the World Heritage Committee held at Baku, Azerbaijan.
- ▶▶ The nomination of Jaipur City has successfully been done by complying with the various UNESCO guidelines of 2017.

- ▶▶ With Successful inscription of Jaipur City, India has 38 world heritage sites, that include 30 Cultural properties, 7 Natural properties and 1 mixed site.
- ▶▶ India's nomination was initially recommended by the ICOMOS (advisory body of World Heritage (WH) Centre for cultural sites) as Deferral, but the 21 nation World Heritage Committee debated it and after discussion decided to inscribe it on the World Heritage list.

### Why Jaipur?

- ▶▶ The City of Jaipur is an exceptional urban example in indigenous city planning and construction in South Asia.
- ▶▶ Unlike other medieval cities of the region, Jaipur was deliberately planned as a new city on the plains open for trade as opposed to hilly terrain and military cities of past, though its planning still ensured a response to the surrounding hill tops in all directions.
- ▶▶ The site selected within the valley that lay to the south of Amber hills was comparatively flat and unmarred by any previous construction.
- ▶▶ Besides an exemplary planning, its iconic monuments such as the Govind Dev temple, City Palace, Jantar Mantar and Hawa Mahal excel in artistic and architectural craftsmanship of the period.
- ▶▶ Jaipur is an expression of the astronomical skills, living traditions, unique urban form and exemplary foresighted city planning of an 18th century city from India.
- ▶▶ Jaipur is an exemplary development in town planning and architecture that demonstrates amalgamation and important interchange of several ideas over the late medieval period

### World Heritage Committee:

- ▶▶ The World Heritage Committee is composed of representatives of 21 States Parties to the World Heritage Convention who meet annually.
- ▶▶ The Committee is in charge of implementing the Convention.
- ▶▶ To date, 1,092 sites in 167 countries have been inscribed on the World Heritage List.

### Significance:

- ▶▶ It brings international attention to the need for the preservation and conservation of the site. It brings tourism to the site, with its accompanying economic benefits to the host country and local area. It can provide funds for restoration, preservation, and training. For example, in 2001, the Taliban destroyed two 6th century, 150-ft. statues of Buddha carved into the mountainside in the Bamiyan Valley in Afghanistan. The site has received more than \$4 million from UNESCO to help with reconstruction and to hire a sculptor to re-carve some of the damaged stone

- ▶▶ It promotes national and local pride in the natural and man-made wonders of the country.
- ▶▶ It promotes close ties with the United Nations system and the prestige and support it provides.
- ▶▶ It provides access to global project management resources.
- ▶▶ It facilitates creating partnerships between government, the private sector, and NGOs to achieve conservation goals.
- ▶▶ The site is protected under the Geneva Convention against destruction or misuse during wartime.

**Selection Criteria:**

- ▶▶ To represent a masterpiece of human creative genius
- ▶▶ To exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;
- ▶▶ To bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared
- ▶▶ To be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;
- ▶▶ To be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;
- ▶▶ To be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria);
- ▶▶ To contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;
- ▶▶ To be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;
- ▶▶ To be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals;

- ▶▶ To contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

### **Types of World Heritage Sites:**

- ▶▶ **Cultural Heritage Sites** include hundreds of historic buildings and town sites, important archaeological sites, and works of monumental sculpture or painting.
- ▶▶ **Natural Heritage Sites** are restricted to those natural areas that (1) furnish outstanding examples of Earth's record of life or its geologic processes, (2) provide excellent examples of ongoing ecological and biological evolutionary processes, (3) contain natural phenomena that are rare, unique, superlative, or of outstanding beauty, or (4) furnish habitats for rare or endangered animals or plants or are sites of exceptional biodiversity.
- ▶▶ **Mixed Heritage Sites** contain elements of both natural and cultural significance.

### **Process of getting into the list:**

- ▶▶ The first step involves creating a detailed dossier showing the outstanding universal value of the site, besides meeting a few other criteria.
- ▶▶ Once the documentation is complete, it requires a push by the State party or the country where the site is located.
- ▶▶ The property is then evaluated by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
- ▶▶ The International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) then provides advice on conservation of the site, and training.
- ▶▶ After all these steps, the World Heritage Committee evaluates the site and decides to inscribe it or send back the nomination.

