

PIB COMPILATION

DECEMBER - 2018

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

1. INDIAN POLITY

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- Lok Sabha passes Bill prohibiting commercial surrogacy
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- Water Conservation Fee (WCF)
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- Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission
- India, ADB sign USD 60 Million loan agreement to reduce floods in Assam
- Analytical report of the National Health Profile-2018 released
- India Post ventures into new arena of e-market place
- PM inaugurated 175 Km of sewerage network in Prayagraj

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- IMPRESS Scheme
- NITI Aayog organizes the Third Edition of the Women Transforming India Awards
- AIIMS to be set up under Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY)
- Expansion of beneficiaries list under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana
- Eklavya Model Residential Schools
- Bhasha Sangam Programme
- Acceptance of vehicle documents, driving licence in electronic format
- ICAT Certification
- RTI Portal on Judgments/Orders of various courts
- Integrated Government Online Training Programme (iGOT)
- NITI Aayog Releases SDG India Index, 2018
- 10 Central agencies to snoop on any computer
- Press freedom under attack around the world in 2018: Death Watch Data
- Governing council to boost shipments
- EC prohibits tobacco use in polling booths during Lok Sabha elections
- Islands of Andaman to be renamed after Netaji Bose
- Aadhaar not mandatory for admission in schools
- Year End Review-2018: Ministry of Tourism
- Year End Review 2018 Ministry of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare
- NITI Aayog releases Second Delta Ranking under the Aspirational Districts Programme
- DIPP Swachh Bharat Grand Challenge Awards Presented
- North East Industrial Development Scheme (NEIDS)
- National Commission for Indian System of Medicine Bill, 2018
- Railways to grant fare concession to transgender senior citizens
- PM inaugurates Rice Research Institute
- "One District, One Product" Scheme
- Ujjwala Sanitary Napkins initiative
- Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana

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3. SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

- National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems
- NITI Aayog launches Global Hackathon on Artificial Intelligence
- Combined Guided Weapon Firing Exercise
- Online Assurances Monitoring System
- Microsoft India signs pact with NITI Aayog for AI tools in agriculture, healthcare
- World's First Floating Nuclear Power Plant becomes operational
- Tamil Nadu fishermen get NavIC-powered ISRO Gadgets
- Reusable Rocket Technology
- National Supercomputing Mission (NSM)
- International Training Centre for Operational Oceanography at INCOIS
- India successfully test-fires nuclear-capable Agni-IV missile
- China Launched its First Satellite for Space-Based Broadband Services
- Gaganyaan Programme
- Indian Science Congress (ISC)-2019

4. INTERNAL SECURITY

- Indian Navy to conduct TROPEX Exercise
- Ex Aviaindra 2018
- UN Global Counter Terrorism Coordination Compact
- Information Fusion Centre (IFC) - IOR
- Indian Navy commissions Naval Hospital INHS Sandhani
- Indian Coast Guard conducts Exercise at sea off Port Blair: Clean Sea-2018

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5. GEOGRAPHY / ENVIRONMENT

- COP24: 24th Conference of Parties to UNFCCC
- India Water Impact Summit-2018
- Dual-Fuel Usage for Agricultural and Construction Equipment Vehicles
- Ministry of Finance releases Discussion Paper entitled "3 Essential "S"s of Climate Finance
- Soil Health Cards (SHC) for optimal utilization of fertilizers
- FAO Council approves India's proposal to observe International Year of Millets in 2023
- India lost \$79.5 billion due to climate-related disasters in last 20 years: UN
- Sikkim's 100% organic farming wins FAO's Future Policy Gold Award
- Asiatic Lion Conservation Project
- India to submit 2nd biennial report on greenhouse gas inventory to UNFCCC
- Sixth National Report to the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD)
- Hornbill Festival 2018

6. INDIAN ECONOMY

- Govt. inks \$85 Million Loan Agreement with ADB for Odisha Skill Development Project
- Odisha's Kandhamal Haldi to get GI tag
- Ombudsman Scheme for Digital Transactions
- Union Cabinet approves implementation of Shahpurkandi Dam
- Cabinet nod to merger of skill development bodies
- India to receive \$800 Billion Remittance in 2018
- Vision of New India - USD 5 Trillion Economy
- Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution in India
- ADB, India Sign \$31 Million Loan to Develop Tourism, Boost Jobs in TamilNadu

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- Index of Industrial Production (IIP) grows to 8.1 percent
- PCS 1x System
- Container cargo circuit on Inland Waterways
- NITI Aayog releases Strategy for New India @ 75
- E-Drishti Software
- DIPP Announces State-Wise Startup Rankings
- GST Council reduces GST Rates of 23 goods and services
- PM inaugurates Bogibeel bridge in Assam
- Economic Capital Framework Committee of RBI

7. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

- Exercise Cope India 2018
- India to Chair Kimberley Process Certification Scheme
- India-ASEAN InnoTech Summit 2018
- India, China Sign A protocol for Fish meal and Oil Import
- India to host G20 Summit in 2022
- Ex SHINYUU Maitri-2018
- International Day of Persons with Disabilities
- India, UAE sign agreement on currency swap
- India, Peru sign agreement for co-operation and mutual assistance in Customs Matters
- Exercise Hand-in-Hand 2018
- Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration adopted
- Outcome of 24th Session of Conference of Parties
- 'Katowice package' rules to implement 2015 Paris Climate Agreement: COP24
- 7th round of India - South Korea CEPA negotiations held
- 18th meeting of IRIGC-MTC held in New Delhi
- Indian Firm Takes Over Operations of Strategic Iranian Port Chabahar



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INDIAN POLITY

'India for Humanity' initiative

GS 2: Polity | Ministries & Departments of the Government

Prelims level: India For Humanity Initiative

Why in news?

- External Affairs Minister Mrs. Swaraj has launched 'India for Humanity' initiative to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

'India for Humanity' Initiative:

- The initiative will feature a year-long series of artificial limb fitment camps in a various countries across the globe.
- For this MEA is collaborating with the renowned charitable organisation – "Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti" (BMVSS).
- These camps will be initially held in 12 countries identified through our missions with financial support of the central government.
- The larger aim is to provide for the physical, economic and social rehabilitation of the differently-abled.

Lok Sabha passes Bill prohibiting commercial surrogacy

GS 2: Governance | Issues relating to development & management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources

Prelims level: Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2016 & Provisions

Why in News?

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- The Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2016 that ensures effective regulation of surrogacy, prohibits commercial surrogacy and allows altruistic surrogacy to the needy Indian infertile couples was passed by the Lok Sabha by a voice vote.
- Once the Bill is enacted by the Parliament, the National Surrogacy Board will be constituted. The States and Union Territories will constitute the State Surrogacy Board and State Appropriate Authorities within three months of the notification by the Union Government.
- The Bill prohibits commercial surrogacy; makes commercial surrogacy, its advertisement, and exploitation of the surrogate mother a punishable offence with imprisonment for 10 years and a fine of up to Rs 10 lakh.

Provisions of the Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2016:

- The intending couple must be Indian citizens and married for at least five years with at least one of them being infertile.
- It permits surrogacy only for couples who cannot conceive a child.
- The surrogate mother has to be a 'close relative' of the intending couple.
- No payment other than reasonable medical expenses can be made to the surrogate mother.
- The surrogate child will be considered as the biological child of the intending couple.
- Singles, homosexuals and live-in couples cannot apply for surrogacy. Besides, couples who already have children will also not be allowed to opt for surrogacy.
- The Bill entitles only Indian citizens to avail of surrogacy, whereas foreigners, NRIs and PIOs are not allowed to commission surrogacy in the country.
- Central and state governments will appoint appropriate authorities to grant eligibility certificates to the intending couple and the surrogate mother.

Eligibility conditions for surrogacy:

- The Bill specifies eligibility conditions that need to be fulfilled by the intending couple in order to commission surrogacy.

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- The intending couple must be Indian citizens and married for at least five years with at least one of them being infertile. It permits surrogacy only for couples who cannot conceive a child.
- Surrogacy is not allowed in case of any other medical conditions which could prevent a woman from giving birth to a child.
- The surrogate mother has to be a 'close relative' of the intending couple who has been married and has had a child of her own. The Bill does not define the term 'close relative'.
- The surrogate mother and the intending couple need eligibility certificates from the appropriate authority.
- The intending couple should have a 'certificate of essentiality' and a 'certificate of eligibility' issued by the appropriate authority. The surrogate mother too needs a 'certificate of eligibility'.
- The Bill does not specify a time limit within which such certificates will be granted. It also does not specify an appeal process in case the application is rejected.
- The Bill prohibits commercial surrogacy, makes it a punishable offence.

National Commission for Homeopathy Bill, 2018 gets cabinet approval

Why in news?

- The Union Cabinet has approved the National Commission for Homeopathy Bill, 2018.
- The National Commission for Homeopathy seeks to replace the existing regulator Central Council of Homoeopathy.

Aim:

- The bill aims at bringing reforms in the medical education of homoeopathy in line with the National Medical Commission proposed for setting up for allopathy system of medicine.

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- The National Commission for Homeopathy aims to promote transparency and accountability.

Features of the Bill:

- Constitution of a National Commission with three autonomous boards
- The Homoeopathy Education Board to be vested with the responsibility of overseeing the Homeopathy education in the country.
- The board of assessment and rating to assess and grant recognition to educational institutions of Homoeopathy
- Board of ethics and registration of practitioners of Homoeopathy to maintain a National Register and deal with ethical issues relating to practice
- The bill also proposes a common entrance exam and an exit exam which all graduates will have to clear to get practicing licenses.
- The bill proposes a teacher's eligibility test to assess the standard of teachers before appointment and promotions.

Rajasthan cabinet scraps education criteria for civic poll candidates

Why in News?

- The new Government of Rajasthan has abolished the condition of a minimum educational qualification to contest local body elections.
- The cabinet also decided on holding the election of mayors and chairmans in corporations through the direct system instead of the indirect method introduced by the previous government.

Criteria's for contesting in local polls:

- As per the Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Amendment Bill 2015, Candidates were:

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- Required to have passed Class X for contesting municipal elections, Class VIII for contesting panchayat polls for the post of a sarpanch, and Class X for contesting Zila Parishad or Panchayat Samiti elections
- Construction of toilets in their homes as mandatory for contesting polls to the panchayati raj institutions in the state

Supreme Court on Educational Qualification for contesting Polls:

- Even Haryana had passed a similar law mandating minimum education qualification for those contesting in Panchayat Raj Institutions.
- The constitutional validity of this law of Haryana was questioned in the Supreme Court.
- The Supreme Court had upheld the constitutional validity of the law enacted by Haryana government to bar the illiterate from contesting panchayat polls in the state.
- The Supreme Court had ruled that "it is only education which gives a human being the power to discriminate between right and wrong, good and bad".
- The Supreme Court had even made it clear that it would be valid for the legislature to disqualify a candidate from seeking election to a civic body if he or she lacks "basic norms of hygiene" by not having a functional toilet at home.

Governance

FSSAI launches Heart Attack Rewind Campaign for elimination of trans-fat

GS 2: Governance | Issues relating to development & management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources

Prelims level: FSSAI, Heart Attack Rewind Campaign

Why in News?



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- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has launched a new mass media campaign in order to create awareness about trans fats and eliminate them in India by 2022.

Objective:

- It will support FSSAI's global target of eliminating trans-fat in India by 2022, a year ahead of global target by World Health Organization (WHO). It is in line with FSSAOI's objective to get Freedom from 'Trans Fat: India@75'.

Heart Attack Rewind Campaign:

- It is a 30-second public service announcement to be broadcast in 17 languages for a period of four weeks on YouTube, Facebook, Hotstar, and Voot.
- It will also be placed on outdoor hoardings and run on radio stations in Delhi and the National Capital Region.
- The campaign will warn citizens about the health hazards of consuming trans fats and offer strategies to avoid them through healthier alternatives.
- This campaign will concentrate on the demand side (consumers), who in turn, will push the supply side (food manufacturers) to come up with various strategies in order to reduce and later replace trans fats.

Significance:

- Studies have recently shown that 60,000 deaths occur every year due to cardiovascular diseases, which in turn are caused due to high consumption of trans fats.
- Since the impact of trans fats on human health is increasing exponentially, it is very important to create awareness about them.
- In May this year, the WHO released a step-by-step guide for the elimination of industrially-produced trans-fatty acids from the global food supply.

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- Since then, a lot of countries have made efforts to reduce the levels of trans fats and in some cases, have completely banned them.
- India is also moving towards same by first reducing the levels from 5 per cent to 2 per cent and then altogether by 2022.

Trans Fats:

- Artificial Trans fats are created in an industrial process that adds hydrogen to liquid vegetable oils to make them more solid.
- Since they are easy to use, inexpensive to produce and last a long time, and give foods a desirable taste and texture, they are still widely used despite their harmful effects being well-known.

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI):

- FSSAI is a nodal statutory agency responsible for protecting and promoting public health in India through regulation and supervision of food safety.
- It was established under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 and operates under aegis of Union Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.

Digital Sky Platform launched for registration of drones, pilots, and operators

GS 2: Governance | Government policies & interventions for development in various sectors & issues arising out of their design & implementation.

Prelims level: Drone regulations 1.0 and 2.0

Mains level: Digital Sky Platform

Why in news?

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- In August 2018, India had announced the release of its Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR) to enable safe flying of RPAS (Remotely Piloted Aerial Systems) in India.
- Remotely Piloted Aerial Systems (RPAS), also known as drones, are a technology platform with wide-ranging applications.

Digital Sky Platform:

- The Digital Sky Platform is a first of its kind that implements 'no permission, no take-off' (NPNT) – a novel system of software-based self-enforcement to minimize deviations from the CAR.
- The regulations has to come in effect from December 1, allowing the industry time to ready themselves for the launch.
- For micro and above categories, operators and pilots are required to register on the Digital Sky Portal.
- The platform has begun accepting registrations of users.
- Payments for Unmanned Aerial Operator's Permit (UAOP) and Unique Identification Numbers (UIN) will be accepted through the Bharat Kosh (bharatkosh.gov.in) portal.

Permissions to fly in different zones:

- To get permissions, RPAS operators or remote pilots will have to file a flight plan.
- Green zones – Flying in the green zones, requires only intimation of the time and location via the portal or the app.
- Yellow zones – Permission will be required for flying in yellow zones.
- Red zones – Flights will not be allowed to fly.

How to get permissions?

- To get permissions to fly, RPAS operators or remote pilots will have to file a flight plan.

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- Flying in the 'green zones' will require only intimation of the time and location of the flights via the portal or the app.
- Permissions will be required for flying in 'yellow zones' and flights will not be allowed in the 'red zones'.
- The location of these zones will be announced soon. Permission, if granted, will be available digitally on the portal.
- If a drone does not have permission to fly, it will not be allowed to take-off under the policy of No Permission-No-Takeoff (NPNT).

Drone 2.0 Framework:

- The Minister for Civil Aviation has constituted a task-force on the recommendation of Drone Policy 2.0 under the chairmanship of the Minister of State.
- This task-force which is expected to release their final report by the end of this year.
- Drone 2.0 framework for RPAS are expected to include regulatory architecture for autonomous flying, delivery via drones and beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) flights.

NCW to support Northeast livelihood programmes for women

GS 2: Governance | Government policies & interventions for development in various sectors & issues arising out of their design & implementation.

Prelims Level: Northeast livelihood programmes for women

Mains Level: Role of Women and Women's Organizations

Why in news?

- The National Commission for Women (NCW) has decided to support northeast livelihood programmes for women, particularly for those falling under the younger age group, through skill development and specialised training.

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Objective:

- The main aim behind the move is to empower the young women as individuals and enable them to earn a living for themselves.

Highlights:

- The DoNER Ministry has said that the National Commission for Women can supplement its efforts and resources in carrying forward several of the women-oriented projects that have already been undertaken by the Ministry and the North-Eastern Council.
- In this regard, the DoNER Minister of State made a special mention of a number of Self Help Groups (SHGs) of women doing a commendable work in the region.
- The DoNER Ministry also assured the NCW that the PSUs working under it will offer their collaboration and cooperation in women-oriented welfare programmes in the region.
- Besides, during the meeting between the NCW and the DoNER Ministry, the issue of Northeast women, particularly of younger age groups, living in metros like Bengaluru and Mumbai was also discussed.
- Though the women in the northeast are quite unbound as far as their contribution in outdoor work is concerned, there is still scope for raising the levels of education among them, especially among women living in remote and rural areas.
- The livelihood programmes will impart skill training to these women in order to make them self-reliant.

National Commission for Women (NCW):

- The NCW is a statutory body generally concerned with advising the government on all policy matters affecting women.
- It was established in January 1992 under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990 as per the provisions of the Indian Constitution.

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- The objective of the NCW is to represent the rights of women in the country and to provide a voice for their issues and concerns.
- It recommends remedial legislative measures, advise Government on all policy matters affecting women and facilitate redressal of grievances related to women.

First ever Swadesh Darshan Project in the state of Nagaland

GS 2: Governance | Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

Prelims level: Swadesh Darshan Scheme

Mains level: Promoting Tribal tourism in India

Why in News?

- The first Nagaland Swadesh Darshan 'Peren-Kohima-Wokha Project' will be inaugurated by Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio, in the presence of Union Minister of State for Tourism at Kisama Heritage Village in Nagaland on Wednesday.
- This is the first project to be implemented in the state under Swadesh Darshan scheme of the Union Ministry of Tourism.

Peren-Kohima-Wokha Project:

- The project "Development of Tribal Circuit: Peren-Kohima-Wokha" was sanctioned by the Ministry of Tourism in November 2015.
- Under the project the Ministry has developed facilities like Tribal Tourist Village, Eco Log Huts, Open Air Theatre, Tribal Rejuvenation Centre, Cafeteria, Helipad, Tourist Interpretation Centre, Wayside Amenities, Last Mile Connectivity etc.
- In addition to this, the Ministry has also sanctioned another project in Nagaland "Development of Tribal circuit: Mokokchung-Tuensang-Mon" which is under progress.

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Swadesh Darshan scheme:

- India's rich cultural, historical, religious and natural heritage provides a huge potential for development of tourism and job creation in the country
- This can be achieved only through an integrated approach by providing engaging experiences for distinct categories of tourists i.e. Domestic and International
- In due recognition to this the Government of India, Ministry of Tourism (MoT) launched the Swadesh Darshan Scheme (Central Sector Scheme) for integrated development of theme-based tourist circuits in the country in 2014-15
- Various themes which are unique and specific to the area can include beaches, culture, heritage, wildlife etc.
- Such theme based tourist circuits are developed in a manner that supports communities, provides employment and fosters social integration without comprising upon the environmental concerns and provides unique experiences to the tourists.

Hassle free Visa regime

GS 2: Governance | Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

Mains Level: Promoting India as a global hub for Education and Tourism

Why in news?

- The Union Home Secretary Shri Rajiv Gauba has said that creating a simple and hassle free Visa regime is the government's objective to facilitate arrival and stay of foreign travelers into the country.
- He also highlighted various policy initiatives taken to liberalize the Visa regime, taking into account the concerns and suggestions made by various Ministries and stakeholders, including Ministries of Civil Aviation, Tourism, Health, Higher Education etc.



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Highlights:

- Emphasizing that India has the potential to become a global hub for Education and Tourism called for a change in the mind-set at the Field level to make foreigners feel welcomed in the country. A friendly Visa regime is also a part of 'Ease of doing Business.
- The same time, security should also be strengthened, using technological tools. Citing the recently launched e-FRRO module which provides 27 Visa related services to foreigners, it has been very successful and has obviated the need for foreigners to visit FRRO Offices for extending their stay, change of Visa status etc.
- e-Visa facility now covers 166 countries and foreigners can obtain online Visa within 72 hours for travel related to Tourism, Business, Health, Medical Attendant and Conference purposes.
- The number of Visas issued through e-Visa system is now approximately 40% of the total number of Visas issued and the figure is soon expected to cross the 50% mark, which is an indication of its popularity. Our e-Visa regime is one of the best in the world.
- Highlighting some of the other Visa liberalization measures, Relaxation introduced in grant of Internship Visa which can be obtained by a student while still pursuing a course in the country without remuneration, Extension of Business Visa beyond five years, Conversion of Visa into medical category in an emergency for a foreigner who is already in the country and Permission for foreigners who are on long duration Visas to attend conferences.
- Conference will provide inputs for further reforms in the Visa regime which is an ongoing process. The Conference was attended by Senior Officers from the Ministries of Home Affairs, Civil Aviation, Tourism, Information & Broadcasting, Security Agencies, State Governments and Industry representatives.



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PRASAD Scheme: Centre includes Gangotri, Yamunotri in Uttarakhand

GS 2: Governance | Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

Prelims level: PRASAD Scheme

Why in news?

- Union Government has included Gangotri and Yamunotri in Uttarakhand, Amarkantak in Madhya Pradesh and Parasnath in Jharkhand under Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASAD) to develop pilgrimage and heritage destinations in the country. With the new additions, the number of sites under PRASAD has now reached to 41 in 25 states.

PRASAD Scheme:

- It was launched in 2014-15 by Union Ministry of Tourism.
- It aims at the integrated development of pilgrimage destinations in planned, prioritised and sustainable manner to provide a complete religious tourism experience.
- It focuses on the development and beautification of the identified pilgrimage destinations.

Objectives of PRASAD Scheme:

- Harness pilgrimage tourism for its direct and multiplier effect upon employment generation and economic development.
- Enhance tourist attractiveness in sustainable manner by developing world class infrastructure in the religious destinations.
- It also seeks to promote local art, culture, handicraft, cuisine, etc.

Funding:

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- Under this scheme, Ministry of Tourism provides Central Financial Assistance (CFA) to State Governments for promoting tourism at identified destinations.
- For components within public funding under this scheme, Central Government will provide 100% fund.
- For improved sustainability of the project, it also seeks to involve Public Private Partnership (PPP) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as well.

Infrastructure development under this scheme includes:

- Development of entry points (road, rail and water transport), last mile connectivity, basic tourism facilities like Information/interpretation centers, ATM/ money exchange.
- Development of eco-friendly modes of transport, lighting and illumination with renewable energy sources, drinking water, parking, toilets, waiting rooms, first aid centers, craft bazars/haats/souvenir shops/cafeteria, rain shelters, telecom facilities, internet connectivity etc.

Cabinet approves Agriculture Export Policy 2018

GS 2: Governance | Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

Prelims level: Agriculture Export Policy 2018

Why in news?

- The Union Cabinet has approved the Agriculture Export Policy in line with the government's commitment to double farmer's income by 2022.
- The Cabinet has also approved the proposal for establishment of Monitoring Framework at Centre with Commerce as the nodal Department with representation from various line Ministries/Departments and Agencies and representatives of concerned State Governments, to oversee the implementation of Agriculture Export Policy

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Highlights:

- The Government has come out with a policy to double farmers' income by 2022. Exports of agricultural products would play a pivotal role in achieving this goal.
- In order to provide an impetus to agricultural exports, the Government has come out with a comprehensive "Agriculture Export Policy" aimed at doubling the agricultural exports and integrating Indian farmers and agricultural products with the global value chains.
- The Agriculture Export Policy has the following vision: "Harness export potential of Indian agriculture, through suitable policy instruments, to make India global power in agriculture and raise farmers' income."

Objectives of the Agriculture Export Policy:

- To double agricultural exports from present ~US\$ 30+ Billion to ~US\$ 60+ Billion by 2022 and reach US\$ 100 Billion in the next few years thereafter, with a stable trade policy regime.
- To diversify our export basket, destinations and boost high value and value added agricultural exports including focus on perishables.
- To promote novel, indigenous, organic, ethnic, traditional and non-traditional Agri products exports.
- To provide an institutional mechanism for pursuing market access, tackling barriers and deal with sanitary and phyto-sanitary issues.
- To strive to double India's share in world agri exports by integrating with global value chain at the earliest.
- Enable farmers to get benefit of export opportunities in overseas market.

Ministry of New and Renewable Energy conferred Skoch Award for National Significance.



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GS 2: Governance | Development processes and the development industry- the role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders.

Prelims & Mains level: Skoch Award

Why in News?

- Ministry of New and Renewable Energy has been conferred the Skoch Award for National Significance.

Highlights:

- The award has been conferred considering its purpose and critical role played in installing about 73 GW renewable energy capacity in the country.
- With 21 per cent of total installed capacity, within the year renewable energy grossed one billion units of electricity in the country.
- Today, India ranks 4 in the world in wind energy capacity and 5th in solar & total renewable energy capacity installed in the world.
- India has played a critical role in setting up of international solar alliance. Further, India moved a resolution during the first meeting for making it a global initiative.

