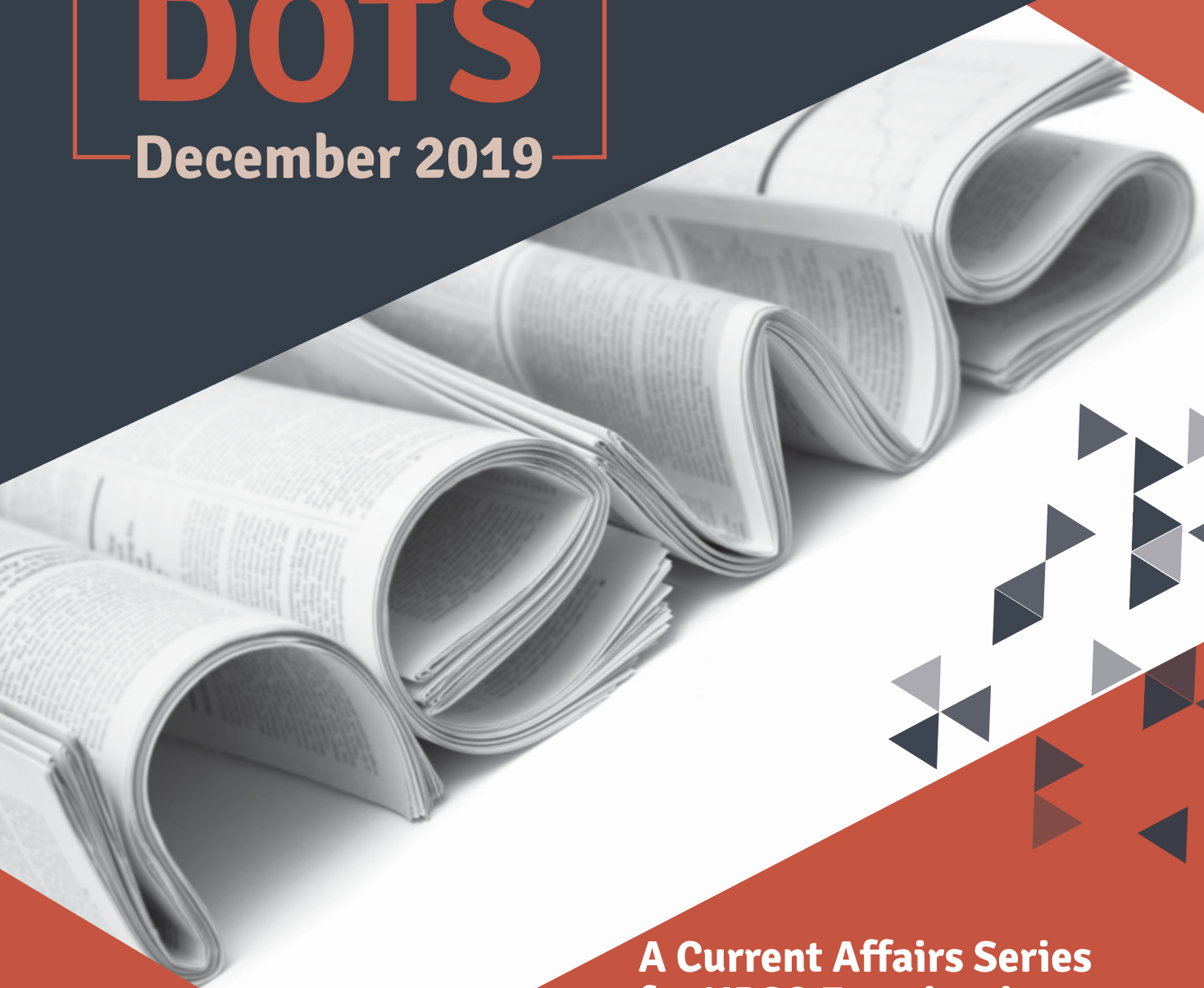


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December 2019



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Compendium – December 2019

Dear Students,

With the present examination pattern of UPSC Civil Services Examination, General Studies papers require a lot of specialization with 'Current Affairs'. Moreover, following the recent trend of UPSC, almost all the questions are based on news as well as issues. CL IAS has now come up with '**JOIN THE DOTS! DECEMBER 2019**' series which will help you pick up relevant news items of the day from various national dailies such as The Hindu, Indian Express, Business Standard, LiveMint, PIB and other important sources.

'**JOIN THE DOTS! DECEMBER 2019**' series will be helpful for prelims as well as Mains Examination. We are covering every issue in a holistic manner and covered every dimension with detailed facts. This edition covers all important issues that were in news in the month of June 2019. Also, we have introduced Prelim base question for Test Your Knowledge which shall guide you for better revision. In addition, it would benefit all those who are preparing for other competitive examinations.

We have prepared this series of documents after some rigorous deliberations with Toppers and also with aspirants who have wide experience of preparations in the Civil Services Examination.

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Team CL

Contents

General Studies II: Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice and International relations Join the dots!

1. Bilateral Relations: First India-Japan 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting.....	2
2. Centre – State Relations: The Fifteenth Finance Commission submits its report for 2020-21 to the President of India	3
3. Recent Updates: Union Cabinet approved the extension of the term of the 15 th Finance Commission	3
4. Tribal Affairs: Launch of ‘Going Online as Leaders’ Programme.....	3
5. Bilateral Relations: Mongla and Chattogram declared as Ports of Call under the “Coastal Shipping Agreement” between India and Bangladesh.....	4
6. Health Sector: World Malaria Report: Despite a dip in cases, India still one of the worst-hit countries.....	5
7. Bilateral Relations: India – Maldives Relations	6
8. Centre-State Relations: Lok Sabha passes the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2019 .	7
9. Social Justice/State Specific: AP Cabinet clears Disha Act	8
10. Education Sector: UNESCO & Dell to train 4,000 school teachers in India with AI-powered digital tech	9
11. Health and Family Welfare: Programmes to Control Anaemia Among Women	9
12. Centre – State Relations: The Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019.....	10
13. Nagaland extends Inner Line Permit to Dimapur	11
14. National Affairs: Drones to be deployed to destroy hidden marijuana plantations..	12
15. Government Schemes: PM Modi chairs first meeting of Ganga council, reviews Namami Gange project	12
16. Defence: Second 2+2 dialogue between India, US was productive and positive	13
17. NITI Aayog: NITI Aayog mulls PDS supply of eggs, fish & meat.....	14
18. Health Reforms: WHO prequalifies first biosimilar medicine to increase worldwide access to life-saving breast cancer treatment.....	15
19. Good Governance: Nagpur Resolution	16
20. Bilateral Relations/Health Sector: Afghanistan first country to recognize Indian Pharmacopoeia	17
21. International Organisations: Global Refugee Forum	18
22. Social Justice: Lok Sabha passes bill extending SC/ST quota in State legislatures.	19
23. Government Schemes: Ministry of Rural Development inaugurates Phase–III of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana.....	19
24. Human Resource Development: Manthan- Impeccable Academia	21
25. Government Schemes: GEM launches National Outreach Programme - GEM Samvaad.....	21

26.	Bilateral Relations: India constructs Girls' Hostel for Nepal Armed Police Force School at Kirtipur.....	22
27.	International Relations: Brexit: All you need to know about the UK leaving the EU ...	23
28.	International Affairs/Prelims Factoids: West African countries to rename CFA franc to cut some ties with 'colonial relic'	24
29.	Social Issues: India slips to 112 th rank on gender gap index; in bottom 5 on health, economic fronts	26
30.	Health Sector: India launches its first national healthcare facility registry.....	27
31.	Focus Article: SEED ACT, 1966	27
32.	National Affairs: National Population Register (NPR).....	29
33.	Farmer's Welfare/Social Issues: First tripartite Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) signed under Fisheries and Aquaculture Development Fund (FIDF)	30
34.	Internal Security: DNA Analysis Centre at CFSL, Chandigarh inaugurated	31
35.	Governance: Good Governance Index launched	32
36.	Government Schemes: Prime Minister Launches Atal Bhujal Yojana	33
37.	Strategic Tunnel under Rohtang Pass named after former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee	34
38.	NITI Aayog: NITI Aayog to Launch SDG India Index & Dashboard 2019-20	35
39.	NITI Aayog: NITI Aayog Releases SDG India Index and Dashboard 2019	36

General Studies III: Science & Technology Economic Developments, Biodiversity, Environment, Internal Security and Disaster management

40.	Economic Development: Aditya Birla Finance becomes first company to list commercial papers on exchanges	40
41.	Governance: Corporate Affairs Ministry Launches Independent Director's Databank	40
42.	Environment Conservation: Blue Flag Certification for beaches.....	41
43.	Infrastructure Development: Ministry of Civil Aviation Launches Round 4 of RCS- UDAN	42
44.	Economic Development: RBI Monetary Policy	43
45.	Defence: IAF may get 'No Escape' Meteor missiles in May	45
46.	Environment Conservation: India ranks 5 th in Global Climate Risk Index 2020	46
47.	Economic Development: NEFT to be available 24x7 from December 16: RBI	47
48.	India's forex reserves cross \$450 billion for the first time	49
49.	Environment Conservation: Landmark 'The Recycling of Ships Bill, 2019' passed in Parliament	50
50.	NITI Aayog: AIM-SIRIUS Deep Technology Learning, Innovation Programme in Sochi concludes.....	51
51.	Economic Development: Bharat Bond Exchange Traded Fund	52

52.	Environment Conservation/Prelims Factoids: Greta Thunberg named Time magazine's person of the year	53
53.	Economic Development: Rajya Sabha passes International Financial Services Centres Authority Bill, 2019.....	54
54.	Economic Development: Cabinet authorises NHA to set up InvIT to monetise national highways.....	55
55.	Defence: Warship builder GRSE hands over Landing Craft Utility amphibious ship to Indian Navy	56
56.	Economic Developments: Economic Census Flagged off in Delhi	56
57.	Environment, Forest and Climate Change: National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management	57
58.	National Afforestation Programme.....	57
59.	National Energy Conservation Day celebrated on 14 th December 2019.....	58
60.	Agriculture & Farmers Welfare: ICAR and NABARD signs MoU to promote sustainable agriculture and climate resilient farming systems.....	59
61.	Information Technology: Ravi Shankar Prasad launches National Broadband Mission	59
62.	Defence: Successful launch of two BrahMos missiles from land and air platforms..	60
63.	Infrastructure Development: ADB, India sign \$250 million loan to expand energy efficiency investments in India	61
64.	Science & Technology: CSIR and the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), France ink MoU for Promotion and Support of Scientific and Technological Research	62
65.	Space Awareness: ISRO RISAT-2BR1 launch- Big success for Indian space agency as PSLV's 50 th lift off successful	63
66.	Environment Conservation: India Manages To Rank In The Top 10 Countries With Higher Climate Performance	64
67.	Environment, Forest and Climate Change: First Annual Meet of State Nodal Agencies for Ecoclub programme conducted.....	65
68.	Infrastructure Development: First Trial Run of Double Stack Train conducted on newly built Rewari-Madar section of Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC).....	66
69.	Defence: Cabinet approves creation of the post of Chief of Defence Staff in the rank of four star General	67
70.	Internal Security: Cabinet grants Ex-post facto approval to amend the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations	68
71.	Odisha Governor Dedicates Bolangir LPG Bottling Plant To Nation.....	68
72.	Environment, Forest and Climate Change: Total Forest and Tree Cover rises to 24.56 percent of the total geographical area of the Country	69

Miscellaneous/Prelims Factoids

73.	Jnanpith Award 2019.....	74
74.	Defence: Indian Army successfully test-fires Spike LR missile	74
75.	Governance/Reports: Most Corrupt States in India 2019: Rajasthan Tops, Delhi & Odisha Among Least; India Corruption Survey 2019.....	75

76.	Defence: Exercise Hand-in-Hand-2019	76
77.	Exercise Mitra Shakti -VII: 2019	76
78.	State Specific: 20 th Edition of Hornbill Festival begins in Nagaland	77
79.	Prelims Factoids: Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik launches “MadhuApp” for school children	77
80.	Defence: Exercise INDRA 2019	78
81.	Prelims Factoids: President of India presents the National Florence Nightingale Awards	78
82.	Prelims Factoids: Head on Generation (HOG)	79
83.	Defence: Exercise Hand-In-Hand-2019.....	79
84.	Culture: The government launches a portal to showcase Indian culture	80
85.	Prelims Factoids: FSSAI, Nasscom Foundation partner to develop app to prevent food wastage	80
86.	Prelims Factoids: India to Host 36 th International Geological Congress in March 2020	81
87.	Arms Amendment Bill 2019	81
88.	State Specific: Naveen launches ‘Jalsathi’ programme to supply safe drinking	82
89.	Defence: Successful flight test of two Pinaka missiles in salvo mode.....	83
90.	Prelims Factoids: EChO Network.....	83
91.	QCI Conclave in Uttarakhand.....	84
92.	Prelims Factoids: Kisan Diwas 2019: India Observes National Farmers’ Day, Honours Former PM Chaudhary Charan Singh.....	85
93.	Prelims Factoids: Deepika Padukone, 3 others selected for WEF’s Crystal Award.....	85
94.	Prelims factoids: Mahila Police Volunteers (MPVs).....	86
95.	Defence: Quick Reaction Surface to Air Missile successfully flight-tested off Odisha coast	86
96.	State Specific: Himachal Pradesh Global Investors’ Meet.....	87
97.	Losar Festival.....	88
98.	Prelims Factoids: DGCA launches Phase-1 services of e-GCA.....	89



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GENERAL STUDIES II

**Governance, Constitution, Polity,
Social Justice and International
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A current affairs series for UPSC Examination

Bilateral Relations: First India-Japan 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting



Relevance IN – Prelims (about 2+2 ministerial meet) + GS II bilateral relations

What's the NEWS

- Defence Minister of India, Mr. Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister of India, Dr. S. Jaishankar, met Foreign Affairs Minister of Japan, Mr. MOTEGI Toshimitsu, and Minister of Defense of Japan, Mr. KONO Taro, on 30 November 2019 in New Delhi for the first India-Japan 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting.

Know! more about the dialogue

- The 2+2 ministerial dialogue is seen as an upgrade of the meeting between foreign and defence secretaries of the two countries, the first round of which took place in 2010.
- The upgrade to the ministerial level talks follows an agreement reached between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe during the 13th India-Japan Annual Summit held in Japan in October 2018.
- India has a similar ministerial level 2+2' dialogue with the US as well.
- The India-Japan ministerial meeting comes ahead of the annual summit of the two prime ministers next month, scheduled to be held in Guwahati.
- The 2+2 meeting would provide an opportunity for the two sides to review the status of and exchange further views on strengthening defence and security cooperation between India and Japan so as to provide greater depth to the 'India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership,' the Indian foreign ministry said in a statement.
- The two sides also exchange views on the situation in the Indo-Pacific region and their respective efforts under India's 'Act East Policy' and Japan's 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific Vision' for achieving their shared objective of peace, prosperity and progress to realise a better future for the people of the two countries and the region.

Centre – State Relations: The Fifteenth Finance Commission submits its report for 2020-21 to the President of India

Relevance IN – Prelims (about 15 finance commission and about the tenure of 15 finance commission) + Mains (GS II centre-state relations)

What's the NEWS

- The Chairman of the 15th Finance Commission, Shri N.K. Singh, called on the President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind and submitted the report of the Commission for the financial year 2020-21 for further necessary action.

Know! more about XV finance commission

- The XV Finance Commission was constituted by the President of India under Article 280 of the Constitution on 27 November 2017 to make recommendations for a period of five years from 1st April 2020 to 31 March 2025.
- The Commission had a wide ranging Terms of Reference contained in the Presidential Notification.
- Thereafter, the Gazette Notification dated 27 November 2019 mandated the XV Finance Commission to submit the report for the financial year 2020-21 by 30 November 2019 and thereafter the final report for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2026 by 30 October 2020.

Recent Updates: Union Cabinet approved the extension of the term of the 15th Finance Commission

- The 15th finance commission will now submit two reports and their term has been extended to October 30, 2020.
- The 1st report for the Financial Year 2020-21 will be submitted in the coming months before the Union Budget.
- Second report for the period 2021-26 will be presented by October 30, 2020.
- This will effectively mean the 15th Finance Commission recommendations will be applicable for 6 years and not the conventional 5-year period.

Tribal Affairs: Launch of 'Going Online as Leaders' Programme



Relevance IN – Prelims (about GOAL) + Mains (GS II welfare scheme for the vulnerable section of the population)

What's the NEWS

- GOAL (Going Online as Leaders) is a digitally-enabled mentorship initiative of Facebook for empowering tribal youth to become leaders for tomorrow in the respective fields.

Know! more about the project

- GOAL Project is stated to aim at identifying and mobilizing renowned people from industry (policy makers and influencers), known for their leadership skills or roles, to digitally empower and personally mentor tribal youth from tribal communities across multiple locations of India.

- The initiative has been designed to identify and attach 1 Mentor who is expert in their respective fields, to four tribal youth, who will be trained and mentored.
- Facebook had started a pilot project on its own in March 2019 in 5 states of India i.e. Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, Maharashtra, wherein they have identified 100 Tribal Mentees and 25 Mentors.
- Further, Facebook envisages to identify 5000 tribals from various fields to be mentored by 1250 mentors in 5 years in a phased manner.
- GOAL (Going Online as Leaders) is a Facebook initiative. Ministry of Tribal Affairs was not associated with the pilot project implemented by the Facebook

Bilateral Relations: Mongla and Chattogram declared as Ports of Call under the “Coastal Shipping Agreement” between India and Bangladesh

What’s the NEWS

- Under the Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade (PIWT&T) between India and Bangladesh, the following are existing Ports of Call in the two countries on Indo-Bangladesh Protocol (IBP) route:

India	Kolkata	Haldia	Pandu	Karimganj	Silghat	Dhubri
Bangladesh	Narayanganj	Khulna	Mongla	Sirajganj	Ashuganj	Pangaon

- The Port of Mongla is declared as Port of Call under PIWT&T and Chattogram port is not part of PIWT&T.
- Mongla and Chattogram are declared as Ports of Call under the “Coastal Shipping Agreement” between India and Bangladesh.
- A MoU, Agreement and Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on the use of Chattogram Port & Mongla Ports for movement of goods to & from India have been signed by India and Bangladesh.



Know! about Port of call

- Port of call means an intermediate stop for a ship on its scheduled journey for cargo operation or taking on supplies or fuel.
- As Per the shipping Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) regulation a “port of call” can be defined as the port of a country where cargo or a passenger (cruise) ship halts to discharge or load the cargo or to embark or disembark passengers.



Health Sector: World Malaria Report: Despite a dip in cases, India still one of the worst-hit countries

Relevance IN – Prelims (about World Malaria Report) + Mains (GS II Social issues – issues relating to the development and management of social sectors relating to Health)

What's the NEWS

- Nineteen countries in sub-Saharan Africa and India accounted for 85 per cent of the global malaria burden in 2018.
- Globally 228 million malaria cases were reported in 2018, which is marginally lower than the number of cases in 2017 (231 million), as per the World Malaria Report 2019 released by the World Health Organization (WHO) on December 4, 2019.
- Malaria is mostly caused by Plasmodium falciparum and Plasmodium vivax parasites mainly.

Know! more about the report findings

- India accounted for a little less than half (47 per cent) of malaria caused by P vivax.
- Globally P. vivax, caused 7.5 million malarial cases. More than half (53 per cent) were found to be in South-East Asia.
- While Africa and India saw the maximum dip in malaria cases between 2017 and 2018, they still accounted for 85 per cent deaths.
- Nigeria accounted for almost 24 per cent of all malaria deaths, followed by the Democratic Republic of the Congo (11 per cent), the United Republic of Tanzania (5 per cent), and Angola, Mozambique and Niger (4 per cent each).
- India registered a fall of 2.6 million malarial cases in 2018 as compared to previous year.
- The country also has one of the lowest funding per person at risk of being inflicted with malaria at just US\$0.2.
- Despite being the highest burden country in the South-East Asia region, India showed a reduction in reported cases of 51 per cent compared to 2017 and of 60 per cent compared to 2016.
- The estimated burden of malaria, the WHO report says is 6.7 million while only 4 million cases were reported in 2018.”
- India, Indonesia and Myanmar accounted for 58 per cent, 21 per cent and 12 per cent of the total reported deaths in the region, respectively.

- The major challenges remain decreased funding, treatment failures and vector resistance to pyrethroids, the insecticides used against the vectors.
- The biggest region of concern for the WHO is the African region as it contributes 93 per cent cases to the global burden. This region also accounted for 94 per cent of all malarial deaths
- Plasmodium falciparum is the most prevalent malaria parasite in the WHO African region, accounting for 99.7 per cent of estimated malaria cases in 2018
- Globally, 53 per cent of the P. vivax burden is in the WHO South-East Asia Region, with the majority being in India (47 per cent).
- P. vivax is the predominant parasite in the WHO Region of the Americas, representing 75 per cent of malaria cases.

Bilateral Relations: India – Maldives Relations



Relevance IN – Prelims (about the projects inaugurated) + Mains (GS II bilateral relations)

What's the NEWS

- The Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President of Maldives Ibrahim Mohamed Solih jointly inaugurated several key development projects in Maldives via video conference.
- These included gifting of Made in India Coast Guard Ship Kaamiyaab to Maldives, launch of RuPay card, lighting up of Male using LED lights, High Impact Community Development Projects, launch of fish processing plants.

Know! more about it

- Prime Minister said, India's Neighbourhood First Policy and Maldives' India first Policy has strengthened the bilateral cooperation in all sectors.
- Speaking about the Fast Interceptor Craft Coast Guard Ship Kaamiyaab, Prime Minister said, it would help in enhancing Maldives' maritime security, and promote blue economy and tourism.
- Prime Minister also expressed happiness at partnering through High Impact Community Development Projects for supporting livelihood of the islands community.
- Prime Minister said Government is working on building a cancer hospital and cricket stadium in Hulhulmale while work on the water and sanitation project in 34 islands will begin soon.
- Prime Minister reiterated his commitment to continue partnering with Maldives for strengthening of democracy and development. Prime Minister said both the countries would enhance cooperation for peace and security in Indian Ocean Region.

Centre-State Relations: Lok Sabha passes the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2019



Relevance IN – Prelims (about the bill) + Mains (GS II Indian Constitution- historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure. Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein. Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions.

What's the NEWS

- The Lok Sabha today passed the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2019.
- The Bill seeks to grant Indian Citizenship to persons belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities who have migrated to India after facing persecution on grounds of religion in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, if they fulfil conditions for grant of citizenship.

Highlights

- At present, it is mandatory for a person to stay here for at least 11 years to get citizenship of India.
- The bill will reduce this period to six years. It will enable people from these communities to get Indian citizenship in six years.
- It will make some amendments to the Citizenship Act 1955 to provide legal aid for citizenship.

Know! more about the bill and the government point of view regarding it

- The provisions of the amendments to the Act would not apply to tribal area of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram or Tripura as included in the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution and the area covered under 'The Inner Line' notified under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873.
- The Bill also seeks to amend the Third Schedule to the Act to make applicants belonging to the said communities from the aforesaid countries eligible for citizenship by naturalisation if they can establish their residency in India for five years instead of the existing eleven years.
- Manipur would be brought under the Inner Line Permit (ILP) regime and with that the problems of all the North Eastern States would be taken care of.
- The provisions from Constitutions of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh where they provide for a specific state religion.
- These countries have had a history of persecution of religious minorities viz., Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians.
- The Bill contains provisions to grant Citizenship to such refugees on reasonable grounds, which in no way go against any provision under the Constitution of India and does not violate Article 14.