## **MONUMENTS OF VALOUR & VICTORY HOMAGE TO KARGIL WARRIORS**

### **Why in News?**

- ▶▶ The Union Culture Minister inaugurated an exhibition of 'Monuments of Valour & Victory Homage to Kargil Warriors' on the 20th anniversary of Kargil Vijay Divas.
- ▶▶ The exhibition was organized by National Monuments Authority of Ministry of Culture.

### **National Monuments Authority (NMA):**

- ▶▶ The NMA has been established under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains AMASR (Amendment and Validation) Act, 2010.
- ▶▶ It is chiefly engaged in the protection and preservation of monuments and sites through management of the prohibited and regulated area around the centrally protected

monuments. Another function is to consider grant of permissions to applicants for construction related activity in the prohibited and regulated area.

- ▶▶ The NMA is particularly relevant with increasing urbanisation and development.
- ▶▶ The NMA is also involved in grading and classifying the monuments.

### ARANI SILK SAREE

**Context:** Union Minister for Ministry of Textiles informed the Lok Sabha about the Arani Silk Saree.



#### About Arani Silk Saree:

- ▶▶ It is a traditional sari made in Arani, a town in **Tiruvanamalai district of Tamil Nadu**
- ▶▶ The silks from the town of Arani in Tiruvannamalai are equally famous as the Kanjivaram; but they are lighter than them.
- ▶▶ The sarees are woven with **mulberry silk** in warp and weft, with or without too much Zari.
- ▶▶ The highlight of an Arani pattu is the “**thazambo**” border motif.

### AANAYOOTTU FESTIVAL

- ▶▶ Aanayoottu is a unique **Temple Festival** that involves the ritualistic **feeding of elephants**.
- ▶▶ The festival is held in the precincts of the **Vadakkunnathan temple** in City of Thrissur, in Kerala. This famous temple is dedicated to **Lord Shiva**.
- ▶▶ The festival **falls on the first day of the month of Karkkidakam** (timed against the Malayalam calendar), which coincides with the month of July.
- ▶▶ On the festival day the elephants are brought inside the premises of the Vadakkunnathan Temple for the special feast.
- ▶▶ Here, the elephants are lined-up in a single row and facing them would be thousands of people ready with offerings in their hands to feed the elephants.
- ▶▶ Sugarcane, rice, ghee, coconut, jaggery and Ayurvedic medicines are the major ingredients of the special feed for the elephants.
- ▶▶ Every year of Aanayoottu, Gaja pooja, is conducted.
- ▶▶ It is believed that offering poojas and delicious feed to the elephants is a way to satisfy Lord Ganesha—the god of wealth and of the fulfilment of wishes.

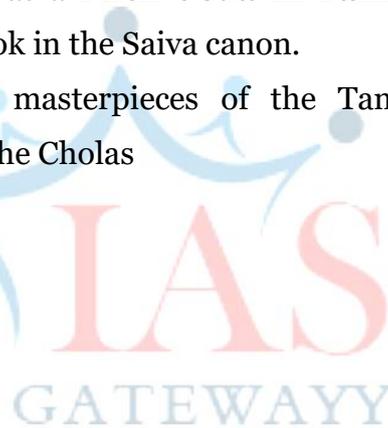


## PERIYAPURANAM

**Context:** Exactly 134 years after they were first published, the first four-volume commentaries on **Periyapuram, the poetic history of 63 Shaivite saints**, will be released in Chennai at the Sekkizhar festival.

### About Periyapuram:

- ▶▶ **Sekkizhar's Tiruttondar Puranam or Periyapuram**, composed during the rule of **Kulottunga Chola II** (1133-1150)
- ▶▶ It is a Tamil poetic account depicting the lives of the sixty-three Nayanars, the canonical poets of Tamil Shaivism.
- ▶▶ It was compiled during the **12<sup>th</sup> century** by **Sekkizhar**.
- ▶▶ It provides evidence of trade with West Asia
- ▶▶ The Periya Puranam is part of the corpus of Shaiva canonical works.
- ▶▶ The Periyapuram is considered as a **Fifth Veda in Tamil** and immediately took its place as the twelfth and the last book in the Saiva canon.
- ▶▶ It is considered as one of the masterpieces of the Tamil literature and worthily commemorates the Golden age of the Cholas