Skoch Group:

- Skoch Group is a think tank dealing with socio-economic issues with a focus on inclusive growth.
- According to their website they have instituted India's highest independent civilian honours in the field of governance, finance, technology, economics and social sector.

SKOCH Award:

- It celebrates excellence of governance delivery by domain departments.



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- This includes having sufficient familiarity, capacity and knowledge about the functionality of their systems, processes and outcomes.

World Bank assisted project SMART launched in Maharashtra

GS 2: Governance | Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

Prelims level: SMART Project

Why in news?

- Maharashtra Government has launched World Bank assisted- State of Maharashtra's Agribusiness and Rural Transformation (SMART) Project to transform rural Maharashtra.

Highlights:

- This project aims to revamp agricultural value chains, with special focus on marginal farmers across 1,0000 villages.
- This initiative is in line with Union Government's step towards doubling farmers' income by 2022.
- The launch of the project was followed by signing of 50 memorandum of understandings (MoUs) between big corporates and farmers producer groups.

State of Maharashtra's Agribusiness and Rural Transformation (SMART)

Project:

- The objective of this project is to create and support value chains in post-harvest segments of agriculture, facilitate agribusiness investment, stimulate SMEs within the value chain.
- It will also support resilient agriculture production systems, expand access to new and organised markets for producers and enhance private sector participation in the agribusiness.

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- The project will be implemented in 10,000 villages of total 40,913 villages in states with objective to achieve sustainable farming within the next three years.
- It will cover almost one-fourth of Maharashtra.
- Its focus is on villages which are reeling under worst agriculture crisis compounded by lack of infrastructure and assures value chains to channelise farm produce.
- The project will be implemented in 10,000 villages comprising 10,000 gram panchayats which were shortlisted by state government based on multiple parameters of socio-economic backwardness in terms of development and growth.

Significance of the project:

- The project is a giant step towards transformation of rural economy and empowerment of farmers and also sustainable agriculture through public-private partnership (PPP) model.
- It seeks to sure higher production of crops and create robust market mechanism to enable farmers to reap higher remunerations for the yield.
- It unites agriculture-oriented corporates and farmers by providing them a common platform.

1st International Conference on Sustainable Water Management

GS 2: Governance | Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

Prelims level: India's projected water demand and need for sustainable use of water

Why in news?

- The first International Conference on 'Sustainable Water Management' began on December 10, 2018 at Indian School of Business (ISB) in Mohali, Punjab.



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- The conference is being organised by Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) under the aegis of the National Hydrology Project of the Union Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation.
- The theme of the international conference is 'Sustainable Water Management'.

Objective:

- To foster the participation of and dialogue between various stakeholders, including governments, the scientific and academic communities, so as to promote sustainable policies for water management.
- To create awareness of water-related problems, motivate commitment at the highest level for their solution and thus promote better management of water resources at local, regional, national and international levels.

Highlights:

- The conference is expected to witness participation from a number of experts and delegates from reputed organisations from both within India and other countries such as Australia, United Kingdom, USA, Spain, Netherlands, Republic of Korea, Canada, Germany and Sri Lanka.
- The experts will deliver their experience and expertise in the use of state of art technology to the stakeholders for sustainable development of water resources.
- The participation in the conference is by invitation and more than 400 delegates have been registered.
- Overall, around 20 companies and organisations will be putting up stalls in the exhibition to showcase their activities in the area of sustainable water resources management.
- The conference is the first in the series of conferences being organised in India under the aegis of the ongoing National Hydrology Project.
- The hydrology project is being implemented by the Bhakra Beas Management Board with financial assistance from the Ministry of Water Resources.

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National Hydrology Project:

- It is a World Bank Board sponsored project to strengthen the capacity of institutions to assess water situation in their regions in India.
- The project aims to scale up the successes achieved under Hydrology Project-I and Hydrology Project-II to cover the entire country including the states of Ganga and Brahmaputra-Barak basins.
- Apart from benefitting the states in further upgrading and completing their water monitoring networks, the project aims to help new states to better manage water flows from the reservoirs.
- The project includes setting up of national flood forecasting systems with an advance warning system and reservoir operation systems as well as water resources accounting in river basins.
- It will have the potential to help communities to build resilience against possible uncertainties of climate change.

'MedWatch' Mobile Health App

GS 2: Governance | Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

Prelims level: Medwatch App

Why in news?

- On the occasion of 86th anniversary, the Indian Air Force has launched an innovative mobile health App named 'MedWatch' in keeping with the PM's vision of Digital India, Ayushman Bharat and Mission Indradhanush.

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MedWatch:

- The app is conceived by the doctors of IAF and developed in house by Directorate of Information Technology (DIT) with zero financial outlay.
- It will provide correct, Scientific and authentic health information to air warriors and all citizens of India.
- The app is available on www.apps.mgov.gov.in and comprises of host of features like information on basic First Aid, Health topics and Nutritional Facts.
- It includes reminders for timely Medical Review, Vaccination and utility tools like Health Record Card, BMI calculator, helpline numbers and web links.

Khelo India Youth Games

GS 2: Governance | Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

Prelims level: Khelo India programme

Why in news?

- After the first edition of the Khelo India School Games 2017, the second edition, the games has become an initiative of the Central Government, has expanded in its scope, and will allow participants to compete in two categories (under 17 and under 21).
- Talented players identified in priority sports disciplines at various levels by the High-Powered Committee will be provided annual financial assistance of INR 5 lakh per annum for 8 years.
- Khelo India School Games are a part of the Khelo India programme.
- It consists of 16 disciplines which includes Archery, Athletics, Badminton, Basketball, Boxing, Football, Gymnastics, Hockey, Judo, Kabaddi, Kho-Kho, Shooting, Swimming, Volleyball, Weightlifting, and Wrestling.

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

Khelo India programme:

- The Khelo India programme has been introduced to revive the sports culture in India at the grass-root level by building a strong framework for all sports in India and establish India as a great sporting nation.
- It will be a Central Sector Scheme (Scheme implemented by the Central Government machinery and 100% funding by the union government).
- It is a Pan India Sports Scholarship scheme covering the 1000 most deserving and talented athletes across the sports discipline, every year.
- It is an unprecedented scheme, a first-ever plan to be implemented for creating a long-term development pathway for athletes.
- To enable the sportsman to pursue both studies and sports, the program aims at identifying and promoting 20 Universities in the country as centres of sporting distinction.
- To ensure maximum entries for organized sports competitions, the programme encourages the school and colleges to organize programmes of high standards.
- Forming an active population with a healthy lifestyle is also the focus of this programme.
- The aim is to impact the whole of sports ecosystem inclusive of sports economy, competition structure, talent identification, coaching and infrastructure.
- The programme plans to engage youth living in deprived and disturbed areas into sporting activities so that they will be mainstreamed into the process of nation-building and weaned away from disruptive activities.

Online Assurances Monitoring System

GS 2: Governance | Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

Prelims level: Online Assurances Monitoring System

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

Mains level: e Governance in Parliament

Why in News?

- The union govt. has inaugurated the Online Assurances Monitoring System (OAMS), developed by the Union Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs (MPA).

Online Assurances Monitoring System (OAMS):

- Different Ministers, while giving replies to questions or making statements in Parliament, given assurances on the floor of the House.
- This system has made the information regarding assurances given on the floor of the Houses of Parliament paperless and available in digital format.
- The MPA takes such assurances from the proceedings of the House, based on the guidelines for this purpose, and sends the extract of those assurances to the concerned Ministries for their fulfilment.
- Information regarding OAMS, including data and figures, will available on the web portal oams.nic.in.

Significance:

- With OAMS, all assurances being taken out by the Ministry through e-Office would be reflected on this system and various Ministries/Departments.
- This would encompass various actions related to Parliamentary Assurances including sending implementation reports, request for dropping, request for extension and decision thereon.
- Hereafter, physical communication would not be accepted.

Need for online monitoring of Assurances:

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

- A number of problems arise in the process of fulfilment of assurances due to human factors and non-compliance of guidelines, making the process less transparent.
- Hence, the need arose for an online assurances monitoring system to track the exact status of pending assurances and expedite their fulfilment.
- Since 2007, a total of 26,830 assurances given by the Ministers on the floor of the Houses were culled out by the MPA.
- Out of these 21,439 assurances have been fulfilled and 1,903 have been dropped, leaving a total of 3,488 assurances still pending for compliance.

Online portal "ENSURE" To Connect with Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)

GS 2: Governance | Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

Prelims level: ENSURE, DBT

Why in news?

- Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare launched a portal ENSURE – National Livestock Mission-EDEG to connect the subsidy payment under livestock sector to Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).
- The online portal "ENSURE" (<https://ensure.nabard.org>) has been developed by NABARD and operated under the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying & Fisheries.

Entrepreneurship Development and Employment Generation (EDEG):

- Under the Mission's component EDEG, subsidy payment for activities related to poultry, small ruminants, pigs etc., through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) goes directly to the beneficiary's account.

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- To make it better, simpler and transparent, the NABARD has developed an online portal “ENSURE” which makes the information related to beneficiary and processing of application readily available.

Significance of the portal:

- The flow of information/funds will be quicker and more accountable.
- The burden of extra interest due to delay in the disbursement of the subsidy would now be reduced.
- Accessing the portal will be on real-time basis and list of beneficiaries can be easily prepared.

Water Conservation Fee (WCF)

GS 2: Governance | Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

Prelims & Mains level: Issues of water extractions in India and addressing the short comings

Why in news?

- In order to comply with various directions of the Hon'ble NGT and to address various shortcomings in the existing guidelines of ground water extraction, the Central Ground Water Authority, Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation notified revised guidelines for ground water extraction.
- The revised guidelines aim to ensure a more robust ground water regulatory mechanism in the country.

Ground water extraction in India:

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

- It is primarily for irrigation in agricultural activities, accounting for nearly 228 BCM (Billion Cubic Meter), which amounts to 90% of the annual ground water extraction.
- The remaining 10% of extraction (25 BCM) is for drinking & domestic as well as industrial uses.
- Industrial use is estimated to account for only about 5% of the annual ground water extraction in the country.
- India is the largest user of ground water in the world, extracting ground water to the tune of 253 bcm per year, which is about 25% of the global ground water extraction.

Water Conservation Fee (WCF):

- The WCF payable varies with the category of the area, type of industry and the quantum of ground water extraction and is designed to progressively increase from safe to over-exploited areas and from low to high water consuming industries as well as with increasing quantum of ground water extraction.
- The high rates of WCF are expected to discourage setting up of new industries in over-exploited and critical areas as well as act as a deterrent to large scale ground water extraction by industries, especially in over-exploited and critical areas.
- The WCF would also compel industries to adopt measures relating to water use efficiency and discourage the growth of packaged drinking water units, particularly in over-exploited and critical areas.

Revised guidelines:

- They are encouraged to use recycled and treated sewage water by industries, provision of action against polluting industries, mandatory requirement of digital flow meters, piezometers and digital water level recorders.
- Mandatory water audit by industries abstracting ground water 500 m³/day or more in safe and semi-critical and 200 m³/day or more in critical and over-exploited assessment units.

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- Mandatory roof top rain water harvesting except for specified industries and measures to be adopted to ensure prevention of ground water contamination in premises of polluting industries/ projects

Exemptions:

- As per the revised guidelines, exemption from requirement of NOC has been given to
 - Agricultural users, users employing non-energised means to extract water,
 - Individual households (using less than 1 inch diameter delivery pipe) and
 - Armed Forces Establishments during operational deployment or during mobilization in forward locations
- Other exemptions (with certain requirements) have been granted to strategic and operational infrastructure projects for Armed Forces, Defense and Paramilitary Forces Establishments and Government water supply agencies.

Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA):

- Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA), constituted under the Environment (Protection) Act of 1986 has the mandate of regulating ground water development and management in the country.
- CGWA has been regulating ground water development for its sustainable management in the country through measures such as issue of advisories, public notices, grant of No Objection Certificates (NOC) for ground water withdrawal.

FAME-India Scheme

GS 2: Governance | Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

Prelims & Mains level: FAME-India Scheme phase 2

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Why in News?

- To promote manufacturing of electric and hybrid vehicle technology and to ensure sustainable growth of the same, Department of Heavy Industry is implementing FAME-India Scheme Phase - I [Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India] from 1st April 2015.
- The scheme was initially up to 31st April 2017, has been extended up to 31st March 2019 or till Notification of FAME-II, whichever is earlier.

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.

Objectives:

- Provide fiscal and monetary incentives for adoption and market creation of both hybrid and electric technologies vehicles in the country.
- Incentivise all vehicle segments, including two-wheelers, three wheeler auto, passenger four-wheeler vehicle, light commercial vehicles and buses.

FAME-India Scheme Phase - II:

- The scheme proposes to give a push to electric vehicles (EVs) in public transport and
- It seeks to encourage adoption of EVs by way of market creation and demand aggregation.
- 100% FDI by automatic route is permitted in the automobile sector.

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- Further, the sector is deregulated, both private sector and public sector are free to carry out investment in the automobile sector, including for manufacturing of Electric Vehicles and E-Buses.

India, ADB sign USD 60 Million loan agreement to reduce floods in Assam

GS 2: Governance | Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

Prelims & Mains level: Assam Integrated Flood and Riverbank Erosion Risk Management Investment

Why in news?

- India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on December 13, 2018 signed a USD 60 million loan agreement to reduce floods and the riverbank erosion in Assam.
- This Tranche 2 loan is part of the USD 120 million multi-tranche financing facility (MFF) of the ADB for the Assam Integrated Flood and Riverbank Erosion Risk Management Investment Program. The program was approved by the ADB Board in October 2010.

Objective:

- The loan agreement aims to continue financing riverbank protection works, renovation of flood embankments, and community-based flood risk management activities in critically flood-prone areas along the Brahmaputra River in Assam.

Highlights:

- The loan will have a 20-year term, including a grace period of 5 years.
- It includes an Annual Interest Rate determined in accordance with ADB's lending facility based on the London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR), and a commitment charge of 0.15 percent per year.

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- It will fund a combination of structural and nonstructural measures in the three subproject areas of Palasbari-Gumi, Kaziranga, and Dibrugarh along the Brahmaputra River.
- It includes 20 km of riverbank protection works and upgrading of 13 km of flood embankments.
- The non-structural measures will cover community involvement and community-based flood risk management activities through establishing and training disaster management committees.
- It will continue to support the institutional capacity development of the autonomous bodies, namely, Flood and River Erosion Management Agency of Assam (FREMAA), and Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), as the executing and implementing agencies for this Project.

Assam Integrated Flood and Riverbank Erosion Risk Management Investment Program:

- The Program is aimed at increasing the reliability and effectiveness of flood and riverbank erosion risk management systems in flood-prone areas of Assam.
- It aims to strengthen the disaster preparedness of the communities, and developing institutional capacity and knowledge base for flood forecasting.

Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission

GS 2: Governance | Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

Prelims & Mains level: Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission- particulars

Why in News?

- The Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission (SPMRM) is under implementation across the country (launched in 2016).



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- It is a unique programme, designed to deliver catalytic interventions to rural areas on the threshold of growth.

Objective:

- It aims to spur social, economic and infrastructure development in rural areas by developing a cluster of 300 Smart Villages over the next years across the country.

Key features:

- National Rurban Mission(NRM) NRM through development of rurban growth clusters aims at catalyzing overall regional growth for simultaneously benefiting the rural as well as urban areas of the country.
- Envisages institutional arrangements both at the State and Centre in order to ensure smooth implementation of the Mission.
- The State Governments would identify the clusters which have latent potential for growth in accordance with the Framework for Implementation prepared by the Union Ministry of Rural Development. States government will prepare Integrated Cluster Action Plans for Rurban Clusters. It will be comprehensive plan documents detailing out the strategy for the cluster development.
- The clusters will be geographically contiguous Gram Panchayats with different population and follow administrative convergence units of Gram Panchayats.
- Population Constrains: Coastal and plain areas must have population of about 25000 to 50000. Hilly, desert or tribal areas must have 5000 to 15000.
- There will be a separate approach for selection of clusters in Tribal and Non-Tribal Districts.

Funding Support:

- There is a funding support of up to 30% of the estimated investment for each Rurban cluster, given as Critical Gap Funding (CGF), while 70% of the funds is mobilized by the

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States through convergence with synergic State and Central programmes and private investment and institutional funding.

- The CGF is now shared between the Centre and the State in a ratio of 60:40 for Plain area States and 90:10 for Himalayan and NE States.

Analytical report of the National Health Profile-2018 released

GS 2: Governance | Issues relating to development & management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources

Prelims & Mains level: National Health Profile-2018 and its significance

Why in news?

- The Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare has released an Analytical Report of the National Health Profile-2018 prepared by the Central Bureau of Health Intelligence (CBHI).

Analytical Report of National Health Profile – 2018:

- The report indicates that significant progress has been made in the country for various health outcomes, which is an encouraging sign.
- The Profile covers demographic, socio-economic, health status and health finance indicators, along with comprehensive information on health infrastructure and human resources in health.
- CBHI has been publishing National Health Profile every year since 2005 and this is the 12th

National Health Resource Repository (NHRR):

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- The Union Health Ministry June 2018, has launched the first ever registry in the country registry of authentic, standardised and updated geo-spatial data of all public and private healthcare.
- To create a reliable, unified registry of country's healthcare resources showing the distribution pattern of health facilities and services between cities and rural areas.
- The ISRO is the project technology partner for providing data security.
- Under the Collection of Statistics Act 2008, more than 20 lakh healthcare establishments such as hospitals, doctors, clinics, diagnostic labs, pharmacies and nursing homes would be enumerated under this census, which will capture data on more than 1,400 variables.
- The Central Bureau of Health Intelligence (CBHI) has looped in key stakeholders, including leading associations, allied ministries, and several private healthcare service providers.
- NHRR will be the ultimate platform for comprehensive information of both, Private and Public healthcare establishments including Railways, ESIC, Defense and Petroleum healthcare establishments.

India Post ventures into new arena of e-market place

GS 2: Governance | Issues relating to development & management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources

Prelims & Mains level: e-Market place

Why in News?

- The Ministry of State for Communications (Independent Charge), launched the e-Commerce Portal of the Department of Posts (DoP).

Highlights:

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- It will provide an e-Market place to sellers especially to rural artisans/self-help groups/women entrepreneurs/State and Central PSUs/Autonomous Bodies etc. to sell their products to buyers across the Country.
- The small and local sellers (who were left) will now, by leveraging the vast physical and IT network of DoP, be able to maximize their reach and retailing power.
- The buyers can access the products of their choice displayed by sellers on the portal and place online orders by making digital payments.

Other Initiatives:

Post Office Core Banking Solution (CBS):

- It also launched the internet banking facility for Post Office Savings Bank (POSB) customers which are under Core Banking Solution (CBS).
- Now, around 17 Crore POSB accounts will be intra-operable and customers can also transfer funds online to RD and PPF accounts of Post Offices.
- This facility will help customers to do their transactions without physically visiting post offices.

Deen Dayal SPARSH:

- The Department of Posts had launched a scholarship program for school children called Deen Dayal SPARSH (i.e., Scholarship for Promotion of Aptitude & Research in Stamps as a Hobby).
- To bring philately to the mainstream of the education system and incentivizing it, in 2017

India Post:

- India Post is a Central Postal System of Government of India that was founded on 1st April 1854.
- It works under the Ministry of Communications of the Government of India.

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- The postal system of India is one of the widely distributed networks in the world.
- India is divided into 23 postal circles headed by Chief Postmaster.
- Indian Post is providing its services in Philately, Army Postal Service, Electronic Indian Postal Order, Postal Life Insurance, Postal Savings, Banking, Data collection, e-commerce and Railways.

PM inaugurated 175 Km of sewerage network in Prayagraj

GS 2: Governance | Issues relating to development & management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources

Prelims & Mains level: Namami Gange Programme

Why in news?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 16, 2018 inaugurated various projects worth Rs 199.65 crore under Namami Gange Programme in Prayagraj, including 175 KM of sewerage network.

Sewerage network:

- The projects will prevent 7.8 crore litres of sewage from flowing untreated into Ganga River every day. Now, this untreated sewage water will be carried every day to existing Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) at Salori, Kodra & Ponghat for treatment.
- Prime Minister Modi also laid the foundation stone for two projects in the Trans Ganga/Yamuna area under 'One City-One Operator Scheme' with sanctioned cost of Rs 767.59 crore.
- The project is based on Hybrid Annuity based PPP mode that includes Operations and Maintenance of the entire sewerage infrastructure for 15 years.
- These projects include Intersection and diversion (I&D) of sewage network, 7 sewage pumping stations and 3 STPs of total capacity 72 million litres per day (MLD).



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- These 3 STPs of 72 MLD capacity will be - Naini (42 MLD), Phaphamau (14 MLD) and Jhusi (16 MLD).
- With these projects, there will be comprehensive sewerage coverage of Prayagraj, including areas on the other side of the Ganga and Yamuna rivers.
- The sanctioned projects will also involve rehabilitation and operations and maintenance of existing sewage treatment infrastructure at the cost of Rs 904 crores.
- Rehabilitation projects include six existing STPs with a total capacity of 254 MLD located at Naini, Numayadahi, Rajapur, Kodra, Ponghat and Salori and operations and maintenance of 10 existing sewage pumping stations.

IMPRESS Scheme

GS 2: Governance | Issues relating to development & management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources

Prelims level: IMPRESS Scheme & Particulars


Why in News?

- IMPRESS" scheme has been launched to promote Social Science Research in the country by ministry of human resource development.


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IMPRESS


Impactful Policy
Research in Social Science




भारत सरकार
Government of India
मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT




The ICSSR will be the project implementing agency. They shall put in place an online portal for receipt, evaluation, selection and monitoring of proposals.




There shall be no duplication with any existing scheme; and UGC shall not fund any social science research which is being funded under this scheme.



There shall be (4) calls for proposals – October, 2018, February 2019, September 2019 and February 2020. The process of evaluation of the proposals and selection shall be completed within 90 days from the date of call for proposals.



The experts for evaluation of proposals shall be persons of eminence and selected using objective criteria.



There shall be a regular monitoring of the progress of projects using the online portal, in which the progress can be directly updated by the Project Coordinator. There shall be a third party evaluation of the projects in March 2021.

IMPRESS Scheme:

- Under the Scheme, 1500 research projects will be awarded for 2 years to support the social science research in the higher educational institutions and to enable research to guide policy making.
- Research in social science is essential for progress of the society and the research carried out under IMPRESS scheme will be used to understand and solve problems facing the society.
- Indian Council of Social Science and Research (ICSSR) will be the project implementing agency.
- The broad objectives of the scheme are:
- To identify and fund research proposals in social sciences with maximum impact on the governance and society.
- To focus research on (11) broad thematic areas such as : State and Democracy, Urban transformation, Media, Culture and Society, Employment, Skills and Rural transformation , Governance, Innovation and Public Policy, Growth, Macro-trade and Economic Policy,

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Agriculture and Rural Development, Health and Environment, Science and Education, Social Media and Technology, Politics, Law and Economics. The sub- theme areas will be decided on the basis of Expert Groups' advice before notifying the scheme and calling for applications.

- To ensure selection of projects through a transparent, competitive process on online mode
- To provide opportunity for social science researchers in any institution in the country, including all Universities (Central and State), private institutions with 12(B) status conferred by UGC.
- ICSSR funded/ recognized research institutes will also be eligible to submit research proposals on the given themes and sub-themes.

NITI Aayog organizes the Third Edition of the Women Transforming India Awards

GS 2: Governance | Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors

Prelims level: Women Entrepreneurship Platform, WTIA

Why in news?

- The NITI Aayog organized the Third Edition of the Women Transforming India Awards 2018 on December 17, 2018.
- An online portal for women entrepreneurs was also launched on this occasion.
- The Vice President of India, M. Venkaiah Naidu presided over as the chief guest of the event where he launched the WEP Portal 2.0 and conferred WTI Awards 2018.

Highlights:

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

- The Women Transforming India Awards were instituted to recognize and celebrate stories of exemplary women from across India. The theme of this year's award is "Women and Entrepreneurship."
- As many as fifteen candidates have been selected through an extensive six-month-long process for this award.
- More than 2300 nominations were received for WTI Awards 2018, and through a highly objective and transparent screening process, a total of 15 candidates have been selected for the award.
- On this occasion, the Women Entrepreneurship Platform-an online portal has also been launched by the NITI Aayog. This online portal will help to realize the dreams of Women Entrepreneurs across India.
- The Women Entrepreneurship Platform seeks to transform the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the country and shall be a one-stop resource center for future and budding women entrepreneurs.
- It seeks to act as a medium for various stakeholders in the economy to come together and offer integrated services such as Incubation Support, Mentorship, Funding avenues, Compliance, Marketing Assistance, etc.

Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP):

- On November 28-30, 2017, NITI Aayog, Government of India in partnership with the Government of the United States of America hosted the 8th Annual Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) in Hyderabad, India with the overarching theme of 'Women First, Prosperity for All'. To take the idea forward, CEO, NITI Aayog announced setting up of Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) to promote and support established as well as aspiring women entrepreneurs in India.
- WEP is the first of its kind unified access platform which enables meeting of several stakeholders in the entrepreneurial space on a single platform, work in collaboration with

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various partner organizations to provide a wide range of support services to women entrepreneurs under various service verticals of WEP.

- WEP partners such as Google, CRISIL, SIDBI, NIC, NASSCOM, UN India Business Forum, WEE Foundation, SEWA bank, MannDeshi Foundation, Shopclues, etc. to WEP registered women entrepreneurs under verticals such as Financial Assistance and Funding Support, Entrepreneurship Skilling, Incubation and Acceleration, Compliance Assistance, Marketing Assistance and a dedicated vertical for Social Entrepreneurship.

AIIMS to be set up under Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY)

GS 2: Governance | Issues relating to development & management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources

Prelims level: AIIMS, PMSSY

Why in News?

- The Union Cabinet has approved establishment of two new All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) at Madurai, Tamil Nadu and Bibinagar, Telangana.
- The AIIMS will be set up under Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY).

Facilities:

- Each new AIIMS will add 100 UG (MBBS) seats and 60 B.Sc. (Nursing) seats.
- Each new AIIMS will have 15-20 Super Specialty Departments.
- Each new AIIMS will add around 750 hospital beds.


Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY):

- The Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY) was announced in 2003 with objectives of correcting regional imbalances in the availability of affordable/ reliable


VETRI'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

tertiary healthcare services and also to augment facilities for quality medical education in the country.

Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY)
Aiming to create balance in healthcare system



Components of PMSSY



Highlights of PMSSY

- ✓ 6 Institutions like AIIMS set up in Patna, Raipur, Bhopal, Bhubaneshwar, Jodhpur & Rishikesh
- ✓ All existing AIIMS have functional medical & Nursing colleges
- ✓ Upgradation of 39 Medical colleges / institutions approved by CCEA
- ✓ Cost of Rs.150 crore approved for upgrading each medical college

#TransformingIndia
MyGovIndia
www.transformingindia.mygov.in
Date :8th Dec, 2016

Expansion of beneficiaries list under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana

GS 2: Governance | Issues relating to development & management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources

Prelims level: Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana

Why in News?

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has cleared the proposal to release deposit free LPG connections to poor families, who have not been considered earlier under PMUY on account of their names not been covered in Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC).
- Poor families who could not get LPG connection under PMUY are now eligible to get a connection subject to fulfilling the eligibility norms and furnishing required documents, they include:
 - SC/STs households
 - Beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin),
 - Beneficiaries of Antyodaya Anna Yojana(AAY),
 - Forest dwellers,
 - Most Backward Classes (MBC),
 - Tea & Ex-Tea Garden Tribes,
 - People residing in Islands / river islands

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana:

- PMUY is a welfare scheme being implemented by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas to provide LPG connections to families below the poverty line, guided by the strong commitment to bring about changes in the life of poor women and also protect their health.
- Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) is used to identify the beneficiaries (adult woman of a BPL family) and is given a deposit free LPG connection with a financial assistance of Rs.1600 per connection by the centre.
- This scheme will help prevent pollution and facilitate the healthy atmosphere in the families of poor people.

Eklavya Model Residential Schools



VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

GS 2: Governance | Issues relating to development & management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources

Prelims level: Eklavya Model Residential Schools

Why in News?

- In the context of establishing quality residential schools for the promotion of education, Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs) for ST students are set up in States/UTs with provisioning of funds through “Grants under Article 275(1) of the Constitution”.

Highlights:

- EMRS is a Government of India scheme for model residential school for Indian tribals (Scheduled Tribes, ST) across India.
- The establishing of EMRSs is based on demand of the concerned States/UTs with availability of land as an essential attribute.
- As per the budget 2018-19, every block with more than 50% ST population and at least 20,000 tribal persons will have an Eklavya Model Residential School by 2022.

Objectives of EMRS:

- Comprehensive physical, mental and socially relevant development of all students enrolled in each and every EMRS. Students will be empowered to be change agent, beginning in their school, in their homes, in their village and finally in a larger context.
- Focus differentially on the educational support to be made available to those in Standards XI and XII, and those in standards VI to X, so that their distinctive needs can be met,
- Support the annual running expenses in a manner that offers reasonable remuneration to the staff and upkeep of the facilities.
- Support the construction of infrastructure that provides education, physical, environmental and cultural needs of student life.

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Bhasha Sangam Programme

GS 2: Governance | Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Prelims level: Bhasha Sangam Programme

Why in news?

- The Department of School Education & Literacy has initiated Bhasha Sangam Programme to provide multilingual exposure to students in Indian Languages

Bhasha Sangam Programme:

- The Bhasha Sangam is an initiative under the 'Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat' which aims to make the students aware about the unique cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity of our country.
- In order to celebrate the unique characteristic of our country, Bhasha Sangam provides an opportunity to schools and educational institution to provide multilingual exposure to students in Indian Languages.
- The objective is to familiarize every child with simple dialogues in all the 22 languages under Schedule VIII of the Constitution of India.
- They will be taking up one language on each working day, to enhance linguistic tolerance and promote national integration.
- The initiative has been widely received and accepted by States and UTs in very positive manner and schools are introducing five simple and commonly used sentences as per the convenience of students.

Lingual provisions:

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- Section 29(2)(F) of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 states that “medium of instruction shall, as far as practicable, be in child’s mother tongue”.
- The National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005 emphasises the importance of imparting primary education in the mother tongue of the child.
- Since education is in the Concurrent List, States have the liberty to decide the medium of instruction in schools.

Three Language Formula:

- The NCF also states that the ‘Three Language Formula’ is an attempt to address the challenges and opportunities of the linguistic situation in India.
- As per the ‘Three Language Formula’ the first language to be studied, must be the mother tongue or the regional language.
- In the case of Hindi speaking States, children learn a language not spoken in their area.
- Sanskrit may also be studied as a modern Indian language in addition to these languages.

Acceptance of vehicle documents, driving licence in electronic format

GS 2: Governance | Issues relating to development & management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources

Prelims level: Digital India initiatives

Why in News?

- The Union Road Transport and Highways Ministry asked states to facilitate acceptance of driving licence and other documents such as vehicle registration certificates in electronic format by enforcement agencies.

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- The Ministry, while issuing a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to states, said that the vehicle owners can also show their documents including driving licence, RCs and insurance certificates through mobile apps like Digilocker and mParivahan app.

Significance:

- The decision is likely to benefit both the enforcement agencies as they need not physically handle any document, their office need not maintain any inventory or record and the citizens as they will escape harassment to collect document after the payment of compounding fees as the challan when disposed would automatically update the record in the Database.
- The fast, transparent and more accountable system will also ensure real-time availability of offence status to the transport and traffic enforcement officers and the citizens.

Highlights:

- The vehicle owners have been permitted to present their important documents such as the certificate of registration, insurance, fitness and permit, driving licence, the certificate for pollution under check and any other relevant documents in electronic format.
- With this, the vehicle owners may now, not be required to carry the documents in hard formats.
- People can produce the documents or other information either through the Digilocker app or the mParivahan app.
- They can download the Driving Licence or the Registration Certificate through these apps and store on their mobile devices.
- They can also show particulars relating to the Driving Licence or the RC through the mParivahan app on mobile through internet connectivity.
- The decision would enable the enforcement agencies like traffic and transport departments to simultaneously access the details from the eChallan app, which has data for online verification of vehicle and its licence status.

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- The off-line verification of mParivahan QR Code is also available on the platform. The enforcement agencies can use regular android mobile apps for the purpose.
- The enforcement agencies can also carry out complete challenging operation including tagging of the Driving Licence or the Certificate of Registration for impounding or suspension.
- The Transport ministry has urged the states that the standard operating procedure may be adopted for ensuring compliance with the provisions of rule 139 of the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989. The notification to amend the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989 to this effect was issued last month.

ICAT Certification

GS 2: Governance | Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Prelims level: ICAT, ICAT certification

Why in News?

- International Centre for Automotive Technology (ICAT) launched the Certification with high security features in order to prevent use of forged certificates in New Delhi.

ICAT Certification:

- This is a first of its kind initiative taken by any automotive certification agency in India for enhancing the security of the Central Motor Vehicles Rule certificates.
- These certificates include Type Approval Certificates (TAC) and Conformity of Production (COP) Certificates for vehicles, engines and components.

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- The new ICAT certificate format consists of nine new and unique security features incorporated in the certificate.
- The most important security feature is the paper itself on which the certificate is to be printed as it is a special paper which is made especially according to ICAT's specific requirements.
- The certificates will be printed using special printers which have been imported by ICAT for this very purpose.
- With the new high security features it will become difficult to forge or counterfeit the ICAT certificate.
- While some of the security features are generic in nature, the other features are specific for each certificate i.e. the contents or the information covered through these features will be specific for that particular certificate.
- Some of the features are visible only through ultraviolet light.
- The unique features in the certificate are as listed below:
 - High security paper
 - Printing using the ultraviolet ink
 - Troymark
 - Microprint
 - Pantograph
 - Reverse Pantograph
 - Secure code
 - Print code
 - Digitally printed stamp and seal of ICAT

ICAT:

- International Centre for Automotive Technology is located at Manesar in Gurugram district of Haryana state of India.



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- ICAT is the premier certification agency authorized by Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MORTH) for providing testing and certification services to the vehicle and component manufacturers situated within India and abroad.
- In addition to the certification services, ICAT is providing extensive testing services for product development and validation.

RTI Portal on Judgments/Orders of various courts

GS 2: Governance | Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Prelims level: RTI Portal

Why in News?

- The RTI Portal on Judgments/Orders of Supreme Court, High Courts and CIC has been developed by the Institute of Secretariat Training and Management (ISTM), New Delhi.

Highlights:

- This Portal will provide a learning environment for all stakeholders under which a repository on the landmark cases on the RTI will be available in one place.
- The Portal also makes available the gist of the replies given by Central Public Information Officers (CPIOs), First Appellate Authorities as well as the Supreme Court.
- It will be helpful in learning the latest trends of implementation of RTI Act as the judgments/orders given by Central Information Commission, High Courts and Supreme Court are always a crucial source to track the developments on this subject.

Integrated Government Online Training Programme (iGOT)



VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

GS 2: Governance | Role of civil services in a democracy

Prelims level: iGOT

Why in News?

- The iGOT (Integrated Government Online Training Programme) developed by Department of Personnel and Training, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, was launched.

Significance:

- The National Training Policy-2012 mandates that all civil servants will be provided with training to equip them with the competencies for their current or future jobs.
- The current structure of training for Government servants including domestic and foreign training is mostly available to very small section of the government servants.
- The outreach of the existing training setup is very limited in view of the large workforce employed in various States/UT Governments.

IGOT Programme:

- To provide a broad training eco-system creating synergies across various premier training institutes of the country and to cater the training needs which can encompass all the officials in the entire hierarchy of Central and State Governments.
- The IGOT will augment the existing training mechanism with online module-based training coupled with certification on flexitime basis.
- The training will be focussed and targeted to the requirement of the officials
- The e-Learning mode provides unparalleled opportunities for training to a large number of civil servants scattered all over the country.
- The latest technologies make available vast resources of learning material and online courses, providing the individuals enormous choices and flexibility in learning.



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- It will provide a single point of access to the repository of training resources.
- The training courses under this programme will be accessible through DoPT's web portal.
- The initiative aims at "Competent Civil Services for Good Governance"

NITI Aayog Releases SDG India Index, 2018

GS 2: Governance | Issues relating to development & management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resource

Prelims level: SDG India Index

Why in news?

- The NITI Aayog has released the Baseline Report of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) India Index, which comprehensively documents the progress made by India's States and UTs towards implementing the 2030 SDG targets.

SDG India Index:

- The Index was developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI), Global Green Growth Institute and United Nations in India and was launched by NITI Aayog.
- NITI Aayog has the twin mandate to oversee the implementation of SDGs in the country, and also promote Competitive and Cooperative Federalism among States and UTs.
- The SDG India Index acts as a bridge between these mandates, aligning the SDGs with the PM's clarion call of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas.
- It embodies the five Ps of the global SDG movement - people, planet, prosperity, partnership and peace.

Significance:

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- The SDG India Index tracks progress of all States and UTs on 62 Priority Indicators selected by NITI Aayog, which in turn is guided by MoSPI's National Indicator Framework comprising 306 indicators.
- The Index spans 13 out of 17 SDGs.
- Progress on SDGs 12, 13 & 14 could not be measured as relevant State/UT level data were not available and SDG 17 was left out as it focuses on international partnerships.
- A composite score was computed between the range of 0-100 for each State and UT based on their aggregate performance towards achieving 13 SDGs
- If a State/UT achieves a score of 100, it signifies that it has achieved the 2030 national targets. The higher the score of a State/UT, the greater the distance to target achieved.

Performance of states:

- Top Performing states are Himachal Pradesh, Kerala & Chandigarh with SDG India Index Score Range 42-69 & 57-68 respectively.
- Himachal Pradesh ranks high on providing clean water & sanitation, in reducing inequalities & preserving mountain ecosystem
- Kerala's top rank is attributed to its superior performance in providing good health, reducing hunger, achieving gender equality & providing quality education
- Chandigarh leads because of its exemplary performance in providing clean water & sanitation, affordable & clean energy, generating decent work & economic growth, & providing quality education.

10 Central agencies to snoop on any computer

GS 2: Governance | Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Prelims level: IT Act 2000, Snooping

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Why in News?

- The Union government has notified 10 Central Agencies, giving them the power to intercept, monitor and decrypt all the data contained in “any” computer system in India. The Cyber and Information Security Division under the Home ministry issued this notification.

Highlights:

- The 10 agencies authorised by the central government are the Intelligence Bureau, Narcotics Control Bureau, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, CBI, National Investigation Agency, Enforcement Directorate, Central Board of Direct Taxes, Research and Analysis Wing, Directorate of Signal Intelligence (in Jammu & Kashmir, the North-East and Assam) and the Delhi Police.
- As per the government, the notification fulfills the requirement under Rule 4 of the IT (Procedure and Safeguards for Interception, Monitoring and Description of Information) Rules, 2009, under which the government has to list the number of agencies permitted for the interception, monitoring, and decryption of any data.
- The Information Technology Act, 2000 is the primary law in India to handle cybercrime and to deal with electronic commerce.
- Section 69 of the Information Technology Act, 2000 includes provides for the interception and monitoring along with decryption for cyber-crime investigations. The Information Technology (Procedures and Safeguards for Interception, Monitoring, and Decryption of Information) Rules, 2009, has been notified by the government under Section 69.
- This notification by the government has caused quite an uproar in the Indian Parliament. The opposition has termed the recent order as unconstitutional and an attack on the Fundamental Rights of the citizens.



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Press freedom under attack around the world in 2018: Death Watch Data

GS 2: Governance | Important aspects of governance, transparency & accountability

Prelims level: Death Watch Data

Why in news?

- Press freedom faced a slew of attacks around the world in 2018, as political leaders unwilling to accept scrutiny increasingly jail, prosecute or undermine the credibility of critical journalists.

Death Watch Data:

- The Vienna-based International Press Institute (IPI) is organisation of editors, journalists and media executives in its Death Watch' said as many as 78 journalists were killed in 2018.
- IPI has been compiling annual data on the killings of journalists since 1997 as part of its press freedom and safety of journalist programmes.
- The Death Watch data for 2018 show that as many as 28 reporters and journalists were killed in targeted attacks during the year, while 11 died covering armed conflict.
- There is a growing movement, including in countries once seen as guarantors of fundamental rights, aimed at destroying the press as an institution of democracy.
- This atmosphere of intolerance toward independent journalism is putting the lives and freedom of journalists at risk and threatening the public's right to know.

Global Trends:

- 2018 witnessed an overall decline in the state of press freedom worldwide amid a trend of increased harassment and intimidation of journalists and attacks on independent media.

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- Mexico and Afghanistan were the deadliest countries for journalists were overall, with 13 deaths each.
- Investigations in a large number of cases are slow and tardy, due in many cases to a lack of political will to bring the killers and perpetrators to justice.

Governing council to boost shipments

GS 2: Governance | Important aspects of governance, transparency & accountability

Mains level: Initiatives for micro, small and medium enterprise

Why in news?

- The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) has proposed to establish a governing council to ensure efficient delivery of all export-related interventions, as a part of its action plan to boost shipments from micro, small and medium enterprises.

Highlights:

- Under MSMEs' action plan, the National Resource Centre for MSME Exporters will engage with various international agencies including UN organisations to promote procurement from Indian MSMEs and further enhance their capabilities.
- The ministry has recommended a detailed analysis of various trade agreements, including FTAs and bilateral and multilateral trade agreements, to identify areas of concern for MSMEs in the strategic action plan titled 'Unlocking the Potential of MSME Exports'.
- It said a study will be conducted of special economic zones and export promotion zones in the country to reassess their role and objectives as these are an essential constituent of Foreign Trade Policy and it is important to harness their potential.

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- Further, a tech-enabled online portal shall be developed featuring country-wise list of global products and services in demand and information on how to enter specific foreign markets. It will also have details on loans and credit offered by various financial institutions.
- A formal platform may also be created by the ministry to ensure that it is involved in all bilateral and multilateral trade negotiations which have an impact on the enterprises.
- A guide or handbook shall also be developed to help the export community to understand the processes involved in the export business and access the potential markets.
- The guide will comprise practical information which will be useful for exporters.

EC prohibits tobacco use in polling booths during Lok Sabha elections

GS 2: Governance | Important aspects of governance, transparency & accountability

Mains level: Tobacco Ban

Why in News?

- The Election Commission of India (ECI), for the first time, has banned all kinds of tobacco in polling booths during the general elections in 2019. The move is aimed at effectively implementing tobacco control laws across the nation.
- The Commission has asked all states and UTs to issue instructions to all the district electoral officers-cum-district magistrates to ensure prohibition of not just smoking but also the use of chewable tobacco in all polling booths in the country.

Highlights:

- All the polling booths in country to be declared tobacco free and not just smoke free so use of bidi, cigarette, gutkha, scented/ flavoured chewable tobacco are prohibited in all polling booth.
- As per the guidelines, each polling booth will have a banner put up.

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- The presiding officer of each polling booth will be nominated as nodal officer for ensuring tobacco-free status at their booths.
- All district tobacco control cells will supervise and monitor this campaign to sensitise people on ill effects of tobacco.
- The move comes after Delhi government's Health Department approached the Commission seeking declaration of all polling stations as tobacco-free zones rather than just declaring them as smoke-free as it used to be in previous elections.
- It is stated that tobacco use is the single largest preventable cause of disease, disability and pre-mature death and major threat to the present and future health of any population.

Islands of Andaman to be renamed after Netaji Bose

GS 2: Governance | Important aspects of governance, transparency & accountability

Why in news?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will rename three islands of Andaman and Nicobar after Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose on December 30, 2018. These three islands are - Ross Island, Neil Island and Havelock Island.

Highlights:

- These islands will be renamed during PM Modi's visit to Port Blair to mark the 75th Anniversary of hoisting of the National Flag at Port Blair by freedom fighter Subhash Chandra Bose.
- Renaming the Ross Island as Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Island, Neil Island as Shaheed Dweep, Havelock Island as Swaraj Dweep.
- Bose had hoisted the flag at Port Blair on December 30, 1943, as he believed that Port Blair was the first territory to be freed from British rule.
- This was done after the Japanese captured that area during the time of the Second World War.

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Aadhaar not mandatory for admission in schools

GS 2: Governance | Important aspects of governance, transparency & accountability

Why in news?

- The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has asserted that schools cannot make Aadhaar, the 12-digit biometric identifier a pre-condition for student admission.
- UIDAI warned that doing so will be against the recent order of the Supreme Court.

Highlights:

- UIDAI cleared that asking for Aadhaar cards for admissions is not as per the provisions of law and doing so will be against the recent order of the Supreme Court.
- However, there have been reports of certain schools insisting on Aadhaar as one of the documents required for student admission.
- The Aadhaar issuing body said that it is aware of such reports and has asked all the schools to ensure that no child is denied admission for not having the identification card.
- UIDAI CEO Ajay Bhushan Pandey said that in fact, schools should admit children without Aadhaar and ensure that children are given Aadhaar once they are in schools by arranging special camps for them.
- UIDAI cleared that despite this, should certain schools continue to insist on Aadhaar then, it would clearly be seen as a case of contempt of court.
- The word of caution from UIDAI comes at a time when admissions to the nursery and entry-level classes have just begun in over 1,500 private schools in Delhi.

Year End Review-2018: Ministry of Tourism

GS 2: Governance | Important aspects of governance, transparency & accountability

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

Mains level: Development of tourism infrastructure

Why in news?

- Ministry of Tourism in close collaboration with Ministry of Culture and Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) launched “Adopt a Heritage Project” to provide world class tourist facilities at the various natural/cultural heritage sites, monuments and other tourist sites
- The project plans to entrust heritage sites/monuments and other tourist sites to private sector companies, public sector companies and individuals for the development of various tourist amenities.

Bharat Parv:

- The prime objective of organizing the event is to generate a patriotic mood, promote the rich cultural diversity of the country, to ensure wider participation of the general public and to popularize the concept of ‘Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat’, ‘Dekho Apna Desh’ and ‘Tourism for All’

India Tourism Mart 2018:

- The First edition of the India Tourism Mart 2018 was organized by the Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH) with the support of the Ministry of Tourism and State Governments/Union Territory Administrations
- India Tourism Mart provided a platform to different tourism stakeholders for interacting and conducting business with foreign buyers.

Incredible India Mobile app:

- The Incredible India Mobile App showcases India as a holistic destination, revolving around major experiences, such as spirituality, heritage, adventure, culture, yoga, wellness and more.

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- The mobile app has been designed keeping in mind the preferences of the modern traveler and follows the trends and technologies of international standards. The app has been equipped with features to assist the traveller in each phase of their journey to India.

Year End Review 2018 Ministry of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare

GS 2: Governance | Important aspects of governance, transparency & accountability

Mains level: Measures and initiatives taken by government to increase farmers yield and production - schemes & significance

Why in News?

- The Government has set a target of doubling of farmers' income by the year 2022. The Government has constituted an Inter-Ministerial Committee to examine issues relating to doubling of farmers' income and recommend a strategy to achieve doubling of farmers' income in real terms by the year 2022.

Seven sources of income growth:

- The committee has identified seven sources of income growth-
 - Improvement in crop and livestock productivity
 - Resource use efficiency
 - Increase in the cropping intensity
 - Diversification towards high value crops
 - Improvement in real prices received by farmers
 - Shift from farm to non-farm occupations.
 - Savings in the cost of production

Initiatives Taken:

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- Launch of **eNAM initiative** to provide farmers an electronic online trading platform.
- Implementation of flagship scheme of **distribution of Soil Health Cards** to farmers so that the use of fertilizers can be optimized.
- **“Per drop more crop” initiative** under which drip/sprinkler irrigation is being encouraged for optimal utilization of water.
- Encouraging contract farming through the State Governments by promulgating of **Model Contract Farming Act**.
- **22,000 Gramin Haats** are to be upgraded to work as centers of aggregation and for direct purchase of agricultural commodities from the farmers.
- **“Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)”** under which organic farming is being promoted. North East is being developed as organic hub.
- Under **“Har Medh Par Ped”**, agro forestry is being promoted for supplementing farm income, increase risk management and climate resilient agriculture as an important component of Integrated Farming Systems.
- A revised farmer friendly **“Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)”** have been launched. The scheme covers various types of risks from pre-sowing to post harvest and the farmers have to pay very nominal premium.
- The **Indian Forest Act, 1927** was amended to exclude bamboo from the definition of ‘trees’. Henceforth bamboo grown outside forest area will not be regulated under the provisions of felling and transit rules. As a corollary the restructured National Bamboo Mission was launched for development of the value chain of bamboo as a measure to strengthen rural economy by linking the producer (farmer) to markets (industry).
- Launch of **PM-Asha scheme** which will ensure MSP to farmers for oilseeds, pulses and copra.
- Foreseeing high potential in fisheries sector, a **Blue Revolution with multi dimensional activities** mainly focusing on fisheries production, both inland and marine is being implemented.

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- The **National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)**, one of the eight Missions under the PM's National Action Plan on Climate Change is anchored in the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
- **Rashtriya Gokul Mission** has been implemented to enhance milk production and productivity of bovines and to make milk production more remunerative to the farmers.
- **National Livestock Mission** has been implemented to increase productivity and genetic improvement of livestock.
- **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** is notified by the Government for certain crops. Giving a major boost for the farmers income, the Government has approved the increase in the MSPs for all Kharif & Rabi crops for 2018-19 season at a level of at least 150 percent of the cost of production.

