

1. Unified Payments Interface (UPI)

Why in News?

- Recently, Google has written to US Federal Reserve about UPI which is a successful digital payment system in India.

About UPI:

- It is developed by National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).
- It is a payment system that allows money transfer between any two bank accounts by using a smartphone.
- It allows a customer to pay directly from a bank account to different merchants, both online and offline, without the hassle of typing card details, IFSC code, or net banking/wallet passwords.
- It is an Immediate money transfer through mobile device round the clock 24*7 and 365 days.
- It allows all transactions to be at least Two-factor authentication (2-FA) using mobile and second factor like PIN or Biometrics makes all transactions compliant with the existing regulatory guidelines.
- It is built over the (IMPS) infrastructure and allow transfer of money between any two parties' bank accounts'

2. STRANDHOGG

Why in News?

- Recently, the Union Home Ministry has sent an alert to all States warning them about a bug called 'StrandHogg'.

About StrandHogg:

- It allows real-time malware applications to pose as genuine applications.
- It can listen to their conversations, access photo album, read/send messages, make calls, record conversations and get login credentials to various accounts.
- It will ask for permission to send notifications, messages etc., which acts as the main entry points for 'StrandHogg' to launch the attack.
- All versions of Android are vulnerable to this bug, but it may not be apparent to the affected users that malware applications are already on board in their device.

3. National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA)

Why in News?

- Recently, NPPA hikes ceiling price of 12 essential medicines

About NPPA:

- It is established by the Government of India Resolution in 1997.
- It is an office attached to Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP), Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers.
- It currently fixes price of drugs on National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) under Schedule-I of Drug Price Control Orders (DPCO).
- It ensures accessibility and availability of medicines to people at Affordable Prices.

About NLEM:

- It is a list of medicines prepared by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare based on essentiality and made part of the DPCO.

About DPCO:

- It is issued by the Government in exercise of the powers conferred under Section 3 the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.

4. India to Host 36th International Geological Congress in March 2020

Why in News?

- India is gearing up to host the 36th International Geological Congress (IGC) in the capital during the first week of March, 2020.

International Geological Congress:

- Popularly described as the Olympics of Geosciences, the IGCs are a prestigious global geoscientific events held once in four years and participated by around 5000-6000 geoscientists from all across the world.
- The theme of the forthcoming conference is 'Geosciences: The Basic Science for a Sustainable Development'.

Highlights:

- India is the only Asian country to host the event twice.
- In 1964, India had hosted it for the first time, which was the 22nd IGC. The event was inaugurated by the then President of India Dr.Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan.

- The IGC is making a comeback to the Indian soil after 56 long years much to the enthusiasm of the entire geoscientific community.
- The event is being funded by the Ministry of Mines (MoM) and Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) with the support of the Indian National Science Academy (INSA) and the national Science Academies of Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka.
- Geological Survey of India is the nodal agency for organizing the event

5. National Afforestation Programme

Why in News?

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) is implementing plantation/afforestation schemes in the forest areas with participatory approach.
- The plantation species under the schemes is selected by the implementing agencies/the members of Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMC) on the basis of their needs, ecological conditions and other local factors in consultation with the Forest Department.

Conservation and Development of Forest:

- The conservation and development of forest primarily involves three strategies – afforestation through natural/artificial regeneration, protection and management.
- The ministry is implementing three major schemes for development of forest areas e.National Afforestation Programme (NAP) scheme, National Mission for a Green India (GIM) and Forest Fire Prevention & Management Scheme (FFPM).
- While NAP is being implemented for afforestation of degraded forest lands, GIM aims at improving the quality of forest and increase in forest cover besides cross sectoral activities on landscape basis.
- The FFPM takes care of forest fire prevention and management measures.
- For scientific management of forests, the States prepare management plan called Working Plan which highlights various activities to be undertaken in a forest division for effective management of forest.
- The working plan is approved by the Ministry.
- Besides, the funds collected under Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA), as compensatory levies from states inter-alia, is also used in plantation activity including compensatory afforestation by States/UTs.