- The Bill seeks to amend section 7D so as to empower the Central Government to cancel registration as Overseas Citizen of India Cardholder, after providing a reasonable opportunity of being heard, in case of violation of any provisions of the Citizenship Act or any other law for the time being in force.

Know! the concerns

- Opposition parties said that this is a violation of Article 14 of the Constitution, which speaks of the right to equality.

Know! about illegal migrants

- Illegal migrants cannot get citizenship of India according to the Citizenship Act, 1955
- The people, who have entered India without valid travel documents like passports and visas or have come to India with valid documents but stay here longer than the period mentioned therein, are considered as illegal migrants under this law.
- Under the Foreigners Act, 1946 and the Passports (Entry into India) Act, 1920 these illegal migrants can either be kept in jail or sent back to their country.
- In the laws of 1920 and 1946 the central government has made some to exempt Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsi and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan so that they can stay in India.
- So after the amendments if people belonging to these communities live in India without valid documents, then they can neither be imprisoned nor deported.
- This exemption has given to those religious groups who have reached India on or before 31 December 2014.

Social Justice/State Specific: AP Cabinet clears Disha Act

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the Disha act) + Mains (GS II Social issues)

What's the NEWS

- The Andhra Pradesh Cabinet has approved the draft Disha Act that provides for harsher punishments, including death sentence, to those guilty of heinous crimes against women.

Know! more about Disha act

- The Disha act calls for speedy trial within 14 days and judgment within 21 days in case of heinous crimes against women such as acid attacks and rape, in the presence of conclusive evidence.
- The Cabinet, accepted the draft, which calls for completion of trial in 21 days and awarding death sentence in rape cases.
- Currently, there is a four-month trial period for such serious offences against women. The act reduces the period to just 21 days.
- The Act would cover sexual offences against women and children, acid attacks and harassment of women.
- The government will set up special courts in districts to try the cases related to attacks, sexual offences on children and women.
- Sexual abuse and attacks on children would attract 354(F), with punishments ranging from 14 years in jail to life term.
- The current sentence for those convicted of sexual abuse on children is 3-5 years of jail term. The act has increased the punishment to a minimum of 10 years of jail term, which can be extended to life imprisonment depending on the severity of the case.
- The Government also decided to slap cases on people who slander women in the social media. First time offenders could face two-year jail term, while a repeat offence could attract double the punishment.

Tackling crime

The key aspects of the A.P. Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2019, which will be tabled in the ongoing winter session of the State Legislature

- Death penalty for heinous offences of rape and gang-rape
- Probe and trial will be completed in 7 and 14 working days respectively
- Judgment time reduced to 21 days from the existing 4 months

It will be known as A.P. Disha Act, 2019



Education Sector: UNESCO & Dell to train 4,000 school teachers in India with AI-powered digital tech

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the training of teachers by Dell and UNESCO) + Mains (GS II issues relating to development and management of social sector / services relating to education and human resource)

What's the NEWS

- Dell Technologies announced a new partnership at TECH 2019 between its Dell in India operation and UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace (MGIEP) to enable school teachers to adopt technology in classrooms.

Know! more about it

- Through this partnership, 'Dell Aarambh' a PC for education program by Dell and UNESCO MGIEP's 'FramerSpace' platform, will collaborate to train identified teachers.
- This partnership is a resultant of meeting the common objective of equipping teachers with the requisite knowledge to implement technology in classrooms
- In India, Dell is addressing the challenge of quality education and digital literacy through Dell Aarambh – a program instituted to help schools, teachers and parents understand PC technology and its use in education.
- This partnership enables the global community in achieving the UN Sustainable Goal 4.7 towards education for building peaceful and sustainable societies, and UNESCO MGIEP in its mission of building social and emotional learning, innovative digital pedagogies and empowering youth, said the Company.
- Dell Aarambh intends to provide a springboard for teachers in ICT and to help them kickstart their digital learning journeys; and UNESCO MGIEP FramerSpace helps teachers with rich content creation abilities coupled with analytical insight to elevate the education quality.
- FramerSpace is an AI-powered digital platform that helps teachers conceive, implement and monitor personalized learning plans for their students.
- Through 2019, along with UNESCO MGIEP, Dell has organized 'PolicyHack', a forum for teachers, schools and education experts, to present real-life solutions for the advancement of the education system in India.

Health and Family Welfare: Programmes to Control Anaemia Among Women

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the steps taken by the government to reduce anaemia) + Mains (GS II issues relating to development and management of social issues relating to health)

What's the NEWS

- Considering, the slow progress i.e. less than 1% per annum in reduction of anaemia from 2005 to 2015, the Government of India has launched the Anemia Mukta Bharat (AMB) strategy under the Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nourishment (POSHAN) Abhiyaan and the targets has been set to reduce anaemia by 3% per year.

Know! more about it

- The 6x6x6 strategy under AMB implies six age groups, six interventions and six institutional mechanisms.
- The strategy focuses on ensuring supply chain, demand generation and strong monitoring using the dashboard for addressing anemia, both due to nutritional and non-nutritional causes.

The six population groups under AMB strategy are:

- Children (6-59 months)
- Children (5-9 years)
- Adolescents girls and boys (10-19 years)
- Pregnant women
- Lactating women
- Women of Reproductive Age (WRA) group (15-49 years)

The six interventions are:

- Prophylactic Iron and Folic Acid Supplementation
- Deworming
- Intensified year-round Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) Campaign and delayed cord clamping
- Testing of anaemia using digital methods and point of care treatment,
- Mandatory provision of Iron and Folic Acid fortified foods in Government funded health programmes
- Addressing non-nutritional causes of anaemia in endemic pockets with special focus on malaria, hemoglobinopathies and fluorosis and the six institutional mechanisms.

The six institutional mechanisms are:

- Inter-ministerial coordination
- National Anemia Mukta Bharat Unit
- National Centre of Excellence and Advanced research on Anemia Control
- Convergence with other ministries
- Strengthening supply chain and logistics
- AnemiaMukta Bharat Dashboard and Digital Portal- one-stop shop for Anemia.

Centre – State Relations: The Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the bill + ILP) + Mains (GS II Indian Constitution- historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure. Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein. Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions.

Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)

- To grant Indian Citizenship to persons belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities who have migrated to India after facing persecution on grounds of religion in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh

Highlights of CAA

- At present, it is mandatory for a person to stay here for at least 11 years to get citizenship of India.
- The bill will reduce this period to six years. It will enable people from these communities to get Indian citizenship in six years.
- It will make some amendments to the Citizenship Act 1955 to provide legal aid for citizenship.
- The provisions of the amendments to the Act would not apply to tribal area of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram or Tripura as included in the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution and the area covered under 'The Inner Line' notified under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873.
- The CAA amends section 7D so as to empower the Central Government to cancel registration as Overseas Citizen of India Cardholder, after providing a reasonable opportunity of being heard, in case of violation of any provisions of the Citizenship Act or any other law for the time being in force.

The Citizenship Act, 1955

- Under The Citizenship Act, 1955, one of the requirements for citizenship by naturalisation is that the applicant must have resided in India during the last 12 months, as well as for 11 of the previous 14 years.
- The amendment relaxes the second requirement from 11 years to 6 years as a specific condition for applicants belonging to these six religions, and the aforementioned three countries.

Know! about illegal migrants

- Illegal migrants cannot get citizenship of India according to the Citizenship Act, 1955
- The people, who have entered India without valid travel documents like passports and visas or have come to India with valid documents but stay here longer than the period mentioned therein, are considered as illegal migrants under this law.
- Under the Foreigners Act, 1946 and the Passports (Entry into India) Act, 1920 these illegal migrants can either

be kept in jail or sent back to their country.

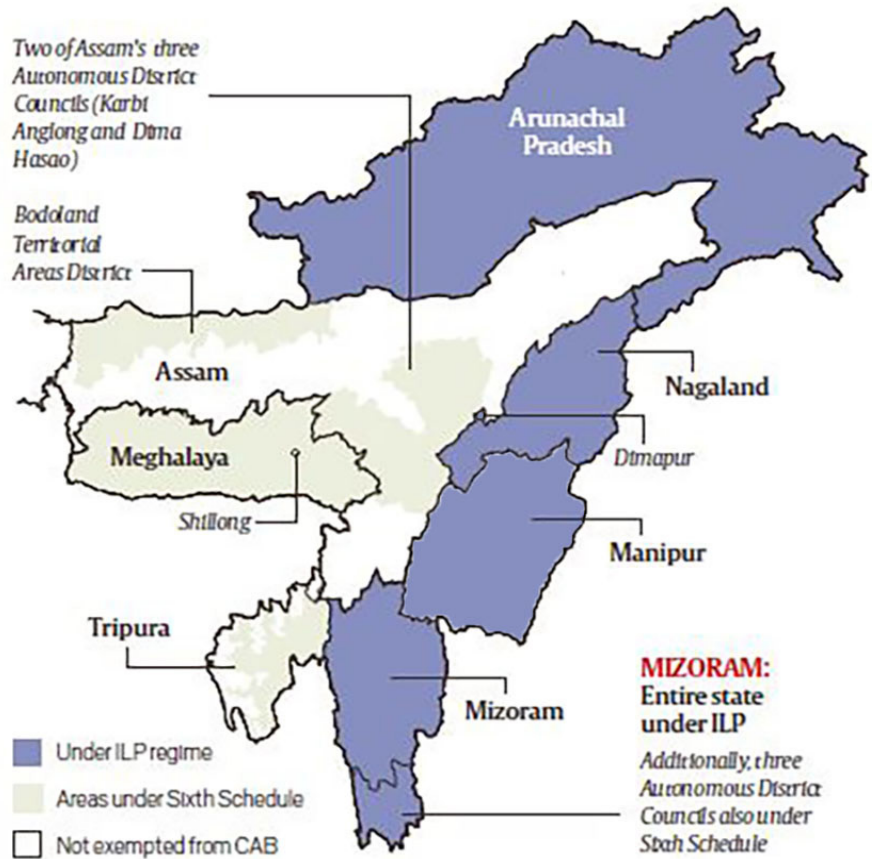
- In the laws of 1920 and 1946 the central government has made some to exempt Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsi and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan so that they can stay in India.
- Now after the amendments if people belonging to these communities live in India without valid documents, then they can neither be imprisoned nor deported.
- This exemption has given to those religious groups who have reached India on or before 31 December 2014.

Nagaland extends Inner Line Permit to Dimapur

- The Nagaland government extended the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system to Dimapur, the commercial hub of the State.
- The decision makes it mandatory for “every non-indigenous person” who entered the district after November 21, 1979, to obtain an ILP within 90 days.
- The notification said non-indigenous persons living in Dimapur prior to November 21, 1979, would have to produce documents as evidence to get a certificate from the Deputy Commissioner for exemption from the permit system.

Exempt from CAB

- Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram, protected by the ILP requirement, have been exempted from the provisions of the CAB along with the whole of Meghalaya, Mizoram and the tribal areas of Tripura and Assam as covered in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.
- Recently Manipur has also been brought under the purview of ILP System. Thus the entire north eastern India has been exempted from CAB except for Sikkim and non-tribal areas in Assam and Tripura
- This means that undocumented migrants from the six non-Muslim communities, who will become Indian citizens as per the proposed amendment, will not be able to take up jobs, open businesses or settle in these areas and will require a permit to enter these States.
- States under the ILP regime, it means that beneficiaries under CAB will become Indian citizens but will not be able to settle in these states



ARUNACHAL PRADESH: Entire state under ILP regime	MEGHALAYA: Almost entire state covered under Sixth Schedule, except a part of Shillong
NAGALAND: Entire state under ILP regime	ASSAM: 3 Autonomous District Councils under Sixth Schedule
TRIPURA: Sixth Schedule covers 70% of geographical area	MANIPUR: Entire state under ILP regime

Know! about Inner Line Permit (ILP)

- An Inner Line Permit is a document that allows an Indian citizen to visit or stay in a state that is protected under the ILP system. The system is in force today in Four North eastern states — Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram (Manipur added recently) — and no Indian citizen can visit any of these states unless he or she belongs to that state, nor can he or she overstay beyond the period specified in the ILP.

- Residents of other States have to mandatorily obtain an ILP to visit the protected States under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873. The States also give long-term ILPs for work and stay.
- An ILP is issued by the state government concerned. It can be obtained after applying either online or physically. It states the dates of travel and also specifies the particular areas in the state which the ILP holder can travel to.

The Sixth Schedule

- The sixth schedule gives tribal communities considerable autonomy; the States of Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya, and Mizoram are autonomous regions under the Sixth Schedule.
- The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India allows for the formation of Autonomous District Councils to administer areas which have been given autonomy within their respective states

Protests in North East Regions

- There have been protests across the north eastern States against the CA Bill that nullifies the 1985 Assam Accord, which called for detection and deportation of anyone who entered the State after March 24, 1971.
- The Bill makes the Accord redundant as it is likely to benefit non-Muslims among the over 19 lakh people excluded from the National Register of Citizens.

National Affairs: Drones to be deployed to destroy hidden marijuana plantations

Relevance IN – Prelims (about NCB and step taken by the government to curb marijuana plantation)

What's the NEWS

- The Centre has decided to deploy drones to destroy marijuana plantations before the crop is harvested and finds its way into the hands of the drug cartels
- Last year alone saw 414 tons of plant being seized in more than 24,000 cases. That figure is likely to go up this year once the NCB data is collated

Know! more about it

- A decision has been taken by the Ministry of Home Affairs with states and Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on board to investigate illegal operations suspected to be carried out by the farmers in some states, along with other crops to conceal the prohibited activities.
- The Centre will use satellites to detect marijuana crops by penetrating the lighter foliage and drones will subsequently destroy the plants.
- Drones could be deployed to carry out spraying of chemicals to destroy the crops.
- There are reports of large-scale smuggling of marijuana from Tuticorin to Maldives and Central agencies are working with state law enforcement authorities to detect the source.
- Legal cultivation of limited crop of marijuana for medical and scientific purposes is licensed under Section 10 of the Narcotics, Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act and mainly used in alternative medicine such homeopathy and ayurveda. On the other hand, illegal cultivation is an offence under Section 20 of the NDPS Act.
- In the proposed move, the NCB, Central Bureau of Narcotics (CBN) along with state authorities have tasked to collect field intelligence, destruction of illegal cultivation and arrest offenders. Central Economic Intelligence Bureau (CEIB) will procure satellite surveys of illicit cultivation and will share the images with NCB, CBN and state agencies.
- Since farmers are taking up cultivating marijuana to make large profits quickly, the government is also encouraging alternative mechanisms to wean them away by training them to grow other crops.

Government Schemes: PM Modi chairs first meeting of Ganga council, reviews Namami Gange project

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Namami ganga project and National Ganga Council) + Mains (GS II government policies and interventions for the development in various sectors)

What's the NEWS

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired the first meeting of the National Ganga Council and said that rejuvenation of the river should be a shining example of cooperative federalism.

Know! more about the meet

- Modi also reviewed the progress of works under the ambitious Namami Gange project in the stretch of the river that is considered the most polluted, and deliberated on various aspects of cleaning the river with focus on 'swachhta', 'aviralta' and 'nirmalta'.
- The meeting observed that the Ganga is the holiest river in the sub-continent and its rejuvenation should embody a shining example of cooperative federalism.
- A lot has been accomplished as a comprehensive initiative integrating various governmental efforts and activities to abate pollution, and conserve and rejuvenate the river.
- The government had made a commitment of providing Rs 20,000 crore for the period 2015-20 to the five states through which the Ganga passes, to ensure adequate and uninterrupted flow.
- An improvement in the framework for Nirmal Ganga would require the fullest cooperation from the public at large and generating greater awareness through dissemination of best practices from cities situated on river banks.

Know! about National Ganga Council

- The National Ganga Council holds overall responsibility to direct, develop and control River Ganga and the entire River Ganga Basin. It also includes protection, prevention and abatement of environmental pollution in River Ganga.
- **Jurisdiction of the Council**
- The jurisdiction of the council is extended to states Himachal Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Delhi and Haryana.
- **Composition**
- The PM is the chair person of the council. The Union Minister of Water Resources, river development and Ganga Rejuvenation are the ex-officio vice-chairperson of the council.
- The other members include ministers of finance, urban development, environment, tourism, drinking water and sanitation, shipping, vice chairman of NITI Aayog and CMs of the states to which the jurisdiction extends.
- The government has set up the Clean Ganga Fund (CGF) to facilitate contributions from people, NRIs and corporate entities for funding Ganga rejuvenation projects.

Defence: Second 2+2 dialogue between India, US was productive and positive

Relevance IN – Prelims (about 2+2 dialogue) + Mains (GS II bilateral relations)

What's the NEWS

- India and the US agreed to deepen their bilateral cooperation in areas of defence, counter-terrorism and trade, and to work with like-minded countries for a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

Know! about the 2+2 dialogue and its important takeaways

- These decisions were taken at the conclusion of the second India-US 2+2 dialogue where Pompeo along with defence secretary Mark Esper hosted their Indian counterparts Jaishankar and defence minister Rajnath Singh.
- The first 2+2 dialogue was held in New Delhi in September last year after the mechanism was approved by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump.
- In the second such dialogue, India and the US agreed to further expand their defence ties
- During the dialogue, India and America reaffirmed their commitment to work together in support of a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region and the two sides agreed to deepen their cooperation to address regional and global threats and to combat terrorism, according to the US State Department.

Core concerns

- India has a trade surplus of \$23 billion with America
- The U.S. is seeking to wipe out the surplus by forcing more imports by New Delhi
- A draft agreement in the U.S. last month committed additional imports by India in civilian aircraft and natural gas
- India's core concerns are steel and aluminium tariffs levied by the U.S., and a U.S. proposal to review the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) status. GSP is a preferential tariff system that India enjoys



Mike Pompeo in New Delhi. ■ AFP

- The two sides reaffirmed the growing strategic partnership between the United States and India, which is grounded in democratic values, shared strategic objectives, strong people-to-people ties, and a common commitment to the prosperity of their citizens
- During the meeting, secretary Pompeo and his counterparts reaffirmed their commitment to work together in support of a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region
- India and the US also agreed to deepen cooperation to address regional and global threats, combat terrorism, coordinate on disaster relief, train peacekeepers, promote transparent and sustainable infrastructure, and advance maritime security
- Both delegations welcomed new initiatives to further strengthen people-to-people ties, including new exchange programs for parliamentarians and young innovators, increased judicial cooperation, the expansion of university research partnerships, and a new bilateral science and technology agreement.

Regarding exemption from sanctions against Iran's Chabahar port

- The US has given a narrow exemption to India from Iran's Chabahar port sanctions, saying that it recognises that the project is a lifeline for Afghanistan to get humanitarian supplies from New Delhi
- Located on the Indian Ocean in Iran's Sistan and Baluchistan province, the port is being developed jointly by India, Iran and Afghanistan and is looked as a strategic project for trade by the three countries with central Asian nations.
- The port, which is easily accessible from India's western coast, is increasingly seen as a counter to Pakistan's Gwadar Port which is being developed with the Chinese investment
- The USA provided a narrow exemption (to India) for the development of Chabahar that allows for the construction of the port and the rail line that allows for the export of refined oil products to Afghanistan



NITI Aayog: NITI Aayog mulls PDS supply of eggs, fish & meat

What's on India's Plate

Indian diet not nutritious enough	Country scores low globally on nutrition	Niti working on subsidy regime for protein-rich food	Eggs, fish, chicken and meat may be considered
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4 out of 10 children affected

But total food subsidy already high

So rationalisation will be needed

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the initiative of NITI aayog to include subsidised protein rich food) + Mains (GS II issues related to poverty and hunger)

What's the NEWS

- Niti Aayog, the government think tank, is working on a proposal aimed at improving India's low nutrition ranking and centred on the idea that the government subsidises protein-rich food, including eggs, fish, chicken and meat, possibly through its public distribution system.
- This is likely to be part of Niti Aayog's 15-year Vision Document. The document is expected to be in place by early next year and will be effective from April 1, 2020.

Know! more about the proposed programme

- Niti Aayog officials are looking at widening the list of food items under the public distribution system to include at least one or more. If implemented, these food items will join the food subsidy programme along with wheat, rice, coarse grains and a few varieties of pulses.
- India's dietary pattern is becoming unhealthy with people moving towards oily, sugary and spicy food," he said, adding that the Vision Document will aim to create awareness among poor protein-rich food to begin with
- India is self-sufficient in majority of foodgrains and is even a net exporter in some food categories.
- But its global scores are low in nutrition and hunger alleviation. According to UN India, about 195 million Indians are undernourished, constituting a quarter of the global hunger burden.
- Almost 47 million, or 4 out of 10 children in India, don't achieve their full human potential because of chronic undernutrition or stunting, according to these studies.
- Extending the subsidies to protein-rich items, which are typically costlier, will put a bigger burden on the already large food subsidy bill — pegged at Rs 1.84 lakh crore for 2019-20 — and, therefore, changes may be required in the current format. "Some amount of rationalisation will be needed

Health Reforms: WHO prequalifies first biosimilar medicine to increase worldwide access to life-saving breast cancer treatment

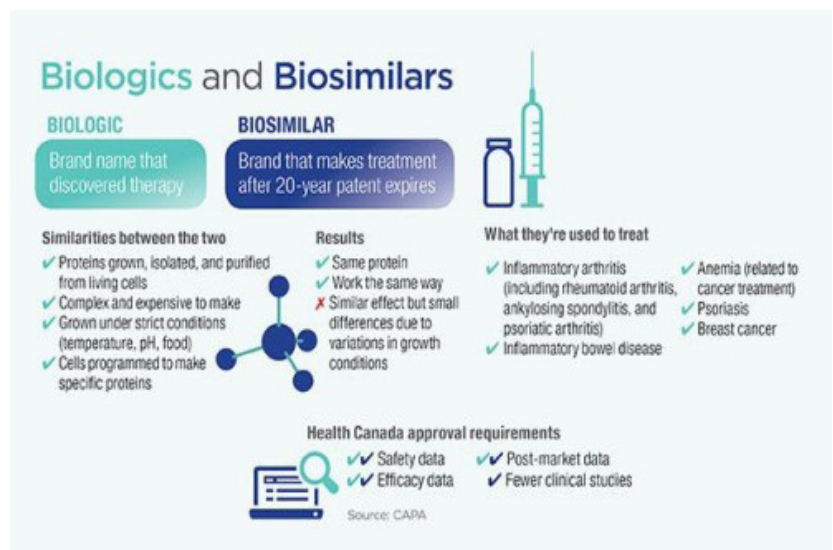
Relevance IN – Prelims (about biosimilar medicine – trastuzumab + WHO Prequalification) + Mains (GS II issues relation to health)

What's the NEWS

- The World Health Organization (WHO) prequalified its first biosimilar medicine – trastuzumab – in a move that could make this expensive, life-saving treatment more affordable and available to women globally.
- Breast cancer is the most common form of cancer in women. 2.1 million women contracted breast cancer in 2018. 630 000 of them died from the disease, many because of late diagnosis and lack of access to affordable treatment.