Mahila Kisan Diwas:

- Mahila Kisan Diwas was organised and the focus of the event was to learn and address issues and constraints related to women farmers in Agriculture; Animal Husbandry, Dairying, Fisheries and other off-farm activities and their access to institutional credit and micro-financing and building agri-enterprises.

National Food Security Mission:

- NFSM programme is being implemented in 638 districts of 29 states of the country for increasing the production and productivity of food grain crops (rice, wheat, pulses, coarse cereals & nutri-cereals) through area expansion and productivity enhancement, restoring soil fertility and productivity at the individual farm level and enhancing farm level economy to restore confidence amongst the farmers.

RKVY-RAFTAAR:

- The government recently approved Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana to be continued as Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana - Remunerative Approaches for Agriculture and Allied

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sector Rejuvenation (RKVY-RAFTAAR) for the next three years, i.e, 2017-18 to 2019-2020. RKVY Raftaar has the objective of making farming a remunerative economic activity through strengthening the farmers' effort, risk mitigation and promoting agribusiness entrepreneurship. RKVY-RAFTAAR funds would be provided to the States as 60:40 grants between Centre and States while 90:10 for North Eastern and Himalayan States through various means.

Micro Irrigation Fund:

- In order to achieve the objective of enhancing water use efficiency in agriculture sector and bring about desired growth, Finance Minister announced in the Union Budget for 2017-18 setting up of a dedicated fund in NABARD titled "Micro Irrigation Fund"
- The main objective of the fund is to facilitate the States in mobilizing the resources for expanding coverage of Micro Irrigation by taking up special and innovative projects and also for incentivizing micro irrigation beyond the provisions available under Per Drop More Crop (PDMC) component of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) to encourage farmers to install micro irrigation systems.

Krishi Unnati Mela:

- A National level 3rd Krishi Unnati Mela was organized and the objective of the mela was to create widespread awareness about the latest agricultural technological developments and receive feedback from the agricultural community, which helps in designing and shaping the Institute's future research strategy.

Soil Health Card Scheme:

- Soil Health Card Scheme is under implementation in the country since February 2015 to provide Soil Health Card to all farmers in the country. Soil Health Card will provide information to farmers on soil nutrient status of their soil and recommendation on

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appropriate dosage of nutrient to be applied for improving soil health and its fertility. Soil Health card will be issued every 2 years for all land holdings in the country.

Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region (MOVCDNER):

- Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has launched a Central Sector Scheme entitled “Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region” for implementation in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura
- The scheme aims at development of certified organic production in a value chain mode to link growers with consumers and to support the development of entire value chain starting from inputs, seeds, certification and creation of facilities for collection, aggregation, processing, marketing and brand building initiative.

NITI Aayog releases Second Delta Ranking under the Aspirational Districts Programme

GS 2: Governance | Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors

Prelims level: Delta Ranking 2018

Mains level: Aspirational District Programme

Why in News?

- NITI Aayog will release the Second Delta Ranking of the Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP).

Delta Ranking:

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- The ranking will measure the incremental progress made by districts.
- The districts have been ranked in a transparent basis on parameters across Health & Nutrition, Education, Agriculture & Water Resources, Financial Inclusion & Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure through key performance indicators.
- The rankings are based on the data that is publicly available through the Champions of Change Dashboard, which includes data entered on a real-time basis at the district level.
- The rankings, for the first time, will also factor in inputs from household survey conducted by NITI Aayog's knowledge partners, namely, TATA Trusts and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF).
- The first Delta ranking for the Aspirational Districts was released in June 2018.

Best performing Districts:

- Virudhunagar district in Tamil Nadu has shown the most improvement overall, followed by Nuapada district in Odisha, Siddarthnagar in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar's Aurangabad and Koraput in Odisha.
- These districts have championed the development narrative in fundamental parameters of social progress.
- Nagaland's Kiphire district, Jharkhand's Giridih, Chatra in Jharkhand, Hailakandi in Assam, and Pakur in Jharkhand have shown least improvement.

Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP):

- The Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) is an essential retreat from India's previous development strategies in its ownership, scope, and scale based on "One-size-fits-all" approach.
- 115 districts were chosen by senior officials of the Union government in consultation with State officials on the basis of a composite index of the following:
 - deprivation enumerated under the Socio-Economic Caste Census,

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- key health and education performance indicators and the state of basic infrastructure
- A minimum of one district was chosen from every State.
- The areas under the programme that have been targeted for transformation are education, health and nutrition, agriculture and water resources, financial inclusion, basic infrastructure and skills.
- There is no financial package or large allocation of funds to this programme
- Its aim is to leverage the resources of the several government programmes that already exist but are not always used efficiently.

DIPP Swachh Bharat Grand Challenge Awards Presented

GS 2: Governance | Important aspects of governance, transparency & accountability

Why in news?

- As part of the Swachhta Pakhwada held from, Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) organized a Swachh Bharat Grand Challenge. Four areas of sanitation, waste management, water and wastewater management and air management were selected for the grand challenge.

Objective of the award:

- This was organized to reward innovative solutions by DIPP recognized Start-ups in the country.
- Unique solutions were received from start-ups who had also filed for intellectual property rights.

Swachhata Pakhwada:

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- It was started in April 2016 with the objective of bringing a fortnight of intense focus on the issues and practices of Swachhata by engaging GOI Ministries/Departments in their jurisdictions.
- An annual calendar is pre-circulated among the Ministries to help them plan for the Pakhwada activities.
- They are monitored closely using online monitoring system of Swachhata Samiksha where action plans, images, videos related to Swachhata activities are uploaded and shared.
- After the observation, Ministries/Departments announce their achievements through a press conference and other communication tools.
- For the Pakhwada fortnight, observing ministries are considered as Swachhata Ministries and are expected to bring qualitative Swachhata improvements in their jurisdictions.

North East Industrial Development Scheme (NEIDS)

GS 2: Governance | Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Mains level: North East Industrial Development Scheme (NEIDS)

Why in News?

- North East Industrial Development Scheme (NEIDS), 2017 covers eligible industrial units in the manufacturing and service sectors Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim to promote industrialization and boost employment and income generation.

Significance Of NEIDS:

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- Promote industrialization: It will promote industrialization in North Eastern Region (NER) states including Sikkim and will boost income generation and will boost income generation and employment.
- Promote employment: For this, government is incentivizing primarily MSME Sector through this scheme. It is also providing specific incentive through scheme to generate employment.
- Benefits to industrial units: It will provide various incentives and benefits to all eligible industrial units. The overall cap for benefits under all components of incentives will be of Rs. 200 crores per unit.

Central Capital Investment Incentive:

- Central Capital Investment Incentive for Access to Credit (CCIIAC): 30% of investment in Plant and Machinery with upper limit of Rs.5 Crore on the incentive amount per unit.
- Central Interest Incentive (CII): 3% on working capital credit advanced by eligible Banks and Financial institutions for first 5 years from date of commencement of commercial production.
- Central Comprehensive Insurance Incentive (CCII): Reimbursement of 100% insurance premium on insurance of building and Plant & Machinery for 5 years from date of commencement of commercial production.
- Goods and Service Tax (GST) Reimbursement: Reimbursement upto the extent of central government share of CGST and IGST for 5 years from the date of commencement of commercial production by the unit.
- Income-Tax (IT) Reimbursement: Reimbursement of centre's share of income tax for first 5 years including year of commencement of commercial production by unit.
- Employment Incentive (EI): The Government will pay 3.67% of employer's contribution to Employees Provident Fund (EPF) in addition to its bearing 8.33% Employee Pension Scheme (EPS).

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- Transport Incentive (TI): Indian Railways will provide 20% of cost of transportation including subsidy currently provided for movement of finished goods by rail. Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) will provide 20% of cost of transportation for finished goods for movement through inland waterways. Airport nearest to place of production will provide 33% of cost of transportation of air freight on perishable goods (defined by IATA) to any airport within country.

National Commission for Indian System of Medicine Bill, 2018

GS 2: Governance | Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Why in News?

- The Cabinet today approved the draft National Commission for Indian Systems of Medicine (NCIM) Bill, 2018, which seeks to replace the existing regulator Central Council for Indian Medicine (CCIM) with a new body to ensure transparency.

Highlights:

- The draft bill provides for the constitution of a National Commission with four autonomous boards entrusted with conducting overall education of Ayurveda, under Board of Ayurveda and Unani, Siddha &Sowarigpa under Board of Unani, Siddha and Sowarigpa.
- There are two common Boards namely, Board of assessment and rating to assess and grant permission to educational institutions of Indian systems of Medicine and Board of ethics and registration of practitioners of Indian systems of medicine to maintain National Register and ethical issues relating to practice under the National Commission for Indian Medicine.

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- It also proposes a common entrance exam and an exit exam, which all graduates will have to clear to get practicing licenses. Further, a teacher's eligibility test has been proposed in the Bill to assess the standard of teachers before appointment and promotions.
- The draft bill is aimed at bringing reforms in the medical education of Indian medicine sector in lines with the National Medical Commission proposed for setting up for Allopathy system of medicine.
- The proposed regulatory structure will enable transparency and accountability for protecting the interest of the general public. The NCIM will promote availability of affordable healthcare services in all parts of the country.

Railways to grant fare concession to transgender senior citizens

GS 2: Governance | Important aspects of governance, transparency & accountability

Why in news?

- The Indian Railways announced on December 27, 2018 that it has decided to grant 40-per-cent concession in passenger fares to transgender senior citizens.
- The concession will be applicable to those of the third gender, who are aged 60 years or above. It will be available from January 1, 2019.

Highlights:

- The Indian Railways offers concessions on ticket prices to 53 different categories, ranging from 10-100 per cent.
- The railways grants 40 per cent concession in fares to men aged 60 years or above and 50 per cent concession in fares to women aged 58 years or above.

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- The students going to their hometown or educational tours can avail a concession of 50 per cent in fares for the second and sleeper class, while students belonging to the Scheduled Tribe community can avail a concession of 75 per cent.
- Similarly, government school students in rural areas are eligible to get a concession of 75 per cent in second class for a study tour or an entrance examination once a year.
- Those appearing for UPSC and Central Staff Selection Commission can also avail a concession of 50 per cent on the fares.
- Industrial labours and farmers, who wish to visit agricultural exhibitions, can also avail a 25-per-cent concession on second-class and sleeper-class tickets.
- In addition, foreign students studying in India are also eligible for a 50-per-cent concession in the second and sleeper class.
- Apart from these, senior citizens, who book their railway tickets online, now have the option to choose between 100-per-cent concession, 50-per-cent concession and no concession.
- Though a column for transgender (T) was introduced in the reservation form, the concession was not admissible to them.

PM inaugurates Rice Research Institute

GS 2: Governance | Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Why in news?

- The International Rice Research Institute South Asia Regional Centre (IRRI SARC) in Varanasi was dedicated to the nation by PM.

IRRI SARC:

- With an aim to double farmers' income the 6th IRRI SARC campus will serve as a hub for rice research and training in South Asia and SAARC region.

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

- The major aim of IRRI is to improve livelihood and nutrition, abolishing poverty, hunger, and malnutrition among those countries which depend on rice-based agri-food systems.
- This new Centre is expected to improve crop production, seed quality and the nutritional value of rice.
- It will also work with national partners to enhance farmers' knowledge and income and deliver advanced research, teaching and services in the connection.
- It will also teach scientists and agriculture leaders about the latest technologies and innovations for sustainable farming; and laboratories for digital crop monitoring and assessment, and demonstration fields where variety testing is conducted.
- IRRI SARC facilities will include the Centre of Excellence in Rice Value Addition (CERVA), a suite of modern laboratories where rice grains are assessed for: quality and nutritional value and sensory evaluations for grain taste, texture, and aroma are conducted; on-site facilities.
- This centre will catalyze South-South collaboration, strengthen the research expertise and capacity of rice-growing countries in the region, and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals.

International Rice Research Institute:

- The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) is an international agricultural research and training organization with headquarters in Los Baños, Laguna in the Philippines.
- IRRI is known for its work in developing rice varieties that contributed to the Green Revolution in the 1960s which preempted the famine in Asia.
- The Institute, established in 1960 aims to reduce poverty and hunger, improve the health of rice farmers and consumers, and ensure environmental sustainability of rice farming.
- It advances its mission through collaborative research, partnerships, and the strengthening of the national agricultural research and extension systems of the countries IRRI works in.
- It is also the largest non-profit agricultural research center in Asia.

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

- IRRI's semi-dwarf varieties, including the famous IR8 saved India from famine in the 1960s.

"One District, One Product" Scheme

GS 2: Governance | Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Why in News?

- The Government of Uttar Pradesh has initiated "One District, One Product" Scheme to encourage indigenous and specialized products and crafts of the state.
- The scheme aims to capitalize the rich heritage of the Uttar Pradesh by reviving them through modernization and publicisation to enhance the reach of these products.

Highlights:

- Uttar Pradesh is a vast state with vast diversity in all facets of life. The diversity of products and crafts in UP is breath-taking.
- The vast diversity encompasses the ancient and nutritious Kala namak rice, the rare and intriguing wheat-stalk craft, world-famous chikankari and zari-zardozi work on clothes, the intricate and stunning horn and bone work that uses the remains of dead animals rather than live ones, a nature-friendly replacement for ivory.
- Many of these rich traditions are facing the existential threat.
- The One District, One Product aims to revive these traditional heritages by reviving them through modernization and publicisation.

Objectives of the scheme:

- Preservation and development of local crafts / skills and promotion of the art

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- Increase in the incomes and local employment (resulting in decline in migration for employment).
- Improvement in product quality and skill development
- Transforming the products in an artistic way (through packaging, branding)
- To connect the production with tourism (Live demo and sales outlet – gifts and souvenir)
- To resolve the issues of economic difference and regional imbalance
- To take the concept of ODOP to national and international level after successful implementation at State level

Ujjwala Sanitary Napkins initiative

GS 2: Governance | Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Why in news?

- The Ujjwala Sanitary Napkins initiative has been launched by three oil marketing companies – IOCL, BPCL and HPCL.

Highlights:

- The mission, which forms part of the CSR initiative of OMCs in Odisha, is aimed to educate women on female hygiene and health, improve accessibility to low cost eco-friendly sanitary pads and boost rural employment and economy.
- The three companies will set up 100 manufacturing units at the Common Service Centres (CSC) covering 93 Blocks across 30 districts of Odisha at an estimated cost of ₹2.94 crore.
- At least 10 Ujjwala beneficiary women will get employment at each CSC. Each facility will have a capacity to produce 1,200-2,000 pads per day and will have a sterilisation room to ensure that the napkins are sterilised before they are packed for use by rural women.
- The CSCs are also being provided with raw material, enough to make 45,000-50,000 pads. These napkins will be priced at ₹40 per pack, each containing eight pads.

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- The Ujjwala pads will be made of virgin wood pulp sheet, non-woven white sheet and a gel sheet which are all biodegradable in nature and will leave minimal carbon footprint.

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana

GS 2: Governance | Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Why in news?

- Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) is a Maternity Benefit Programme that is implemented in all the districts of the country in accordance with the provision of the National Food Security Act, 2013.

Objectives:

- Providing partial compensation for the wage loss in terms of cash incentives so that the woman can take adequate rest before and after delivery of the first living child
- The cash incentive provided would lead to improved health seeking behaviour amongst the Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers (PW& LM).

Benefits under PMMVY:

- Cash incentive of Rs 5000 in three instalments i.e. first instalment of Rs 1000/ – on early registration of pregnancy at the Anganwadi Centre (AWC) / approved Health facility as may be identified by the respective administering State / UT, second instalment of Rs 2000/ – after six months of pregnancy on receiving at least one ante-natal check-up (ANC) and third instalment of Rs 2000/ – after child birth is registered and the child has received the first cycle of BCG, OPV, DPT and Hepatitis - B, or its equivalent/ substitute.

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- The eligible beneficiaries would receive the incentive given under the Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) for Institutional delivery and the incentive received under JSY would be accounted towards maternity benefits so that on an average a woman gets Rs 6000 / - .

Target beneficiaries:

- All Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers, excluding PW&LM who are in regular employment with the Central Government or the State Governments or PSUs or those who are in receipt of similar benefits under any law for the time being in force.
- All eligible Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers who have their pregnancy on or after 01.01.2017 for first child in family
- The date and stage of pregnancy for a beneficiary would be counted with respect to her LMP date as mentioned in the MCP card.

Case of Miscarriage/Still Birth :

- A beneficiary is eligible to receive benefits under the scheme only once.
- In case of miscarriage/still birth, the beneficiary would be eligible to claim the remaining instalment(s) in event of any future pregnancy.
- Thus, after receiving the 1st instalment, if the beneficiary has a miscarriage, she would only be eligible for receiving 2nd and 3rd instalment in event of future pregnancy subject to fulfilment of eligibility criterion and conditionality's of the scheme. Similarly, if the beneficiary has a miscarriage or still birth after receiving 1st and 2nd instalments, she would only be eligible for receiving 3rd instalment in event of future pregnancy subject to fulfilment of eligibility criterion and conditionality's of the scheme.
- **Case of Infant Mortality:** A beneficiary is eligible to receive benefits under the scheme only once. That is, in case of infant mortality, she will not be eligible for claiming benefits under the scheme, if she has already received all the instalments of the maternity benefit under PMMVY earlier.

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- Pregnant and Lactating AWWs/ AWHs/ ASHA may also avail the benefits under the PMMVY subject to fulfilment of scheme conditionality's.

SCIENCE & TECH

National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems

GS 3: Science & Technology | Developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

Prelims & Mains level: NM-ICPS

Why in News?

- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 6, 2018 approved the launching of National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS).
- The mission will be launched by the Department of Science and Technology at an expected cost of Rs 3660 crore for a period of five years.

Objective:

- The mission addresses the ever-increasing technological requirements of the society and takes into account the international trends and roadmaps of leading countries for the next generation technologies.

National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS):

- The NM-ICPS is a comprehensive Mission which would address technology development, application development, human resource development & skill enhancement, entrepreneurship and start-up development in CPS and associated technologies.

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- The Mission addresses the ever increasing technological requirements of the society, and takes into account the international trends and road maps of leading countries for the next generation technologies.
- It would be a Pan India Mission and covers entire gamut of India that includes Central Ministries, State Governments, Industry and Academia.
- The Mission will feed the Central Ministries/ Departments and State Govts and also the Industry to effectively use the CPS technologies in their projects and schemes for the benefit of the society.
- The mission implementation would develop and bring:
 - Cyber Physical Systems (CPS) and associated technologies within reach in the country,
 - Adoption of CPS technologies to address India specific National / Regional issues,
 - Produce Next Generation skilled manpower in CPS,
 - Catalyse Translational Research,
 - Accelerate entrepreneurship and start-up ecosystem development in CPS etc.

Significance:

- CPS is an integrated system of upcoming technology, which in turn is being taken up on priority basis by countries in the race for development.
- CPS will indeed bring a paradigm shift in entire skill sets requirement.
- The proposed Mission would act as an engine of growth that would benefit national initiatives in health, education, energy, environment, agriculture, strategic cum security, and industrial sectors, Industry 4.0, SMART Cities, SDGs etc.
- The job opportunities will be enhanced through the Mission by imparting advanced skills and generating skilled manpower as per the requirement of the industry/ society.
- As Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Start-up Ecosystem is an integral part of the proposed NM-ICPS, the start-ups will also create a number of technology driven job opportunities in CPS and allied areas.



VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

Cyber Physical System:

- CPSs are systems that link the physical world (e.g., through sensors or actuators) with the virtual world of information processing.
- They are composed from diverse constituent parts that collaborate together to create some global behaviour. These constituents will include software systems, communications technology, and sensors/actuators that interact with the real world, often including embedded technologies.
- In short these types of systems blend human and compute power, and integrating mechanical systems with human physical interaction giving both a form of "super powers"

NITI Aayog launches Global Hackathon on Artificial Intelligence

GS 3: Science & Technology | Developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

Prelims & Mains level: Global Hackathon on Artificial Intelligence

Why in News?

- NITI Aayog is partnering with Perlin – a Singapore-based AI start up – to launch the 'AI 4 All Global Hackathon', With the vision to further expand the idea of 'Artificial Intelligence, AI for All' articulated in the National AI Strategy.

Objective:

- The objective of this hackathon is to promote awareness and subsequently develop solutions that deliver the twin benefit of efficient computing to address the infrastructure challenges, while also not compromising on privacy of data for training AI algorithms.

Highlights:

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

- The Hackathon was announced at the AI conference organised by NITI Aayog, in partnership with the ORF, held in Mumbai in November 2018.
- The first stage will invite ideas for use cases of multi-party computation in areas such as healthcare, education, agriculture, urbanisation and financial inclusion.
- The second stage will call for these ideas to be matured and developed, with a focus on privacy preserving AI and distributed computing.
- The participants will also get mentorship and support from the hackathon co-sponsors, including the opportunity to scale and implement their AI applications.
- The AI for All Hackathon underscores the commitment of NITI Aayog to supporting meaningful social, economic and technological advancements directed at making people's lives better.
- The government's policy think tank organised its first hackathon, 'MoveHack' in August, on the sidelines of the Global Mobility Summit 2018, with the aim of garnering cutting-edge mobility applications. Over 2,000 submissions were received out of which the top 10 teams were awarded at the summit.

Combined Guided Weapon Firing Exercise

GS 3: Science & Technology | Developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

Prelims & Mains level: Combined Guided Weapon Firing Exercise

Why in News?

- This was a first of its kind Exercise undertaken by the Indian Air Force in which firing of four different class of missiles - AKASH, SPYDER, OSA-AK-M and IGLA was successfully carried out during day and night in an integrated networked environment.

AKASH:

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

- Akash (means sky in English) is a mid-range surface-to-air missile (SAM). It is medium range nuclear capable supersonic missile. It has been indigenously developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) under Integrated Guided-Missile Development Programme (IGMDP).
- It is multi target, multi directional, all weather air-defence missile system consisting of surveillance and tracking radars for defending vulnerable areas against medium range air targets penetrating from low, medium and high altitudes. It has supersonic speeds ranging from Mach 2.8 to 3.5.
- It has capability to carry 55- kg fragmentation warhead that is triggered by proximity fuse. It can engage aerial targets up to range of approximately 25 kms. It can reach high altitude of 18 kms and as low as 30 meters.

Spyder:

- Spyder (Surface-to-air PYthon and DERby) is an acquired missile system from Israel which is a short-range, quick reaction surface-to-air missile.
- It comprises two missiles- Python and Derby, with an active onboard radar which makes the Spyder system more lethal. Both the missiles are smokeless which makes it harder to detect them visually.
- It can neutralise enemy targets up to a distance of 15 km and at heights between 20 and 9000 metres.
- Besides aircraft and UAVs, it can also neutralise low-level cruise missiles.
- It is an all-weather missile which has an automatic process of engaging an aggressive aircraft or missile.
- Spyder is shorter than India's indigenously developed surface-to-air 'Akash' missile, which has a strike range of 25 km.

OSA-AK-M:

- It is a highly mobile, low-altitude, short-range tactical surface-to-air missile system.

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- The SA-8 was the first mobile air defense missile system incorporating its own engagement radars on a single vehicle, an all-in-one 9A33 transporter erector launcher and radar (TELAR) vehicles which can detect, track and engage aircraft independently or with the aid of regimental surveillance radars
- The 9M33M2 "Osa-A" missile extends the ranges out to 1,500–10,000m (1–6.2 miles) and engagement altitudes to 25–5,000 m (82–16,400 ft).

IGLA-S (SA-24):

- It is latest model of Russian MANPADS (Man-portable air-defense system) technology. It offers superior performance over earlier supplied SA-18 missiles to India.
- It is designed for use against visible aerial targets at short range such as tactical aircraft, helicopters, unmanned aerial vehicle (UAVs), cruise missile, head-on or receding, in presence of natural (background) clutter and countermeasures.
- As per requirements of Indian Army, it will have maximum range of 6km, altitude of 3km along with all-weather capability.
- Igla-S missile system will replace the existing Igla in service which is in urgent need of replacement.

Microsoft India signs pact with NITI Aayog for AI tools in agriculture, healthcare

GS3: Science & Technology | Indigenization of technology & developing new technology

Prelims level & Mains level: AI tools in agriculture

Why in news?

- Microsoft India has signed an agreement with NITI Aayog to deploy artificial intelligence (AI) technologies to address challenges in agriculture and healthcare.