- The overall objective of the National Afforestation Programme (NAP) scheme is ecological restoration of degraded forests and to develop the forest resources with peoples' participation, with focus on improvement in livelihoods of the forest-fringe communities, especially the poor.

6. National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM)

Why in News?

- Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has set up the National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM), Chennai to undertake studies and research in the area of Coastal Zone Management including coastal resources and environment.

Highlights:

- NCSCM has 6 research divisions. Its cutting-edge research infrastructure provides for world class research outputs and decision support system that directly enables policy decisions.
- NCSCM is mandated to disseminating knowledge pertaining to coastal management by capacity building at all levels for the benefit of coastal communities and stakeholders.
- NCSCM's Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Plan has been developed on international standards that can be replicated in other parts of the World.
- Survey of India and NCSCM have mapped the Hazard Line for the entire coast of India, which includes vulnerability mapping of flood, erosion and sea level rise. The outputs will be used by all the coastal States and UTs in managing coastal vulnerability in the coming years and as a tool for preparation of disaster management plans.

The aims and Objectives of the Centre:

- To strive for being a World Class Knowledge Institution related to coastal zones, environment, resources and processes.
- To promote integrated and sustainable management of the coastal and marine areas in India for the benefit and wellbeing of the traditional coastal and island communities.
- To advice the Union and State Governments and other associated stakeholder(s) on policy, and scientific matters related to Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM).

7. New System for Measurement of Weight

Why in News?

- The prototype of one kilogram (NPK-57) is now available in India and placed at the National Physical Laboratory, New Delhi. The new definition of kilogram which has come into effect from May 2019 and few countries have developed the system of realization of unit of mass 'kg'.

Highlights:

- Over the centuries, it has been defined and redefined, with a standard in place since 1889.
- Called Le Grand K, a cylinder of platinum-iridium is locked up in a jar at the International Bureau of Weights and Measures (BIPM) in Paris.
- For nearly 130 years, the mass of this cylinder has been the international standard for the kilogram.

Redefining what constitutes 1 Kg:

- Representatives from 57 countries will vote in Versailles, France, to redefine SI, or the International System of Units.
- The kilogram's definition will be based on a concept of physics called the Planck constant.
- Reports worldwide suggest that the new definition is set to be voted in.

Kibble Balance:

- Kibble balance is a self-calibrating electromechanical balance and provides the measurements of mass, traceable in terms of electrical parameters and provides linkage of macroscopic mass to the Planck constant (h).
- The advantages of Kibble balance would be that the NPK need not to be sent to BIPM for calibrations and the accuracy and stability of Kibble balance is very high.
- This is very important where low weights with high accuracies are essential, for example in pharmaceuticals and biotechnologies.

8. National Economic Census

Why in News?

- The Seventh Economic Census was launched in the National Capital Territory of Delhi. Delhi is the 26th state where the survey has been launched, while the process is already on in 20 states and 5 UTs.

National Economic Census:

- In 1976, GoI launched a planning scheme called Economic Census and Surveys.
- It is the census of the Indian economy through counting all entrepreneurial units in the country which involved in any economic activities of either agricultural or non-agricultural sector which are engaged in production and/or distribution of goods and/or services not for the sole purpose of own consumption.
- It provides detailed information on operational and other characteristics such as number of establishments, number of persons employed, source of finance, type of ownership etc.
- This information used for micro level/ decentralized planning and to assess contribution of various sectors of the economy in the GDP.

Past Censuses:

- Total Six Economic Censuses (EC) has been conducted till date.
- In 1977 CSO conducted First economic census in collaboration with the Directorate of Economics & Statistics (DES) in the States/UTs.
- The Second EC was carried out in 1980 followed by the Third EC in 1990. The fourth edition took place in 1998 while the fifth EC was held in 2005.
- The Sixth edition of Economic Census was conducted in 2013.