1. Global Talent Competitiveness Index

Why in News?

- Recently, India has moved to the 72nd position in the Global Talent Competitiveness Index (GTCI) 2020.

RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE
1	Switzerland	81.23
2	US	79.09
3	Singapore	78.48
4	Sweden	75.82
5	Denmark	75.18
6	Netherlands	74.99
7	Finland	74.47
8	Luxembourg	73.94
9	Norway	72.91
10	Australia	72.53
72	India	40.42

About GTCI Report:

- It is launched by INSEAD, a partner and sponsor of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Davos, Switzerland recently.
- It is one of the world's leading and largest graduate business schools with locations all over the world and alliances with Top Institutions.
- It was started in 2013 and is an annual benchmarking report that measures the ability of countries to compete for talent, their ability to grow, attract and retain talent.
- The six metrics used to decide a country's rank are - enable, attract, grow, retain, vocational skills and global knowledge skills.

Key Points of the Report:

- Switzerland topped the list of 132 nations, followed by the US and Singapore.
- Theme for 2020: 'Global Talent in the Age of Artificial Intelligence'.
- It noted that the gap between high income, talent-rich nations and the rest of the world is widening. More than half of the population in the developing world lack Basic Digital Skills.

India's Performance in the Report

- The report stated that India's score and GDP per capita are both lower than the other emerging market economies such as BRICS - Brazil (80th), Russia (48th), China (42nd), and South Africa (70th).
- India's key strength relates to growing talent, due to its levels of lifelong learning and access to growth. However, more could be done to improve India's educational system.
- It faces the challenge of attracting and retaining talent and the weak ability to overcome it.
- It has to strengthen the role of minorities and women to raise the level of internal openness in the country which would make it more appealing.
- The country's highest-ranked sub-pillar is employability but the ability to match labour market demand and supply stands in contrast to the country's poor "mid-level skills", which result in a mediocre score in vocational and technical skills.

2. NISHTHA

Why in News?

- In continuation of Union Government's outreach initiative, Union Minister of Human Resource Development inaugurated NISHTHA (National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement). NISHTHA is a two day orientation workshop for the teachers of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir at SKICC, Srinagar.
- A number of completed projects and initiatives were e-launched by the minister on the occasion.

NISHTHA:

- NISHTHA is a capacity building programme for "Improving Quality of School Education through Integrated Teacher Training".
- It aims to build competencies among all the teachers and school principals at the elementary stage.
- The basic objective of this massive training programme is to motivate and equip teachers to encourage and foster critical thinking in Students.
- The initiative is first of its kind wherein Standardized Training Modules are developed at national level for all States and UTs. It is also the world's largest teachers' training programme of its kind.

- NISHTHA is a benchmark programme that will raise the standards of education throughout the country.
- It will prove to be helpful in inculcating creativity among children and stimulate their imagination as well as physical and mental wellbeing.
- It has already been launched in 20 states of the country and around 21000 e-resource persons have been trained so far.
- The main objective of the initiative is to help the overall development of students as better citizens. The art modules included in the programme instil cooperation and spirit of unity with responsibility.

3. Corals restoration in Gulf of Kachchh

Why in News?

- The Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), with help from Gujarat's forest department, is attempting for the first time a process to restore coral reefs using biorock or mineral accretion technology in the Gulf of Kachchh.

Highlights:

- Biorock is the name given to the substance formed by electro accumulation of minerals dissolved in seawater on steel structures that are lowered onto the sea bed and are connected to a power source, in this case solar panels that float on the surface.
- When a positively charged anode and negatively charged cathode are placed on the sea floor, with an electric current flowing between them, calcium ions combine with carbonate ions and adhere to the structure (cathode). This results in calcium carbonate formation. Coral larvae adhere to the $CaCO_3$ and grow quickly.
- The fragments of broken corals are tied to the biorock structure, where they are able to grow at least four to six times faster than their actual growth as they need not spend their energy in building their own calcium carbonate skeletons.
- The location for installing the biorock had been chosen keeping in mind the high tidal amplitude in the Gulf of Kachchh. The low tide depth where the biorock has been installed is four metres, and at high tide it is about Eight Metres.
- India has four coral reef areas, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Gulf of Mannar and the Gulf of Kachchh.

- The ongoing initiative of coral restoration using biorock technology could potentially help to sustain the earlier successes. The technology helps corals, including the highly sensitive branching corals, to counter the threats posed by global warming.

Degradation of Corals:

- **Water Pollution:**
  - ✓ Water pollution is perhaps the most obvious cause of coral reef destruction. Reefs are harmed when oil, fertilizer, and human or animal waste are dumped in the area. These elements can end up changing the chemical makeup of the water, but the waste can also block life-giving sunlight to the reef.
- **Coral Bleaching:**
  - ✓ Reef bleaching occurs when extreme water conditions cause corals to expel the internal microorganisms that give them their vibrant colours. Bleaching events are attributed to a number of factors, including pollution and extreme low tide, but the most common (and widespread) is the change in water temperature due to Global Warming.
- **Sedimentation:**
  - ✓ When sediment enters the ocean, it can smother coral reefs, depriving them of sunlight and nutrients. Also, fish are unable to feed and coral polyps are unable to grow, leaving the area inhospitable to reef life.

4. Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)

Why in News?

- Recently, the Ministry of Human Resource Development has approached the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) to take notice in the implementation of the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA).

About RUSA

- It is the centrally sponsored scheme launched in October 2013 that aims at providing strategic funding to higher education institutions throughout the country.
- It is being operated in mission mode for funding state universities and colleges to achieve the aims of Equity, Access and Excellence.
- Its funding is provided by the central ministry through the State governments and Union Territories (UTs), which in coordination with the Central Project Appraisal Board monitors the academic, administrative and financial advancements taken under the scheme.

Objectives of RUSA:

- Adoption of Accreditation (Certification of Competency) as a mandatory quality assurance Framework.
- It promotes autonomy in state universities and improving governance in institutions.
- It create an enabling atmosphere for research in the higher education system.
- It ensure reforms in the affiliation, academic and examination system.
- It ensure adequate availability of quality faculty in all higher educational institutions and ensure capacity building at all levels of employment.
- It correct regional imbalances in access to higher education by setting up institutions in unserved and underserved areas.
- It improve equity in higher education by providing adequate opportunities to the disadvantaged.
- It improve the overall quality of state institutions by conforming to the prescribed norms and standards.