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

Highlights:

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

World's First Floating Nuclear Power Plant becomes operational

GS3: Science & Technology | Indigenization of technology & developing new technology

Prelims level & Mains level: Floating Nuclear Power Plant

Why in news?

- On December 11, 2018, Russia's Akademik Lomonosov, the world's first floating nuclear power plant (FNPP) has become operational.
- The Russian atomic energy corporation Rosatom announced that the plant has been brought to 10% of its capacity.

Akademik Lomonosov FNPP:

- Akademik Lomonosov was constructed by Russian state nuclear power firm Rosatom.
- It has length of 144 metres and width of 30 metres.
- It has a displacement of 21,500 tonnes and crew of 69 people.

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

- For power generation, it has been fitted with two modified KLT-40 naval propulsion nuclear reactors (each of 35 MW capacity) together providing up to 70 MW of electricity and 300 MW of heat.
- It is named after Russian Academician Mikhail Lomonosov.
- It has the latest security systems and is considered as one of safest nuclear installations in the world.
- However, environmentalists have dubbed it as 'Nuclear Titanic' or 'Chernobyl on ice'.
- It will be primarily used to power oil rigs in remote areas of Arctic region where Russia is pushing to drill for oil and gas.

Significance of this nuclear power plant:

- The low-capacity, mobile (floating) nuclear power plant can produce enough electricity to power town of 200,000 residents living in Russia's far-flung northernmost Arctic region where large amounts of electricity is not needed and construction of conventional power station based on coal, gas and diesel is complicated and costly.
- It can save upto 50,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions per year.
- The project is part of Russia's greater aims to secure rich deposits of oil and gas in North Pole region in Arctic.
- Due to climate change, new shipping routes are opening up in Russia's north and as result, it is strengthening its military position in the region.

Tamil Nadu fishermen get NavIC-powered ISRO Gadgets

Prelims level: NavIC-powered ISRO Gadgets

Why in news?

- The Tamil Nadu government has distributed 200 NavIC- powered satellite-enabled communication devices developed by ISRO to 80 fishing boat groups in Tamil Nadu.

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These gadgets will help the Tamil Nadu fishermen to get cyclone and weather updates on a real-time basis.

NavIC Gadgets:

- These gadgets, which are of the size of a soapbox, are basically 'receivers' which will produce a beep when alerts are received by the device.
- They are Bluetooth enabled and the alerts received can be read on the NavIC App which can be downloaded on an android phone.
- The alerts will be in the Tamil language so that the fisherman find it easy to understand.
- The gadgets have been given free of cost and there is no recurring cost associated with these devices.
- Last year several fishermen went missing in the cyclone Ockhi and Tamil Nadu government had to face severe criticism for not providing timely weather alerts to fishermen.
- For this reason, the Tamil Nadu government had declared giving these gadgets free of cost to fishermen in this year's state budget.

NavIC:

- NavIC (Navigation with Indian Constellation) can be understood as the Indian version of the American GPS (Global Positioning System).
- The Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System constellation consists of eight satellites.
- NavIC provides accurate real-time position, navigation and timing services over India and region extending 1,500 km around Indian borders.

Reusable Rocket Technology



VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

GS 3: Science & Technology | Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics etc.

Prelims level: Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV)

Why in News?

- ISRO is working on reusable technology for reducing the cost of access to space including the development of a winged body unmanned reusable launch vehicle (RLV) for launching payloads into low earth orbits.

ISRO's Prototype RLV:

- ISRO has successfully developed a scaled down (1:5) technology demonstration version of Reusable Launch Vehicle - Technology Demonstrator (RLV-TD) vehicle.
- It has successfully carried out the first experimental mission on May 23, 2016 from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota.
- In this mission, critical technologies such as autonomous navigation, guidance & control and reusable thermal protection system have been successfully demonstrated.

Highlights:

- Development of Reusable Launch Vehicles is a technical challenge and it involves the development of many cutting edge technologies.
- A series of technology demonstration missions would be required to validate these technologies.
- In the next phase, an autonomous runway landing experiment is planned releasing the RLV-TD vehicle from a helicopter to demonstrate the runway approach and landing capability.
- This will be followed by an end-to-end orbital re-entry mission demonstration using a Technology Demonstration Vehicle boosted by propulsion systems.



VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

National Supercomputing Mission (NSM)

GS 3: Science & Technology | Achievements of Indians in science & technology

Prelims level: NSM

Why in news?

- French IT services firm Atos has won a three-year contract to build the first phase of supercomputers under India's Rs 4,500-crore National Supercomputing Mission (NSM)

National Supercomputing Mission (NSM):

- The Mission envisages empowering national academic and R&D institutions spread over the country by installing a vast supercomputing grid comprising of more than 70 high-performance computing facilities.
- These supercomputers will also be networked on the National Supercomputing grid over the National Knowledge Network (NKN).
- The NKN is another programme of the government which connects academic institutions and R&D labs over a high speed network.
- The Mission includes development of highly professional High Performance Computing (HPC) aware human resource for meeting challenges of development of these applications.
- India looks forward to create a cluster of machines for weather forecasting, drug discovery and data mining.

Implementation:

- The NSM is divided into two key tracks, build and buy, which are being spearheaded by the C-DAC and Bengaluru's Indian Institute of Science respectively.

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

- Atos has won the contract for the 'build' part of the NSM for which it will partner CDAC in all three phases of the project.
- While Phase I involves assembling of the supercomputers, in Phase II, certain components like the motherboards would be manufactured locally, and in the third phase, the supercomputer would be designed in India by C-DAC.
- In Phase II, it will be an aggregate of 10 petaflop, but the number of computers is yet to be decided.
- In the first phase, IIT-Kharagpur will have a 1.3 petaflop machine and IISER Pune and IIT-BHU will have a 650 teraflop computer each.
- The Mission would be implemented and steered jointly by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) and Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY) over a period of seven years.
- The tender to build these high performance computers (HPC) had been floated by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC).
- Atos would be deploying its energy efficient Direct Liquid Cooled Bull Sequana supercomputers in India.

International Training Centre for Operational Oceanography at INCOIS

GS 3: Science & Technology | Developments and their applications and effects in everyday life

Prelims level: INCOIS, RIMES

Why in news?

- The UNESCO Category 2 Centre - International Training Centre for Operational Oceanography (ITCOcean) Complex is established as a training facility at Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), Hyderabad.



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ITCOcean:

- The Ministry of Earth Sciences had established ITCOcean at INCOIS, Hyderabad to provide training to scientists/ researchers/government officers/disaster managers/decision makers, etc in 2013.
- Accordingly, it started conducting short term training programmes for wide variety of participants from India and abroad.
- Later, in order to assist UNESCO and its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) India offered to establish the ITCOcean as a UNESCO Category 2 Centre.
- The General Conference of UNESCO approved the offer of Government of India to establish ITCOcean as a UNESCO Category 2 Centre in November 2017.

Objective:

- The mission of the Centre is to assist the Member States of IOC/UNESCO in developing oceanographic scientific base, related technology and information systems.
- It aims to create a pool of trained ocean scientists, technologists and managers to cater the growing demands of operational oceanographic services and better management of oceans.
- It will give an opportunity to the South Asian and African states bordering the Indian Ocean and the small island nations in the Pacific to benefit from the expertise and experience of INCOIS in the areas of ocean science and management.

Role of INCOIS:

- INCOIS is already playing its part as a leading operational oceanography institute in the region.
- Tsunami early warnings from the institute are delivered to 25 countries on the Indian Ocean Rim on real-time basis, since IOC/UNESCO designated the Centre as Regional Tsunami Service Provider (RTSP) in October 2012.

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- Under the aegis of Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early warning System for Africa and Asia (RIMES), INCOIS is also providing ocean state forecast and other related warnings to 5 countries (Sri Lanka, Maldives, Seychelles, Madagascar and Cameroon).

INCOIS:

- Indian National Center for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) is an autonomous organization of the Government of India, under the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- INCOIS is mandated to provide the best possible ocean information and advisory services to society, industry, government agencies and the scientific community through sustained ocean observations and constant improvements through systematic and focussed research.

India successfully test-fires nuclear-capable Agni-IV missile

GS 3: Science & Technology | Developments and their applications and effects in everyday life

Prelims level: Agni-IV missile

Why in news?

- India successfully test-fired nuclear strategic ballistic missile Agni-IV from Dr Abdul Kalam Island off the Odisha coast as a part of user trial by the Army
- This is the seventh trial of Agni-IV missile.

Agni-IV missile:

- The Agni-IV missile was designed and developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). It has a strike range of 4,000 km.
- It is 20 metres long and weighs 17 tonnes and has many cutting-edge technologies which can meet global standards including Pershing missile of US.

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

- Agni-IV missile is equipped with advanced Avionics, 5th generation On Board Computer and distributed architecture.
- It has the latest features to correct and guide itself for in-flight disturbances.
- It encompasses most accurate ring laser gyro-based inertial navigation system (RINS) which is supported by highly reliable redundant micro navigation system (MINGGS).

Agni Series:

- Agni-1 with 700 km range
- Agni-2 with a 2,000-km range
- Agni-3 and Agni-4 with 2,500 km to more than 3,500-km range
- Agni-5 with a strike range of 5,000 km

China Launched its First Satellite for Space-Based Broadband Services

GS 3: Science & Technology | Developments and their applications and effects in everyday life

Prelims level: Space-Based Broadband Services

Why in News?

- China on December 22 launched its first communication satellite to provide broadband internet services worldwide in an apparent bid to rival Google and other international firms.

Hongyun Project:

- The Hongyun project, started in September 2016, aims to build a space-based communications network to provide broadband internet connectivity to users around the world, especially those in the underserved regions.

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

- The satellite was launched from a Long March 11 carrier rocket from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in north-western China.
- It is the first in the Hongyun project planned by China Aerospace Science and Industry Corp (CASIC).
- The spacecraft is tasked with verifying basic designs of Hongyun satellite and demonstrating low-orbit broadband communications technologies.
- Weighing 247 kilograms, the satellite works in a sun-synchronous orbit about 1,100 kilometres above earth.
- It is powered by solar arrays and has a design life of one year, but is expected to operate longer.
- CASIC plans to launch four mass-production Hongyun satellites in future

Space-Based Broadband Service:

- The concept of running a low-cost, high-performance satellite network to provide space-based communications and internet services has become popular globally among industry players.
- Currently, many foreign tech companies, including Google, SpaceX, OneWeb and Telesat, have already launched plans to use satellites to provide free internet access.
- The US' SpaceX launched two experimental satellites last month to test technologies for its Starlink project, in which tech tycoon Elon Musk proposes to put a total of nearly 12,000 satellites into orbit by the mid-2020s.
- Similarly, US firm, OneWeb, plans to launch a satellite constellation of 648 low-Earth orbit microsatellites by the end of 2019, though few developments have been reported. Last month, a Chinese internet technology firm unveiled the first satellite in a constellation plan comprising of 272 satellites to provide free WiFi service worldwide.

Gaganyaan Programme



VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

GS 3: Science & Technology | Developments and their applications and effects in everyday life

Prelims level: Gaganyaan

Why in news?

- The Union Cabinet has approved the Gaganyaan Program with demonstration of Indian Human Spaceflight capability to low earth orbit for a mission duration ranging from one orbital period to a maximum of seven days.

Gaganyaan Programme:

- A human rated GSLV Mk-III will be used to carry the orbital module which will have necessary provisions for sustaining a 3-member crew for the duration of the mission.
- The total fund requirement for the Gaganyaan Programme is within Rs.10,000 crore and includes cost of technology development, flight hardware realization and essential infrastructure elements.
- Gaganyaan Programme will establish a broader framework for collaboration between ISRO, academia, industry, national agencies and other scientific organizations.
- This will allow pooling in of diverse technological and industrial capabilities and enable broader participation in research opportunities and technology development benefitting large number of students and researchers.
- It is expected to generate employment and train human resources in advanced technologies.
- It will inspire large number of young students to take up science and technology careers for national development.
- Gaganyaan Programme is a national effort and will involve the participation of the Industry, Academia and National Agencies spread across the length and breadth of the country.

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- Human spaceflight programme will provide a unique micro-gravity platform in space for conducting experiments and test bed for future technologies.
- The programme is expected to give impetus to economic activities within the country in terms of employment generation, human resource development and enhanced industrial capabilities.

Indian Science Congress (ISC)-2019

GS 3: Science & Technology | Developments and their applications and effects in everyday life

Prelims level: Indian Science Congress

Why in News?

- World's largest science meets 'Indian Science Congress (ISC)-2019' is going to be held in Jalandhar, Punjab. The theme for this year is 'Future India: Science and Technology.

Significance:

- Government's aim is to deliver the benefits of Science & Technology to the last man in the society and scientists being a pivot should put their heart and soul into finding new solutions to the problems facing the nation and improve the quality of life of common man.
- The event will play a pivotal role in stimulating scientific research effort and raising the scientific temperament in the country and the world.

Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA):

- ISCA was started in the year 1914 at its headquarters in Kolkata.
- It organises Indian Science Congress annually in first week of January.
- The first meeting of ISCC was held in January 1914 in Asiatic Society, Kolkata.

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

- ISCA works under Department of Science & Technology, Ministry of Science and Technology.
- Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA) is a premier scientific organization of India.

INTERNAL SECURITY

Indian Navy to conduct TROPEX Exercise

GS 3: Security | Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate

Prelims level: TROPEX

Mains level: Strengthening coastal security of India

Why in news?

- Indian Navy will carry out its flagship huge-scale coastal defence work out Theatre Stage Operational Readiness Exercising (TROPEX) from January to March 2019 to examination robustness of total coastal security equipment.
- As portion of TROPEX, Indian Navy will conduct substantial-scale coastal defence exercising 'Exercise Sea Vigil'.
- It will see participation of all operational ships, submarines and aircraft as effectively as units of Indian coast guards (ICG), Indian Military and Indian Air Power (IAF).

Exercise TROPEX:

- Theatre Level Readiness and Operational Exercise (TROPEX) is an inter-service military exercise involving the participation of the Indian Army, Air Force, Navy and the Coast Guard.
- The exercise generally commences at the beginning of each year and lasts a month.

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- It is generally carried out in three phases: independent workup phase, joint workup phase and tactical phase.
- It also seeks to strengthen interoperability and joint operations in a complex environment.
- It will see participation of above 45 ships from the two Western and Japanese Naval Instructions of Indian Navy, which includes plane provider INS Vikramaditya, submarines such as nuclear powered Chakra, naval plane MiG-29K, helicopters as well as ships from Indian Coast Guard.
- Since it's a tri-services workout, troops from Indian Military and fighter plane from Indian Air Force including SU-30 MKI, Jaguars and AWACs will also take part.

Exercise Sea Vigil:

- The Indian Navy will conduct a large-scale coastal defence exercise next month to test the robustness of the entire coastal security apparatus.
- It will involve all stake holders across mainland and Island territories, and will see the participation of all operational ships, submarines and aircraft as well as units of Indian coast guards, Indian Army and the Indian Air Force.

Ex Avaiindra 2018

GS 2: IR | Bilateral, regional & global groupings & agreements involving India &/or affecting India's interests

Prelims & Mains level: India - Russia strategic relationship, Ex Avaiindra 2018

Why in News?

- The second edition of the service-specific exercise AVIAINDRA between Indian Air Force (IAF) and Russian Federation Aerospace Force (RFAF), has been commenced at Air Force Station Jodhpur in Rajasthan on December 10, 2018. This bi-annual air-service exercise will conclude on December 22, 2017.

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Highlights:

- The primary objective of this bi-annual air service exercise is to strengthen both of the air forces for anti-terrorist operations.
- Besides strengthening air forces, it also seeks to increase cooperation and build understanding between IAF and RFAS. This air service exercise takes place in two phases.
- This exercise allows foreign partners to participate without their assets. Indian Air Force pilots and Russian Federation Aerospace Force pilots flew aircraft when this air exercise was held at Lipetsk, Russia in September 2018.
- Similarly, RFSAF and IAF pilots will fly aircraft during in this 12-day long service specific exercise.
- Russia has been a major partner of India in the defence sector and the cooperation has been steadily growing further.
- In October 2017, India and Russia held a 10-day mega war game involving their armies, navies and air forces for the first time ramp up military ties.
- The exercise Indra, which took place in Russia, primarily focused on achieving coordination between forces of the two countries in tri-services integrated theatre command scenario.
- It was the first time, India participated in tri-services exercise with a foreign country with large scale participation by the Navy, the Army and the Air Force.

UN Global Counter Terrorism Coordination Compact

GS 3: Security | Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate

Prelims Level: UN Global Counter Terrorism Coordination Compact

Why in news?

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

- UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has launched a new framework to combat the scourge of international terrorism and coordinate efforts across the peace and security, humanitarian, human rights and sustainable development sectors.
- Termed the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, the framework is an agreement between the UN chief, 36 organizational entities, the International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL) and the World Customs Organisation, to better serve the needs of Member States when it comes to tackling the scourge of international terrorism.

Objectives of the agreement:

- To bring the UN agencies together to combat terrorism with common approach and find the ways to improve the strategies to support member states.
- To protect the people from violent extremist groups and hate speeches.
- To adopt the strategies that do not compromise the international human rights standards and rule of law.
- To monitor use of technology which is the main source of reaching people globally and manipulate them.
- To devise the policies that will protect communities and their religious belief.

Need of the Framework:

- The Global terrorism index released by Institute for Economic and Peace showed that there is a decrease in deaths due to terrorism, but the impacts of terrorism are still spreading all over the world.
- United Nation is actively working to bring peace and cooperation among member states.
- To combat counter terrorism UN created UN counter-terrorism implementation task force in 2005.
- The task force consists of 38 international entities.
- The goal of Counter terrorism Implementation task force was to organize working groups and the project related to counter terrorism.

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

- Finally, on 23rd February 2018, a new agreement was signed to create more integrated working approach between the agencies and coordinate them for counter terrorism and prevention of violent extremism. UN Global counter terrorism coordination compact replaced counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force.

Information Fusion Centre (IFC) - IOR

GS 2: IR | Bilateral, regional & global groupings & agreements involving India &/or affecting India's interests

Prelims level: IFC-IOR

Why in news?

- The Navy will formally inaugurate the Information Fusion Centre (IFC) for the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Highlights:

- This center will provide information on “white shipping”, or commercial shipping, which will be exchanged with countries in the region to improve maritime domain awareness in the Indian Ocean.
- White-shipping refers to commercial shipping information about movement of cargo ships.
- The IFC has been established at the Navy's Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC) in Gurugram, which is the single point centre linking all the coastal radar chains to generate a seamless real-time picture of the nearly 7,500-km coastline.
- All countries that have signed white shipping information exchange agreements with India, about 21 of them, are IFC partners.

Significance:

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

- The IFC-IOR is established with the vision of strengthening maritime security in the region and beyond, by building a common coherent maritime situation picture and acting as a maritime information hub for the region
- Establishment of the IFR-IRO would ensure that the entire region is benefited by mutual collaboration and exchange of information and understanding the concerns and threats which are prevalent in the region.
- This will help in addressing issues related to Piracy by mutual coordination with other countries.
- This will also help in tackling the growing influence of china in the region.

Challenges in IOR:

- The Indian Ocean Region is vital to world trade and economic prosperity of many nations.
- More than 75% of the world's maritime trade and 50% of global oil consumption passes through the IOR.
- However, maritime terrorism, piracy, human and contraband trafficking, illegal and unregulated fishing, arms running and poaching pose myriad challenges to maritime safety and security in the region.
- Response to these challenges requires enhanced situational awareness of the maritime activities in the region so as to enable security agencies function effectively.

Trans Regional Maritime Network (T-RMN):

- India has signed the ascension agreement to join the Trans Regional Maritime Network (T-RMN).
- The pact will give India the access to information on ships which pass through the Indian Ocean region that will greatly help the security forces in keeping a tab on any suspicious activity.
- The multilateral construct comprises of 30 countries and is steered by Italy.

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

Indian Navy commissions Naval Hospital INHS Sandhani

GS 2: Internal Security

Prelims level: INHS Sandhani

Why in News?

- The Indian Navy has commissioned a naval hospital ship, the INHS Sandhani at Naval station Karanja in the Raigad district of Maharashtra.

Highlights:

- INHS Sandhani was flagged by Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief (FOC-in-C) of the Western Naval Command Vice Admiral Girish Luthra and the commissioning plaque of the hospital was unveiled by Preeti Luthra, President of NWWA (Navy Wives Welfare Association), Western Region.
- The hospital has its origins as a small primary health care unit established in 1955.
- As Naval station Karanja expanded rapidly over the last couple of decades, there was a need to develop the station's healthcare services.
- Hence the upgrade was sanctioned by the Ministry of Defence in September 2016.
- The hospital has been expanded from a 16-bed facility to a 30-bed hospital.
- The hospital is capable of providing treatment in the fields of General Medicine, Surgery, Gynaecology, Anaesthesia, Paediatrics and dental services to naval personnel at the station.
- INHS Sandhani is the tenth commissioned hospital by the Indian Navy.
- The Navy had earlier commissioned its ninth hospital 'INHS Navjivani' at the Indian Naval Academy in Kerala's Ezhimala.

Indian Coast Guard conducts Exercise at sea off Port Blair: Clean Sea-2018



VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

Prelims level: Clean Sea-2018

Why in news?

- Indian Coast Guard (ICG) has conducted Regional Level Marine Oil Pollution Response Exercise titled 'Clean Sea- 2018' at the sea off Port Blair, Andaman & Nicobar (A&B) Islands.

Highlights:

- The objective of the exercise was to ascertain preparedness of IGC, resource agencies and other stakeholders in responding to a major oil spill in line with the provisions of National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan (NOS-DCP).
- ICG ships Viswash, Vijith, Rajveer, Rajshri, 4 interceptor boats and its air assets Dornier and Chetak helicopters participated in the exercise.
- The exercise was conducted in two phases for synchronizing support and cooperation provided by all stakeholders for combating oil spills in such ecologically sensitive areas.
- The exercise saw participation of ICG Pollution Control Vessel and integration of ICG Dornier/Chetak aircraft into Oil Spill Disaster Management System for aerial assessment and delivery of Oil Spill Dispersant for mitigation of spilled oil.
- The exercise was planned to evaluate preparedness for Response Operations for any such oil pollution incident in the highly sensitive area of A&B islands.

Significance of the exercise:

- Great Channel between Nicobar Islands and Northern Sumatra that leads into Malacca Straits is a marine drive of high seas.
- Almost 200 ships cross 160-km wide Straits daily making it among busiest sea routes of world.
- Considering, the high intensity of oil tanker traffic through this route, the area is highly vulnerable to oil spills.

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

- So, the need for a robust national system for oil spill response is critical.

National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan:

- Indian Coast Guard (ICG) under Ministry of Defence is responsible for marine environment protection in maritime zones of India and is the coordinating authority for response to oil spills in Indian waters.
- It has drawn up the National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan (NOS-DCP) and has established three pollution response centres at Mumbai, Chennai and Port Blair.
- It mandates that all major ports in India should have basic, minimum equipment, like inflatable booms and oil skimmers, to tackle oil spill.
- It highlights the responsibilities for individual Ports.

Objectives of the plan are:

- To develop appropriate and effective systems for the detection and reporting of spillage of oil.
- To ensure prompt response to prevent, control, and combat oil pollution.
- To ensure that adequate protection is provided to the public health and welfare, and the marine environment.
- To ensure that appropriate response techniques are employed to prevent, control, and combat oil pollution, and dispose off recovered material in an environmentally accepted manner.
- To ensure that complete and accurate records are maintained of all expenditure to facilitate cost of recovery.

GEOGRAPHY / ENVIRONMENT

COP24: 24th Conference of Parties to UNFCCC



VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

GS 3: Environment | Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

Prelims level: COP24

Mains level: India fulfilling its ambitious climate actions

Why in News?

- The COP-24 to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will be held at Katowice, Poland from 2nd December 2018 to 14th December 2018.
- COP-24 is very significant as it is expected to finalise guidelines for implementation of the Paris Agreement adopted in 2016.

India-COP24:

- India strongly supports the objective of the Paris Agreement to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change.
- India is committed towards keeping the global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius.
- India considers it important from the point of view of eradicating poverty and caring for the poor and the marginalized.
- The issue of pre-2020 commitments under Kyoto Protocol of developed countries to fulfill their climate finance commitments of mobilizing USD 100 billion per annum by 2020, will remain a priority for India in COP-24.

Conference of Parties (COP):

- COP is the supreme decision-making body of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

- All States that are Parties to UNFCCC are represented at COP. At COP, all parties review implementation of Convention and take decisions necessary to promote the effective implementation of Convention.