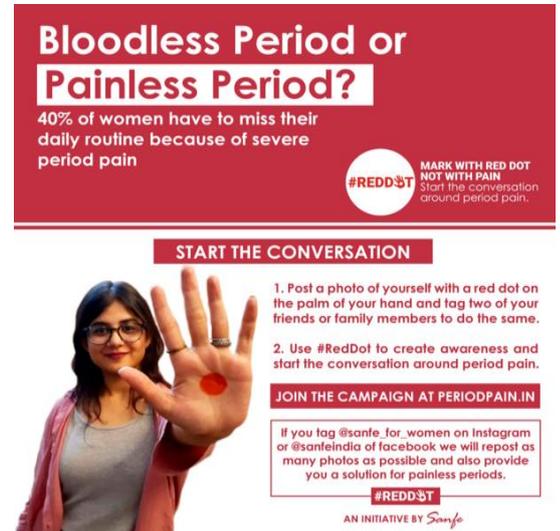


## 8. MISCELLANEOUS

### #RedDot CAMPAIGN

**Context:** IIT Delhi Incubated Sanfe Launches #  
**Red Dot Campaign** 'To Spark Conversations  
Around Period Pain'.

- ▶▶ The campaign intends to generate widespread awareness around the discomfort caused by a period pain in the life of women and how it restricts them from reaching new heights in various walks of life.
- ▶▶ It invites women to post a photo on social media with a RED DOT on their hand and tag two friends or family members to do the same.
- ▶▶ Sanfe has partnered with the NGO Pinkishe and The Better India, to make period pain talks a mass movement.
- ▶▶ One can join the campaign by logging in at **periodpain.in**.



**Bloodless Period or Painless Period?**  
40% of women have to miss their daily routine because of severe period pain

**#REDDOT** MARK WITH RED DOT NOT WITH PAIN Start the conversation around period pain.

**START THE CONVERSATION**

1. Post a photo of yourself with a red dot on the palm of your hand and tag two of your friends or family members to do the same.
2. Use #RedDot to create awareness and start the conversation around period pain.

**JOIN THE CAMPAIGN AT PERIODPAIN.IN**

If you tag @sanfe\_for\_women on Instagram or @sanfeindia on facebook we will repost as many photos as possible and also provide you a solution for painless periods.

**#REDDOT**  
AN INITIATIVE BY Sanfe

### STATISTICS DAY: 29 JUNE

- ▶▶ **Statistics Day** is being celebrated on **29 June** every year.
- ▶▶ It is observed to popularize the use of Statistics in everyday life and sensitize the public as to how Statistics helps in shaping and framing policies.
- ▶▶ The **Theme** of 2019 Statistics Day is **Sustainable Development Goals**.
- ▶▶ The day is celebrated on the birth anniversary of **Prof. P C Mahalanobis**.



Government of India  
**Ministry of Statistics and  
Programme Implementation**

### ZARDALU MANGOES- RED-BANDED MANGO CATERPILLAR

**Context:** Threat for Bhagalpur's mango growers: Red banded mango caterpillar

- ▶▶ This is the second consecutive year that the pest has affected the mango crop in Bhagalpur and surrounding areas, known for its famous Zardalu brand

#### About Zardalu Mango:

- ▶▶ Zardalu is a Unique Mango Variety from Bhagalpur.
- ▶▶ It is known for its **light-Yellow Skin and Distinct Special Aroma**.



- ▶▶ Three agri products from Bihar – **Jardalu Mango, Katarani Paddy and Magahi Betel Leaf** – have got the **Geographical Indications (GI)** tag.

#### About Red Banded Mango Caterpillar:

- ▶▶ **Deanolis sublimbalis, the red banded mango caterpillar**, is a species of moth of the Crambidae family.
- ▶▶ It is found in **India (Sikkim, Darjeeling) and Indonesia (Sulawesi), Papua New Guinea, Burma, Thailand, China, Brunei and the Philippines.**
- ▶▶ The larvae are a **Serious Pest of Mango fruit**
- ▶▶ They hatch and burrow into the distal end of the Mango Fruit.

#### STRUM ATAKA

- ▶▶ India signs Rs 200-crore deal with **Russia** to acquire '**Strum Ataka**' anti-tank missile for its fleet of Mi-35 attack choppers

#### LCA TEJAS

**Context:** Fuel tank of 'Tejas' aircraft falls in agriculture field in Tamil Nadu



- ▶▶ It is an **Indian single-engine, delta wing, multirole light fighter** designed by the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for the **Indian Air Force and Indian Navy.**
- ▶▶ It came from the **Light Combat Aircraft (LCA)** programme, which began in the 1980s to replace India's ageing MiG-21 fighters.
- ▶▶ It is pegged as the **world's smallest and lightest supersonic fighter aircraft** in its class.
- ▶▶ In 2003, the LCA was officially named "**Tejas**"

#### m- Kisan PORTAL

#### MKisan Application:

- ▶▶ This app and portal has been designed and developed by inhouse **IT Team of DAC** with the help of **C-DAC Pune** under project **mKisan.**
- ▶▶ It **Brings** together SMS (both Push and Pull), Interactive voice response system, unstructured supplementary services of DATA or USSD (Which is essentially interactive SMS and can facilitate data entry and query on Web Portals without Internet), Mobile apps and services.