Know! more about trastuzumab

- Trastuzumab – a monoclonal antibody – was included in the WHO Essential Medicines List in 2015 as an essential treatment for about 20% of breast cancers.
- It has shown high efficacy in curing early stage breast cancer and in some cases more advanced forms of the disease.
- The global average cost of trastuzumab from originator companies is \$20 000, a price that puts it out of reach of many women and healthcare systems in most countries.
- The biosimilar version of trastuzumab is generally 65% cheaper than the originator. With this WHO listing, and more products expected in the prequalification pipeline, prices should decrease even further.



- The medicine, supplied by Samsung Bioepis NL B.V. (Netherlands), was assessed by WHO and found comparable to the originator product in terms of efficacy, safety and quality. That means it is eligible for procurement by United Nations agencies and for national tenders.

Know! about Biotherapeutic medicines

- Biotherapeutics are pharmaceutical products derived from biological and living sources. They include therapeutic vaccines, blood, blood components, cells, gene therapies, tissues and other materials.
- Biotherapeutic medicines, which are produced from biological sources such as cells rather than synthesized chemicals, are important treatments for some cancers and other non-communicable diseases.
- Like generic medicines, biosimilars can be much less expensive versions of innovator biotherapeutics while keeping the same effectiveness. They are usually manufactured by other companies once the patent on the original product has expired.

WHO Prequalification

- Every year, billions of dollars' worth of medicines and other health products are purchased by international procurement agencies for distribution in low-income countries.
- Prequalification is a service provided by WHO to assess the quality, safety and efficacy of those products that address global public health priorities.
- If the products meet international standards, they are listed on the WHO web site as eligible for procurement, giving purchasing agencies a range of quality-assured diagnostics, medicines and vaccines from which to choose.
- Many low-income countries also use WHO's lists of prequalified products to guide their selection of medicines, vaccines and technologies for national procurement.

Good Governance: Nagpur Resolution

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the objective of Nagpur resolution) + Mains (GS II governance - Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.

What's the NEWS

- The 'Nagpur Resolution- A holistic approach for empowering citizens' was adopted during the Valedictory session of the two-day Regional Conference on 'Improving Public Service Delivery – Role of Governments', in Nagpur

Know! more about the conference

- The conference was organised by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), Government of India, in collaboration with the Government of Maharashtra and the Maharashtra State Commission for Right to Public Services.



Good Governance (government's effort in promoting it)

- Positive approach, transparency, corruption-free system, fast track decision making and social sensitivity are essential to good governance.
- Collective team spirit and humane approach towards the subordinates is the most important quality of the successful leaders.
- On earlier occasions also, Shillong Declaration and Jammu Resolution have been adopted for good governance.
- After the formation of J&K and Ladakh as UTs, DARPG organised the conference in Jammu, which was the first major event organised by Centre Government in the UT.

Minimum Government, Maximum Governance

- Various initiatives taken by the Government: discontinuation of interviews for junior level posts, launching of portals, self-attestation and en-masse promotions
- The Grievance redressal system has been made more responsive and prompt.
- The grievances lodged with the Government have gone up from about 1.5 lakh in the beginning to about 16 lakh now.
- This has been due to the prompt and time-bound response by the Government
- The emphasis has been given on transparency, citizen centricity and participation.

Know! more about the conference and about Nagpur Resolution

- The Government has started organising these conferences out of Delhi.
- Such conferences have been organised in Shillong, Jammu, Chandigarh and other places across the country.

Nagpur Resolution

- To empower the citizens by policy interventions for better service delivery through timely updation of citizens charters, implementation of enactments and benchmarking standards for continuous improvement;
- To empower citizens by adopting a bottom-up approach to bring massive improvements in quality of grievance redressal and reduction in timelines of grievance redressal;
- To adopt a holistic approach of systemic public grievance reforms through improved mapping, formulation of monitoring matrix, data collection and evaluation in quality of grievance redressal;
- Creating web portals and to adopt a holistic approach for improved service delivery through digital platforms;
- To focus on dynamic policy making and strategic decisions, monitoring of implementation, appointment of key personnel, coordination and evaluation;
- To work towards long-term engagements in the areas of Improved Service Delivery for Empowering Citizens through greater cooperation between the DARPG and the participating States and
- To ensure timely publication of Good Governance Index to identify the quality of governance in 10 sectors

Bilateral Relations/Health Sector: Afghanistan first country to recognize Indian Pharmacopoeia

Relevance IN – Prelims (about India Pharmacopoeia) + Mains (GS II bilateral relations + Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector / Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.)

What's the NEWS

- The Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP) has been recognised formally by the National Department of Regulation of Medicines and Health Products of the Ministry of Public Health of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.
- It will also be used based on the requirement as reputable pharmacopoeia in the laboratory of medicines and health products quality.
- With this, a new beginning has been made and Afghanistan has become the first country to recognize IP pursuant to the efforts of Department of Commerce and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Know! about IP

- IP is an officially recognized book of standards as per the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Rules 1945 thereunder.
- The IP specifies the standards of drugs manufactured and marketed in India in terms of their identity, purity and strength.
- The quality, efficacy and safety of the medicines are important from healthcare perspective. In order to ensure the quality of medicinal products, the legal and scientific standards are provided by Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC) in the form of Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP).
- As per, the Second Schedule of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, IP is designated as the official book of standards for drugs imported and/or manufactured for sale, stock or exhibition for sale or distribution in India.

- The IP Commission's mission is to promote public and animal health in India by bringing out authoritative and officially accepted standards for quality of drugs including active pharmaceutical ingredients, excipients and dosage forms, used by health professionals, patients and consumers.

International Organisations: Global Refugee Forum



Relevance IN – Prelims (about global refugee forum + global compact on refugees + New York declaration) + Mains (GS II international relations)

What's the NEWS

- The first Global Refugee Forum (GRF), a two-day gathering of United Nations member states, recently concluded in Geneva, Switzerland.

Know! more about the first GRF meet

- The Forum, jointly hosted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Refugee Agency, and the government of Switzerland, aims to debate and discuss the response of the world's countries to the global refugee situation.
- The first-ever Global Refugee Forum concluded in Geneva with more than 770 pledges of support, covering areas such as protection, employment, and education, for refugees and the communities which have taken them in.
- The Forum is a key element of the Global Compact on Refugees, which the international community signed last December. It calls for Global Refugee Forums to be held every four years.
- More than 3,000 participants attended this first gathering, ranging from representatives of governments, international financial organizations, business, civil society, and humanitarian and development organizations, as well as refugees themselves.
- A stock-taking meeting will take place in two years, and the second Global Refugee Forum is scheduled for late 2023.

Global Compact on Refugees

- In 2016's historic New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, all 193 Member States of the United Nations agreed that protecting those who are forced to flee and supporting the countries that shelter them are shared international responsibilities that must be borne more equitably and predictably.
- The Declaration gave UNHCR the task of building upon the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), contained in Annex I of the New York Declaration, to develop a 'global compact on refugees'.
- The Philippines is among the nations that endorsed the compact, a blueprint that calls for greater support for refugees and the countries that welcome them. It also aims to help refugees become more self-reliant so that they can contribute more to their own future and to that of their host communities.

Global Refugee Forum (GRF)

- Guided by the Global Compact on Refugees, the Global Refugee Forum is an opportunity to translate the principle of international responsibility-sharing into concrete action.

- The Forum will showcase impactful pledges and contributions and the exchange of good practices
- This Forum is an opportunity to attest our collective commitment to the Global Compact on Refugees and rally behind the aspirations of the Sustainable Development Goals of leaving no one behind.
- The GRF will be held every four years at the Ministerial level. It is intended to present an opportunity for UN member states and other stakeholders to announce action plans and pledges towards meeting objectives such as easing the burden on the host country, enhancing refugee self-reliance, expanding access to third-country solutions, and supporting conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.

Social Justice: Lok Sabha passes bill extending SC/ST quota in State legislatures

Relevance IN – (about the provision of reservation) + Mains (GS II Indian Constitution- historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.)

What's the NEWS

- Lok Sabha passed the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Sixth Amendment) Bill, 2019, which continues the reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes for another 10 years, upto January 25, 2030.

Know! more about it

- The Bill was passed with 352 members in favour and none against. The reservation for SCs, STs and Anglo-Indians given for the past 70 years in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies was due to end on January 25, 2020.
- The reservation for Anglo-Indians in the form of “nomination” is set to expire on January 25 next year as the Bill does not extend the facility to the community. The Minister in his reply said doors are not shut and the matter would be considered.

Government Schemes: Ministry of Rural Development inaugurates Phase– III of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana



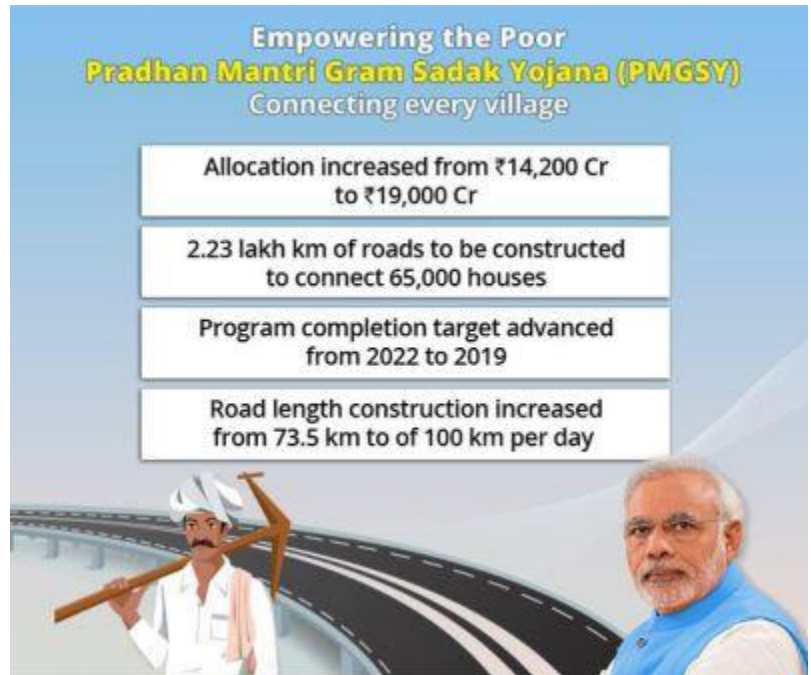
Relevance IN – Prelims (about Phase III of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) + Mains (GS II Government policies and interventions for the development of various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation)

What's the NEWS

- The Union Minister of Rural Development, Agriculture and Farmers Welfare & Panchayati Raj, Shri Narendra Singh Tomar launched Phase III of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)

Know! about PMGSY (phase III)

- The Phase-III of PMGSY aims at consolidation of 1,25,000 Kms Through Routes and Major Rural Links that connect habitations to Gramin Agricultural Markets (GrAMs), Higher Secondary Schools and Hospitals with an estimated cost of Rs. 80,250 crores (Central Share of Rs. 53,800 crores) for the period 2019-20 to 2024-25.
- The funding pattern for the PMGSY-III will be 60:40 between Centre and the States for States other than NE & Himalayan States and 90:10 for NE and Himalayan States as applicable for Central sponsored schemes.
- More than 6 Lakh Kms of Roads have been constructed across rural India.
- The Minister highlighted the importance of roads in bringing about all round positive development and empowering the villages
- A total of 1,53,491 rural road works have been completed under the PMGSY Scheme connecting 97.27% of the eligible and feasible habitations and adding up a road length of 6,07,900 Kms across the country.
- Out of the above, a road length of 36,063 Kms has been constructed using green technologies, a major portion of which includes Waste plastic and cold mix technology.
- Government launched the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana on 25th December, 2000 to provide all-weather access to unconnected habitations.
- The Ministry of Rural Development along with state governments is responsible for the implementation of PMGSY.



PMGSY - Phase I

- PMGSY - Phase I was launched in December, 2000 as a 100% centrally sponsored scheme with an objective to provide single all-weather road connectivity to eligible unconnected habitation of designated population size (500+ in plain areas and 250+ in North-East, hill, tribal and desert areas, 00-249 population in LWE districts as per Census, 2001) for overall socio-economic development of the areas.
- The unit for this Programme is a Habitation and not a Revenue village or a Panchayat. A Habitation is a cluster of population, living in an area, the location of which does not change over time. Desam, Dhannis, Tolas, Majras, Hamlets etc. are commonly used terminology to describe the Habitations.
- An Unconnected Habitation is one with a population of designated size located at a distance of at least 500 metres or more (1.5 km of path distance in case of Hills) from an All-weather road or a connected Habitation.

PMGSY - Phase II

- The Phase II of PMGSY was approved during May, 2013. While the ongoing PMGSY - I continued, under PMGSY phase II, the roads already built for village connectivity was to be upgraded to enhance rural infrastructure.
- For the 12th Five Year Plan period a target of 50,000 Km length under PMGSY-II. 75 per cent of the cost of the upgradation was by the Centre and 25 per cent by the state.
- For hill states, desert areas, Schedule V areas and Naxal-affected districts, 90 per cent of cost was borne by the Centre

Road Connectivity Project for Left Wing Extremism Area (RCPLWEA)

- Government launched Road Connectivity Project for Left Wing Extremism affected Areas in the year 2016 as a separate vertical under PMGSY to provide all-weather road connectivity with necessary culverts and cross-drainage structures in 44 districts (35 are worst LWE affected districts and 09 are adjoining districts), which are critical from security and communication point of view.

PMGSY - Phase III

- The Phase III was approved by the Cabinet during July 2019. It involves consolidation of Through Routes and Major Rural Links connecting habitations to Gramin Agricultural Markets (GrAMs), Higher Secondary Schools and Hospitals.
- Under the PMGSY-III Scheme, it is proposed to consolidate 1,25,000 Km road length in the States. The duration of the scheme is 2019-20 to 2024-25.
- The funds would be shared in the ratio of 60:40 between the Centre and State for all States except for 8 North Eastern and 3 Himalayan States (Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh & Uttarakhand) for which it is 90:10.

Human Resource Development: Manthan- Impeccable Academia

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Manthan- Impeccable Academia) + Mains (GS II issues relating to the development and management of social sectors / services relating to education, health and human resource)

What's the NEWS

- Union Minister for Human Resource Development, Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' inaugurated the third chapter of 'Manthan- Impeccable Academia

Know! more about it

- Media and Entertainment Skills Council (MESC) in collaboration with Ministry of Human Resources and Development (MHRD) organized this event.
- Skill education forms the backbone of development of any nation, which helps cultivate skilled youth and workforce which is the need of the hour.
- India's young population is its most valuable asset and dominates 54% of the population.
- It also has a history of being the world leader in education; to put our vision and mission to create a better skilled population for future, the work MHRD and MESC are doing is commendable.

Know! about MANTHAN

- MANTHAN is focused on a plethora of opportunities available in the Media and Entertainment Industry.
- It's highlighting the possibilities of Association between Media and Entertainment Skills Council (MESC) and participating esteemed Academic Institutions, colleges & universities.
- The Ministry of Human Resource & Development along with MESC has developed specialized employment oriented Bachelor Courses as: BSc. Animation & VFX, BSc. Performing Arts and B.Sc. Film Making.

Government Schemes: GEM launches National Outreach Programme - GEM Samvaad

GeM (Government e-Marketplace),
an end-to-end digital platform for government procurement of goods and services launched.
(www.gem.gov.in)

GeM will ensure greater transparency in government procurements and will give a fillip to #DigitalIndia mission.

GeM will ensure 100% elimination of corruption in government procurements.

Government ministries and departments would be able to purchase goods & services on GeM.

Anyone would be able to sell items on this platform after registration.

26 categories including computers and stationery will be available on GeM. More items would be added from 1 April 2017.

During previous governments, procurement was one of the key sources of corruption & political financing.

Source : bit.ly/eMarketPlace | www.bjp.org

ज़ानिये GeM 3.0 में L1 purchase कैसे करते हैं

Relevance IN – Prelims (about GeM and about GeM Samvaad) + Mains (GS II Government policies and interventions for the development of various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation)

What's the NEWS

- A national outreach Programme, **GeM Samvaad**, was launched
- The outreach programme will take place with stakeholders across the country and with local sellers in order to facilitate on-boarding of local sellers on the marketplace while catering to specific requirements and procurement needs of buyers.
- The outreach programme will take place from **19 Dec 2019 to 17 Feb 2020** and will cover all the States and UTs of the country.

Know! more about GeM Samvad and Government e Marketplace (GeM)

- GeM has more than 15 lakh products and around 20,000 services, more than 3 lakh registered sellers and service providers and more than 40,000 Government buyer organizations.
- In its short journey of three years, GeM has processed more than 28 lakh orders worth Rs. 40,000 crores in Gross Merchandise Value out of which 50% has been transacted by MSMEs.
- State Departments and Organizations and Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs) have been using GeM for their buying needs.
- Sellers from the State are also benefitting through the access to national Public Procurement market using the portal.
- Through GeM Samvaad the marketplace is looking forward to receiving feedback from users which shall be used for making improvements and advancements in the system.
- Government e Marketplace (GeM) is the national public procurement portal offering end to end solutions for all procurement needs of Central and State Government Departments, PSUs, autonomous institutions and local bodies.
- Since its commencement on 9th August 2016, GeM has transformed public procurement in the country by leveraging technology and making procurement contactless, paperless, and cashless.

Big Upgrade

Consultant being appointed to potentially achieve sales of over ₹7 lakh crore over the next 2-3 years

On boarding of all central and state government organisations, PSUs and on boarding the entire array of products and services required by them

Opening up GeM for bulk buying by private entities

Upgrading GeM with world-class features like user experience on Amazon

Cumulative order value: Over **₹35,000 cr**

5-times growth in the volume of sellers and number of products from 2017

40% of total sales of products by MSMEs, over 38,000 MSMEs on board

Over 90% states are on-boarded on GeM

15-25% savings on an average across categories

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Bilateral Relations: India constructs Girls' Hostel for Nepal Armed Police Force School at Kirtipur



Relevance IN – Prelims (about India- Nepal relations) + Mains (GS II Bilateral relations)

What's the NEWS

- The Govt. of India has constructed Girls' Hostel for Nepal Armed Police Force School, Kirtipur.

Know! more about it

- Nepal Armed Police Force (APF) School is an academic institution created under the APF Welfare Service Centre of Nepal Armed Police Force. The school was established in 2005 and it has over 21 per cent of girls students.
- The new infrastructure constructed with the Government of India's grant assistance of 40.42 million Nepali Rupees is a two-storied girls' hostel. It comprises 32 rooms including a dormitory, warden room, bathroom, sanitation facilities for girls on each floor and furniture.
- The newly built infrastructure is expected to boost the learning environment of students. Government of India is happy to be associated with the project which complements the effort of the Government of Nepal in augmenting infrastructure in the field of education.

International Relations: Brexit: All you need to know about the UK leaving the EU

Relevance IN – Prelims (all about Brexit + backstop) + Mains (GS II international relations)

What's the NEWS

- The UK is due to leave the European Union (EU) on 31 January 2020, after Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Brexit deal was passed by MPs.

Know! about Brexit

- Brexit - British exit - refers to the UK leaving the EU.

Know! about European Union

- The EU is an economic and political union involving 28 European countries. It allows free trade and free movement of people, to live and work in whichever country they choose.
- The UK joined in 1973 (when it was known as the European Economic Community). If the UK leaves, it would be the first member state to withdraw from the EU.

Why is the UK leaving

- A public vote - or referendum - was held on Thursday 23 June 2016, to decide whether the UK should leave or remain.
- Leave won by 52% to 48%. The referendum turnout was very high at 72%, with more than 30 million people voting - 17.4 million people opting for Brexit.

Why hasn't Brexit happened yet?

- Brexit was originally due to happen on 29 March 2019. That was two years after then Prime Minister Theresa May triggered Article 50 - the formal process to leave - and kicked off negotiations.
- Under Mrs May, the deadline was delayed twice after MPs rejected her Brexit deal - eventually pushing it to 31 October 2019.
- Despite negotiating a revised deal, Mr Johnson missed the latest deadline, after MPs failed to pass it into law.
- The EU then agreed to a further extension until 31 January 2020.

Why did Parliament reject Theresa May's Brexit deal?

- The main sticking point for many Conservative MPs and the DUP (the government's ally in Parliament at the time) was the **Irish backstop**.
- The backstop was designed to ensure there would be no border posts or barriers between **Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland after Brexit**.
- If it had been needed, the backstop would have kept the UK in a close trading relationship with the EU and avoided checks altogether.
- But many MPs were critical. They said if the backstop was used, the UK could be trapped in it for years. This would prevent the country from striking trade deals with other countries.

- After MPs rejected the deal for a third time, Mrs May resigned as prime minister.
- Mrs May resigned as prime minister.

What is the new Brexit deal?

- After winning the Conservative leadership contest, Mr Johnson took over as PM in July 2019 and set about renegotiating Mrs May's deal.
- Mr Johnson succeeded in replacing the backstop with new customs arrangements.
- Unlike the previous deal, the revised one will allow the UK to sign and implement its own trade agreements with countries around the world.
- However, the revised deal effectively creates a customs and regulatory border between Northern Ireland and Great Britain.
- This means some goods entering Northern Ireland from Great Britain would be subject to checks and pay EU import taxes (known as tariffs).
- These would be refunded if goods remain in Northern Ireland (ie are not moved to the Republic of Ireland).

The "backstop" – a Brexit sticking point



Source: Maps4News

WHAT'S AT STAKE

The reintroduction of border controls between the U.K.'s Northern Ireland and EU member Ireland.

Goods and people flowing freely across border without customs checks.

A 1998 Peace Accord that has made the border virtually invisible.

New U.K. global trade deals.

AP

What happens next?

- Assuming the European Parliament also gives the green light, the UK will formally leave the EU on 31 January with a withdrawal deal.
- However, this would only mark the next step in the Brexit process. Following its departure, the UK will enter a transition period until 31 December 2020.
- During this period, the UK's trading relationship with the EU will remain the same while the two sides negotiate a free trade deal.
- At the same time, many other aspects of the UK's future relationship with the EU - including law enforcement, data sharing and security - will need to be agreed.

Know! about United Kingdom

- The United Kingdom, also called the U.K., consists of a group of islands off the northwest coast of Europe.
- It is a unique country made up of four nations: England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. England, Wales, and Scotland also make up Great Britain.