Responsibility for Developed Countries :

- These implementation gaps will present an additional burden to developing countries in the post-2020 period.
- Therefore, the key concern for India is to ensure that no undue burden is shifted onto developing countries in the post-2020 period.
- India is of the view that enhanced provision of new, adequate and predictable finance, technology development and transfer, as well as capacity-building support, is key enablers to achieve higher ambition in their climate actions.
- Therefore, PAWP must have mechanisms to ensure new, adequate and predictable support for developing country parties.

India Water Impact Summit-2018

GS 3: Environment | Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

Prelims level: India Water Impact Summit-2018

Mains level: India's projected water demand and need for sustainable use of water

Why in news?

- Union Minister for Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation Shri Nitin Gadkari will inaugurate India Water Impact Summit 2018.

India Water Impact Summit-2018:

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

- Summit is being jointly organized by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) and the Centre for Ganga River Basin Management and Studies (cGanga) from 5-7 December 2018 in New Delhi.
- The India Water Impact Summit is an annual event where stakeholders get together to discuss, debate and develop model solutions for some of the biggest water-related problems in the country.
- A number of Indian Central Government Ministries, as well as all key decision makers responsible for delivering the rejuvenation of the Ganga, will also be present at the Summit.
- The Summit will focus on three key aspects:
 - **Spotlight on 5 states:** Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Delhi and Bihar. The objective is to showcase the efforts and works going on within the respective states.
 - **Technology and Innovation:** Implementation of the pilot/demonstration programme known as the Environment Technology Verification (ETV) process.
 - **Ganga Financing Forum:** The 2018 Summit also introduces the inaugural Ganga Financing Forum that will bring a number of institutions to a common knowledge, information and partnership platform. The Hybrid Annuity Model has redefined the economic landscape of water and waste-water treatment in India.

Dual-Fuel Usage for Agricultural and Construction Equipment Vehicles

GS 3: Environment | Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

Mains Level: Bio-fuels & alternatives to curb pollution in India

Why in News?

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

- The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways has notified dual-fuel usage for agricultural and construction equipment vehicles.

Usage of Dual-fuel:

- Usage include tractors, power tillers, construction equipment vehicles and combine harvesters which have originally been manufactured as dual- fuel with diesel as primary fuel and CNG, Bio CNG as secondary, or have been converted as such from in -use diesel vehicles.
- Rules 115A and 115 B of the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989 have been amended to incorporate new rules 115 AA and 115 BB for the purpose.
- This move will give a boost to vehicles run on bio-fuel, and help in reducing both cost and pollution.
- The emission norms for smoke and vapour from these dual fuel vehicles will be same as the prevailing mass emission norms for the diesel mode.
- The mass emission standards for these CNG/ Bio CNG/ LNG dual fuel engines of the agriculture tractors, power tillers, construction equipment vehicles and combine harvesters will be the same as the emission standards for the diesel engines of these vehicles with the exception that the HC (Hydrocarbon) shall be replaced by NMHC (Non-Methane Hydrocarbon) on measurement basis as detailed in rule 115 A.

Significance of Dual-fuel:

- Most of the construction and agricultural equipment which were running on diesel fuels now runs with these cleaner alternate bio-fuels.
- With dual fuel usage of vehicles the advantage is that they will use 60% diesel and 40% bio-CNG or LNG and hence cause less pollution and also turn out to be cost effective.

**Ministry of Finance releases Discussion Paper entitled "3 Essential "S"s of
Climate Finance**



VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

GS 3: Environment | Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

Prelims level: COP24

Mains level: India fulfilling its ambitious climate actions

Why in news?

- Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, released a Discussion Paper entitled “3 Essential “S”s of Climate Finance – Scope, Scale and Speed: A Reflection” on the sidelines of COP 24 to UNFCCC at Katowice, Poland.

Highlights:

- The Discussion Paper examines analytically the scope, scale and speed required in climate finance. While the financial requirements of developing countries run into trillions of Dollars, the commitments made by the developed countries for enhancement and support in relation to climate finance is not clearly translated into reality. Equally important is the issue of reporting and tracking of climate finance.
- The Discussion Paper finds serious concerns with the various numbers on climate finance reported by the developed countries. Definitions of climate change finance used in various reports were not consistent with the UNFCCC provisions. Methodologies used were also questionable.
- This Paper attempts to identify the essential elements, step by step, for a robust and transparent accounting of climate finance flows from developed to developing countries.
- Climate change issues have taken centre-stage in the recent times with various scientific reports pointing to the serious effects of climate change and global warming. The urgency for global climate action cannot be overemphasised.

Soil Health Cards (SHC) for optimal utilization of fertilizers

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

GS 3: Agriculture | Major crops cropping patterns in various parts of the country

Prelims level: Soil Health card scheme

Why in news?

- Soil Health Card Scheme has been taken up for the first time in a comprehensive manner across the country.
- Under the scheme soil health cards are provided to all farmers so as to enable the farmers to apply appropriate recommended dosages of nutrients for crop production and improving soil health and its fertility.

Highlights:

- Collecting soil samples at a grid of 2.5 ha in irrigated area and 10 ha in un-irrigated areas
- Uniform approach in soil testing adopted for 12 parameters viz. primary nutrients (NPK); secondary nutrient (S); micronutrients (B,Zn, Mn. Fe & Cu); and other (pH, EC & OC) for comprehensiveness.
- GPS enabled soil sampling to create a systematic database and allow monitoring of changes in the soil health over the years.
- In the 1st cycle which was implemented in year 2015 to 2017, 2.53 crore soil samples were analysed and 10.73 crore soil health cards distributed to farmers.
- The 2nd cycle (2017-19) was started from 1st May, 2017 and against target of 2.73 crore soil samples, 1.98 crore samples tested and 6.73 crore cards have been distributed to farmers.
- The target is to cover 12.04 crore farmers.
- To enable quick soil sample testing and distribution of soil health cards, the soil test infrastructure has been upgraded, 9263 soil testing labs have been sanctioned to States.
- In addition, 1562 village level soil testing projects have been sanctioned to generate employment for rural youth.

Soil Health Card Scheme:

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

- Soil Health Card Scheme is a scheme launched by the Government of India in 19 February 2015.
- Under the scheme, the government plans to issue soil cards to farmers.
- The SHC will carry crop-wise recommendations of nutrients and fertilizers required for the individual farms to help farmers to improve productivity through judicious use of inputs.
- All soil samples are to be tested in various soil testing labs across the country.
- Thereafter the experts will analyse the strength and weaknesses (micro-nutrients deficiency) of the soil and suggest measures to deal with it.

FAO Council approves India's proposal to observe International Year of Millets in 2023

GS 3: Agriculture | Major crops cropping patterns in various parts of the country

Prelims level & Mains level: International Year of Millets, FAO

Why in news?

- The 160th session of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Council, currently underway in Rome, approved India's proposal to observe an International Year of Millets in 2023.

Highlights:

- This international endorsement comes in the backdrop of India celebrating 2018 as the National Year of Millets for promoting cultivation and consumption of these nutria-cereals.
- This is further supported by increase in Minimum Support Prices (MSP) of millets.
- Millets consists of Jowar, Bajra, Ragi and minor millets together termed as nutria-cereals.

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

- Through the Department of Food and Public Distribution, State Governments are allowed to procure jowar, bajra, maize and ragi from framers at MSP.
- This will enhance global awareness to bring back these nutri-cereals to the plate, for food and nutrition security and hence increase production for resilience to challenges posed globally by climate change.

Significance of Millets consumption:

- Millets are nutritionally superior to wheat and rice owing to their higher levels of protein with more balanced amino acid profile, crude fibre and minerals such as Iron, Zinc, and Phosphorous.
- It provides nutritional security and act as shield against nutritional deficiency, especially among children and women.
- Pellagra (niacin deficiency), Anaemia (iron deficiency), B-complex vitamin deficiency can be effectively tackled with intake of less expensive but nutritionally rich food grains like millets.
- It can also help tackle health challenges such as obesity, diabetes and lifestyle problems as they are gluten free and also have low glycemic index and are high in dietary fibre and antioxidants.

FAO Council:

- Established by the Conference at its Third Session (1947) to replace the original "Executive Committee of FAO" in accordance with a recommendation of the Preparatory Commission on World Food Proposals
- The Council, within the limits of the powers, acts as the Conference's executive organ between sessions.
- It exercises functions dealing with the world food and agriculture situation and related matters, current and prospective activities of the Organization, including its Programme



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of Work and Budget, administrative matters and financial management of the Organization and constitutional matters.

India lost \$79.5 billion due to climate-related disasters in last 20 years: UN

GS 3: Environment | Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

Prelims level: "Economic Losses, Poverty and Disasters" Report

Mains level: Impact of natural disasters on Indian economy

Why in news?

- India lost \$79.5 billion to climate-related disasters in the last two decades a/c to UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction report.

Report findings:

- The UNISDR highlighted that there has been a "dramatic rise of 251%" globally in direct economic losses from climate-related disasters in the last 20 years.
- In the period 1998-2017, disaster-hit countries reported direct economic losses of \$2.9 trillion, 77% out of which was caused by climate-related disasters.
- The report comes in the wake of the IPCC alarm sounding a rise in extreme weather events, if warming is not limited to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels.
- At least 91% of all major disasters recorded from 1988 to 2017 were climate-related says the report.
- The 2 billion people were affected by floods, which accounted for 43.4% of these disasters, followed by droughts, which affected a further 1.5 billion people.

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- The average number of disasters per year has increased to 329 in the latest 20-year period, with climate change increasing the frequency and severity of extreme weather related events.
- Storms were among the most frequently occurring disasters, along with floods.
- US recorded the biggest monetary losses reflecting high asset values, while China suffered a significantly higher number of disasters.

Impact on Indian economy:

- The report shows that while absolute economic losses might be concentrated in high income countries, the human cost of disasters falls on low- and lower middle-income countries.
- India is among five countries after the US, China and Japan and Puerto Rico, which have witnessed the greatest economic losses due to climate-related disasters.
- The findings suggest that an average of 130 people died per million living in disaster-affected areas in low income countries, compared to 18 in high-income countries, in disasters since 2000.
- That means people exposed to natural hazards in the poorest nations were more than seven times more likely to die, than equivalent populations in the richest nations.
- This report highlights the protection gap between rich and poor.
- The analysis shows that people in low-income countries are six times more likely to lose all their worldly possessions or suffer injury in a disaster than people in high-income countries.
- The report's analysis makes it clear that economic losses from extreme weather events are unsustainable and a major brake on eradicating poverty in hazard-exposed parts of the world.

Sikkim's 100% organic farming wins FAO's Future Policy Gold Award

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GS 3: Agriculture | Major crops cropping patterns in various parts of the country

Prelims level: Sikkim Organic Mission

Why in news?

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

Objective of Future Policy Gold Award:

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

Award for Sikkim:

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

Sikkim Organic Mission:

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

Asiatic Lion Conservation Project

GS 3: Environment | Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

Prelims level: Asiatic Lion Conservation Project

Why in news?

- The free-population of Asiatic Lions and the ecosystem of their habitation will be protected and conserved under 'Asiatic Lion Conservation Project,' an initiative taken by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change on December 20, 2018.
- Under the project, the stability, and viability in the population of Asiatic Lions will be ensured through scientific intervention, disease control, veterinary control, and adequate eco-development works.
- A total of Rs. 9784 Lakh for three years has been allocated for this project which will provide monetary support to the centrally-sponsored scheme-Development of Wildlife

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Habitat (CSS-DWH). The state and Union government will share the total cost of the project at 60:40.

Objectives of the project:

- The project activities is envisaged in a manner to cause habitat improvement, scientific interventions, disease control and veterinary care supplemented with adequate eco development works for the fringe population in order to ensure a stable and viable Lion population in the Country.
- The project will strengthen the ongoing measures for conservation and recovery of Asiatic Lion with the help of state-of-the -art techniques/ instruments, regular scientific research studies, disease management, Modern surveillance/ patrolling techniques.

Asiatic Lion Conservation Project:

- The MoEFCC has launched the “Asiatic Lion Conservation Project” with an aim to protect and conserve the world’s last ranging free population of Asiatic Lion and its associated ecosystem.
- The project will be funded from the Centrally Sponsored Scheme- Development of Wildlife Habitat (CSS-DWH) with the contributing ratio being 60:40 of Central and State share.
- The conservation of Asiatic Lions has always been a priority of Government of India.
- The Ministry in the past has supported Asiatic Lion in Gujarat by including it in list of 21 critically endangered species under the species recovery component of CSS-DWH.

Asiatic Lions and Their Population:

- Asiatic lions that once ranged from Persia (Iran) to Palamau in Eastern India were almost driven to extinction by indiscriminate hunting and habitat loss.
- A single population of fewer than 50 lions persisted in the Gir forests of Gujarat by late 1890s.

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- With appropriate and stringent protection offered by the State Government and the central Government, Asiatic lions have increased to the current population of over 500 numbers.
- The last census in the year 2015 showed the population of 523 Asiatic Lions in Gir Protected Area Network of 1648.79 square Kilometers that includes Gir National Park, Gir Sanctuary, Pania Sanctuary, Mitiyala Sanctuary adjoining reserved forests, Protected Forests, and Unclassed Forests.
- The Asiatic Lions have already been included in the list of 21 critically endangered species for recovery programme and financial assistance under the species recovery component of CSS-DWH by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

[India to submit 2nd biennial report on greenhouse gas inventory to UNFCC](#)

Why in News?

- India is mandated to submit a biennial update report containing updates of national greenhouse gas inventories and information on mitigation actions, needs and support received as a party to UNFCC.
- The Union Cabinet chaired by PM Modi has approved the submission of second Biennial Update Report (BUR) to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), giving India's national greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory of 2014.

India's greenhouse gas emissions in 2014:

- The BUR reports following figures about India's greenhouse gas emissions:
- In India, a total of 26,07,488 gigagram (Gg) CC-2 equivalent or around 2.607 billion tonnes of CC-2 equivalent of GHGs were emitted from all activities , excluding 'land use, land use change and forestry' (LULUCF) in 2014.
- Net national GHG emissions after including LULUCF were 23,06,295 Gg CO₂ equivalent or around 2.306 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent.

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- Energy sector accounted for 73 per cent, industrial processes and product use (IPPU) 8 per cent, agriculture 16 per cent and waste sector 3 per cent of emissions.
- India is on course for achieving the target for emission intensity of the economy and share of non-fossil fuel-based power capacity.

India's commitments under the Paris Agreement:

- Reducing greenhouse gas emission intensity of India's GDP by 33-35 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030
- 40 per cent of India's power capacity would be based on non-fossil fuel sources.
- Creating an additional 'carbon sink' of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.

Sixth National Report to the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD)

GS 3: Environment | Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

Prelims and Mains Level: Sixth National Report to the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD)

Why in news?

- India submitted its Sixth National Report (NR6) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The report was submitted by the Union Environment Minister, during the inaugural session of the 13th National Meeting of the State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs) organized by the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA).

Sixth National Report (NR6):

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- The NR6 provides an update of progress in achievement of 12 National Biodiversity Targets (NBT) developed under the Convention process in line with the 20 global Aichi biodiversity targets.
- The Report highlights that while India has exceeded/overachieved two NBTs, it is on track to achieve eight NBTs and in respect of the remaining two NBTs also, India is striving to meet the targets by the stipulated time of 2020.
- India has exceeded the terrestrial component of 17 percent of Aichi target 11, and 20 percent of corresponding NBT relating to areas under biodiversity management.

Aichi Target:

- The 'Aichi Targets' was adopted at the Nagoya conference of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- In the conference of parties (COP-10), the parties agreed to come up with new plans and targets as the previous targets on biodiversity protection were not achieved.
- The short-term plan which consists of 5 strategic goals and further sub divided into 20 ambitious targets is collectively known as Aichi targets.
 - **Strategic Goal A:** Address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society
 - **Strategic Goal B:** Reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use
 - **Strategic Goal C:** To improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity
 - **Strategic Goal D:** Enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services
 - **Strategic Goal E:** Enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building

Hornbill Festival 2018

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Prelims level: Hornbill Festival

Why in news?

- Union Home Minister has inaugurated hugely popular Hornbill Festival 2018 in Kohima, coinciding with the Formation Day of Nagaland.

Hornbill Festival 2018:

- The Hornbill Festival is a celebration held every year from 1 - 10 December, in Kohima, Nagaland.
- The first festival was held in the year 2000.
- Nagas celebrate this festival to revive, protect, sustain and promote the richness of the Naga heritage and traditions.
- The festival is named after the Indian hornbill, the large and colourful forest bird which is displayed in the folklore of most of the state's tribes.
- The festival pays tribute to Hornbill, the most admired and revered bird for the Nagas for its qualities of alertness and grandeur.
- Organized by the Nagaland State Tourism and Art & Culture Departments, the Festival showcases a mélange of cultural displays under one roof.
- Festival highlights include the traditional Naga Morungs exhibition and the sale of arts and crafts, food stalls, herbal medicine stalls, flower shows and sales, cultural medley - songs and dances, fashion shows etc.

Great Indian Hornbill:

- The great hornbill (*Buceros bicornis*) also known as the great Indian hornbill or great pied hornbill, is one of the larger members of the hornbill family.
- The great hornbill is long-lived, living for nearly 50 years in captivity.
- It is predominantly fruit eating, but is an opportunist and preys on small mammals, reptiles and birds.

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- Its impressive size and colour have made it important in many tribal cultures and rituals.
- IUCN status: Vulnerable (uplisted from Near Threatened in 2018). It is also listed in Appendix I of CITES.

INDIAN ECONOMY

Govt. inks \$85 Million Loan Agreement with ADB for Odisha Skill Development Project

GS 3: Economy | Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

Prelims Level: Asian Development Bank, Odisha Skill Development Project

Why in News?

- Union Government (Ministry of Finance) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) have signed an \$85 million loan agreement for Odisha Skill Development Project.
- It aims to improve the skill development eco-system in Odisha and establish World Skill Center (WSC), an advanced skill training center in the state's capital- Bhubaneswar.

Highlights:

- It will improve the quality of State's TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) programs by making them relevant to industry and demand driven.
- It will impart advanced occupation-ready skills training aligned with international standards.
- It will also complement efforts to target the employment needs of the emerging sectors in India and globally.
- It will engage Institute of Technical Education Services (ITEES), Singapore to support Odisha Skill Development Authority in setting-up and operationalizing WSC.

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- This centre will offer internationally bench marked advanced training programs for the working age population of Odisha.
- It will deliver eight training courses for 13,000 full-time students, provide training for 5,000 teachers and train 1,000 assessors.
- The project will help over 150,000 people learn skills in priority sectors, including manufacturing, construction and services for formal employment.
- It will improve overall eco-system of skill development in Odisha by providing integrated services through entrepreneurship incubation center, career counselling and placement center, curriculum design and development center and education technology deployment center.
- These important functions of WSC will support network of Government ITIs and develop skills and capacity of polytechnics, college of engineering, and other private skilling centers.
- ADB will also administer \$2 million technical assistance grant from Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction, financed by Japanese Government that will support capacity development activities under the project.

Odisha's Kandhamal Haldi to get GI tag

GS 3: Indian Economy | Planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment

Prelims level: Odisha's Kandhamal Haldi (Turmeric), GI tag

Why in News?

- Odisha's Kandhamal Haldi (Turmeric) will soon get a Geographical Indications (GI) tag.
- It is a few steps away from receiving this tag.

Odisha's Kandhamal Haldi (Turmeric):

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- Its registration was moved by Kandhamal Apex Spices Association for Marketing and was accepted under sub-section (1) of Section 13 of Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999.
- Kandhamal Haldi is famous for its healing properties.
- It is a main cash crop of the tribal people in Kandhamal.
- Apart from domestic use, it is also used for cosmetic and medicinal purposes.

Geographical Indication (GI):

- GI tag is a name or sign used on certain products which correspond to a specific geographical location or origin.
- It is used for agricultural, natural and manufactured goods having a special quality and established reputation.
- The purpose of GI tag enables stakeholders to authenticate their production while earning a premium and derive an improved livelihood.
- The goods and products having such tag are recognised for their origin, quality and reputation and gives it the required edge in the global market.
- It also ensures that none can use their name, giving them exclusivity.
- The registration of GI is valid for 10 years after which it needs to be renewed.
- Violation of GI tags is a punishable offence under law.
- GI is covered as an element of intellectual property rights (IPRs) under the Paris Convention for Protection of Industrial Property.
- At the international level, GI is governed by WTO's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).
- In India, GI tag Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection Act), 1999 governs it.
- This Act is administered by Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks, who is also the Registrar of Geographical Indications and is based in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.



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Ombudsman Scheme for Digital Transactions

GS 3: Indian Economy | Planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment

Prelims & Mains level: Ombudsman Scheme

Why in news?

- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced to introduce 'Ombudsman Scheme for Digital Transactions' to provide cost-free mechanism to redress grievances of customers related to digital transactions.

Ombudsman Scheme:

- The scheme will be notified by end of January 2019.
- It will cover services provided by entities falling under RBI's regulatory jurisdiction.
- The scheme is being implemented taking into consideration rise in digital mode for financial transactions which is gaining traction in the country.
- There is an emerging need for a dedicated, cost-free and expeditious grievance redressal mechanism for strengthening consumer confidence in this channel.

Limiting customer liability:

- RBI has also decided to come out with a framework for limiting customer liability in respect of unauthorised electronic payment transactions involving prepaid payment instruments (PPI).
- It has already issued instructions on limiting customer liability in respect of unauthorised electronic transactions involving banks and credit card issuing non-banking financial companies (NBFCs).

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- This framework will bring all customers up to same level with regard to electronic transactions made by them and extend benefit of limiting customer liability for unauthorised electronic transactions involving PPIs issued by other entities not covered by extant guidelines.
- The guidelines will be issued by the end of December 2018.

Union Cabinet approves implementation of Shahpurkandi Dam

GS 3: Economy | Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

Prelims level: Shahpurkandi Dam

Why in News?

- Union Cabinet has approved implementation of Shahpurkandi Dam Project on river Ravi in Punjab.
- The project will be implemented by Punjab Government with central assistance of Rs. 485.38 crore (for irrigation component) over a five years period from 2019 to 2023.
- It will be completed by June 2022.
- Funding for central assistance will be made through National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) under the existing system for funding of 99 Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana- Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (PMKSY-AIBP) projects under Long Term Irrigation Fund (LTIF).

Significance of this Project:

- ShahpurKandi Dam project was proposed on River Ravi.
- This project will help minimizing some of water of River Ravi which at present is going waste through Madhopur Headworks downstream to Pakistan.
- It will create an irrigation potential of 5,000 hectares in Punjab and 32,173 hectares in Jammu & Kashmir on completion.

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- Besides, Punjab will be able to generate 206 MW of hydropower.

Indus Waters Treaty:

- Indus Waters Treaty was signed between India and Pakistan in 1960 for sharing of Indus waters.
- According to this treaty, India got the full rights for utilization of waters of three eastern rivers namely Ravi, Beas and Satluj.
- Bilateral agreement was signed between Punjab and J&K in January 1979 for construction of RanjitSagar Dam (Thein Dam) and Shahpurkandi Dam by Punjab Government.
- RanjitSagar Dam was commissioned in August 2000.

Cabinet nod to merger of skill development bodies

GS 3: Economy | Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment

Prelims level: NSDA, NCVT, NCVET

Why in news?

- The Union cabinet on has approved the merger of the National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT) and the National Skill Development Agency (NSDA).
- The merger is aimed to consolidate fragmented regulatory structures and improve the outcome of the Skill India mission.

National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET):

- The National Council for Vocational Education and Training will regulate the functioning of entities engaged in vocational education and training, both long-term and short-term, and establish minimum standards for the functioning of such entities.

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- The primary functions of NCVET will include recognition and regulation, assessment, approval of qualifications developed by different bodies and industry governed sector skill councils.
- The merger would bring in accountability in skill sector that caters to nearly 15 million students at any given time.
- This reform will ultimately increase credibility of the skill sector and encourage greater private investment.

NCVT and NSDA:

- The NCVT was a regulator and assessment body of the long-term skill education space comprising more than 13,000 industrial training institutions.
- While the NSDA was policy formulating bodies of the skill development ministry helping it devise training and industry collaboration policy for the Skill India mission.
- The NCVT had been in existence for more than four decades as part of the directorate general of training, while the NSDA was a relatively new body that came into force in 2013.

India to receive \$800 Billion Remittance in 2018

GS 3: Economy | Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment

Prelims level: Global Remittance Report, GDP

Why in News?

- India is likely to receive total remittances of \$ 800 billion, stated the Migration and Development Brief released by the World Bank on December 08, 2018.

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- India was followed by China (\$67 billion), Mexico and Philippines (\$34 billion each) and Egypt (\$26 billion) in the brief.