- ▶▶ It enables farmers and all other stakeholders to obtain advisories and information being sent by experts and government officials at different levels through mKisan portal without registering on the portal.

## HENLEY PASSPORT INDEX 2019

**Context:** Japan and Singapore top the 2019 Henley Index list of world's most powerful passports

- ▶▶ It is launched by **Henley and Partners**.
- ▶▶ The Indian passport has been **ranked 86** with a mobility score of 58.
- ▶▶ **Japan and Singapore** hold the joint top spot on the Henley Passport Index.
- ▶▶ The index includes 199 passports and 227 travel destinations — including micro-states and territories.

## KING TUTANKHAMUN

**Context:** A controversial 3,000-year-old stone sculpture of Pharaoh King Tutankhamun/Tutankhamen has been sold for nearly \$6 million at auction in the U.K., despite protests from the Egyptian government.



### About King Tutankhamun:

- ▶▶ King Tutankhamun was an **Egyptian Pharaoh** of the 18th dynasty (ruled c. 1332–1323 BC in the conventional chronology), during the period of Egyptian history known as the New Kingdom.
- ▶▶ He has, since the discovery of his intact tomb, been referred to colloquially as King Tut.
- ▶▶ His original name, Tutankhaten, means "Living Image of Aten", while Tutankhamun means "Living Image of Amun". In hieroglyphs, the name Tutankhamun was typically written Amen-tut-ankh, because of a scribal custom that placed a divine name at the beginning of a phrase to show appropriate reverence.

## TEA BOARD OF INDIA



- ▶▶ The Tea Board of India is a **Statutory Body** which was set up under section 4 of the **Tea Act, 1953**
- ▶▶ The Board is constituted of 31 members (including Chairman) drawn from Members of Parliament, tea producers, tea traders, tea brokers, consumers, and representatives of Governments from the principal tea producing states, and trade unions.

### Functions:

- ▶▶ Rendering financial and technical assistance for cultivation, manufacture and marketing of tea.
- ▶▶ Export Promotion.

## WORLD YOUTH SKILLS DAY

**Context:** To be organized on the occasion of **World Youth Skills Day**, from July 13 to 15, the three-day programme by **Bihar Skill Development Mission** envisages raising awareness among the youth in even the remotest part of the state.



- ▶▶ In December 2014, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution declaring **15th July** as **World Youth Skills Day**.
- ▶▶ The **goal** is to achieve better socio-economic conditions for today's youth as a means of addressing the challenges of unemployment and under employment.
- ▶▶ The **theme for 2018** World Youth Skills Day is '**Improving the image of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)**'.

## INDIA'S 1st ELEPHANT REHABILITATION CENTRE

- ▶▶ The Kerala government is working to set up the **Country's First Elephant Rehabilitation** centre in **Kottoor**, an ecotourism village near the state capital Thiruvananthapuram.

- ▶▶ The centre, expected to have an elephant museum, mahout training centre, super-specialty hospital, a retirement home and crematorium for the animals, will house orphaned, injured and older elephants.
- ▶▶ It is being planned on the lines of the **Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage in Sri Lanka.**

### OPERATION THIRST

**Context:** All India Drive to crack down selling of unauthorized Packaged Drinking Water

- ▶▶ Aims to curb the menace of **unauthorized PDW (PACKAGED DRINKING WATER)** in Railway premises
- ▶▶ An all India drive named “**Operation Thirst**” was launched on 08th & 09th July 2019 on the direction of DG/RPF, Railway Board, New Delhi
- ▶▶ During the drive, 1371 persons were arrested for selling of packaged drinking water of unauthorized brands under different sections

### WORLD POPULATION DAY

- ▶▶ **World Population day** is an annual event, observed on **July 11** every year, which seeks to raise awareness of global population issues.
- ▶▶ The event was established by the Governing Council of the **United Nations Development Programme** in 1989.
- ▶▶ **This year’s World Population Day calls** for global attention to the unfinished business of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development.
- ▶▶ World Population Day **aims** to increase people's awareness on various population issues such as the importance of family planning, gender equality, poverty, maternal health and human rights.