International Affairs/Prelims Factoids: West African countries to rename CFA franc to cut some ties with 'colonial relic'

Relevance IN – Prelims (about CFA franc + about eco + about west African countries)

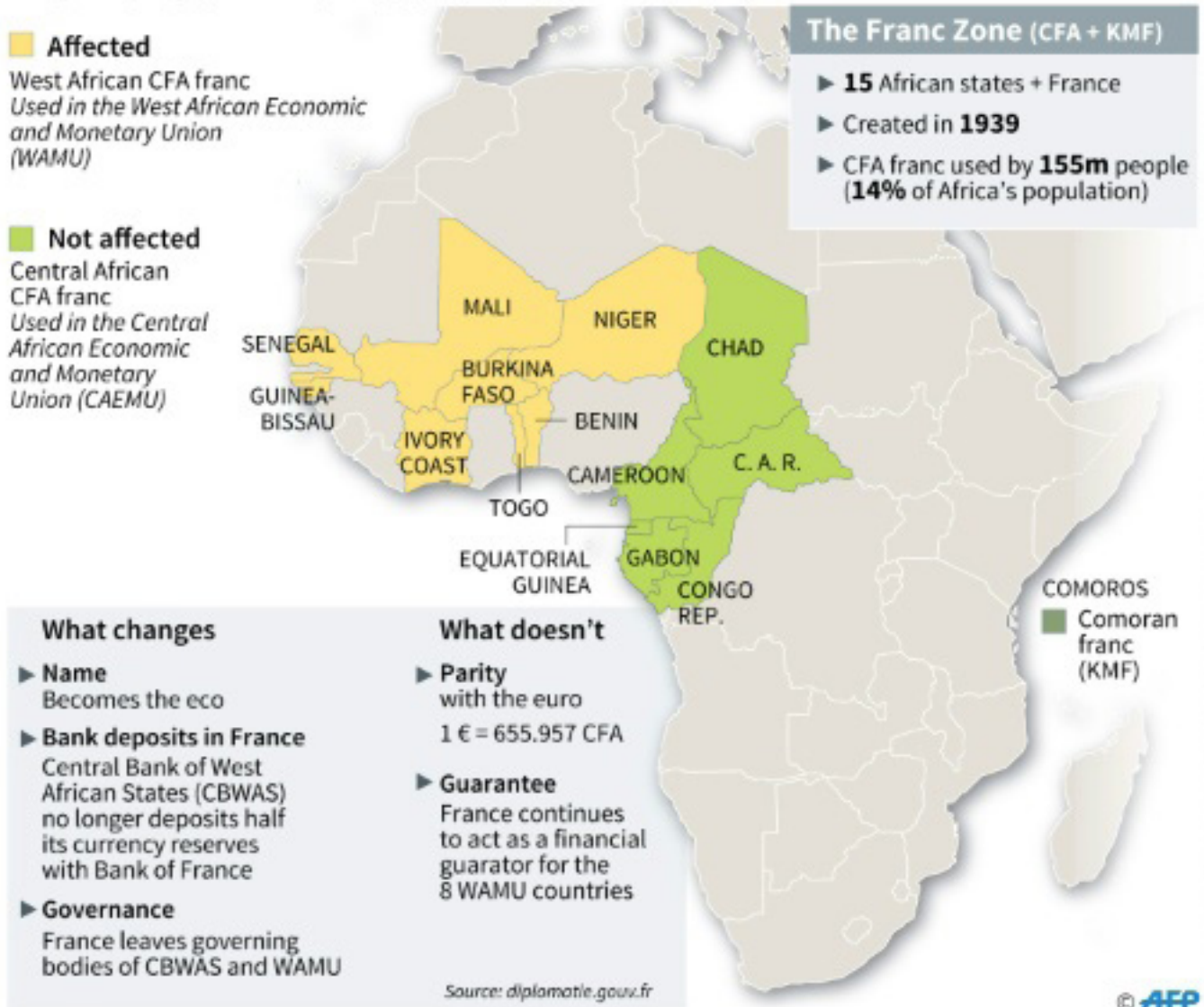
What's the NEWS

- Eight West African countries agreed to change the name of their common currency to Eco
- West Africa's monetary union has agreed with France to rename its common currency from CFA franc to Eco and cut some of the financial links with Paris that have underpinned the region's common currency since its creation after the Second World War.

Know! more about the deal

- Under the deal, the Eco will remain pegged to the euro but the African countries in the bloc won't have to keep 50 per cent of their reserves in the French Treasury and there will no longer be a French representative on the currency union's board.

From the CFA franc to the eco



- Critics of the CFA have long seen it as a relic from colonial times while proponents of the currency say it has provided financial stability in a sometimes turbulent region.
- The CFA is used in 14 African countries with a combined population of about 150 million and \$235 billion (£181bn) of gross domestic product.
- However, the changes will only affect the West African form of the currency used by Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo - all former French colonies except Guinea Bissau.
- The six countries using the Central African CFA are Cameroon, Chad, Central African Republic, Congo Republic, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon - all former French colonies with the exception of Equatorial Guinea.

More about CFA franc

- The West African CFA franc which is used in 8 West African countries, and 'Central African CFA franc', which is used in 6 Central African countries.
- Both currencies are guaranteed by French treasury and was created in 1945.
- The currency was seen by many as a sign of French interference in its former African colonies even after countries became independent.

Social Issues: India slips to 112th rank on gender gap index; in bottom 5 on health, economic fronts

Relevance IN – Prelims (about gender gap index and its findings) + Mains (GS II Social issues and social justice)

What's the NEWS

- India ranked lower than many of its international peers, and some of its neighbours like China (106th), Sri Lanka (102nd), Nepal (101st), Brazil (92nd), Indonesia (85th) and Bangladesh (50th)
- India's latest position is 14 notches lower than its reading in 2006 when the WEF started measuring the gender gap

Know! more about the report findings

- India has slipped four places on the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap index to 112, behind neighbours China, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh, due to rising disparity in terms of women's health and participation in the economy.
- Moreover, India is now ranked in the bottom-five in terms of women's health and survival and economic participation, according to an annual survey report.
- Iceland remained the world's most gender-neutral country, while Yemen was ranked the worst at 153th place. Iraq and Pakistan remained in bottom three of the ladder.
- The WEF's Gender Gap Index ranks countries according to calculated gender gap between women and men in four key areas: health, education, economy and politics. It measures women's disadvantage compared to men, and is not a measure of equality of the gender gap.
- The time it will take to close the gender gap narrowed to 99.5 years in 2019. While an improvement on 2018 -- when the gap was calculated to take 108 years to close -- it still means parity between men and women across health, education, work and politics will take more than a lifetime to achieve
- Geneva-based WEF said this year's improvement can largely be attributed to a significant increase in the number of women in politics.
- The report said that the political gender gap will take 95 years to close, as against 107 years last year.
- Worldwide, women now hold 25.2 per cent of parliamentary lower-house seats and 21.2 per cent of ministerial positions, compared to 24.1 per cent and 19 per cent respectively last year.
- There is a sharp deterioration in the economic opportunity gap, especially in women's under-representation in emerging roles, such as cloud computing, engineering and data and artificial intelligence. At the current rate of progress, the economic opportunity gap will take 257 years to bridge, compared to 202 last year.
- The report showed that economic opportunities for women are extremely limited in India (35.4 per cent), followed by Pakistan (32.7 per cent), Yemen (27.3 per cent), Syria (24.9 per cent) and Iraq (22.7 per cent).
- India also ranked among countries with very low women representation on company boards (13.8 per cent), while it was even worse in China (9.7 per cent).
- The report also highlighted abnormally low sex ratios at birth in India (91 girls for every 100 boys) and Pakistan (92/100).
- On health and survival, four large countries -- Pakistan, India, Vietnam and China -- fare badly with millions of women not getting the same access to health as men, the WEF said.
- On a positive note, India has closed two-thirds of its overall gender gap, but the condition of women in large section of India's society is precarious and the economic gender gap has significantly widened since 2006.
- India is the only country among the 153 countries studied where the economic gender gap is larger than the political one.
- India ranks high on the political empowerment sub-index, largely because the country was headed by a woman for 20 of the past 50 years. But, female political representation today is low as women make up only 14.4 per cent of Parliament (122nd rank globally) and 23 per cent of the cabinet (69th), the report said.



Health Sector: India launches its first national healthcare facility registry

Relevance IN – Prelims (about NHRR and its benefits) + Mains (GS II Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources. Issues relating to poverty and hunger)

Through the National Health Resource Repository it will now be possible to provide comprehensive data on all private and public health establishments

What's the NEWS

- The Union ministry of health and family welfare launched the National Health Resource Repository (NHRR), the first ever registry in the country registry of authentic, standardised and updated geo-spatial data of all public and private healthcare.

Know! more about NHRR

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is the project technology partner for providing data security.
- It will now be possible to provide comprehensive data on all private and public health establishments and other resources, including Railways, Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC), defence and petroleum healthcare establishments.
- 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.
- This resource repository shall enable advanced research towards ongoing and forthcoming healthcare challenges arising from other determinants of health such as disease and the environment.
- Approximately 4,000 trained professionals are working with dedication to approach every healthcare establishment to collect information.
- The NHRR project aims to strengthen evidence-based decision making and develop a platform for citizens and provider-centric services by creating a robust, standardised and secured Information Technology (IT)-enabled repository of India's healthcare resources.
- The health minister also released the National Health Profile (NHP)-2018, prepared by CBHI. The National Health Profile covers demographic, socio-economic, health status and health finance indicators, along with comprehensive information on health infrastructure and human resources in health.

Focus Article: SEED ACT, 1966

Relevance IN – Mains (GS II Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.)

What's the NEWS

- After the 'Green Revolution', India brought Seed Act, 1966. It was the first act to govern matters of seed and seed quality. It was modelled on the US Legislation. This Act served well in making the Indian Seed Industry vibrant and competitive to serve the interests of the farmers.

What Is Covered Under The Existing Seeds Act, 1966?

1. It covers "notified kinds or varieties of seeds". Regulation of quality is limited to the seeds of varieties that have been officially notified.
2. Such varieties are mostly those bred by public sector institutions like, ICAR State Agricultural Universities (SAUs).
3. These are officially released for cultivation after multi-location trials, over three years or more, to evaluate their yield performance, disease and pest resistance.
4. "Release is a precondition for notification" and the provisions of The Seeds Act, 1966, apply only to certified seeds produced of notified varieties.

5. It has punitive measures against seed sellers, in case of any deficiency in seed quality parameters mentioned on the label.

Shortcomings In The Provision Of Seed Act 1966

1. The 1966 legislation was enacted at the time of the Green Revolution. The high-yielding wheat and paddy varieties, which made India self-reliant in cereals by the 1980s, were developed by various ICAR institutes and SAUs. However over the last one decade, private companies and multinationals have made significant inroads, especially into hybrids. These private companies and their hybrid varieties of seeds are not covered under the Seeds Act 1966 by virtue of not being officially “released”. Thus this companies resort to ‘Truthful labelling’ (self declaration) without any official verification.
2. It has labelling provisions, but no licensing provisions.
3. Lack of varietal (generic name of the plant or seed by which such variety is known to the public) registration prior to sale.

How to make the new Seed Bill 2019 acceptable to all stakeholders

1. Farmers’ rights under PPV&FR should be protected.
2. The Government proposes compulsory registration of varieties/ hybrids. India has more than hundred crops and hundreds of seed companies with R&D and the biggest challenge is the development of infrastructure by the Government.
3. For fast-tracking the registration, an Empowered Committee can be formed. Evaluation systems of seed companies can be subject to regular audit by the technical auditors, appointed by the Empowered Committee.
4. Price control is another sensitive item and Govt. should tread cautiously and should intervene as and when required.
5. Damage to seeds can occur due to rain, weather, contamination. Some of them are intentional and some are not. Deterioration of seed quality is a biological process due to accelerated ageing, when the seed lots are subjected to very harsh conditions. Penalizing the seed manufacturers should be assessed in an objective way on case-to-case basis. Otherwise, courts will be clogged with several cases.
6. For the major offences, due judicial process should be followed, but for minor offences, the seed inspectors should be empowered to compound the offence or initiate a fine.
7. All registrations can be harmonized with the provisions of PPV&FR Act.

Conclusion

- Healthy seed industry will lead to enhanced quality seed availability at affordable prices to the farmers. The seed industry should see vibrant growth in an enabling environment. Also farmers must be provided quality seeds at competitive price. The Seeds Bill is expected to strike the right balance in this direction.

Know! more about

1. Farmers’ Rights Under PPV&FR Act, 2001 And Indian Patents Act, 1970

- As per Section 39 (1) (iv) of The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers’ Rights Act, 2001, a farmer is allowed to save, use, sow, resow, exchange, share or sell his farm produce, including seed of a variety protected under this Act. He is not punishable as long as, he does not sell “Branded Seed”.
- As per the Indian Patents Act, a biological process to create a seed or plant cannot be patented.
- Hybridization comes under biological process and cannot be patented. Hybridization is the process of interbreeding between individuals of different species.

The PPV&FR Act is the first of its kind in granting intellectual property rights not only to plant breeders but also to the farmers by protecting new, extant and farmers’ varieties. The total period of validity of certificate of registration shall not exceed 18 years in case of trees and 15 years in case of other crops.

2. International Union For The Protection Of New Varieties Of Plants (UPOV)

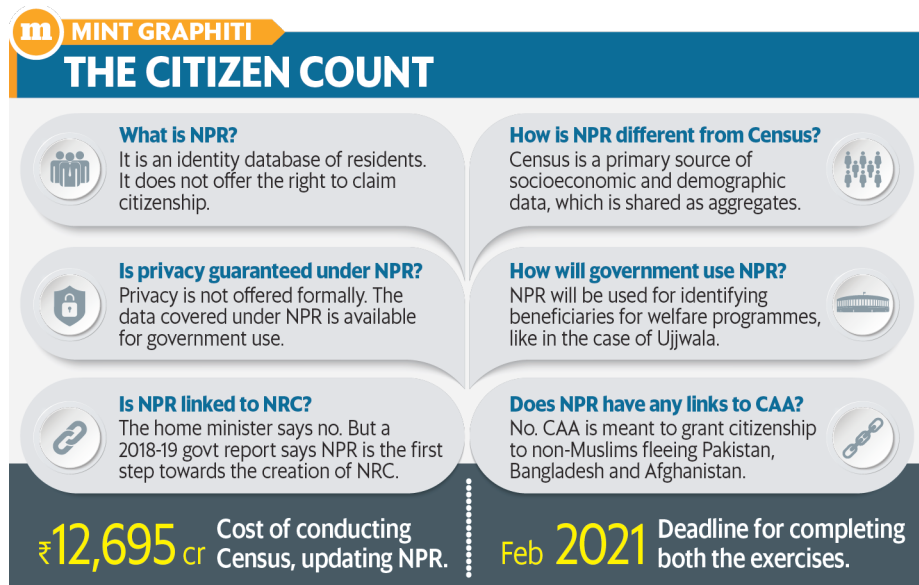
- The International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) is an intergovernmental organization with headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. UPOV’s mission is to provide and promote an effective system of plant variety protection.

Why India Is Not A Member Of UPOV?

- In India, farmers’ interests far outweigh the breeders interests.

- UPOV primarily looks at the rights of plant breeders.
- Though it offers limited rights to the farmers, the countries subscribing to UPOV have to uphold commercial interests of the seed developers.
- Hence India did not join UPOV as a member, as farmers' interests are paramount in India.
- However, there is constant pressure on India from advanced countries to subscribe to UPOV

National Affairs: National Population Register (NPR)



Relevance IN – Prelims (about NPR and NRC + Mains (GS II Centre-State Relations - Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein. Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions.)

Know! about NPR

- The NPR is a register of usual residents of the country. It is mandatory for every usual resident of India to register in the NPR. It includes both Indian citizens as well as a foreign citizen.
- The NPR is a list of “usual residents of the country”. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, a “usual resident of the country” is one who has been residing in a local area for at least the last six months, or intends to stay in a particular location for the next six months.
- Unlike the NRC, the NPR is not a citizenship enumeration drive, as it would record even a foreigner staying in a locality for more than six months.
- The Union Cabinet approved a proposal to conduct Census 2021 and updation of National Population Register (NPR).
- While the Census will be conducted in 2021, the updation of NPR will take place from April to September 2020 in all the States/UTs except Assam.
- The objective of the NPR is to create a comprehensive identity database of every usual resident in the country.
- The first National Population Register was prepared in 2010 and updation of this data was done during 2015 by conducting door to door survey.
- The next update of the NPR will take place next year from April to September with the Houselisting phase of the Census 2021 by the Office of the Registrar General of India (RGI) under the Home Ministry for Census 2021. Only Assam will not be included, given the recently completed NRC.
- It is being prepared at the local (Village/sub-Town), sub-District, District, State and National level under provisions of the Citizenship Act 1955 and the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003.

Know! the details required for NPR

- The demographic details of every individual which includes 'date and place of birth of parents', last place of residence, Permanent Account Number (PAN), Aadhar (on a voluntary basis), Voter ID card number, Driving License Number and Mobile Number.
- In the last NPR done in 2010 it did not include 'date and place of birth of parents' and last place of residence.

Know! the meaning of usual resident

- According to the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003, a usual resident is a person who has resided in a local area for the past 6 months or more or a person who intends to reside in that area for the next 6 months or more.

Know! about Census

- The Census is the enumeration of the population of the country.
- It is being conducted at an interval of 10 years. The Census 2021 will be 16th census in the country since the first census happened in 1872.
- However, it will be 8th census after the Independence. For the first time, the Census 2021 will use the Mobile App for data collection. It will also provide a facility to the public for self-enumeration.

Know! the difference between NPR and NRC

NPR

- The NPR is different from the National Register of Citizens which excludes the foreign citizens.
- According to the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, notified on December 10, 2003, a Population Register is 'the register containing details of persons usually residing in a village or rural area or town

NRC

- The 'National Register of Indian Citizens' is a register containing details of Indian Citizens living in India and outside India.
- The rules further say that 'National Register of Indian Citizens' shall contain the particulars of every citizen i.e. Name; Father's name; Mother's name; Sex; Date of birth; Place of birth; Residential address (present and permanent); Marital status ñ if ever married, name of the spouse; Visible identification mark; Date of registration of Citizen; Serial number of registration; and National Identity Number.

Some more facts

- Out of NPR, the Government proposes to create a database of citizens of India. However the Prime Minister said that there has been no discussion and no talk on NRIC for India on 22nd December, 2019.
- Section 14A was inserted in Citizenship Act, 1955 in 2004 providing for compulsory registration of every citizen of India and issue of national identity card to him or her. The Central Government may maintain a National Register of Indian Citizens.
- Registrar General of India shall act as the National Registration Authority.

Know! the link between NPR and NRC

- According to the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, notified on December 10, 2003, The Central Government may, by an order issued in this regard, decide a date by which the Population Register shall be prepared by collecting information relating to all persons who are usually residing within the jurisdiction of Local Registrar.
- The Local Register of Indian citizens shall contain details of persons after due verification made from the Population Register.

Farmer's Welfare/Social Issues: First tripartite Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) signed under Fisheries and Aquaculture Development Fund (FIDF)

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the first tripartite MoU an its benefits) + Mains (GS II Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

What's the NEWS

- The first tripartite Memorandum of Agreement was signed between the department of Fisheries Government of India, NARBARD and the Government of Tamil Nadu for the implementation of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development Fund (FIDF).

Know! more about the MoU

- A dedicated fund has been created namely the Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund with a total of Rs. 7522.48 crore to address the infrastructure requirement for fisheries sector.
- FIDF provides concessional finance to the eligible entities, cooperatives, individuals and entrepreneurs for development of identified fisheries infrastructure.
- The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NARBARD), National Cooperatives Development Corporation (NCDC) and all scheduled banks are Nodal Loaning entities (NLEs) to provide concessional finance under the (FIDF).
- The Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying under the FIDF provides interest subvention up to 3% per annum for providing the concessional finance by the NLEs at the interest rate not lower than 5% per annum.
- The Government of Tamil Nadu has signed the first Tripartite MoA for availing the initial concessional finance of Rs 420 crore from NARBARD for development of three fishing harbours in the State
- NABARD as one of the Nodal Loaning Entities (NLEs) provides concessional finance for development of fisheries infrastructure facilities through State Governments/State Entities under the FIDF, after execution of the Tripartite MoA.

Internal Security: DNA Analysis Centre at CFSL, Chandigarh inaugurated

Relevance IN – Mains (GS II Social issues -steps taken by the government for empowering women and to strengthen the criminal justice system

What's the NEWS

- Minister of State for Home Affairs, Shri Nityanand Rai inaugurated a State-of-the-Art DNA Analysis Centre at CFSL, Chandigarh.

Know! More about it

- This new Advanced Forensic DNA Analysis Lab has been set up under the Nirbhaya Fund scheme, with an allocation of Rs.99.76 crores.
- This Centre will provide State-of-the-art facility for (i) Sexual Assault and Homicide Unit (ii) Paternity Unit (iii) Human Identification Unit and (iv) Mitochondrial DNA Unit.
- DFSS has ensured that this Centre is fully equipped with modern DNA Profiling tools and equipment. This Advanced Forensic DNA Analysis facility has a capacity of examining 2000 cases per year.

Steps taken by the government w.r.t Women Safety

- Operationalization of 112 universal emergency services in 28 States/UTs, commencement of 'Safe City' projects in 8 large cities, and strengthening State Forensic Science Laboratories.
- MHA would be setting up of Women Help Desks in all Police Stations and setting up Anti- Human Trafficking Units in all Districts.
- DNA Analysis has become critical in ensuring timeliness and efficiency in completion of criminal investigation as well as better convictions

Know! more about CFSLs

- The Directorate of Forensic Science Services under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has set up Central Forensic Science Laboratories (CFSLs) in the country.
- These are situated at Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh), Chandigarh, Guwahati (Assam), Hyderabad (Telangana), Pune (Maharashtra) and Kolkata (West Bengal).
- Apart from assisting States in undertaking forensic examination of evidence, the predominant role of CFSLs is to undertake R&D activities with a view to develop new forensic techniques, adopt the latest developments in basic sciences for forensic analysis and disseminate this information to the other Forensic Science Laboratories.

Know! about Nirbhaya Fund

- The Nirbhaya Fund Framework provides for a non-lapsable corpus fund for safety and security of women to be administered by the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) of the Ministry of Finance (MoF) of the Government of India.
- Further, it provides for an Empowered Committee (EC) of officers chaired by the Secretary, Ministry of Women & Child Development (MWCD) to appraise and recommend proposals to be funded under this framework.

Governance: Good Governance Index launched



Relevance IN – Prelims (about good governance Index + about CSMOP) + Mains (GS II Governance -Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures

What's the NEWS

- The Central government launched the 'Good Governance Index' at an event organized by the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, on the occasion of Good Governance Day

Good Governance Day

- The Good Governance Day is observed on the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Know! more about Good Governance Index

- Good Governance Index has been scientifically designed on various parameters of governance.
- It has been designed keeping in mind the citizen-centricity, which is the prime mantra of Government
- GGI would also seek to determine the status of governance as it exists today and it will provide reference threshold for future also.
- The Good Governance Index is a uniform tool across States to assess the Status of Governance and impact of various interventions taken up by the State Government and UTs.
- The objectives of GGI are to provide quantifiable data to compare the state of governance in all states and UTs, enable states and UTs to formulate and implement suitable strategies for improving governance and shift to result oriented approaches and administration.
- The GGI takes into consideration ten sectors: 1). Agriculture and Allied Sectors, 2). Commerce & Industries, 3). Human Resource Development, 4). Public Health, 5). Public Infrastructure & Utilities, 6). Economic Governance, 7). Social Welfare & Development, 8). Judicial & Public Security, 9). Environment and 10). Citizen-Centric Governance.
- These ten Governance Sectors are measured on total 50 indicators.

- Difference indicators are given different weightage under one Governance Sector to calculate the value.
- The states and UTs are divided into three groups: a). Big States, b). North-East & Hill States and c). UTs.
- The states and UTs are ranked on all indicators separately, at the same time composite ranking is also calculated for these states and UTs under their respective groups based upon these indicators.
- On the index, Tamil Nadu has got the highest score (5.62), followed by Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Chhattisgarh (5.4, 5.1, and 5.05) respectively.
- Among the Northeastern and hill states, Himachal Pradesh is at the top with a score of 5.22, followed by Uttarakhand, Tripura, and Mizoram at 4.87, 4.5, and 4.41 respectively.
- In the list of environment rankings, West Bengal is on top, followed by Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Bihar.
- In economic governance ranking, Karnataka leads, followed by Maharashtra, Telangana, Gujarat, and Tamil Nadu.