Highlights:

- When a foreign worker transfers money or something to family or any other individual living in his home country, it is called 'Remittance.'
- Such transactions help in poverty alleviation in developing and low-income countries.
- According to the Brief, the global remittance including flows to high-income countries is expected to grow by 10.3 percent to \$ 689 billion. In 2019, they are expected to grow 3.7 percent to \$715 billion.
- Remittance to developing countries is expected to grow by 10.8 percent to achieve \$ 528 billion in 2018. It grew by 7.8 percent in 2017.
- It is expected to grow by 4 percent for the low and middle-income countries in 2019.
- India registered a significant increase in the remittance flow, from \$62.7 billion in 2016 to \$65.3 billion in 2017. In the year 2017, it was estimated 2.7 percent of the GDP.

Vision of New India - USD 5 Trillion Economy

GS 3: Indian Economy | Planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment

Prelims & Mains level: Vision of New India - USD 5 Trillion and its particulars

Why in news?

- The Working Group was constituted by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry with participation from government and industry has tasked to develop a **roadmap towards achieving a 5 trillion dollar economy by 2025** has prepared its report and it is being circulated to the stakeholders for further suggestions.

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Objective of this initiative:

- This initiative will enhance the competitiveness of India's service sectors through the implementation of focused and monitored Action Plans, thereby promoting GDP growth, creating more jobs and promoting exports to global markets.
- Services sector in India has immense employment potential, it will enhance the competitiveness of India's service sectors through the implementation of focused and monitored Action Plans, thereby creating more jobs in India, contributing to a higher GDP and exports of services to global markets.
- As the Services sector contributes significantly to India's GDP, exports and job creation, increased productivity and competitiveness of the Champion Services Sectors will further boost exports of various services from India.
- Embedded services are an important part of 'Goods' as well. Thus, competitive services sector will add to the competitiveness of the manufacturing sector.
- The share of India's services sector in global services exports was 3.3% in 2015 compared to 3.1% in 2014. Based on this initiative, a goal of 4.2 % has been envisaged for 2022.

Vision of a new India:

- The contribution to USD 3 trillion and focused plans will be on boosting services sector, Agriculture to USD 1 trillion and manufacturing to USD 1 trillion.

Agriculture Export Policy 2018:

- The Commerce Ministry has formulated India's first Agricultural Export Policy with a focused plan to boost India's agricultural exports to USD 60 billion.

Elements of Agriculture Export Policy:

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- The recommendations in the Agriculture Export Policy are in two categories Strategic and Operational. Strategic involves policy measures, infrastructure and logistics support, holistic approach to boost exports.
- Operational involves focus on clusters, Promoting value added exports, Miscellaneous.

Promotion of trade:

- Commerce Ministry is working closely with the Finance Ministry to ease credit flow to the export sector, especially small exporters to ensure adequate availability of funds to them.
- India has made 23 ranks in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Ranking this year to be ranked at 77. Upward move of 53 ranks highest improvement in 2 years by any large country since 2011. India now ranks first in Ease of Doing Business Report among South Asian countries.

Made in India:

- Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi Launched on 25th September 2014 to make India the hub of manufacturing, India has emerged as one of the fastest growing economies.
- Exemption is given where estimated value of procurement is less than Rs. 5 lakhs and minimum local content shall ordinarily be 50%.
- A Standing Committee in Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, under the chairmanship of Secretary, DIPP implementation of the 2017 order giving to make in India products.

India Trade Promotion Organisation:

- India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO) is the trade promotion agency of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- Exhibitions and conventions at ground in Pragati Maidan in New Delhi, the ITPO holds the India International Trade Fair (IITF) since 1980 every year.



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Trade Infrastructure for Export Scheme (TIES):

- TIES aid with setting up and up-gradation of infrastructure projects with overwhelming export linkages like the Border Haats, Land customs stations, etc.
- The Central and State Agencies, including Export Promotion Councils, Commodities Boards, SEZ authorities and apex trade bodies recognized under the EXIM policy of Government of India, are eligible for financial support under this scheme.

India Improves Ranking in Ease of Doing Business:

- India had made a leap of 23 ranks in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Ranking this year (2018) to be ranked at 77.
- India now ranks first in Ease of Doing Business Report among South Asian countries compared to 6th in 2014.

Multi-Modal Logistics Parks Policy (MMLPs):

- MMLPs is to improve the country's logistics sector by lowering over freight costs, reducing vehicular pollution and congestion and cutting warehouse costs with a view to promoting movements of goods for domestic and global trade.

Way forward:

India is one of the fastest growing major economies and is currently ranked as the world's sixth largest economy. Projections of growth, over the medium term, remain encouraging and optimistic for India. The Government has several ongoing initiatives across sectors focused on growth. In agriculture, the Government is aiming to reorient policy focus from being production-centric to becoming income-centric.

The emphasis on incomes provides a broader scope towards achieving the needed expansion of the sector. The proposed Industrial Policy 2018 provides an overarching,



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sector-agnostic agenda for the enterprises of the future and envisions creating a globally competitive Indian industry that is modern, sustainable and inclusive.

Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution in India

GS 3: Economy | Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy & their effects on industrial growth

Prelims level: 4th Industrial Revolution

Mains level: 4th Industrial Revolution and its impact on Indi

Why in News?

- The World Economic Forum (WEF) announced its new Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution in India, which would aim to bring together the government and business leaders to pilot emerging technology policies.

Highlights:

- The Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution India will work in collaboration with the government on a national level to co-design new policy frameworks and protocols for emerging technology alongside leaders from business, academia, start-ups and international organizations.
- The National Institute for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog will coordinate the partnership on behalf of the government and the work of the centre among multiple ministries.

Projects:

- Initial efforts at the national level are focused on two emerging technology areas: Artificial intelligence and machine learning, and block chain and distributed ledger technology.

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- The first project will focus on expanding access to data to accelerate the adoption of artificial intelligence to tackle some of the country's most pressing socio-economic needs, such as education, healthcare and agriculture.
- The second will focus on the application of smart contracts to boost productivity and transparency while reducing inefficiency.
- At state level, Maharashtra Government in collaboration with Centre is planning to undertake a drone mapping operation in the agriculture sector. These projects will be scaled across India and globally.

World Economic Forum (WEF):

- It is an international institution founded by Klaus Schwab that works to improve the state of the world through public-private cooperation.
- It was established in 1971 and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. It serves as independent not-for-profit organization that works closely with other international organizations.
- It also works with leaders in the field of politics, business, academia to set global, regional and industrial agenda.

ADB, India Sign \$31 Million Loan to Develop Tourism, Boost Jobs in TamilNadu

GS 3: Economy | Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, and Railways etc.

Mains Level: Promoting Tourism economy in India.

Why in News?

- A loan agreement worth \$31 million to develop Tourism and boost Jobs in Tamil Nad has been signed between the Government of India and the Asian Development Bank.

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- This loan amount will be used to upgrade the state tourism industry in order to attract more visitors to the state.

Objective:

- The \$250 million IDIPT aims to build opportunities for local communities and boost the local economy by enhancing tourism in three other states - Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand- besides Tamil Nadu. This will be achieved through developing and preserving sites of natural and cultural heritage, and building connectivity, capacity, and infrastructure around State tourist sites.

Key Highlights of the agreement:

- This project is expected to improve the tourism infrastructure in Tamil Nadu and also help the State in preserving the natural and cultural heritage. The activities under the project would also boost economic opportunities for the local people.
- The increased tourism traffic generated by this Project will generate extra jobs in Tamil Nadu, especially through skills training and community-based activities targeting the poor and women.
- The Government of India's recent Three-Year Action Agenda (2017-2018 to 2019-2020) envisages the hospitality, travel, and tourism sector as a major driver of growth and employment.
- The Agenda recognizes India's significant potential to increase:
 - The number of arrivals,
 - Global presence by leveraging its cultural industries, and
 - Capacity to create large-scale jobs among the poorest segments of the population
- It identifies key areas for action, including infrastructure, marketing, and skill development, all of which are aligned with the MFF Road Map.
- The Project will support the conservation and restoration of eight heritage monuments, one museum, three temples, and a pond.

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- It will build various facilities at the sites, including information centers, rest centers, and toilet blocks, with facilities served by solar-powered lighting and energy-efficient lighting.
- The total cost of the Project is \$44.04 million, of which the Government will provide \$13.04 million. The estimated completion date is June 2020.

Index of Industrial Production (IIP) grows to 8.1 percent

GS 3: Economy | Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy & their effects on industrial growth

Prelims level: IIP Index, significance & particulars

Why in News?

- A data released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) displayed the growth of factories output from 4.5 percent in September 2018 to 8.1 percent in October 2018.

Highlights:

- The output of the factories was measured in term of Index of Industrial Production (IIP).
- Favorable base effect and robust output in all key sectors like manufacturing, electricity, and mining attributed to this growth.
- Index of Industrial Production is used for the assessment of the economic activity in the country.
- While the manufacturing sector output grew 7.9 percent in October from 4.6 in September 2018, the electricity production grew to 10.8 percent in October from 8.6 percent in September 2018. The production in mining grew to 7 percent in October 2018 from 0.2 percent in September 2018.
- The production of the primary goods grew percent by 6.0, intermediate good by 1.8 percent and infrastructure/construction goods by 8.7 percents in comparison to the growth in October 2017.

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- Apart from this, the consumer durables output also witnessed a growth of 17.6 percent from 5.2 percent in September 2018.

Index of Industrial Production (IIP):

- The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) details out the growth of various sectors in an economy such as mineral mining, electricity, and manufacturing.
- It is an indicator that quantifies changes in the production of a basket of industrial products during a given period with respect to that in a chosen base period.
- It is prepared and released by the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) six weeks after the reference month ends.

PCS 1x System

GS 3: Economy | Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

Prelims level: PCS 1x portal and its features

Mains level: Improving logistics sector of India

Why in news?

- Indian Ports Association (IPA) under the guidance of Ministry of Shipping launched the Port Community System 'PCS1x' with url indianpcs.gov.in.
- The platform has the potential to revolutionize maritime trade in India and bring it at par with global best practices and pave the way to improve the Ease of Doing Business world ranking and Logistics Performance Index (LPI) ranks.

PCS 1x:

- 'PCS 1x' is a cloud based new generation technology, with user-friendly interface.

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- This system seamlessly integrates 8 new stakeholders besides the 19 existing stakeholders from the maritime trade on a single platform.
- The platform offers value added services such as notification engine, workflow, mobile application, track and trace, better user interface, better security features, improved inclusion by offering dashboard for those with no IT capability.
- A unique feature of 'PCS1x' is that it can latch on to third party software which provides services to the maritime industry thereby enabling the stakeholders to access wide network of services.
- Another major feature is the deployment of a world class state of the art payment aggregator solution which removes dependency on bank specific payment eco system.

Features of this Portal:

- This system will enable trade to have an improved communication with the customs as they have also embarked on Application Programming Interface (API) based architecture, thereby enabling real time interaction.
- This System offers a database that acts as a single data point to all transactions.
- It captures and stores data on its first occurrence thereby reducing manual intervention, the need to enter transaction data at various points and thereby reducing errors in the process.
- It is estimated that this feature alone will reduce 11/2 to 2 days in a life of transaction.
- The application will have a cascading effect in reducing dwell time and overall cost of transaction.
- A major training and outreach program is under way to educate the stakeholders about the uses and benefits of 'PCS 1x'.

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Container cargo circuit on Inland Waterways

GS 3: Economy | Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc

Why in News?

- Patna witnessed a new landmark in India's Inland Water Transport (IWT) sector with 16 TEUs of container cargo (equivalent to 16 truckloads) belonging to food giants PepsiCo India and Emami Agrotech Ltd from Kolkata reaching the city's Gaighat IWT terminal on river Ganga.

Highlights:

- Patna and upcoming IWAI terminal at Kalughat to emerge as new hub for trade up to Nepal with river Gandak announced as National Waterway 37
- Plans are at an advanced stage to operationalize Patna-Varanasi sector of NW-1 for container cargo movement. Container cargo transport comes with several inherent advantages
- It also reduces the handling cost, allows easier modal shift, reduces pilferages and damage, it also enables cargo owners to reduce their carbon footprints.
- The Ministry of Shipping is developing NW-1 (River Ganga) under Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP) from Haldia to Varanasi (1390 Km) with the technical and financial assistance of the World Bank at an estimated cost of Rs 5369 crore.

NITI Aayog releases Strategy for New India @ 75

GS 3: Economy | Indian Economy Issues relating to planning

Mains level: Key planning towards a USD 5 trillion economy by 2030

Why in news?

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

- The NITI Aayog has unveiled its comprehensive national Strategy for New India, which defines clear objectives for 2022-23.

Strategy for New India @ 75:

- It is a detailed exposition across forty-one crucial areas that recognize the progress already made, identifies binding constraints, and suggests the way forward for achieving the clearly stated objectives.
- It is an attempt to bring innovation, technology, enterprise and efficient management together, at the core of policy formulation and implementation.
- It will encourage discussion and debate, and invite feedback for further refining our policy approach.

Objective:

- The Strategy document aims to further improve the policy environment in which private investors and other stakeholders can contribute their fullest towards achieving the goals set out for New India 2022 and propel India towards a USD 5 trillion economy by 2030.

Key recommendations:

- The forty-one chapters in the document have been dis-aggregated under four sections: Drivers, Infrastructure, Inclusion and Governance.

Drivers:

- Steadily accelerate the economy to achieve a GDP growth rate of about 8 percent on average during 2018-23. This will raise the economy's size in real terms from USD 2.7trillion in 2017-18 to nearly USD 4 trillion by 2022-23.

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- In agriculture, shift the emphasis to converting farmers to 'agripreneurs' by further expanding e-National Agriculture Markets and replacing the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee Act with the Agricultural Produce and Livestock Marketing Act.
- Give a strong push to 'Zero Budget Natural Farming' techniques that reduce costs, improve land quality and increase farmers' incomes.
- To ensure maximum employment creation, complete codification of labor laws; and upscale and expand apprenticeships.
- Launch a mission "Explore in India" by revamping minerals exploration and licensing policy.

Infrastructure:

- Expedite the establishment of the Rail Development Authority (RDA), which is already approved.
- Double the share of freight transported by coastal shipping and inland waterways.
- Develop an IT-enabled platform for integrating different modes of transport and promoting multi-modal and digitised mobility.
- Deliver all government services at the state, district, and gram panchayat level digitally by 2022-23. With the completion of the Bharat Net programme in 2019, all 2.5 lakh gram panchayats will be digitally connected.
- The three themes in this section revolve around the dimensions of health, education and mainstreaming of traditionally marginalised sections of the population.

Inclusion:

- Successfully implementing the Ayushman Bharat programme including the establishment of 150000 health and wellness centres across the country, and rolling out the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Abhiyaan (PM-JAY).
- Create a focal point for public health at the central level with state counterparts.

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- Upgrade the quality of the school education system and skills, including the creation of a new innovation ecosystem at the ground level by establishing at least 10,000 Atal Tinkering Labs by 2020.
- Conceptualise an electronic national educational registry for tracking each child's learning outcomes.
- As already done in rural areas, give a huge push to affordable housing in urban areas to improve workers' living conditions.

Governance:

- Implement the recommendations of the Second Administrative Reforms Commission as a prelude to appointing a successor for designing reforms in the changing context of emerging technologies.
- Set up a new autonomous body 'Arbitration Council of India' to grade arbitral institutions and accredit arbitrators to make the arbitration process cost effective and speedy/
- Address the backlog of pending cases.
- Expand the scope of Swachh Bharat Mission to cover initiatives for landfills, plastic waste and municipal waste and generating wealth from waste.

Other recommendations:

- With 'Strategy for New India @ 75', Niti Aayog aims to accelerate growth to 9-10 percent and make India a USD 5 trillion economy by 2030.
- The development strategy includes doubling of farmers' income, boosting 'Make in India', upgrading the science, technology and innovation ecosystem, and promoting sectors like fintech and tourism.
- NITI Aayog prescribed reducing upper age limit to join the civil services to 27 years from the present 30 years for General Category candidates by 2022-23 in a phased manner and also to have one integrated exam for all civil services.



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E-Drishti Software

GS 3: Economy | Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways, etc.

Prelims level: E-Drishti

Why in news?

- An 'e-Drishti' interface developed by Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS) has been unveiled for the Union Railway Ministry.

E-Drishti Software:

- The E-Drishti software is developed by Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS).
- This software includes an interface which provides summary information on punctuality of trains for the previous day.
- There is also an interface which provides information on current train running on the Indian Railway network.
- In addition, there are interfaces providing details of freight earning, freight loading and passenger earnings for the previous day & month and cumulative for the year, in comparison to the corresponding period of the previous year.
- Punctuality of passenger carrying trains is being also monitored rigorously to improve punctuality performance on a daily basis at Divisional, Zonal and Railway Board levels.
- To ensure running of trains right time when pairing trains are running late, scratch rakes are inducted and rakes are standardized to the extent operationally feasible.
- Besides, punctuality drives are launched from time to time and staff involved in train operations is sensitized.
- In addition, Zonal Railways have also been advised to have better coordination with Civil and Police authorities of states to deal with situations arising out of law and order problems.



VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

DIPP Announces State-Wise Startup Rankings

GS 3: Economy | Development and employment

Prelims level: States' Start-up Ranking 2018

Why in News?

- The Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP), released the much-awaited State Startup Rankings on basis of the startup policy framework that it had announced earlier this year.
- According to the State Startup Ranking Report, while Gujarat is rated the 'best-performing state', Karnataka, Rajasthan, Odisha and Kerala come in a notch below as 'top-performing states.'
- The state startup ranking framework measures and compares the efforts and results of the startup initiatives and exercises undertaken by different state governments.

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*States in each group are presented in alphabetical order

States' Start-up Ranking:

- The DIPP launched an exercise to rank states and union territories on the basis of measures being taken by them to promote startups, and added that it was consulting states for their ranking framework.
- DIPP began this exercise from January, 2016.
- The State Startup Ranking Framework is aimed at bringing to fore progress made by States/UTs for promoting startup ecosystem.

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- The report intends to foster competitiveness and propel the states/UTs to work proactively while facilitating states/UTs to identify, learn and replicate good practices.

GST Council reduces GST Rates of 23 goods and services

GS 3: Economy | Mobilization of resources

Prelims level: Goods and Services under various brackets of GST

Why in News?

- The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council on December 22, 2018 slashed GST Rates for 23 commonly used goods and services. The reduced rates will come into effect from January 1, 2019.
- The GST rate on movie tickets, costing up to Rs 100, was cut to 12 percent from 18 percent, while tickets over 100 rupees will attract 18 percent tax against 28 percent. Monitors and TV screens up to 32-inches and power banks will attract 18 percent GST, as against 28 percent earlier.
- With this rate rationalisation, only 28 goods are left in the highest 28 percent tax bracket. The rate rationalisation was a part of the government's attempt to streamline GST and make it more people-friendly.

GST slash rates:

- **From 28% to 18%:**
 - Pulleys, transmission shafts and cranks, gear boxes etc., falling under HS Code 8483
 - Monitors and TVs of upto screen size of 32 inches
 - Re-treaded or used pneumatic tyres of rubber;
 - Power banks of lithium ion batteries. Lithium ion batteries are already at 18%. This will bring parity in GST rate of power bank and lithium ion battery.
 - Digital cameras and video camera recorders

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- Video game consoles and other games and sports requisites falling under HS code 9504.
- **From 28% to 5%**
 - Parts and accessories for the carriages for disabled persons
 - GST rate reduction on other goods
- **From 18% to 12%**
 - Cork roughly squared or debagged
 - Articles of natural cork
 - Agglomerated cork
- **18% to 5%**
 - Marble rubble
- **12% to 5%**
 - Natural cork
 - Walking Stick
 - Fly ash Blocks
- **12% to Nil**
 - Music Books
- **5% to Nil**
 - Vegetables, (uncooked or cooked by steaming or boiling in water), frozen, branded and put in a unit container
 - Vegetable provisionally preserved (for example by sulphur dioxide gas, in brine, in sulphur water or in other preservative solutions), but unsuitable in that state for immediate consumption.
- **Exemptions:**
- Exemption from GST on supply of gold by Nominated Agencies to exporters of article of gold Jewellery
- Exemption from GST on proceeds received by Government from auction of gifts received by President, Prime Minister, Governor or Chief Minister of a State and public servants, the proceeds of which is used for public or charitable cause.

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- Exemption from IGST/Compensation cess on vehicles imported for temporary purposes under the Customs Convention on the Temporary importation of Private Road Vehicles (carnet de passages-en-douane).
- Rate of 5%/18% to be applied based on transaction value of footwear
- Uniform GST rate of 12% on Flexible Intermediate Bulk Container (FIBC) from existing 5%/12% (depending on the value)

PM inaugurates Bogibeel bridge in Assam

GS 3: Economy | Infrastructure

Prelims level: Bogibeel bridge - significance to economy & connectivity

Why in news?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Bogibeel bridge in Assam on the birth anniversary of former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee.
- The Bogibeel bridge will connect the south bank of the Brahmaputra river in Assam's Dibrugarh to Silapathar in Dhemaji bordering Arunachal Pradesh.
- The 4.9 km-long bridge on the Brahmaputra river boasts of being Asia's second longest rail-cum-road bridge.

Bogibeel bridge:

- The Bogibeel bridge is constructed at an estimated cost of Rs 5,900 crore. Due to inordinate delay in its implementation, the cost of the project escalated by 85 per cent from the sanctioned estimated cost of Rs 3,230.02 crore.
- The bridge has a two-line railway track on the lower deck and a three-lane road on the top deck. For the first time for Indian Railways, the girder has A steel floor system for railway tracks and concrete for road.

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- The Bogibeel bridge, which was a part of the Assam Accord and sanctioned in 1997-98, is also likely to play a crucial role in defence movement along the India-China border in Arunachal Pradesh.
- The bridge will reduce travel time from Assam to Arunachal Pradesh to four hours. It will also reduce the Delhi to Dibrugarh train-travel time by about three hours to 34 hours as against 37 hours presently.
- The bridge will reduce the distance to Northeast region by 165 km, saving fuel worth Rs 10 lakh per day in the region.
- The bridge is among the infrastructure projects planned by India to improve logistics along the border in Arunachal Pradesh.
- The bridge and the train will be a boon for the people of Dhemaji as major hospitals, medical colleges and airport are in Dibrugarh, the third-largest city in the Northeast

Economic Capital Framework Committee of RBI

GS 3: Economy | Mobilization of resources

Prelims level: Economic Capital Framework Committee of RBI

Why in news?

- The Central Board of RBI in consultation with the Govt. of India has constituted an Expert Committee to review the extant Economic Capital Framework of the RBI.

Economic Capital Framework Committee and mandate:

- The RBI has named former RBI governor, Bimal Jalan to head the Framework committee.
- Expert committee on economic capital framework will have to give its report within 90 days from its first meeting.

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- Review status, need and justification of various provisions, reserves and buffers presently provided for by the RBI.
- Review global best practices followed by the central banks in making assessment and provisions for risks which central bank balance sheets are subject to.
- To suggest an adequate level of risk provisioning that the RBI needs to maintain.
- To determine whether the RBI is holding provisions, reserves and buffers in surplus / deficit of the required level of such provisions, reserves and buffers.
- To propose a suitable profits distribution policy taking into account all the likely situations of the RBI, including the situations of holding more provisions than required and the RBI holding less provisions than required.
- Any other related matter including treatment of surplus reserves, created out of realised gains, if determined to be held.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Exercise Cope India 2018

GS 2: IR | Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

Prelims level: Cope India

Mains level: India-US strategic relations

Why in news?

- The fourth edition of the series of bilateral joint exercise, 'Ex Cope India-18', began between the air forces of the United States and India on December 3, 2018 in West Bengal, India.

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- The 12-day exercise will be held from December 3-14 at Air Station Kalaikunda and Air Station Arjan Singh in Panagarh airbase. This is the first time that the exercise is being planned at two Air Force bases.

Objective:

- The main aim of exercise is to provide operational exposure and undertake mutual exchange of best practices towards enhancing operational capability.

Highlights:

- COPE INDIA 2019 is a bilateral Field Training Exercise (FTX) which has been sponsored by US Pacific Air Forces (PACAF).
- This field training exercise will enhance US-Indian mutual cooperation. It will also seek to improve existing capabilities, aircrew tactics and force employment. During this field training exercise, India and US will showcase their efforts and commitment for free and open Indo-Pacific region.
- A total of around 200 US air force personnel with 15 aircraft from 18th Wing At Kadena Air Base in Japan and 182 Airlift Wing of the Illinois Air National Guard are expected to participate in this air training exercise.
- Cope India is a series of Air Force exercises between the Indian Air Force and the United States Air Force. The first such air training exercise was conducted at the Indian Air Force station in Gwalior between February 16 to 27 in 2004.
- The air training exercise included flight tests, practice, and demonstrations. Besides this, the lectures on subjects related to aviation were also organized.
- In addition to the fighter training exercise, it has evolved to incorporate air mobility training, airdrop training and large-force exercises. This exercise was also held in 2005, 2006, 2009 and 2010.