### MEGHALAYA: FIRST STATE TO HAVE WATER POLICY

- ▶▶ The **Meghalaya became the first state** to approve a draft water policy to **address water issues, conservation, and protection of water sources in the state.**
- ▶▶ As per the policy, committees will be formed at the village level and the issue of groundwater will also be catered through this policy.
- ▶▶ The policy intends to **achieve sustainable development**, management and use of water resources with community participation.
- ▶▶ This will **improve health and livelihood** and reduce vulnerability among the people.

- ▶▶ This will also assure of **Good Governance** for present and future generations through integrated water resources management and environmental sustainability."
- ▶▶ It will also **monitor the quality of the water** to check if it has a high content of iron or if acidic.

## **"FIND THE INCREDIBLE YOU" CAMPAIGN**

### **Context:**

The "**Find the Incredible You**" campaign of the **Tourism Ministry**, has won the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Gold Award, 2019.

### **About the Campaign:**

- ▶▶ The campaign **focuses** on **digital and social media** and the promotion of niche tourism products of the country.
- ▶▶ The campaign won the award under the "**Marketing - Primary Government Destination**" category.
- ▶▶ The Ministry of Tourism, as part of its promotional initiatives, annually releases Global Media Campaigns under the '**Incredible India**' brand-line in the television, print, digital and social media platforms, in key and potential source markets overseas.
- ▶▶ To take the campaigns to the next level, the '**Incredible India 2.0**' campaign was launched in September 2017.
- ▶▶ **PATA Gold Awards** are given to tourism industry organizations and individuals making an outstanding contribution towards the successful promotion of the travel industry throughout the Asia Pacific Region.

## **INDIA'S FIRST SPACE TECH PARK IN KERALA**

**Context:** The Kerala government will set up the country's first space tech park at Thiruvananthapuram's Knowledge City.

- ▶▶ **Aim:** To make the city a manufacturing hub for space-related technology.
- ▶▶ A **space museum** named after former President of India Dr APJ Abdul Kalam will also be a part of the infrastructure.
- ▶▶ The entire investment in the park will be made by the **Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre** a major space research centre of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- ▶▶ Primarily a manufacturing hub for companies using GIS and other data systems, the integrated complex will also have a start-up incubator, accelerators including Airbus Bizlab, skill training systems and production units.

- ▶▶ With the space park materialising, Kerala capital will become a key hub of space technology in the country. The space park was being set up to leverage the opportunities provided by Space 2.0 and to generate lots of high-tech jobs.

## INDIA'S FIRST GARBAGE CAFE

**Context:** The country's first garbage cafe has been launched here in Chhattisgarh.

### About:

- ▶▶ **Ambikapur Municipal Corporation will provide food to the poor and homeless in lieu of plastic waste**
- ▶▶ Persons fetching 1 kg plastic waste will be offered a full meal while those collecting 500 grams waste will get a substantial breakfast.
- ▶▶ Ambikapur, which has been selected as the second **cleanest city after Indore**, plans to use the plastic for construction of roads.
- ▶▶ This scheme is being linked to the cleanliness campaign.
- ▶▶ Ambikapur is the **second largest city** in the country in the '**Sanitation Campaign**'.

## NATIONAL BROADCASTING DAY

- ▶▶ **National Broadcasting day** is being observed on **July 23, 2019**.
- ▶▶ On this day in 1927, the first ever radio broadcast in the country went on the air from the Bombay Station under a private company, the Indian Broadcasting Company
- ▶▶ On 8<sup>th</sup> of June, 1936, the Indian State Broadcasting Service became **All India Radio**.
- ▶▶ Since 1927, radio has been an important part in people's life in India.
- ▶▶ All India Radio has been serving to inform, educate and entertain the masses since its inception, truly living up to its motto - **Bahujan Hitaya Bahujan Sukhaya**.

## WORLD BRAIN DAY 2019

- ▶▶ World Brain Day is observed on July 22
- ▶▶ **World Brain Day 2019 Theme:** Migraine: The Painful Truth.
- ▶▶ **Aim:** The theme aims at **raising awareness about migraine**, which is known to be one impactful neurological disease in the world.

### What is Migraine:

- ▶▶ Migraine affects one in seven people and, together with other headache disorders, and is one of the leading causes of disability worldwide. Despite its pervasive impact, migraine continues to be vastly under-recognized, underdiagnosed and under-treated.