Central Secretariat Manual of Office Procedure (CSMOP)

- The main features of the CSMOP, is to enables the march towards the digital Secretariat
- The 1st CSMOP was published in 1955 and has been updated from time to time.
- The last edition (14th edition) was published in 2015.
- To meet the requirements of digital environment, DARPG has brought out 15th edition of CSMOP which integrates conventional office practices with e-office.
- Presently, more than 90% ministries have adopted e-office and 14,56,739 files are running in about 84 Ministries/ Departments through e-office.
- In total. 57 ministries/departments have achieved desired target of 80% and above in e-office.

Government Schemes: Prime Minister Launches Atal Bhujal Yojana

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Atal Bhujal Yojana) + Mains (GS II Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

What's the NEWS

- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its approval for the implementation of the Atal Bhujal Yojana (ATAL JAL), a Central Sector Scheme with a total outlay of Rs.6000 crore to be implemented over a period of 5 years (2020-21 to 2024-25).

Know! more about the scheme

- The scheme aims to improve ground water management through community participation in identified priority areas in seven States, viz. Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.
- Implementation of the scheme is expected to benefit nearly 8350 Gram Panchayats in 78 districts in these States.
- ATAL JAL will promote panchayat led ground water management and behavioural change with primary focus on demand side management

Launch of ATAL BHUJAL YOJANA
by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi

broadcasted through Common Services Centres

VLEs of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra
Districts: 78
Blocks : 193
Gram Panchayats: 8350
will showcase this event live to citizens
(List of the eligible districts is available on the link given below)

Date: Dec 25, 2019 **Time: 11:00 AM**

Live on **Doordarshan** <https://pmindiawebcast.nic.in/>

Rs. 200 will be paid to VLEs to showcase the event.
VLEs will upload two three good quality photographs on the links mentioned below
<http://pmevent.csc-services.in/?r-sessionimage/event&date-2019-12-25>

- Out of the total outlay of Rs. 6000 crore, 50% shall be in the form of World Bank loan, and be repaid by the Central Government.
- The remaining 50% shall be through Central Assistance from regular budgetary support. The entire World Bank's loan component and Central Assistance shall be passed on to the States as Grants.

ATAL JAL has two major components:

- **Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building Component** for strengthening institutional arrangements for sustainable ground water management in the States
- **Incentive Component** for incentivising the States for achievements in improved groundwater management practices

ATAL JAL will result in:

- Institutional strengthening for improving ground water monitoring networks
- Improved and realistic water budgeting based on an improved database and preparation of community-led Water Security Plans at Panchayat level
- Implementation of Water Security Plans through convergence of various ongoing/new schemes of the Government of India and State Governments to facilitate judicious and effective utilization of funds for sustainable ground water management.
- Efficient use of available ground water resources with emphasis on demand side measures such as micro-irrigation, crop diversification, electricity feeder separation etc.

Know! the present status of Ground water

- Ground water contributes to nearly 65% of total irrigated area of the country and nearly 85% of the rural drinking water supply.
- The limited ground water resources in the country are under threat due to the increasing demands of growing population, urbanization and industrialization.
- Intensive, and unregulated ground water pumping in many areas has caused rapid and widespread decline in ground water levels as well as reduction in the sustainability of ground water abstraction structures.
- The problem of reduction in ground water availability is further compounded by deteriorating ground water quality in some parts of the country.
- The increasing stress on ground water due to over- exploitation, contamination and associated environmental impacts threaten to endanger the food security of the nation, unless necessary preventive / remedial measures are taken on priority.

Know! more about ATAL JAL Scheme

- ATAL JAL has been designed with the principal objective of strengthening the institutional framework for participatory ground water management and bringing about behavioral changes at the community level for sustainable ground water resource management.
- The scheme envisages undertaking this through various interventions, including awareness programmes, capacity building, convergence of ongoing/new schemes and improved agricultural practices etc.

Strategic Tunnel under Rohtang Pass named after former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee

Know! all about Rohtang Pass

- Rohtang Tunnel, connecting Manali, Himachal Pradesh with Leh, Ladakh and Jammu Kashmir, will now be known as Atal Tunnel
- The 8.8-kilometre long tunnel is the world's longest tunnel above an altitude of 3,000 metres.
- It will reduce the distance between Manali and Leh by 46 kilometres and save crores of rupees in transport costs.
- It is a 10.5-metre wide single tube bi-lane tunnel with a fire proof emergency tunnel built into the main tunnel itself.

- The breakthrough from both ends was achieved on October 15, 2017.

- The tunnel is now nearing completion and is a step in the direction of providing all weather connectivity to remote border areas of Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh which otherwise remained cut off from the rest of the country for about six months during winters.

- The historic decision to construct a strategic tunnel below the Rohtang Pass was taken on June 03, 2000 when late Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the Prime Minister. The foundation stone for the Access Road to the South Portal of the tunnel was laid on May 26, 2002.

- The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) worked relentlessly to overcome major geological, terrain and weather challenges that included the most difficult stretch of the 587-metre Seri Nalah Fault Zone. The breakthrough from both ends was achieved on October 15, 2017.

- The tunnel is now nearing completion and is a step in the direction of providing all weather connectivity to remote border areas of Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh which otherwise remained cut off from the rest of the country for about six months during winters.

BRINGING MANALI & LADAKH CLOSER



► The Centre wants to construct three more tunnels along the **Manali-Leh highway** to make road access to remote areas possible during winter months too

► The **defence ministry** has proposed a **11.25km** tunnel below Baralacha pass, **14.78km** tunnel below Lachulung-la and **7.32km** tunnel below Taglang-la

► These tunnels will **shorten the distance** between **Manali** and **Ladakh** and also make the highway an all-weather one

► **Rohtang, Baralacha, Lachulung-la** and **Taglang-la** are the **high mountain passes** on the Manali-Leh highway and **remain inaccessible in winter** due to heavy snowfall



● The map is not scaled and is for representational purpose only

NITI Aayog: NITI Aayog to Launch SDG India Index & Dashboard 2019-20

Relevance IN – Prelims (about SDG India Index) + Mains (GS II Governance and Social Justice - Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.)

What's the NEWS

- NITI Aayog will launch the second edition of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) India Index, which documents the progress made by India's States and Union Territories towards implementing the 2030 SDG targets, on 30 December 2019 at NITI Aayog, New Delhi.

Know! more about SDG India Index

- The SDG India Index and Dashboard 2019–20 have been developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), the United Nations in India, and the Global Green Growth Institute.
- NITI Aayog has the mandate of overseeing the adoption and monitoring of SDGs in the country, at the national and sub-national level.
- The SDG India Index, whose first edition was launched in December 2018, was the first tool developed by any large country to monitor the progress towards achieving SDGs at the sub-national level.
- The SDG India Index and Dashboard 2019 tracks the progress of and ranks all States and UTs on 100 indicators drawn from MoSPI's National Indicator Framework, comprising 306 indicators.
- It indicates where the country and its States and UTs currently are on SDG implementation, and charts the distance to be travelled to reach the SDG targets. The Index covers 16 out of 17 SDGs and a qualitative assessment on Goal 17. This marks an improvement over the 2018 Index, which covered only 13 goals.



Relevance IN -Prelims(about SDG India Index 2019) + Mains (GS II Social issues Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

India is the first country in the world with a government-led, sub-national measure of progress on Sustainable Development Goals

What's the NEWS

- NITI Aayog today released the second edition of the *Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) India Index*, which comprehensively documents the progress made by India's States and Union Territories towards achieving the 2030 SDG targets.

Know! more about SDG India Index

- The *SDG India Index*—which has been developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), United Nations in India, and Global Green Growth Institute—was launched by NITI Aayog

Objective

- The government will not leave any stone unturned to make sure India achieves Agenda 2030.
- NITI Aayog has committed itself to building capacities and monitoring progress at the state level.
- Close coordination with the states over the next 5 years will further accelerate SDG localization and ensure greater improvement.'
- In 2020, the world enters the final decade for achieving the SDGs—the 'Decade for Action'. And the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change tells us that we have 12 years left to save the planet from the worst effects of climate change.
- So, the time to act is now. The *SDG India Index 2.0* and the dashboard enables India to both track and encourage accelerated progress to meet the SDGs across all its States and Union Territories

Know! the performance of States/UT (so far)

- India's composite score has improved from 57 in 2018 to 60 in 2019, thereby showing noticeable progress.
- The maximum gains been made in Goals 6 (clean water and sanitation), 9 (industry, innovation, and infrastructure) and 7 (affordable and clean energy).
- All three states that were in the 'Aspirant' category (with score/s in the range of 0–49)—Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Assam—have graduated to the 'Performer' category (50–64).
- Five states—Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Goa, and Sikkim—moved up from the 'Performer' category to the 'Front Runner' category (65–99).

- Kerala achieved the first rank in the composite *SDG Index* with a score of 70, followed by Himachal Pradesh at 69.
- Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu ranked at the third position with the score of 67.
- The biggest improvers since 2018 are UP (which has moved from the 29th position to the 23rd), Orissa (23rd to 15th), and Sikkim (15th to 7th).
- While Bihar improved its score from 48 in 2018 to 50 in 2019, it still has a long way to go in achieving the targets.

Know! more about SDG India Index

- The *SDG India Index 2019* tracks progress of all States and UTs on 100 indicators drawn from the MoSPI's National Indicator Framework (NIF).
- The process of selection of these indicators included multiple consultations with Union ministries/departments and States/UTs.
- The *SDG India Index 2019* is more robust than the first edition on account of wider coverage of goals, targets, and indicators with greater alignment with the NIF.
- The *Index* spans 16 out of 17 SDGs with a qualitative assessment on Goal 17.
- This marks an improvement over the 2018 *Index*, which covered only 13 goals.
- A composite score was computed in the range of 0–100 for each State/UT based on its aggregate performance across 16 SDGs, indicating the average performance of every State/UT towards achieving 16 SDGs and their respective targets.
- If a State/UT achieves a score of 100, it signifies it has achieved the 2030 national targets. The higher the score of a State/UT, the closer it is towards achieving the targets.

Classification criteria based on SDG India Index score is as follows:

- Aspirant: 0–49
- Performer: 50–64
- Front Runner: 65–99
- Achiever: 100
- NITI Aayog has the twin mandate to oversee the implementation of SDGs in the country and promote competitive and cooperative federalism among States and UTs.



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GENERAL STUDIES III

**Science & Technology Economic
Developments, Biodiversity,
Environment, Internal Security and
Disaster management**

Economic Development: Aditya Birla Finance becomes first company to list commercial papers on exchanges

Relevance IN – Prelims (about NBFC and about Commercial papers) + Mains (GS III economic development)

What's the NEWS

- Aditya Birla Finance Ltd (ABFL), the NBFC arm of Aditya Birla Capital, became the first company to list its commercial papers on the stock exchanges.
- The move comes after the exchanges -- the BSE and the NSE -- came out with a framework for listing of commercial papers (CPs), in a bid to broaden investors' participation in such securities.

Know! the benefits of CP

- Listing of CPs is expected to lead to efficient transmission of information regarding corporate borrowings and liquidity positions to market participants, the NSE said in a statement.
- It will also contribute effectively towards the development of the commercial paper market and is expected to have a positive effect on the debt capital market, it added.
- ABFL is a well-diversified non-banking finance company (NBFC) with a long-term credit rating of AAA (stable) from both ICRA as well as India Ratings.

Know! about CP

- CP is an unsecured money market instrument issued in the form of promissory notes that enables highly rated corporate borrowers to diversify their sources of short-term borrowings and provides an additional instrument to investors.
- Commercial papers can be issued for maturities between a minimum of 7 days and a maximum of up to one year from the date of issue. CP are usually issued at a discount from face value and reflects prevailing market interest rates.

Governance: Corporate Affairs Ministry Launches Independent Director's Databank

Relevance IN – Prelims (about independent director's database) + Mains (GS II good governance, accountability and transparency + GS III economic development)

What's the NEWS

- The Ministry of Corporate Affairs, with the objective of strengthening the institution of Independent Directors under the Companies Act, launched the Independent Director's Databank in accordance with the provisions of the Companies Act, 2013

Know! more about the database

- The Databank, is a pioneering initiative of the Ministry to provide an easy to access & navigate platform for the registration of existing Independent Directors as well as individuals aspiring to become independent directors.
- Powered by an Integrated Learning Management System, the various e-learning capsules and videos available in the system will enable Individual users to easily acquire knowledge from diverse resources, develop distinct skills and assess their understanding on company operations, regulations and compliances.

New Norms to Improve Governance

- ▶ Independent directors concerned about government's new law
- ▶ Govt has introduced a qualifying exam for independent directors
- ▶ The exam will be conducted by IICA and 60% will be the pass mark
- ▶ There's no bar on how many times the exam can be taken
- ▶ The norm applies to listed companies and unlisted ones with more than ₹10 cr of paid-up capital

▶ The performance in the test has to be disclosed by the companies on annual reports

Experts say boards need diversified expertise based on the business they are into and hence cannot have a uniform benchmark

- Companies also may register themselves with the databank to search, select and connect with individuals who possess the right skills and attitude for being considered for appointment as Independent Directors as the Databank is expected to become a comprehensive repository of both existing independent directors as well as individuals eligible and willing to be appointed as Independent Directors.
- The Databank portal which has been developed and will be maintained by the Indian Institute for Corporate Affairs (IICA), is a first of its kind initiative from the Ministry.
- It provides for a wide array of e-learning courses on various topics including the Companies Act, Securities laws, basic accountancy, board practices, board ethics and board effectiveness.
- As per the notified rules, all existing Independent Directors are required to register themselves in the databank

Environment Conservation: Blue Flag Certification for beaches

Relevance IN – Prelims (about blue flag certification) + Mains (GS III environment conservation)

What's the NEWS

- The Ministry has embarked upon a programme for 'Blue Flag' Certification for select beaches in the country.

Know! more about it

- This Certification is accorded by an international agency "Foundation for Environment Education, Denmark" based on 33 stringent criteria in four major heads i.e. (i) Environmental Education and Information, (ii) Bathing Water Quality, (iii) Environment Management and Conservation and (iv) Safety and Services in the beaches.
- The 'Blue Flag' beach is an Eco-tourism model endeavouring to provide to the tourists/beach goers clean and hygienic bathing water, facilities/amenities, safe and healthy environment and sustainable development of the area.
- 13 pilot beaches that have been identified for the certification, in consultation with concerned coastal States/UTs, are Ghoghala Beach (Diu), Shivrajpur beach (Gujarat), Bhogave (Maharashtra), Padubidri and Kasarkod (Karnagaka), Kappad beach (Kerala), Kovalam beach (Tamil Nadu), Eden beach (Puducherry), Rushikonda beach (Andhra Pradesh), Miramar beach (Goa), Golden beach (Odisha), Radhanagar beach (Andaman & Nicobar Islands) and Bangaram beach (Lakshadweep).



Infrastructure Development: Ministry of Civil Aviation Launches Round 4 of RCS- UDAN

Relevance IN – Prelims (about UDAN 4.0) + Mains (GS III infrastructure development +GS II Government policies and intervention for the development of various sectors)

What's the NEWS

- Following the three successful rounds of bidding, the Ministry of Civil Aviation has launched the 4th round of Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS)- UdeDeshKaAamNagrik(UDAN) to further enhance the connectivity to remote and regional areas of the country.
- Focus of this round would be the priority areas like NER, Hilly States, J&K, Ladakh and Islands. Some of the key features of the Scheme are:

Know! more about UDAN 4.0

Revision of (Viability Gap Funding) VGF cap –

Category 2 / 3 aircraft (more than 20 seater)

- The provision of VGF for aircraft (more than 20 seater) has been enhanced for operation of RCS flights in Priority Area(s) (Union Territories [UT] of Ladakh and Jammu & Kashmir; the States of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, North Eastern State; UT of Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar).

Category 1 aircraft (below 20 seater)

- The VGF cap applicable for various stage lengths for operation through aircraft (below 20 seater) has also been revised to further incentivize the operation of small aircraft under the Scheme.

Promoting short-haul routes

- The provision of VGF would be restricted for routes with stage length up to 600 kms, for operation of Category 2 / 3 aircraft, beyond it no monetary support would be provided. The table for provision of VGF for various stage lengths would be available for stage length up to 500 kms.

Well defined Prioritization framework

- Airports that has already been developed by AAI would be given higher priority for award of VGF under the Scheme, followed by airports not part of the above list but located Priority Area(s) would be given a priority, followed by airports located in areas other than Priority Area(s).

Flexibility to change the frequency of flight operation

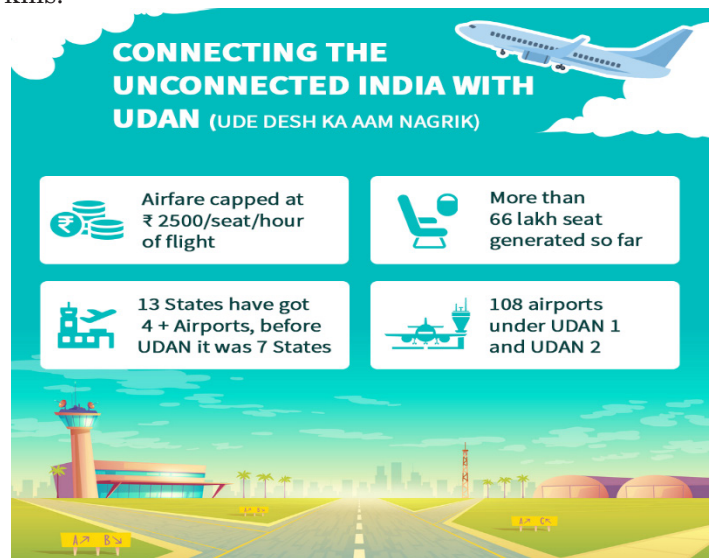
- The Selected Airline Operator (SAO) would be allowed to change the frequency of flight operation, during the tenure of flight operation of the given route, provided that the total scheduled flight operation submitted as part of the Technical Proposal, is conformed and adhered to within a period of one year.

Inclusion of helicopter and sea plane operation under NSOP license

- The operation of helicopter and sea plane would be allowed under this round.

Progress of UDAN 1, 2 and 3

- In the last three years MoCA has successfully completed three rounds of bidding under the Scheme and awarded about 700 routes.



The table on progress of RCS UDAN is provided below (as on 31st of October, 2019):

Scheme	Valid RCS Route / Awarded	RCS Airports (including Heliports and Water Aerodromes)	RCS routes operationalized
UDAN-1	56	43 (31 unserved, 12 undeserved)	54
UDAN-2	297	30 Airports (25 unserved, 5 underserved) + 31 Heliports	104
UDAN-3 (including 3.1)	335	33 airports (20 unserved, 3 underserved, 10 water aerodromes)	74
UDAN (Total)	688	106 Airports+ 31 Heliports	232

- MoCA aims to operationalize 1000 routes and more than 100 airports in the next five years.
- This would be achieved by focusing on operationalizing routes in Priority Areas.
- AAI would focus on developing no-frills airport in the future and routes connecting such airports would be prioritized for award of VGF.
- The market would be incentivized to develop short haul routes only, providing connectivity to nearby airports.

Know! about no-frills airports

- The no-frills airports would limit or avoid costs of services and activities that are not necessarily crucial for airport operations and that would allow the costs to be kept at the lowest possible level. These costs are mainly related to landing fees, parking fees, security and civic amenities at the airports.

Know! about Viable Gap Funding

- VGF is an economic instrument (or scheme) of Government of India, launched in 2004 with the motive of supporting projects which come under public-private partnerships (PPP) model
- Basically, it is a grant to support projects that are economically justified but are not financially viable.
- Latest examples of these are UDAN Regional connectivity scheme and Metro rail projects. Under this scheme, the central government offers a VGF upto 20% for a particular project.

VGF is generally provided to those projects which have a long gestation period (time difference between your investment and it earning profit for you) and when the user charges cannot be increased to commercial levels

Economic Development: RBI Monetary Policy

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the MPC decisions taken in the 5th bi monthly policy) + Mains (GS III economic development)

What's the NEWS

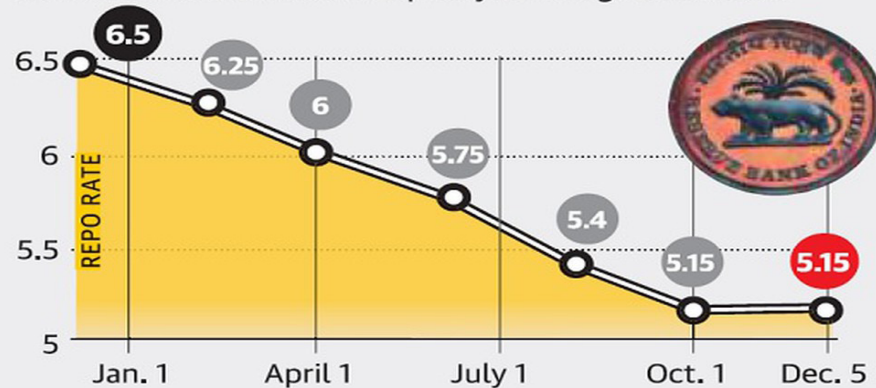
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released its fifth bi-monthly monetary policy statement for 2019-20 in which the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), led by Governor Shaktikanta Das, decided to keep the policy repo rate unchanged at 5.15%.
- In 2019, the RBI has cut repo rate by 135 basis points so far to a nine-year low of 5.15%. Analysts were expecting another 25 basis points cut.

Know! the takeout of 5th MPC

- The RBI has announced that it will launch a new type of prepaid payments instrument (PPI) which can be used only for purchase of goods and services up to a limit of 10,000.
- Transmission of interest rates is expected to improve soon as the share of base rate loans, interest rates on which have remained sticky, declines; and MCLR-based floating rate loans, which typically have annual resets, become due for renewal, RBI said.
- As against the cumulative reduction in the policy repo rate by 135 bps during February-October 2019, transmission to various money and corporate debt market segments ranged from 137 bps (overnight call money market) to 218 bps.

Status quo

The RBI has retained the repo rate (rate at which the central bank lends to commercial banks) at 5.15%. It had reduced the rate at five consecutive policy meetings till October



- RBI has lowered its real GDP growth forecast for 2019-20 from 6.1% in the October policy to 5%.
- The MPC decided to keep the policy repo rate unchanged and continue with the accommodative stance as long as it is necessary to revive growth, while ensuring that inflation remains within the target.
- In its report, the MPC has noted that economic activity has weakened further and the output gap remains negative.
- These decisions are in consonance with the objective of achieving the medium-term target for consumer price index (CPI) inflation of 4 per cent within a band of +/- 2 per cent, while supporting growth, the RBI said.
- The MPC has decided to continue with the accommodative stance as long as it is necessary to revive growth, while ensuring that inflation remains within the target.
- In its last bi-monthly policy statement, the RBI had maintained “accommodative stance” and cut its key lending rate to 5.15%.
- Easing of monetary policy could allow banks to reduce their lending rates and help both consumers and the industry to get cheaper finance.