Cope India:

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

- Cope India is a series of joint Air Force exercises held between the Indian Air Force and the United States Air Force, in India.
- The first such exercise, which required many months of preparation, was conducted at the air force station in Gwalior in February 2004.
- The exercise included flight tests, practice and demonstrations as well as lectures on subjects related to aviation.
- There were also media functions and social interactions held among troops of the two countries.
- The exercise has now evolved to incorporate subject matter expert exchanges, air mobility training, airdrop training and large-force exercises, in addition to fighter-training exercises.

India to Chair Kimberley Process Certification Scheme

GS 2: IR | Bilateral, regional & global groupings & agreements involving India &/or affecting India's interests

Prelims level: Kimberley Process

Why in News?

- India will Chair Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) from 1st January 2018. It was handed Chairmanship by the European Union during KPCS Plenary 2018, which was held in Brussels, Belgium.

Kimberley Process:

- The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) is the process established in 2000 to prevent conflict diamonds from entering the mainstream rough diamond market.

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- It is joint initiative of governments, industry and civil societies to stem flow of 'conflict diamonds', rough diamonds used by rebel groups to finance wars against legitimate governments. It is also described in United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions.
- It was ruled by UNGA Resolution 55/56 following recommendations in the Fowler Report.
- The process was set up to ensure that diamond purchases were not financing violence by rebel movements and their allies seeking to undermine legitimate governments.

India and KPCS:

- India is the founding member of KPCS and is actively involved in KP activities to ensure that almost 99% of the diamond trade in the world is conflict free.
- India is committed to maintain KP as an efficient and effective process in order to ensure the conflict diamond free status.
- India is at the forefront in addressing the issue of differentiation between Natural Diamonds and Lab Grown Diamonds and ensure responsible business in this area.
- India chaired the Ad hoc Committee on Review and Reform (AHCRR).
- In India, the scheme is administered through Department of Commerce under aegis of the Union Commerce and Industry Ministry.

Conflict diamonds:

- Conflict diamonds or blood diamonds are the rough diamonds used by rebel movements in the third world countries especially in Africa to finance (civil) wars with an aim to topple legitimate governments.
- The KPCS completely bans import and export of rough diamonds without certifications.

India-ASEAN InnoTech Summit 2018

GS 2: IR | Bilateral, regional & global groupings & agreements involving India &/or affecting India's interests



VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

Prelims level: India-ASEAN InnoTech Summit

Why in news?

- The first India ASEAN InnoTech Summit 2018, a two-day International Innotech Summit, exhibition, B2B and B2G meetings was held in New Delhi.
- The theme of India ASEAN InnoTech Summit was: Accelerating towards innovative development.
- It was organised by FICCI in association with the Department of Science & Technology (DST) and the Ministry of External Affairs to connect local and global research & development community for collaborative engagement.

Objectives of the summit:

- Explore avenues of cross country partnerships with Indian R&D-based enterprises.
- Capture global trends in technology management and strategy
- Advance progressive ideas for policy reforms and regulatory environment
- Create avenues for industry-academia-government partnerships
- Build capacities for market assessment and rapid commercialization of research
- Promote best practices in financing, strategy, and leadership
- Connect local and global research & development community for collaborative engagement

Highlights:

- Participating ASEAN member countries in this summit were Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam.
- On sidelines of this summit, an exhibition to showcase best Indian Innovative Technologies, with potential implementation in ASEAN region was also organized.



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- Besides this summit also provided platform for B2G meetings i.e. one to one meeting with ASEAN delegation of ministers, advisors, and other dignitaries

ASEAN:

- ASEAN is regional intergovernmental organisation comprising 10 Southeast Asian countries, which promotes intergovernmental cooperation and facilitates economic, political, security, military, educational, and sociocultural integration.
- 10-member ASEAN comprise of Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Philippines, Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia, Brunei and Laos.
- India is a full dialogue partner of the ASEAN.

India, China Sign A protocol for Fish meal and Oil Import

GS 2: IR | Bilateral, regional & global groupings & agreements involving India &/or affecting India's interests

Prelims level: India China Trade Relations

Why in News?

- India and China signed a protocol on hygiene and inspection requirements for the exports in New Delhi. The protocol was signed following a discussion between India's Union Commerce Ministry and a six-member delegation led by Vice Minister, General Administration of Customs of China, Hu Wei on easing market access for exports of various farm products.

Highlights:

- The representative from both the Indian and Chinese sides acknowledged each other's concerns while agreeing to figure out a best possible solution to solve market access

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

problems for the realization of the two-neighbor countries' vision by encouraging a balanced trade.

- The Chinese delegation discussed the problems related to market access for Chinese products like milk and milk products, soy meal, fruits and vegetables, tobacco and pharmaceuticals.
- This protocol will help India to export fish meal, and fish oil to the markets in China for which India has been seeking approval from China.
- It will help India to start the fish meal and fish oil export to China. China imports fish oil worth USD 143.29 million per year and the fish-meal to the tune of \$263.43 million.
- So far, China had not allowed India for the export of these products. It is the second Indian product to get approval from China within the last six months.
- In June this year, General Administration of Customs of China and Department of Agriculture of India had signed a MoU on phytosanitary requirements for exporting Rice from India to China.

India to host G20 Summit in 2022

GS 2: IR | Bilateral, regional & global groupings & agreements involving India &/or affecting India's interests

Prelims level: G20 Summit

Why in news?

- India will host G20 Summit In 2022, when it celebrates its 75th year of Independence.
- It was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during ongoing G20 meet of international grouping in Buenos Aires, capital of Argentina.
- During the Buenos Aires G20 meet, India presented a nine-point agenda to the G20 countries calling for strong and active cooperation among them to comprehensively deal with fugitive economic offenders.

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India's 9-point agenda against fugitive economic offenders:

- Joint efforts to be made by the G20 nations to form a mechanism that denies entry and safe havens to all fugitive economic offenders.
- There is need for the “effective” implementation of the principles of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) and the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime (UNOTC).
- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) should be called upon “to assign priority and to focus on establishing international co-operation that leads to a timely and comprehensive exchange of information between the competent authorities”.
- The FATF should be tasked to formulate a standard definition of fugitive economic offenders.
- The FATF should also develop a set of commonly agreed and standardised procedures related to identification, extradition and judicial proceedings for dealing with fugitive economic offenders to provide guidance and assistance to G-20 countries, subject to their domestic law”.
- There is need for setting up of a common platform “for sharing experiences and best practices including successful cases of extradition, gaps in existing systems of extradition and legal assistance.”
- Strong and active cooperation among the G-20 nations. The document highlights the importance of cooperation in legal processes such as “effective freezing of the proceeds of crime; early return of the offenders and efficient repatriation of the proceeds of crime should be enhanced and streamlined”.
- The G20 forum should consider initiating work on locating properties of economic offenders who have a tax debt in the country of their residence for its recovery.

G20 forum:

- The Group of Twenty (G20) is the premier forum for international economic cooperation and decision-making.

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- It is a forum for the governments and central bank governors from 20 major economies on economic issues and other important development challenges.
- It was started in 1999 as a meeting of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors in the aftermath of the South-east Asian (Tiger economies) financial crisis.
- The G20 comprises of total 19 countries plus the European Union (EU), representing 85% of global GDP, 80% of international trade, 65% of world's population.
- Its members include Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, China, India, France, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Turkey, South Africa, UK, US and EU.

Ex SHINYUU Maitri-2018

GS 2: IR | Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

Prelims level: Exercise SHINYUU Maitri 2018

Mains level: India-Japan strategic relations

Why in news?

- The first bilateral air exercise SHINYUU-18 between Indian Air Force (IAF) and Japanese Air Self Defence Force (JASDF) has been commenced at Air Force Station in Agra, Uttar Pradesh.
- The theme for SHINYUU-18 is joint Mobility/Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief (HADR) on Transport aircraft.

Ex SHINYUU Maitri-18:

VETRII'S UPSC PIB COMPILATION December - 2018

- The JASDF C2 aircraft along with aircrew/observers are part of this first air exercise between the two Air Forces.
- IAF is participating with An-32 and C-17 aircraft with aircrew & observers.
- The focus of the exercise is set for the IAF and JASDF crews to undertake Joint Mobility/ HADR operations.
- Display of heavy loading/ off-loading are also planned to be practiced during this exercise.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

GS 2: IR | Bilateral, regional & global groupings

Prelims level: International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Why in News?

- The International Day of Persons with Disabilities is observed every year on December 3 to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society and development.
- The 2018 theme for this day is "**Empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring inclusiveness and equality**".

Objective:

- It aims to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities.
- It also seeks to increase awareness of the situation of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life.

Highlights:

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- It focuses on empowering persons with disabilities for an inclusive, equitable and sustainable development as part of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) pledges to "leave no one behind".
- The International Day of Persons with Disabilities was instituted by United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) after it had passed a resolution 47/3 in 1992.
- Since then, it is observed annually and originally was called as the International Day of Disabled Persons.
- UN estimates that around one billion people are living with disabilities across the world and they are facing barriers of inclusion in many key aspects of society.

India, UAE sign agreement on currency swap

GS 2: IR | Bilateral, regional & global groupings & agreements involving India &/or affecting India's interests

Prelims level: India Abu Dhabi Relations

Why in News?

- The 12th session of the India-UAE Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) for Economic and Technical Cooperation was held on December 3-4, 2018 in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates.
- Also in the meet discussions to step up bilateral cooperation in areas such as security, defence, counter-terrorism, investments, space, trade and energy taken place

Key Highlights:

- During the India-UAE JCM, India and the United Arab Emirates signed two agreements, one pact on currency swap and an MoU for development cooperation in Africa.

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- The agreement on currency swap between the countries will allow trading in their own currency and payments to import and export trade at a pre-determined exchange rate without bringing in a third benchmark currency like the US dollars.
- The second Memorandum of Understanding would enable both the nations to undertake development projects in Africa.
- The leaders also identified several new areas of cooperation and following the conclusion of the JCM, the leaders signed and adopted the agreed minutes of the meeting.

India-UAE Relations:

- With bilateral trade amounting to almost USD 50 billion, India and UAE are one of the largest trade partners for each other and have made robust investments bilaterally.
- The UAE is the sixth-largest source of Indian oil imports and hosts a 3.3 million-strong Indian community, which amounts to the largest number of Indians outside India.
- Indians also make up the largest ethnic group in the UAE making up roughly 27 per cent of the total UAE's residents.
- During the Indian PM Narendra Modi's visit to the UAE in February 2018, both sides set an ambitious target of US\$100 billion in bilateral trade by the year 2020.

India, Peru sign agreement for co-operation and mutual assistance in Customs Matters

GS 2: IR | Bilateral, regional & global groupings & agreements involving India &/or affecting India's interests

Prelims level: India-Peru Relation

Why in news?

- India and the Republic of Peru on December 5, 2018 signed an agreement for co-operation and mutual assistance in customs matters.

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- The agreement was signed on the sidelines of the 80th Session of the Policy Commission meeting of the World Customs Organisations (WCO) which was held in Mumbai during December 3-5, 2018.

Agreement- Key Highlights:

- The Agreement provides a legal framework for sharing of information and intelligence between the Customs authorities of the two countries.
- It will help in the proper application of Customs laws, prevention and investigation of Customs offences.
- The Agreement will also help in the availability of relevant information for the prevention and investigation of Customs offences.
- It is expected to facilitate trade and ensure efficient clearance of goods traded between the countries

India-Peru Relations:

- India established diplomatic relations with Peru in March 1963. India-Peru relations have since then been traditionally cordial and friendly.
- India's bilateral trade with Peru was USD 107.32 million during 2005-06 and this grew up to 1319.45 percent during 2015-16.
- During 2015-16, bilateral trade between both sides stood at USD 1523.35 million with exports at USD 703.12 million and imports at USD 820.22 million.
- The Peruvian Community in India is quite small with around two hundred people only. Majority of them reside in Delhi NCR, Haryana, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, and Rajasthan.
- On the other side, Indian Community in Peru is also quite small. Only around 50-60 families are engaged in business, trade and other professions in Peru. India origin organisations like Hare Krishna, Sai Baba and Brahma Kumaris are also present in Peru.



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Exercise Hand-in-Hand 2018

GS 2: IR | Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

Prelims level: Ex Hand-in-Hand

Why in news?

- Exercise Hand-in-Hand is conducted annually as part of military diplomacy and interaction between armies of India and China.

Objective:

- The joint exercise for the year 2018 will be conducted from 10 to 23 December 2018 at Chengdu, China.
- The aim of the exercise is to build and promote close relations between armies of both the countries and to enhance ability of joint exercise commander to take military contingents of both nations under command.
- The exercise will involve tactical level operations in an International Counter Insurgency/ Counter Terrorist environment under UN mandate.
- Exercise Hand-in-Hand 2018 will go a long way to further cement relationship between both the nations and will act as a catalyst in bringing bonhomie at grassroots levels between the armies of both countries.

Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration adopted

GS 2: IR | Bilateral, regional & global groupings & agreements involving India &/or affecting India's interests

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Prelims & Mains level: Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, UNGA

Why in News?

- Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration was adopted by 164 nations including India at Intergovernmental Conference held under the auspices of United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) at Marrakesh, Morocco.
- It is the first intergovernmental agreement to cover wide-ranging dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner and agreed upon by all the UN member states minus United States.

Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration:

- It seeks to better manage migration at local, national, regional and global levels, in order to reduce the risks and vulnerabilities of migrants.
- It creates a non-legally binding and co-operative framework that builds on commitments agreed upon by member states in New York Declaration for refugees and migrants of December 2016.
- It lists four objectives:
 - Ease pressures on host countries.
 - Enhance refugee self-reliance.
 - Expand access to third country solutions.
 - Support conditions in countries of origin for return with safety and dignity.
- It sets out a framework on how international cooperation on migration issues should work but does not oblige states to take concrete action.
- It sets out 23 objectives to deal with issues ranging from factors that compel people to move, legal channels for migration, combating trafficking and smuggling, harness economic benefits of migration and return of the migrants.
- Its intent to protect human rights of migrants, address root causes of migration, and combat negative myths surrounding migration.

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- It acknowledges that migration is an international issue that affects all member states and there is a need for more effective migration governance.

Increase in International migrants:

- According to UN, there were 258 million international migrants in the world in 2017, increasing almost 50% since 2000.
- The number of migrants, representing 3.4% of world's population, is increasing faster than global population, driven by economic prosperity, inequality, violence, conflict and climate change.
- Migrants worldwide account for 3% of the world's entire population, but contribute 10% of the global gross domestic production (GDP).
- Migrant's remittance is a huge contributor to their home countries' development.
- Around 80% of world's migrants move between countries in a safe and orderly fashion.
- But more than 60,000 people have died on the move since the year 2000.
- Besides in transit countries or the country of destination, racism, discrimination and human-rights violations are continuously reported.
- The process of developing the compact was started in early 2017 as implementation of decision by UN member states as adopted New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in September 2016.
- UN member states' another decision pledged in the declaration is to develop a Global Compact on Refugees.

Difference between migrant and refugee:

Refugee:

- Refugees are persons who are outside their country of origin for reasons of feared persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order as a result, require international protection.

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- The refugee definition can be found in the 1951 Convention and regional refugee instruments, as well as UNHCR's Statute.

Migrant:

- While there is no formal legal definition of an international migrant, most experts agree that an international migrant is someone who changes his or her country of usual residence, irrespective of the reason for migration or legal status.
- Generally, a distinction is made between short-term or temporary migration, covering movements with a duration between three and 12 months, and long-term or permanent migration, referring to a change of country of residence for a duration of one year or more.

Outcome of 24th Session of Conference of Parties

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Prelims level & Mainslevel: COP24- Outcomings & Significance

Why in news?

- The 24th Session of the of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 24) was held in Katowice, Poland on 02nd- 15th December 2018.

Highlights:

- During the COP, nations overcame divisions to agree global climate pact rules for limiting temperature rise to below 2°Celsius while Indian participants are disappointed with the outcome.
- The key issues which were discussed:

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- Finalization of guidelines/ modalities/ rules for the implementation of Paris Agreement.
- The conclusion of 2018 Facilitative Talanoa Dialogue.
- Stocktake of Pre-2020 actions implementation and ambition.

Outstanding issues:

- Key questions on whether developed countries would come good on earlier commitments to make available \$100 billion annually by 2020 remained unsolved.
- Moreover, a fundamental tenet – that developed countries and developing countries have 'differentiated' responsibilities towards addressing global greenhouse gas emissions – appeared to be threatened.

Transparency Framework:

- India has been in favor of a robust transparency regime, and the finalized Enhanced Transparency Framework builds upon the existing guidelines while providing flexibilities for developing countries.
- The guidance on finance provisions operationalize the obligation of developed countries in providing means of implementation to developing countries.
- It recognizes the need for climate finance to be new and additional and climate specific.
- The framework for technology recognizes the need for enhanced support towards operationalization of the framework and comprehensively covers all stages of technology development and transfer.

Issue over Global Stocktake (GST):

- The GST refers to a periodic appraisal by countries on where the world stands vis-à-vis emissions and what more needs to be done.
- This would form the basis for countries taking the call on increasing their emission cuts.

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- The global stocktake will provide countries with the basis for strengthening their actions and submitting new national climate commitments in the two years following each successive global stocktake.
- Equity is specifically mentioned in Article 14 of the Paris Agreement. It is the basic principle of the Convention and the Paris Agreement.
- The entire GST exercise is lopsided as the process of technical assessment does not fully address equity.

Carbon credits:

- There is the outstanding issue of what happens to carbon credits.
- These are essentially carbon emissions that would normally have gone into the atmosphere but were prevented, due to alternate, cleaner alternatives adopted by developing countries.
- Developed countries are expected to pay for such credits via market-based trading mechanisms but these have been dismantled because of concerns over whether these reductions were real and measurable.
- The countries are not willing to find a solution to this as it has been postponed once again.

'Katowice package' rules to implement 2015 Paris Climate Agreement: COP24

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Prelims level & Mainslevel: OP24- Outcomings, rules to implement & Significance

Why in news?

- The UN Climate Conference (COP24) saw the adoption of 'Katowice package', the rulebook for implementation of the 2015 Paris climate agreement.

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- The Ministers of 200 nations reached consensus on rules after two weeks of intense negotiations during the 24th Conference of the Parties (COP24) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- The adopted guidelines package aims to encourage greater climate action ambition and benefit people from all walks of life, especially the most vulnerable.

Rulebook for implementation of 2015 Paris climate agreement:

- One of the key components is a detailed transparency framework to promote trust among nations. It sets out how countries will provide information about Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), including the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.
- They agreed on the procedure to uniformly count the greenhouse gas emissions.
- If poorer countries feel they cannot meet the standards set, they can explain why and present a plan to build up their capacity in that regard.
- The document sets a way to decide on ambitious funding targets from 2025 onwards from the current commitment to mobilise USD 100 billion per year as of 2020 in support of climate action in developing countries.
- Nations agreed on the methodology to collectively assess the effectiveness of climate action in 2023, and finalised the procedure to monitor and report progress on the development and transfer of technology.
- The concerns of developing nations including India and least developed nations on funding for carbon credit were finally addressed.
- The rich nations which are the main polluters agreed to pay for greening in the underdeveloped world.
- The agreed guidelines mean that countries can now establish the national systems that are needed for implementing the Paris Agreement by 2020.

Fiji-led Talanoa Dialogue concluded:

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- The Fiji-led Talanoa Dialogue, a year-long inclusive dialogue that relates to the Paris Agreement, was also concluded at COP24, with the global warming of 1.5 degree Celsius report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) as a major input.
- There is a clear recognition of the IPCC's role in providing scientific input to inform countries in strengthening their response to the threat of climate change.
- 'Talanoa Call for Action' calls upon all countries and stakeholders to act with urgency.
- Countries are encouraged to factor the outcome of the dialogue into efforts to increase their ambition and to update their nationally determined contributions in 2020.

Paris Agreement on Climate Change:

- In December 2015, 195 countries pledged to slow the process of global warming in Paris by signing the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Objectives:

- The primary objective is to limit the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels.
- Efforts will be made to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels so that it will be possible to reduce the risks and impacts of climate change.
- Parties should take action to conserve and enhance, as appropriate, sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases including forests.
- With a view to contribute to sustainable development and to achieve the long term temperature goal of 2°C, the COP established the global goal on adaptation of enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change.

7th round of India – South Korea CEPA negotiations held

GS 2: IR | Bilateral, regional & global groupings & agreements involving India &/or affecting India's interests

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Prelims level & Mains level: India-Korea Economic and Commercial Relations

Why in News?

- The 7th round of India – South Korea Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) negotiations was held in South Korea.

Highlights:

- The discussions were positive, and subject to Indian sugar industry meeting the quality standards and specifications prescribed by the South Korean Government.
- South Korea imports around 15 lac tons of raw sugar annually and the Indian sugar industry is making efforts to export raw sugar from India during 2018-19 sugar seasons.
- India and South Korea will reduce duties on 11 tariff lines in a bid to expand bilateral trade by updating their existing free-trade agreement, called the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).
- In 2017-18, India exported goods worth \$4.4 billion to South Korea while imports from the latter were worth \$16.3 billion.

18th meeting of IRIGC-MTC held in New Delhi

GS 2: IR | Bilateral, regional & global groupings & agreements involving India &/or affecting India's interests

Why in news?

- The Indian Defense Minister Nirmala Sitharaman recently met the Russian Defence Minister General Sergei Shoigu at the 18th meeting of India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Military Technical Cooperation (IRIGC-MTC) that was held in New Delhi.

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Highlights:

- In the meeting, a wide range of issues were discussed regarding defence equipment, industry and technological cooperation between India and Russia.
- Issues related to after sales support and upgradation of military equipment of Russian origin were also discussed.
- Both the Ministers have expressed their satisfaction at the progress in bilateral defence cooperation between India and Russia.
- Discussions took place on joint manufacturing projects in the meeting, including the Kamov-226T helicopters, naval frigates and other projects related to land systems.
- There was also an agreement from both the sides to take forward inter-governmental arrangements to facilitate joint manufacturing of spares for equipments of Russian origin in India, under the 'Make in India' scheme.
- The existing IRIGC-MTC will be restructured to the IRIGC on Military and Military Technical Cooperation.
- An agreement regarding this was signed by the two Defence Ministers.

IRIGC-MTC:

- Russia has been the most important arms supplier for India's Defence forces.
- Both the countries have an institutionalized structure to oversee all the issues of military-technical cooperation.
- The IRIGC is at the top of this institutionalized structure.
- The India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Military Technical Cooperation (IRIGC-MTC) was set up in 2000.
- The First meeting of the IRIGC-MTC was held in Moscow in 2001.
- The 19th IRIGC meeting is proposed to be held in Russia next year.

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Indian Firm Takes Over Operations of Strategic Iranian Port Chabahar

GS 2: IR | Bilateral, regional & global groupings & agreements involving India &/or affecting India's interests

Prelims level: Port Chabahar

Why in News?

- Indian Firm Takes Over Operations of Strategic Iranian Port Chabahar.
- India Ports Global Limited Company has opened its office and took over operations at the Shaheed Behesti port at Chabahar. It happened during the occasion of the first meeting of the follow-up committee for implementation of the trilateral Chabahar agreement between India, Afghanistan and Iran.

Trilateral Chabahar agreement:

- Positive and constructive discussions were held between the three sides on full operationalisation of the Trilateral Transit Agreement for international transit and transport through the Chabahar port.
- It was agreed to finalise at the earliest the protocol to harmonise transit, roads, customs, and consular matters. It was agreed to allow cargo movement at Chabahar using TIR Convention provisions."
- The Convention on International Transport of Goods Under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention) is a multilateral treaty aimed at simplifying and harmonising the administrative formalities of international road transport.
- TIR stands for "Transports Internationaux Routiers" or 'International Road Transports.
- Also a study would be initiated for determining measures to make the route attractive, decrease logistic costs and pave the way for smooth operationalisation of the Chabahar Agreement.



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- India is investing \$500 million to develop the Chabahar port and a road link from there to Afghanistan to give access to that country, bypassing Pakistan.
- The port is also a key link in the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC), a 7,200-km-long multi-modal network of ship, rail and road routes to move freight between India, Iran, Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Central Asia and Europe.
- Last month, the US waived India from its fresh sanctions on Iran's oil imports and development of the crucial Chabahar port.