Know! some Economic terminology

Headwinds

- Situation that will make growth more difficult.

Tailwinds

- Some condition or situation that will help move growth higher.

Output Gap

- It is the difference between actual output of the economy and its maximum potential.
- In recent times, India is facing the problem of negative Output Gap.

Light Touch

- It is a situation in which something is not controlled very strictly.

Monetary Policy Stances

Calibrated Tightening

- Calibrated tightening means rate cut is “off the table”.
- Going forward, there can only be two actions, either MPC may increase the repo rate or keep them steady.

Neutral

- It is the level i.e., neither expansionary nor contractionary.
- Neutral monetary policy is effective and appropriate, if the economy is at full employment with low inflation and steady sustainable growth.
- The interest rates can move in either direction.

Accommodative

- It is to expand the overall money supply to boost the economy, when growth is slowing.
- It is also known as “easy monetary policy”.
- It is to encourage more spending from consumers and businesses.

Monetary Transmission

- The repo rate is the interest rate, in which banks can borrow money from the RBI for short durations.
- Changing this rate usually influences interest rates across the economy and in the same direction. This is known as monetary transmission.

Defence: IAF may get ‘No Escape’ Meteor missiles in May

Relevance IN – Prelims (about meteor missile and about Rafale missile)

What’s the NEWS

- France is considering a request for early delivery of Meteor air-to-air missiles that will give India the firepower to take on US supplied AMRAAMs used by the Pakistan Air Force to target its fighter jets the day after the Balakot airstrikes in February.

Know! more about the missile

- The beyond-visual-range (BVR) missiles, which will outgun all other air forces in the region, were to come by late 2020 but an Indian request for at least 10 missiles in advance with the delivery of the first set of Rafale fighter jets is under consideration
- The first four Rafale fighter jets are set to arrive in India by May 2020 after training of pilots and ground teams, besides extensive performance trials in France after the handing over ceremony in October this year.
- As per plans, these fighters were to be initially equipped with the Mica air-to-air missiles that are also operational on the Mirage 2000 fleet and supplemented later with the Meteor
- The beyond visual range air-to-air missile is considered to be the best in its class and can take out enemy aircraft at a range of much beyond 100 km, outranging the American origin AMRAAM being used by Pakistan.
- The Indian Air Force is also set to get an opportunity to engage its new Rafale jets with ace pilots of the French Air Force next year when a batch of Rafale fighters and A 400 M military transport aircraft head to India for a joint exercise.
- India has been keen to conduct a tri-services training exercise with France as well, and the air force war games have been scheduled for August 2020.
- Indian Rafale jets will also get the “game-changing” SCALP stand-off missiles that have a range of over 300 km and are designed to hit high value, strongly protected targets deep inside enemy territory.
- These missiles have been successfully used by French forces in Operational Chammal. Rafale jets can carry two of the missiles, making them capable of hitting almost any target in Pakistan.
- This ‘stand-off’ capability is becoming central to the Indian defence strategy, with the air-to-air and air-to-ground missiles being supplemented with the S-400 anti-air system being procured from Russia that will have the ability to take down airborne targets over the entire Pakistani airspace, if the need arises.

Know! more about Rafale and steps taken by Air Force to boost air – defence

- IAF says the operational dynamics for achieving “air dominance” will change with the induction of the Rafales armed with the greater-range Meteor missiles powered by Ramjet engines to fly at Mach 4 speed.

INDO-FRENCH COOPERATION



Meteor Missiles were to be delivered late next year

INDIA ASKS for early delivery of at least 10 missiles that outgun all nations in the region

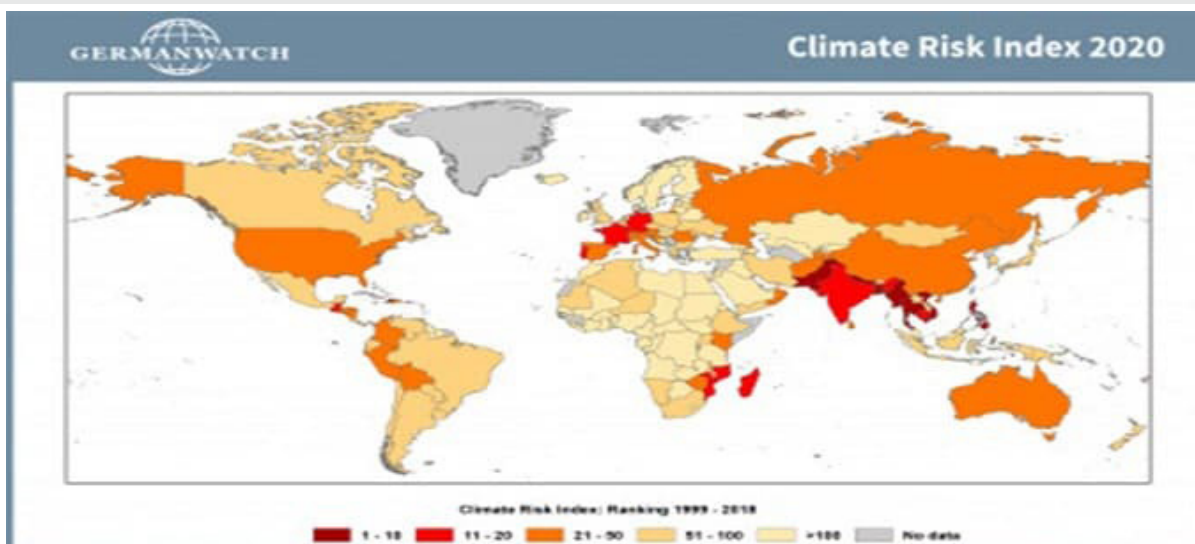
IAF INVITED to UAE to witness French Rafale jets performance in hot weather

FRENCH NAVY Rafale and A 400M transport aircraft to visit India in August 2020 for joint drills

NEW TRI Services exercise with France likely soon

- The Meteor missiles are arguably the best in the world for air combat duels, with “a greater no-escape zone” for hostile fighters than any comparable BVR weapon. Pakistan and China do not currently have any missile of this class in their combat inventories.
- The omni-role Rafale jets, can also deliver nuclear weapons if required, in an environment of high temperatures.
- An IAF induction team of pilots, engineers and technicians is currently undergoing training in France, which has so far handed over three Rafales to India. Once this training is over, the first four Rafales will head for India in May 2020.
- All the 36 jets will arrive in India by April 2022, with 18 each to be deployed at the Ambala and Hasimara airbases for the western and eastern fronts with Pakistan and China.
- The Rafales, with a combat range of 780-km to 1,650-km depending on mission, come armed with a deadly weapons package, advanced avionics, radars and electronic warfare systems to prevent jamming by adversaries and ensure superior survivability in hostile contested airspace.
- Each Rafale can also carry two fire-and-forget Scalp cruise missiles to hit high-value fortified targets well over 300-km away.

Environment Conservation: India ranks 5th in Global Climate Risk Index 2020



India ranks 5th in Global Climate Risk Index

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Global climate risk index and its findings) + Mains (GS III environment conservation)

What's the NEWS

- India is the fifth most vulnerable country to climate change, according to a report released by Environment think tank, Germanwatch.

Know! more about the report findings

- In the Climate Risk Index 2020, India's rank has worsened from the 14th spot in 2017 to 5th in 2018 in the global ...
- The southwest monsoon in 2018 severely affected India, the analysis said adding that Kerala was especially impacted where 324 people died because of drowning or being buried in the landslides set off by the flooding—the worst in hundred years.
- India has also recorded the highest number of fatalities due to climate change and the second highest monetary losses from its impact in 2018 and the second highest monetary losses from its impact in 2018.
- Over 220, 000 people had to leave their homes, 20 000 houses and 80 dams were destroyed. The damage amounted to US\$ 2.8 billion.

- India east coast was also hit by cyclones Titli and Gaja in October and November 2018. With wind speeds of up to 150 kilometres per hour, cyclone Titli killed at least eight people and left around 450 000 without electricity.
- Japan remains the most vulnerable, according to the analysis, because it was hit by extreme weather events in 2018. From 6th to 8th of July, heavy rainfall with more than 200 mm/day was measured.
- The torrential rainfall resulted in flash floods and mudslides, killing more than 200 people and led to over 5 000 houses being damaged and the evacuation of 2.3 million people. The event caused losses to the tune of US\$ 7 billion.
- From mid-July to the end of August 2018, severe heatwave led to 138 fatalities and in September 2018, Typhoon Jebi made landfall in Japan.
- Germany experienced the second hottest year in 2018 since records began. The period between April and July 2018 was the hottest ever recorded in Germany, with temperatures 2.9 C above average and led to the death of 1234 people.

Know! about Global Climate Risk Index

- The Global Climate Risk Index 2020, published by environmental think tank Germanwatch which assessed 181 countries and quantified impacts of climate change through economic losses, losses to GDP and fatalities to arrive at a ranking, found Japan to be the most vulnerable followed by Philippines, Germany, Madagascar and India.
- The Climate Risk Index — based on data from the Munich Re NatCatSERVICE, one of the largest databases on natural catastrophes, has another set of ranking for the period 1999-2018 — which is based on average values over a twenty-year period.
- In the 1999 to 2018 period Puerto Rico is the most vulnerable followed by Myanmar, Haiti, Philippines and Pakistan. India is ranked 17th under long term vulnerability.

Economic Development: NEFT to be available 24x7 from December 16: RBI

Relevance IN – Prelims (about NEFT and RTGS) + Mains (GS III economic development)

What's the NEWS

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said the National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT) facility should be made available by member banks participating in the payment system from December 16 on all days of the year, including holidays.

Know! more about NEFT

- NEFT is a nation-wide payment system facilitating one-to-one funds transfer.
- Under this scheme, individuals, firms and corporates can electronically transfer funds from any bank branch to any individual, firm or corporate having an account with any other bank branch in the country participating in the scheme.
- With effect from December 16 (00:30 hours), there will be 48 half-hourly batches every day.
- The settlement of first batch will commence after 00:30 hours, and the last batch will end at 00:00 hours.
- Currently, fund transfer transactions are settled in batches under NEFT, which operates in 23 half-hourly batches from 8 am to 7 pm on working days.
- These transactions after the usual banking hours are set to be automated initiated using 'Straight Through Processing (STP)' modes by the banks.
- The RBI said that the existing discipline for crediting beneficiary's account or returning the transaction (within two hours of settlement of the respective batch) to the originating bank will continue.
- The RBI had decided not to impose any charge on transactions done through NEFT and RTGS system from July 1, 2019.
- Earlier, the central bank used to levy minimum charges on the banks for transactions done through NEFT and RTGS system and the banks, in turn, levied charges on their customers.
- While NEFT is used for money transfers up to Rs 2 lakh, the Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) system is used for large-value instantaneous fund transfers.

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India's forex reserves cross \$450 billion for the first time

Relevance IN – Prelims (about foreign exchange + about SDR) + Mains (GS III Economic development)

What's the NEWS

- The country's foreign exchange reserves crossed the \$450-billion mark for the first time ever on the back of strong inflows which enabled the central bank to buy dollars from the market, thus checking any sharp appreciation of the rupee.
- India's foreign exchange reserves were at \$451.7 billion on December 3, 2019 — an increase of \$38.8 billion over end-March 2019
- The rise in foreign exchange reserves will give the central bank the firepower to act against any sharp depreciation of the rupee
- The Reserve Bank has always maintained that it intervenes in the foreign exchange market to curb volatility and does not target a particular level of exchange rate.

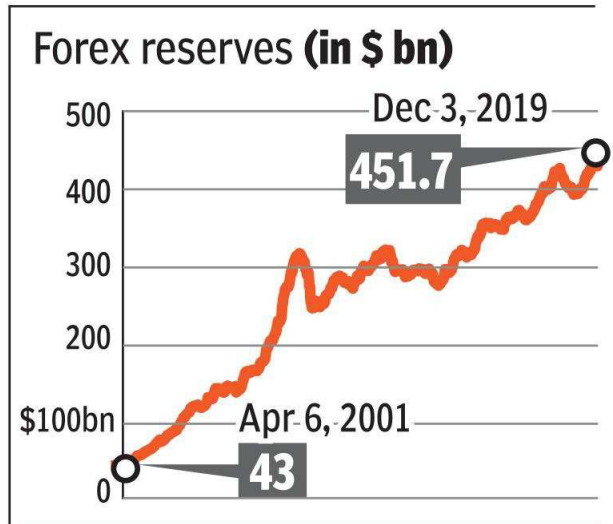
Foreign investment

- Net foreign direct investment rose to \$20.9 billion in the first half of 2019-20 from \$17 billion a year ago while net foreign portfolio investment was \$8.8 billion in April-November 2019 as against net outflows of \$14.9 billion in the same period last year.
- During the taper tantrums of 2013, (or the collective reactionary panic after the U.S. Federal Reserve said it would apply the brakes on its Quantitative Easing programme)
- India's foreign exchange reserves fell to \$274.8 billion in September of 2013, prompting the Centre and RBI to unleash measures to attract inflows. It has been a steady rise for the reserves since then, with \$175 billion added in the last six years.

Know! about Special Drawing Right

- The SDR is an international reserve asset, created by the IMF in 1969 to supplement its member countries' official reserves.
- So far SDR 204.2 billion (equivalent to about US\$291 billion) have been allocated to members, including SDR 182.6 billion allocated in 2009 in the wake of the global financial crisis.
- The value of the SDR is based on a basket of five currencies—the U.S. dollar, the euro, the Chinese renminbi, the Japanese yen, and the British pound sterling.
- The SDR was created as a supplementary international reserve asset in the context of the Bretton Woods fixed exchange rate system.
- The collapse of Bretton Woods system in 1973 and the shift of major currencies to floating exchange rate regimes lessened the reliance on the SDR as a global reserve asset.
- Nonetheless, SDR allocations can play a role in providing liquidity and supplementing member countries' official reserves, as was the case with the 2009 allocations totaling SDR 182.6 billion to IMF members amid the global financial crisis.
- The SDR is neither a currency nor a claim on the IMF. Rather, it is a potential claim on the freely usable currencies of IMF members. SDRs can be exchanged for these currencies.
- The SDR was initially defined as equivalent to 0.888671 grams of fine gold—which, at the time, was also equivalent to one U.S. dollar. After the collapse of the Bretton Woods system, the SDR was redefined as a basket of currencies.
- The SDR basket is reviewed every five years, or earlier if warranted, to ensure that the SDR reflects the relative importance of currencies in the world's trading and financial systems.

18-YEAR JOURNEY

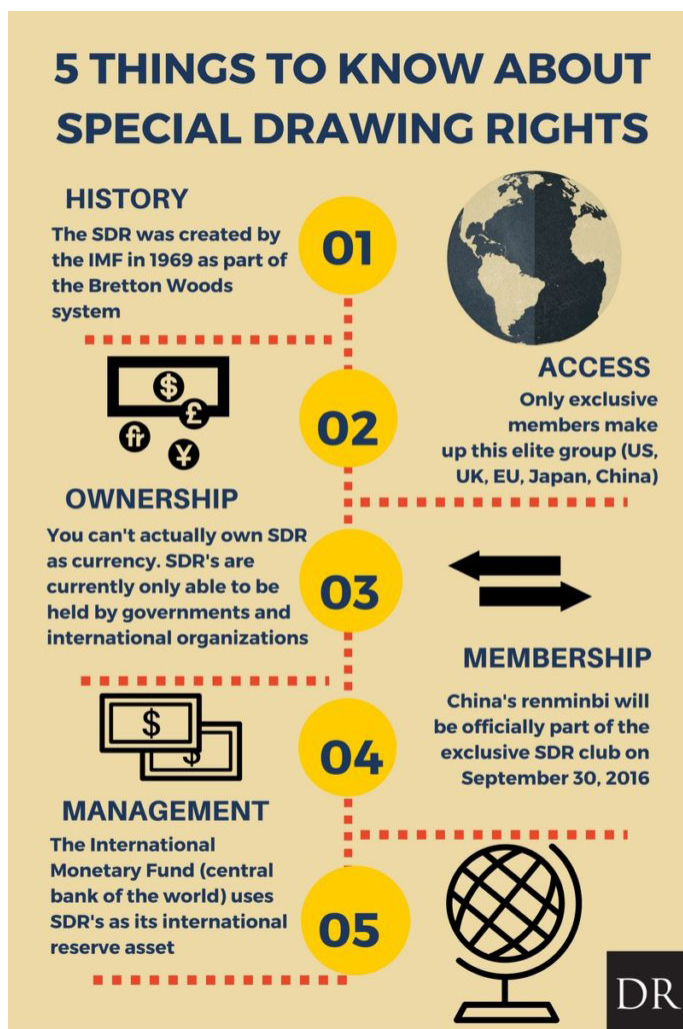


- The value of the SDR is determined daily based on market exchange rates.
- The reviews are also used to assess the appropriateness of the financial instruments comprising the SDR interest rate (SDRi) basket.

Currency	Weights determined in the 2015 Review	Fixed Number of Units of Currency for a 5-year period Starting Oct 1, 2016
U.S. Dollar	41.73	0.58252
Euro	30.93	0.38671
Chinese Yuan	10.92	1.0174
Japanese Yen	8.33	11.900
Pound Sterling	8.09	0.085946

During the last review concluded in November 2015, the Board decided that the Chinese renminbi (RMB) met the criteria for inclusion in the SDR basket.

- Following this decision, the Chinese RMB joined the US dollar, euro, Japanese yen, and British pound sterling in the SDR basket, effective October 1, 2016.



Environment Conservation: Landmark ‘ The Recycling of Ships Bill, 2019’ passed in Parliament

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the Recycling of Ships Bill 2019) + Mains (GS III Environment conservation)

What's the NEWS

- Parliament passed a landmark “The Recycling of Ships Bill 2019” for Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships in India.

Know! more about the bill

- Passing of this Bill is a giant step and historical moment in the Indian Maritime arena and will have far reaching effects in Indian Ship Recycling industry.
- The existing Shipbreaking Code (revised),2013 and the provisions of the Hong Kong Convention, 2009 are dovetailed in this Bill.
- The Bill, upon becoming Act, will ensure environment friendly recycling process of Ships and adequate safety of the yard workers.
- India is a leader in the global ship recycling industry with a share of over 30 per cent of the global market.
- With the enactment of this bill, India will set global standards for safe and sound environmentally-friendly recycling of Ships, as well as ensure adequate safety of the yard workers.
- This bill will pave the way for more global ships to enter into Indian Shipyards for recycling and boost employment and business opportunities

- Ships to be recycled in India will need to obtain a 'Ready for Recycling Certificate' in accordance with the Hong Kong Convention.

The Key Benefits of the bill are as follows:

- The bill will harbingers significant increased number of global ships entering into Indian Shipyards for Recycling.
- Recycling of Ships will boost business & employment opportunities and strengthen India's position in the recycling industry.
- It will raise the brand value of our Ships Recycling Yards located at Alang in Gujarat, Mumbai Port, Kolkata Port & Azhikkal in Kerala.
- 10% of country's Secondary steel needs, as an outcome of Recycling of Ships, will be met in an eco-friendly manner.
- Ships Recycling facilities will become compliant to International standards and Ships will be recycled only in such authorised facilities.
- The tremendous growth of business activities will contribute to the country's GDP.

NITI Aayog: AIM-SIRIUS Deep Technology Learning, Innovation Programme in Sochi concludes



Relevance IN – Prelims (about AIM-SIRIUS) + Mains (GS III awareness in the field of science and technology)

What's the NEWS

- The second phase of NITI Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) and Russia's SIRIUS Deep Technology Learning and Innovation Programme 2019 in Sochi comes to an end as 25 Indian students returned with best practices of contemporary innovation and entrepreneurship.

Know! more about SIRIUS

- SIRIUS hosted an eight-day project oriented educational program from 28 November to 8 December 2019.
- It was held in accordance with Memorandum of Understanding signed between AIM and SIRIUS last year.
- All 50 Russian and Indian students shared best contemporary innovation practices with each other under various categories: IT & Data Analysis, Clean Energy, Biotech, Remote Earth Sensing and Drones & Robotics.
- Under 'IT & Data Analysis', students created a classification of farmland using satellite data and neural network for effective management of crop land.
- Under 'Clean Energy', students created a carbon free energy system/island where researchers from all over the world can lead research on tech advancement. It can sustain energy requirement of up to 600 people.

Know! more about AIM-SIRIUS

- Indian delegation to Russia described the programme as an amazing experience for 50 Indian and Russian students to interact and present their joint co-innovations to President Putin at the state of the art Sirius

Science and Tech Talent Centre, Sochi Russia. AIM would continue to provide students such opportunities to excel

- SIRIUS Innovation Festival held in India last year witnessed a delegation of 10 Russian student innovators and 10 Indian innovators from the best performing Atal Tinkering Labs (ATLs).

Economic Development: Bharat Bond Exchange Traded Fund

IT'S TIME TO BOND

INDIA'S FIRST CORPORATE BOND ETF

- ETF to have basket of CPSE bonds
- It will initially have all AAA rated bonds
- It will have 2 maturity series - 3 & 10 years

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Bond ETFs to get indexation benefit	Tax Incidence to be lower than bonds or debt MFs	It will trade on the exchange
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BOND MARKET BOOST

- It will help in better price discovery of underlying bonds
- It is expected to create a yield curve
- It will create ladder of Bond ETFs with different maturities across calendar years

Now what we have done... is that we are trying to deepen the bond market in India

Nirmala Sitharaman
Finance Minister

Relevance IN – Prelims (about ETF) + Mains (GS III economic development)

What's the NEWS

- The Union Cabinet has recently approved launching a bond ETF (Exchange Traded Fund).
- Called the Bharat Bond ETF, this fund will track the index comprising debt securities of Public Sector Undertakings with the highest credit rating.

Know! more about Bharat Bond ETF

- Unlike existing ETFs in India, the Bharat Bond ETF will have a defined maturity date just like bonds and fixed maturity plans of mutual funds.
- On maturity, investors will get the investment proceeds along with returns.
- Edelweiss MF is launching two series of Bharat Bond ETFs — one matures in April 2023 and the other after 10 years (ie April 2030).
- These ETFs will invest only in AAA-rated bonds issued by PSUs maturing on or before the maturity of the ETFs.
- The ETF will hold the bonds till maturity and coupons received from those bonds will be reinvested in the fund.
- Through demat accounts, investors can buy and sell units at the prevailing market prices.
- Bharat Bond ETF will be the first corporate bond debt ETF to be launched in India.
- An ETF or exchange traded fund invests in a basket of securities that mostly tracks a certain index.
- ETFs are similar to mutual funds, but the big difference is that can be bought and sold only through the stock exchanges.

- A bond ETF invests in a basket of bonds in the underlying index. It can invest in the government, corporate, or public sector unit bonds.

Know! more about the First Corporate Bond ETF

- It would be the first corporate bond ETF in the country. Initially, it will constitute AAA -rated bonds.
- Price will be kept at Rs.1,000 per unit to attract retail investors.
- Each ETF will have a fixed maturity date. Initially they will be issued in two series, of three years and ten years.
- A bond ETF is cheaper than an actively-managed debt fund. For instance, Bharat Bond ETF will charge 0.0005%.
- The Asset Management Company Edelweiss charges an expense ratio of 0.0005% for managing the Bharat Bond ETF. This is the cheapest among mutual funds schemes and ETFs in India
- ETFs are passively managed mutual funds. These are traded on the BSE and NSE.
- Through demat accounts, investors can buy and sell units at the prevailing market prices.
- It is the cheapest mutual fund product in India and one of the cheapest debt fund products in the world,” claims Edelweiss Mutual Fund.

BHARAT BOND ETF
Cabinet approves launch of India's first corporate bond ETF

FEATURES

- Fund to help CPSEs raise funds from debt markets
- ETF units will be listed on the exchanges
- Each ETF to have fixed maturity date
- ETF will track underlying Index on risk replication basis
- Small unit size ₹1,000
- Transparent NAV (Periodic live NAV during the day)
- Transparent Portfolio (Daily disclosure on website)
- Low cost (0.0005%)
- 3-yr and 10-yr plan
- Edelweiss AMC will be the firm issuing the Bharat Bond ETF

Environment Conservation/Prelims Factoids: Greta Thunberg named Time magazine's person of the year

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Greta Thunberg and awareness campaign initiated by her)

- **What's the NEWS**
- Teen activist lauded by magazine for starting an environmental campaign which became a global movement

Know! more about her and the campaign associated with her

- Greta Thunberg, the teen activist from Sweden who has urged immediate action to address a global climate crisis, was named Time magazine's person of the year for 2019. She is the youngest person to have ever received the accolade.
- Thunberg, 16, was lauded by Time for starting an environmental campaign in August 2018 which became a global movement, initially skipping school and camping out in front of the Swedish parliament to demand action.
- In the 16 months since, she has addressed heads of state at the UN, met with the pope, sparred with the president of the United States and inspired 4 million people to join the global climate strike on September 20, 2019, in what was the largest climate demonstration in human history
- Greta Thunberg also gave a speech at the United Nations Climate Action Summit this year. The speech was widely appreciated worldwide. Explain that Greta suffers



from Asperger syndrome. Time Magazine said that she has managed to attract worldwide attention, changed millions of vague ideas, called for immediate change, and turned an idea into a global movement.

Know! about Fridays for Future (FFF) campaign initiated by Greta Thunberg

- The school strike for the climate also known variously as Fridays for Future (FFF), Youth for Climate, Climate Strike or Youth Strike for Climate, is an international movement of school students who take time off from class to participate in demonstrations to demand action to prevent further global warming and climate change.
- Publicity and widespread organising began after Swedish schoolgirl Greta Thunberg staged a protest in August 2018 outside the Swedish Riksdag (parliament), holding a sign that read “Skolstrejk för klimatet” (“School strike for the climate”)
- A global strike on 15 March 2019 gathered more than one million strikers. Around 2200 strikes were organised in 125 countries.
- On 24 May 2019, the second global strike took place, in which 1600 events across 150 countries drew hundreds of thousands of protesters. The events were timed to coincide with the 2019 European Parliament election

Economic Development: Rajya Sabha passes International Financial Services Centres Authority Bill, 2019

Relevance IN – Prelims (about IFSC) + Mains (GS III economic development)

What's the NEWS

- The Rajya Sabha passed the International Financial Services Centres (IFSCs) Authority Bill, 2019 towards setting up a unified authority to regulate all financial services in IFSCs in the country
- The Lok Sabha has already passed Bill and will become a law after the President's assent.
- The bill will be applicable to all the International Financial Services Centres in India, which were set up under the Special Economic Zones Act, 2005.

Know! about IFSC

- An IFSC caters to customers outside the jurisdiction of the domestic economy. Such centres deal with flows of finance, financial products and services across borders. London, New York and Singapore can be counted as global financial centres.
- The first IFSC in India has been set up at GIFT City in Gujarat's Gandhinagar. IFSCs can be set up in an SEZ or as an SEZ after approval from the Centre.
- IFSCs would also provide Indian companies easier access to global financial markets and also enable the development of financial markets in India.
- In a path breaking reform, both Houses pass International Financial Services Authority Bill, 2019.

Know! about the unified financial regulator for IFSCs

International Financial Services Centres Authority

- The International Financial Services Centres Authority will comprise nine members including a Chairperson, all of whom will be appointed by the Union government
- It will set up world class unified regulator for international financial services combining powers and functions of RBI, SEBI, IRDAI And PFRDA
- According to the Bill, the authority comprise a chairperson, and one member each nominated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI), the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) and the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority(PFRDA).
- There will also be two members from the central government and full-time or part-time members.
- Apart from regulating all financial services and products, the authority can also recommend any other financial products to the central government.
- Currently, the banking, capital markets and insurance sectors in IFSC are regulated by multiple regulators such as RBI, SEBI and IRDAI.

- All members will have a term of three years, subject to their reappointment.

Know! about Performance Review Committee

- The authority will be required to constitute a Performance Review Committee, which will review its functioning. The committee will comprise at least two members of the Authority.
- The committee will be required to submit a report of its findings to the authority at least once every year.
- The committee will review whether the authority has followed the provisions of the applicable laws while exercising its powers and performing its functions.
- It will also review the regulations made by the Authority, and evaluate whether they promote transparency and best practices of governance.

Know! about International Financial Services Centres Authority Fund

- The International Financial Services Centres Authority Bill, 2019 has also proposed setting up of the International Financial Services Centres Authority Fund.
- All grants, fees, charges and sums received by the authority from different sources, as decided by the centre, will be credited to the fund.
- The fund will be utilized to give salaries, allowances and other remuneration to the members and employees of the Authority and for other expenses incurred by the Authority.

Economic Development: Cabinet authorises NHAI to set up InvIT to monetise national highways

Relevance IN – Prelims (about InvIT) + Mains (GS III economic development)

What's the NEWS

- The Union Cabinet approved the proposal of Ministry of Road Transport and Highways to authorise the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) to set up Infrastructure Investment Trust(s) (InvIT) to monetise completed national highways that have a toll collection track record of at least one year.
- The INvIT guidelines would be issued by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) and NHAI will reserve the right to levy toll on the identified highway.

Know! about InvITs

- InvITs are trusts, similar to mutual funds listed on a stock exchange, which raise funds from investors, acquire income yielding infrastructure assets, manage such assets and distribute regular yields to investors.
- InvIT as an instrument provides greater flexibility to investors and is expected to lead to the creation of specialised O&M (operation and maintenance) concessionaires and attract patient capital (for say 20-30 years) to the Indian highway market, as these investors are averse to risk and are interested in investing in assets which provide long-term stable returns
- Retail domestic savings and corpus of special institutions such as mutual funds, Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA), among others, will be invested in infrastructure sector through InvIT.

Know! what's the need

- In October 2017, the government launched Bharatmala Pariyojana – its flagship highway development programme for the development of 24,800 km of roads for a total investment of Rs 535,000 crore

CABINET DECISIONS
11 DECEMBER 2019

ENSURING EFFICIENT HIGHWAY INFRASTRUCTURE

Cabinet authorises NHAI to set up Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT)



To enable NHAI to monetise completed National Highways that has a toll collection record of 1 year



Investment from individuals & institutional investors allowed in infrastructure projects



InvIT expected to attract patient capital for around 30 years to the highways market



InvIT expected to create specialized Operation & Management Concessionaires

- Given the magnitude of the Bharatmala program, NHAI would need adequate funds to complete the projects within the prescribed timeline.
- As part of this exercise, a workable option is to monetise the completed and operational national highway assets to unlock their value and offer attractive schemes to private players to invest in construction of national highways.

Know! more about NHAI InvIT

- NHAI's InvIT will be a trust established by NHAI under the Indian Trust Act, 1882 and Securities and Exchange Board of India (Infrastructure Investment Trusts) Regulations, 2014.
- The InvIT Trust will be formed with an objective of investing primarily in infrastructure projects (as defined by Ministry of Finance). InvIT may hold assets either directly or through an SPV or a holding.

Defence: Warship builder GRSE hands over Landing Craft Utility amphibious ship to Indian Navy

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Landing Craft Utility (LCU)) + Mains (GS III security challenges and their management in border areas)

What's the NEWS

- Adding to the country's maritime security prowess, warship builder Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) has delivered a Landing Craft Utility (LCU) to the Indian Navy

Know! more about it

- With an ability to attain a maximum speed of 15 knots, the ship can accommodate 216 personnel and is equipped with two indigenous CRN 91 guns to provide artillery fire support during landing operations.
- Warship builder GRSE hands over Landing Craft Utility amphibious ship to Indian Navy The amphibious ship, that can transport and deploy main battle tanks, armoured vehicles, troops and equipment from ship to the shore, is seventh of eight such vessels being built for the Navy by GRSE.
- These ships can also be deployed for multirole activities like beaching operations, search and rescue, disaster relief operations, supply and replenishment and evacuation from distant islands
- The LCU is 62.8 metres long, 11 metres wide and has a displacement of 830 tonnes, with a low draught of 1.7 metres



Economic Developments: Economic Census Flagged off in Delhi

Relevance IN – Prelims (about economic census) + Mains (GS III economic developments)

What's the NEWS

- The Seventh Economic Census was launched in the National Capital Territory of Delhi.
- The Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation (MoSPI) has tied up with Common Service Centre (CSC), an SPV under Ministry of Electronics and IT, to carry out the 7th National Economic Census.

Know! more about the census

- For the first time the entire Census is being conducted on a digital platform by the use of an application which will ensure high accuracy and data security.

 An infographic detailing the 7th National Economic Census. It lists key features and a timeline.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> will cover all establishments including household enterprises MoSPI has partnered with CSC e-Governance Services India Limited IT based digital platform for data capture, validation, report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> will be used Fieldwork is likely to commence by the end of June or July Results of the exercise will be made available after verification and validation of the field work
<p>TIME LINE:</p> <p>2019 - 7th Economic Census</p> <p>2013 - 6th Economic Census</p>	

- Delhi is the 26th state where the survey has been launched, while the process is already on in 20 states and 5 UTs.
- The National Economic Survey, conducted every five years, is very crucial for framing of policies and planning for the government and other organisations
- Over 1.5 lakh trained enumerators have been deployed for the pan-India survey who will be visiting 35 crore establishments and households to carry out the Census.
- Entire survey is being conducted through an application. It will ensure that there is no data breach. As soon as any data is fed in the application, it is stored in the cloud and no one can access it without permission.
- The process of Economic Census was first held in 1978. This is the Seventh Census which will provide disaggregated information on various operational and structural aspects of all establishments in the country.
- The census will provide valuable insights into geographical spread/clusters of economic activities, ownership pattern; persons engaged etc. of the establishments engaged in economic activity.
- In the 7th Census, an IT based digital platform is being used for data capture, validation, report generation and dissemination will be used.

Environment, Forest and Climate Change: National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management

Relevance IN – Prelims (about NCSCM) + Mains (GS III environment conservation)

What's the NEWS

- The Ministry 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.

The aims and Objectives of the Center are:

- 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
- Advise the Union and State Governments and other associated stakeholder(s) on policy, and scientific matters related to Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM).

Know! more about the role of NCSCM

- 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 Government of India is committed to taking all necessary steps in supporting NCSCM to achieve its goals, in its efforts to developing into a world class institution.
- NCSCM is mandated to disseminating knowledge pertaining to coastal management by capacity building at all levels for the benefit of coastal communities and stakeholders.
- For the first time, Integrated Island Management plans including holistic island development plans have been prepared by NCSCM for implementation by coastal States/ UTs.

National Afforestation Programme

Relevance IN – Prelims (about National Afforestation programme + steps taken by the government to conserve forests)

What's the 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.

Know! the steps taken by the government for the conservation of forests

- 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 *i.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.
- The scheme is implemented by three tier institutional setup through the State Forest Development Agency (SFDA) at the state level, Forest Development Agency (FDA) at the forest division level and JFMCs at village level.

Know! about NAP

- NAP is a centrally sponsored scheme which is implemented with the fund sharing pattern of 60: 40 percent between Centre and States wherein the sharing pattern for North eastern and hilly States is 90:10.
- The central share of funds are released through State Government and state government transfers the funds to SFDA along with its state share which sometime causes delay in fund availability to SFDA for implementation of NAP causing delay in submission of mandatory documents for subsequent release of funds.

National Energy Conservation Day celebrated on 14th December 2019

What's the NEWS

- The National Energy Conservation Day is organized every year on 14th December every year by Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), under Ministry of Power, with an aim to showcase India's achievements in energy efficiency and conservation

Know! more about it

- In order to drive mass awareness about the importance of energy efficiency and conservation, BEE is observing National Energy Conservation Week from 9th to 14th December 2019.
- The National Energy Conservation Awards Programme recognizes the energy efficiency achievements in 56 sub sectors across industry, establishments and institutions
- As part of its awareness outreach, every year on the national conservation day, BEE recognizes and encourages endeavors of industries and other establishments in reducing energy consumption by felicitating them with National Energy Conservation Awards.
- Ministry of Power through Bureau of Energy Efficiency is implementing various policies and schemes viz PAT Scheme, Standard and Labelling, Energy Conservation Building Codes and Demand Side Management.
- These programmes are helpful in achieving significant energy savings and also, in promotion of the efficient use of energy across society.

Agriculture & Farmers Welfare: ICAR and NABARD signs MoU to promote sustainable agriculture and climate resilient farming systems

Relevance IN- Prelims (highlights about the MoU) + Mains (GS III farmer's welfare – Steps taken by the government for sustainable farming)

What's the NEWS

- With a view to promote sustainable agriculture and climate resilient farming systems the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Board of Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) to facilitate the action research (the research carried out with the active participation of farmers to provide solutions for the challenges) and up-scaling of the various technologies and innovative farmer models developed by the ICAR that includes the successful climate resilient practices, models and integrated and hi-tech farming practices in a participatory model through adoptive research on watershed platform

Know! more about the MoU

- The MoU is for taking up site-specific transfer of technologies under sustainable agriculture, integrated farming system, crop intensification, agro-forestry, plantation and horticulture, animal sciences, agri-engineering, etc., including post-harvest technologies.
- The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) is a premier organization in the country with the mandate of agriculture, research, extension and education leading the country's National Agricultural Research and Extension System
- ICAR with its network developed doable technologies in agriculture and allied sectors of horticulture, livestock, fisheries etc
- National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) premier organization dealing with policy, planning and operations in the field of credit for agriculture and other activities in rural areas.

Information Technology: Ravi Shankar Prasad launches National Broadband Mission

Relevance IN- Prelims (National Broadband Mission (NBM) +Mains (GS III awareness in the field of information and technology)

What's the NEWS

- The Minister for Communications, Law & Justice and Electronics and Information Technology, Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad has launching the **National Broadband Mission (NBM)**
- The National Broadband Mission is to fulfill all aspirations of the people and enables fast track growth of digital communication infrastructure.

Know! more about National Broadband Mission (NBM)

- The vision of the NBM is to fast track growth of digital communications infrastructure, bridge the digital divide, facilitate digital empowerment and inclusion and provide affordable and universal access of broadband for all.


Some of the objectives of the Mission which is structured with strong emphasis on the three principles of universality, affordability and quality are:

- Broadband access to all villages by 2022
- Facilitate universal and equitable access to broadband services for across the country and especially in rural and remote areas
- Develop innovative implementation models for Right of Way (RoW) and to work with States/UTs for having consistent policies pertaining to expansion of digital infrastructure including for RoW approvals required for laying of OFC
- Develop a Broadband Readiness Index (BRI) to measure the availability of digital communications infrastructure and conducive policy ecosystem within a State/UT.

- Creation of a digital fiber map of the Digital Communications network and infrastructure, including Optical Fiber Cables and Towers, across the country
- Investment from stakeholders of USD 100 billion (Rs 7 Lakh Crore) including Rs 70,000 crore from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)

Know! about Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)

- Apart from the higher capital cost of providing telecom services in rural and remote areas, these areas also generate lower revenue due to lower population density, low income and lack of commercial activity.
- Thus normal market forces alone would not direct the telecom sector to adequately serve backward and rural areas. Keeping in mind the inadequacy of the market mechanism to serve rural and inaccessible areas on one hand and the importance of providing vital telecom connectivity on the other, most countries of the world have put in place policies to provide Universal Access and Universal Service to ICT.
- The New Telecom Policy - 1999 (NTP'99) provided that the resources for meeting the Universal Service Obligation (USO) would be raised through a 'Universal Access Levy (UAL)', which would be a percentage of the revenue earned by the operators under various licenses.
- The Universal Service Support Policy came into effect from 01.04.2002.
- The Indian Telegraph (Amendment) Act, 2003 giving statutory status to the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) was passed by both Houses of Parliament in December 2003.
- As per the Indian Telegraph Act 1885 (as amended in 2003, 2006 and 2008), the Fund is to be utilized exclusively for meeting the Universal Service Obligation.



सत्यमेव जयते
Department of Telecommunications
 Ministry of Communications
 Government of India

Digital Empowerment Affordable & Universal Access Broadband For All

NATIONAL BROADBAND MISSION

Launch by
Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad
 Hon'ble Minister of Communications, Law & Justice
 and Electronics & Information Technology

In the presence of
Shri Sanjay Shamrao Dhotre
 Hon'ble Minister of State for Communications,
 HRD and Electronics & Information Technology

17 December, 2019,
National Media Centre, New Delhi

National Broadband Mission

All villages with access to broadband by 2022
 Incremental 30 lakhs route km of Optical Fiber Cable by 2024
 Tower density from 0.42 to 1.0 tower per thousand of population by 2024
 Collaborative and innovative implementation models for Right of Way
 Significantly improve quality of services for mobile and internet
 Develop and implement Broadband Readiness Index for each State / UT

Defence: Successful launch of two BrahMos missiles from land and air platforms



Relevance IN – Prelims (about Brahmos missile) + Mains (GS III security challenges and their management in border areas)

What's the NEWS

- Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO), Indian Air Force (IAF) and BrahMos jointly successfully conducted two BrahMos supersonic cruise missile tests, one each from land and air platforms.
- The first missile launch was from a land based mobile launcher, where most of the components were indigenous, including the missile airframe, fuel management system and DRDO designed seeker.
- The second launch of the missile was carried out by Indian Air force (IAF) from SU-30MKI platform against a sea target.

Know! more about the test

- The test conducted in user configuration, revalidated the ship attack capability of the advanced air-launched cruise missile.
- During the test, the missile was gravity dropped from the air combat platform's fuselage and the two-stage weapon's engine fired up and the missile straightaway propelled towards the intended target positioned at the sea, piercing it with pin point accuracy.
- Earlier IAF had successfully tested the missile against a land-based target in the Car Nicobar Islands region.
- The BrahMos Air Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM) promises to bolster the air combat capability of IAF from stand-off ranges.

Top of Form

BrahMos air version missile

- The air launched BrahMos missile, designed and developed by BrahMos Aerospace Private Limited (BAPL), is a 2.5 ton supersonic air to surface cruise missile with ranges close to 300 km.
- The IAF became the first Air Force in the world to have successfully fired an air launched Trisonic class surface attack missile of this category on a sea target on 22 Nov 17.
- This was followed by a second live launch over a land target on 22 May 19. Today's was the third such live launch of the weapon and with this launch, the integration of the missile on Su-30MKI aircraft, is complete.
- The BrahMos missile provides Indian Air Force a much desired capability to strike from large stand-off ranges on any target at sea or on land with pinpoint accuracy by day or night and in all weather conditions.
- The capability of the missile coupled with the high performance of the Su-30MKI aircraft gives the IAF a strategic reach and allows it to dominate the battle fields over land and sea.

Infrastructure Development: ADB, India sign \$250 million loan to expand energy efficiency investments in India

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the steps taken by EESL and ADB in energy efficiency)+ Mains (GS III infrastructure development – energy)

What's the NEWS

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of India signed a \$250 million loan to Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) to expand energy efficiency investments in India that will benefit agricultural, residential and institutional consumers.
- In addition, \$46 million financing will be provided from the Clean Technology Fund (CTF), to be administered by ADB.

Know! more about it

- ADB previously approved a \$200 million loan to EESL, a public sector energy service company, in 2016 for Demand Side Energy Efficiency Sector Project that focused on efficient lighting and appliances.
- The project is expected to contribute to the mission of Government of India to promote energy efficiency and meet Government's commitments to reduce energy intensity of the economy.
- Introduction of energy-efficient technologies in eligible states including smart meters, distributed solar photovoltaic systems and electric vehicles will help reduce electricity network losses and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

- This is one of the few ADB projects specially focused on demand-side energy efficiency targeting upstream efficiency opportunities and business models that can be scaled up in India and other ADB developing member countries. The project's smart metering component will help address billing and collection inefficiencies.
- EESL will also explore business models to generate greater public demand for e-vehicles to support India's current push for electric vehicles.
- Promoting awareness of the benefits of using energy efficient technologies is another feature of the project.

Science & Technology: CSIR and the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), France ink MoU for Promotion and Support of Scientific and Technological Research



Relevance IN – Prelims (about the MoU and about CSIR and CNRS) + Mains (GS III awareness in the field of science and technology)

What's the NEWS

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR), India and the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), France to establish a **framework for cooperation between the two towards promotion and support of scientific and technological research.**
- CSIR and CNRS may explore strengthening their cooperation to foster joint innovation and transfer of technologies applicable to India or/and France and to other nations.
- This cooperation could include sharing good practices, promoting technology transfer and enhancing industry-academia cooperation.

Know! about CNRS

- Founded in 1939, CNRS is the largest fundamental research organization in Europe. CNRS is an interdisciplinary public research organisation under the administrative supervision of the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research.
- CNRS carries out research in the areas of Biological Sciences, Chemistry, Earth Sciences and Astronomy, Ecology & Environment, Engineering & Systems Sciences, Mathematical Sciences, Physics, Nuclear & Particle Physics, Information S&T, and Humanities & Social Science through its ten institutes.
- CNRS is funded by public money and also receives competitive funding.
- Though CNRS is a fundamental research organization, it performs fundamental research on applied objectives with French companies in France and also abroad.

- CNRS has set up four such co-funded centers with industry partnership in China, Japan and Singapore to address local needs.

Know! about CSIR

- Set up in 1942 as an autonomous body, CSIR is now the largest publically funded multi-disciplinary industrial R&D organization in India under the administrative supervision of Ministry of Science and Technology, GOI.
- The 37 R&D institutes of CSIR being manned by around 3600 scientists with support from about 5100 S&T staff, conduct research in a wide spectrum of science and technology from aerospace, instrumentation, environmental engineering, mining, minerals & materials, housing and structures to oceanography, chemicals, drugs, and biotechnology.
- CSIR provides technological intervention in many areas with regard to societal efforts including environment, health, drinking water, food, housing, energy, and farm and non-farm sectors.
- CSIR India caters to the technological needs of Indian as well as foreign industries based in India and abroad. CSIR is technologically strong, has a vast network of world-class research institutes spread across the country.

Space Awareness: ISRO RISAT-2BR1 launch- Big success for Indian space agency as PSLV's 50th lift off successful

Relevance IN – Prelims (about RISAT-2BR1) + Mains (GS III awareness in the filed of space)

What's the NEWS

- RISAT-2BR1 will boost India's space-based surveillance as well assist in agriculture, forestry and disaster management.
- With RISAT-2BR1, PSLV is also carrying nine other commercial foreign satellites from countries such as the US, Italy, Japan and Israel
- In a big boost to India's space-based surveillance, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully launched Radar Imaging Satellite RISAT-2BR1
- This was PSLV's fiftieth mission. With RISAT-2BR1, PSLV is also carrying nine other commercial foreign satellites from countries such as the US, Italy, Japan and Israel under a commercial contract with New Space India Limited (NSIL).
- Last month ISRO launched CARTOSAT 3 satellite on November 27 which was a third-generation satellite having high-resolution imaging capability.
- CARTOSAT 3 carried along 13 other commercial nano-satellites from the US into Sun Synchronous orbit.

50TH FLIGHT OF PSLV

ISRO'S PSLV-C48 LAUNCHES RISAT-2BR1, 9 FOREIGN SATELLITES

RISAT-2BR1 is a radar imaging earth observation satellite

Weight **628kg**

Orbit height **576km**

Payload **X-band radar**

Inclination **37 degrees**

Life **5 yrs**

Source: ISRO

APPLICATION

- ▶ Agriculture
- ▶ Forestry
- ▶ Disaster management support

9 satellites from

- ▶ Japan (1)
- ▶ Italy (1)
- ▶ Israel (1)
- ▶ US (6)

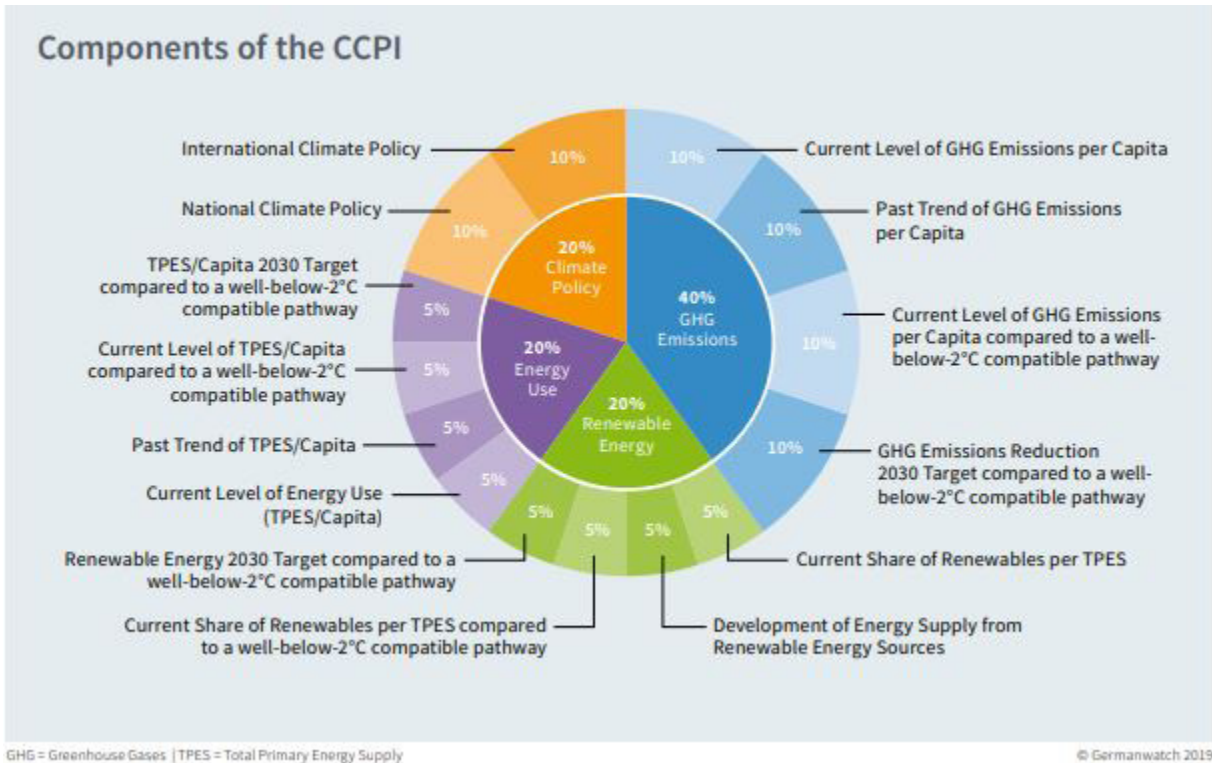
MILESTONES

- ▶ 75th launch vehicle mission from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota
- ▶ 37th launch from first launch pad
- ▶ 2nd flight of PSLV with 'QL' variant

Know! more about RISAT2-BR1

- RISAT2-BR1 is the second satellite in the RISAT-2B series and is expected to be followed by two more satellites.
- ISRO will be launching the remaining two satellites in the series in the coming days to complete the quartet of the so-called 'spy satellites'.
- The satellite, with a mission life of five years, follows the successful launch of RISAT-2B in May 2019.
- RISAT2-BR1 would be used in various fields such as forestry, agriculture and disaster management support.
- The current domestic remote sensing satellite is not equipped to capture images of the earth during cloud cover and hence, India had to rely on the images provided by Canadian satellites to obtain information regarding the same.

Environment Conservation: India Manages To Rank In The Top 10 Countries With Higher Climate Performance



Relevance IN – Prelims (about COP 25 and about CCPI) + Mains (GS III Environment conservation)

What's the NEWS

- India, for the first time, ranks among the top 10 in this year's Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) presented at the COP25 climate summit
- These rankings are given on the basis of 14 standards, which are divided into four categories.
- However, no country could meet 100% of all standards, so the first three places in this list are vacant.
- The list has been started from the fourth position, where Sweden is on the top of the list.

Know! more about it

- The current levels of per capita emissions and energy use in India, ranked 9th in the “high category”, are still comparatively low and, along with ambitious 2030 targets, result in high ratings for the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and energy use categories
- However, despite an overall high rating for its Climate Policy performance, experts point out that the Indian government has yet to develop a roadmap for the phase-out of fossil fuel subsidies that would consequently reduce the country's high dependence on coal.
- The authors of the report noted that while the country receives an overall medium rating in the renewable energy category, India's 2030 renewable energy target is rated very high for its well-below 2 degrees Celsius compatibility.
- The CCPI reflects opposing trends in global climate action: Australia, Saudi Arabia and especially the US give cause for “great concern” with their low to very low performance in emissions and renewable energy development as well as climate policy.
- While some EU countries such as Sweden (4th) and Denmark (5th), one of the best climbers, achieve overall high or very high ratings, the performance of EU countries varies largely.
- China, the largest global emitter slightly improves its ranking in the index to 30th place (“medium”).
- While only two G20 countries, the UK (7th) and India (9th), are ranked in the “high” category, eight G20 countries are remaining in the worst category of the index (“very low”).

- Australia (56th out of 61), Saudi Arabia and above all the US perform particularly poor - the US is the worst performer for the first time.

Know! about CCPI

- CCPI is an international observation instrument of climate protection performance by countries. CCPI aims to increase transparency in global climate politics and enables the comparability of climate protection efforts. Four categories of ranking are - Renewable Energy, Climate Policy, Energy Use, and GHG Emissions.

Know! about COP 25

- The 25th UN Climate Change Conference will be taking place in Madrid, Spain, and will convene from 2-13 December 2019.
- It will feature the 25th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 25) to the United Nations Framework Convention to Combat Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the 51st meetings of the UNFCCC subsidiary bodies
- The previous UN climate conference, COP24 in Katowice Poland, focused on completing work on the Paris Agreement Work Programme, a set of decisions meant to operationalize the treaty.
- Parties adopted a Climate Package, which includes decisions on nearly all of the issues mandated as part of the Paris Work Programme.

COP25 in Santiago was mandated by the UNFCCC to resolve the outstanding issues in the Climate Package, including:

- provisions under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, which would allow countries to meet, in part, domestic mitigation goals through market mechanisms such as carbon markets;
- public registries for Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement;
- communications of adaptation efforts under the Paris Agreement

Environment, Forest and Climate Change: First Annual Meet of State Nodal Agencies for Ecoclub programme conducted

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Ecoclub programme + Mains (GS III environment conservation))

What's the NEWS

- In a first, Annual Meet of the State Nodal Agencies implementing the National Green Corps 'Ecoclub' programme of the Ministry of the Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), organized by the Ministry's Environment Education Division, in collaboration with the GEER Foundation,

Know! more about it

- Environment Education Awareness and Training (EEAT) is an established central sector scheme of the Ministry continuing since 1983-84 and aims to promote environmental awareness and mobilize student's participation for environment conservation.
- Under the scheme, National Green Corps (NGC) 'Ecoclub' programme was initiated in 2001-2002 with the objective to impart knowledge to school children through hands on experience, about their immediate environment, interactions within it and the problems therein.
- The programme aims to inculcate proper attitude towards environment and sensitize children on issues related to environment and development.
- The scheme is continuing to build young cadres of students and trigger their sensitivity towards environment protection and conservation.
- It is envisaged that number of Ecoclubs shall be enhanced from about 1.5 lakh at present to 2 lakh in the ensuing year 2020-21.

Infrastructure Development: First Trial Run of Double Stack Train conducted on newly built Rewari-Madar section of Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC)

Relevance IN – Prelims (about WDFC and DFC) + Mains (GS III infrastructure development)

What's the NEWS

- An inaugural Trial-Run of Indian Railways (IR) freight train on the newly built Rewari-Madar section of Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC), covering a distance of about 306 kms (Total 663 track Km) was conducted
- Railways has already done a trial run of BOXNS cargo wagons at 110 Kmph, trial runs are being conducted on the Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India (DFCCIL) tracks.

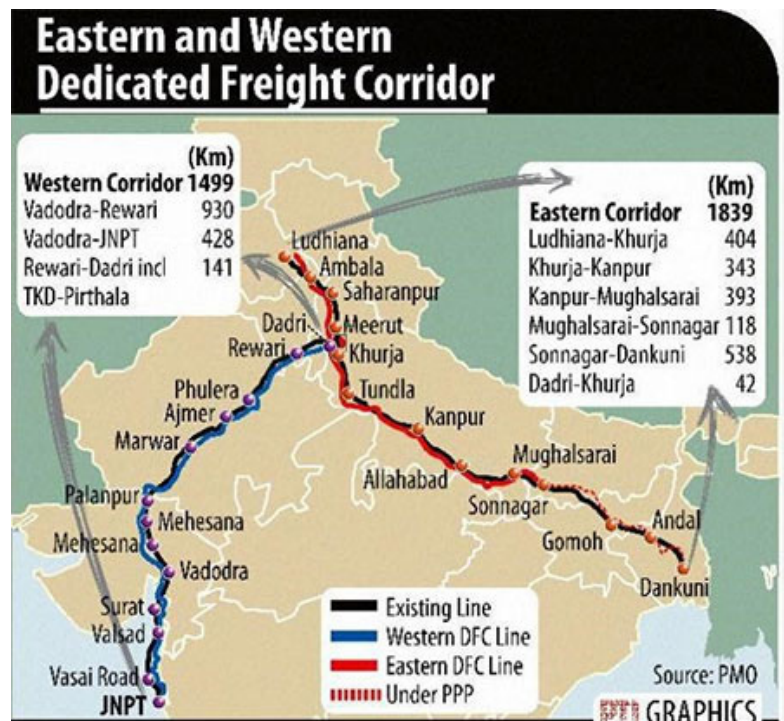


Know! more about it

- DFCCIL will run freight trains at the maximum speed of 100 Kmph hour as against the current maximum speed of 75 kmph on Indian Railway tracks whereas the average speed of freight trains will also be increased from existing speed of 26 kmph on Indian Railways lines to 70 kmph on Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFC).
- The opening of this stretch will benefit various industries in Rewari – Manesar, Narnaul, Phulera & Kishangarh areas of Rajasthan & Haryana.
- In addition to this, the container depot of CONCOR at Kathwas will also come on DFC map and get advantage in terms of faster throughput.
- Heavy haul train operation with 32.5 Ton axle load has been envisaged for the first time in India (currently practiced only in USA, Canada, Brazil, Australia, China, Russia South-Africa and Sweden-Norway)

Double stack containers (benefits)

- Double line electric (2 X 25 KV) track to undertake higher haulage at higher speeds
- Automated New Track Construction (NTC) machine with record single day track laying of more than 3 km.
- More Powerful Locomotives 7000 kW (9000 HP) CO-CO 6 axles
- Train Protection and Warning System (TPWS) for safe and efficient operation
- Elimination of road crossing
- Connecting Multi Modal Logistic Hubs and Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor
- Water Conservation through Rainwater harvesting in all the stations and RUBs (road under bridge)
- Reduced Energy Consumption using latest technology
- Recycling and Re-use - Construction materials and Waste management



- Green Initiatives - developed as “Low Carbon & Energy Efficient Green Transportation” with reduce GHG emissions w.r.t. freight transportation by existing rail and road system
- Exclusive operation for freight trains.

Unification of existing Railway services

- The Union Government has planned for the unification of eight services of Indian Railways from junior level to HAG+.
- Other administrative decisions are also being implemented based on the recommendations made by Prakash Tandon Committee (1994).

Know! about DFCCIL

- The Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Limited (DFCCIL) is a Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) corporation run by government of India's Ministry of Railway to undertake planning, development, and mobilisation of financial resources and construction, maintenance and operation of the Dedicated Freight Corridors.
- The DFCCIL was registered as a company under the Companies Act 1956 in 2006.
- It is both enabler and beneficiary of other key Government of India Schemes, such as Industrial corridor, Make in India, Start up India Stand up India, Sagarmala, Bharat mala UDAN-RCS Digital India and Bharat Net

Defence: Cabinet approves creation of the post of Chief of Defence Staff in the rank of four star General

Relevance IN – Prelims (about CDS + Mains (GS III Security challenges and their management in border areas)

What's the NEWS

- In a landmark decision with tremendous reform in higher defence management in the country, the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved to create the post of Chief of Defence Staff in the rank of a four-star General with salary and perquisites equivalent to a Service Chief.
- The Chief of Defence Staff will also head the Department of Military Affairs (DMA), to be created within the Ministry of Defence and function as its Secretary.

Know! more about it (CDS)

- The Chief of Defence Staff, apart from being the head of the Department of Military Affairs, will also be the Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee.
- He will act as the Principal Military Adviser to Raksha Mantri on all tri-Services matters.
- The three Chiefs will continue to advise RM on matters exclusively concerning their respective Services.
- CDS will not exercise any military command, including over the three Service Chiefs, so as to be able to provide impartial advice to the political leadership.

As the Permanent Chairman of Chiefs of Staff Committee, CDS will perform the following functions:

- CDS will administer tri-services organisations.
- Tri-service agencies/organisations/commands related to Cyber and Space will be under the command of the CDS.
- CDS will be member of Defence Acquisition Council chaired by Raksha Mantri and Defence Planning Committee chaired by NSA.
- Function as the Military Adviser to the Nuclear Command Authority.

Single point of contact

The Cabinet approved the creation of the post of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) as part of military reforms

- The CDS will be of the rank of a four-star General with salary equivalent to a service chief



- The CDS will look after the jointness in operations, logistics, transport, training,

support services, communications, repairs and maintenance

- He will head the Department of Military Affairs (DMA), which will be created in the Ministry of Defence. The armed forces will be brought under the DMA

- He will act as the principal military adviser to the Defence Minister on all services matters. However, the three chiefs will continue to advise the Minister on respective services

- Bring about jointness in operation, logistics, transport, training, support services, communications, repairs and maintenance, etc of the three Services, within three years of the first CDS assuming office.
- Implement Five-Year Defence Capital Acquisition Plan (DCAP), and Two-Year roll-on Annual Acquisition Plans (AAP), as a follow up of Integrated Capability Development Plan (ICDP).
- Assign inter-Services prioritisation to capital acquisition proposals based on the anticipated budget.
- Bring about reforms in the functioning of three Services aimed at augmenting combat capabilities of the Armed Forces by reducing wasteful expenditure.

BENEFITS

- It is expected that this reform in the Higher Defence Management would enable the Armed Forces to implement coordinated defence doctrines and procedures and go a long way in fostering jointmanship among the three Services.
- The country would be benefitted by coordinated action on greater jointmanship in training, logistics and operations as well as for prioritisation of procurements.

Internal Security: Cabinet grants Ex-post facto approval to amend the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations

Relevance IN – Prelims (about BEFR + about ILP) + Mains (GS III internal security)

What's the NEWS

- The Union Cabinet gave its ex-post facto approval to the Adaptation of Laws (Amendment) Order, 2019 issued by the President of India under clause (2) of article 372 of the Constitution to amend the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations (BEFR), 1873.
- The notification will extend BEFR to the State of Manipur to give its indigenous people protection from the provisions of Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 and make necessary changes in the said Regulation.

Know! about Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations (BEFR), 1873.

- Under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act, 1873, the British framed regulations restricting the entry and regulating the stay of outsiders in designated areas. This was to protect the Crown's own commercial interests by preventing "British subjects" (Indians) from trading within these regions.
- In 1950, the Indian government replaced "British subjects" with "Citizen of India". This was to address local concerns about protecting the interests of the indigenous people from outsiders belonging to other Indian states.
- An ILP(inner line permit) is issued by the state government concerned. It can be obtained after applying either online or physically. It states the dates of travel and also specifies the particular areas in the state which the ILP holder can travel to.

Know! more about IPL

- ILP is an official travel document issued by the Government of India to grant inward travel of an Indian citizen into a protected area for a limited period. Visitors are not allowed to purchase property in these regions.
- Currently, the Inner Line Permit is operational in Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland. In addition to these, Meghalaya, Manipur, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Leh also require Indian citizens to have a permit before they enter.
- It has been issued under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873 and the conditions and restrictions vary from state to state.

Odisha Governor Dedicates Bolangir LPG Bottling Plant To Nation

Relevance IN – Prelims (about The LPG bottling plant of BPCL)

What's the NEWS

- Odisha Governor Professor Ganeshi Lal dedicated the new LPG bottling plant of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) at Barkani in Bolangir district to the people of the nation.



Know! more about it

- With the growth of LPG demand, the Bolangir bottling plant aims to cater to the need of LPG customers in 14 districts of Western Odisha.
- The plant will help in the economic development of the region and generate job opportunity for locals.
- It helps in curbing pollution and save women from diseases caused by smoke.
- The LPG bottling plant of BPCL which is second such facility to be operational in the State after a plant in Khurda, is considered to be a milestone for western Odisha.
- Balangir LPG Bottling plant will also help create new opportunities for young entrepreneurs and provide direct & indirect employment opportunities for local youth.
- Set up at a cost of Rs 103 crore by BPCL, the plant has a capacity to produce 42 lakh cylinders per year. It will help supply LPG cylinders to the consumers in 14 districts of Odisha

LPG bottling plant

- It is a factory where liquid petroleum gas (LPG) is filled into the bottles or cylinders.
- After that these cylinders go to the various storages or distributors. It can be filled by bulk LPG through tank trucks or a pipeline. The plant receives empty cylinders or new empty cylinders to fill it with LPG.

Know! about BPCL

- It is a Maharatna oil and gas company, it functions under the control of the Government of India.
- This public sector unit was established in 1976, with its headquarters located in Mumbai, Maharashtra. It has two refineries in the country located in Mumbai and Kochi.

Environment, Forest and Climate Change: Total Forest and Tree Cover rises to 24.56 percent of the total geographical area of the Country



What's the NEWS

- The Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Prakash Javadekar released the biennial "India State of Forest Report (ISFR)", in New Delhi.

Know! more about the report findings

- The report is published by the Forest Survey of India (FSI) which has been mandated to assess the forest and tree resources of the country including wall-to-wall forest cover mapping in a biennial cycle.
- Starting 1987, 16 assessments have been completed so far. ISFR 2019 is the 16th report in the series.
- The total forest and tree cover of the country is 80.73 million hectare which is 24.56 percent of the geographical area of the country.
- As compared to the assessment of 2017, there is an increase of 5,188 sq. km in the total forest and tree cover of the country.
- Out of this, the increase in the forest cover has been observed as 3,976 sq km and that in tree cover is 1,212 sq. km
- Range increase in forest cover has been observed in open forest followed by very dense forest and moderately dense forest and the top three states showing increase in forest cover are Karnataka (1,025 sq. km) followed by Andhra Pradesh (990 sq km) and Kerala (823 sq km).

Know! Some Major Findings

- Area-wise Madhya Pradesh has the largest forest cover in the country followed by Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Maharashtra.
- In terms of forest cover as percentage of total geographical area, the top five States are Mizoram (85.41%), Arunachal Pradesh (79.63%), Meghalaya (76.33%), Manipur (75.46%) and Nagaland (75.31%).



Mangrove Cover

- Mangrove cover has been separately reported in the ISFR 2019 and the total mangrove cover in the country is 4,975 sq km.
- An increase of 54 sq Km in mangrove cover has been observed as compared to the previous assessment of 2017.
- Top three states showing mangrove cover increase are Gujarat (37 sq km) followed by Maharashtra (16 sq km) and Odisha (8 sq km).

Bamboo

- The extent of bamboo bearing area of the country has been estimated 16.00 million hectare.

- There is an increase of 0.32 million hectare in bamboo bearing area as compared to the last assessment of ISFR 2017.
- The total estimated green weight of bamboo culms is 278 million tonnes, slowly an increase of 88 million tonnes as compared to ISFR 2017.

Wetlands

- Wetlands within forest areas form important ecosystems and add richness to the biodiversity in forest areas, both of faunal and floral species.
- Due to importance of wetlands, FSI has carried out an exercise at the national level to identify wetlands of more than 1 ha within RFA.
- There are 62,466 wetlands covering 3.8% of the area within the RFA/GW of the country.

Know! the METHODOLOGY of ISFR 2019

- FSI's assessment is largely based on digital data whether it is satellite data, vector boundaries of districts or data processing of field measurements.
- The report provides information on forest cover, tree cover, mangrove cover, growing stock inside and outside the forest areas, carbon stock in India's forests
- The biennial assessment of forest cover of the country using mid-resolution Satellite data is based on interpretation of LISS-III data from Indian Remote Sensing satellite data (Resourcesat-II)
- Satellite data for the entire country was procured from NRSC for the period October, 2017 – February, 2018.
- The satellite data interpretation is followed by rigorous ground truthing. Information from other collateral sources are also used to improve the accuracy of the interpreted image.
- For the first time, Ortho-rectified satellite data has been used for forest cover mapping due to its better positional accuracy as it removes effects of image perspective (tilt) and relief (terrain) and scale distortions in the image to represent features in its true positions for accurate measurement of distances, angles and areas.

Champion & Seth Classification and Shanon Wiener Index

- FSI, in a first ever attempt has carried out a rapid assessment of biodiversity for all the States and UTs (except two) and for all the sixteen Forest Type Groups as per Champion & Seth Classification (1968).
- Apart from the number of tree, shrub and herb species as observed in the survey, Shanon Wiener Index which gives species richness along with the relative abundance, has also been calculated for each forest type groups in each State & UT.
- FSI has carried out mapping of forest types of India as per the Champion & Seth Classification (1968), for the first time in the year 2011 based on the base line forest cover data of 2005.
- A new exercise for refining and updating the forest type maps as per the latest baseline forest cover was initiated in the year 2016 and has been completed in 2019.

Other Highlights

- The accuracy level achieved in the current assessment is the highest amongst all the previous assessments.
- The accuracy of forest cover classification has been assessed 93.17% .The accuracy of classification between forest and non-forest classes has been assessed 97.20%.
- A study to assess the dependence of the people living in close proximity to forests for their day to day needs has been presented in the report.
- The present report also gives information on the fire prone forest areas of different severity classes, mapped in the grids of 5km x 5km

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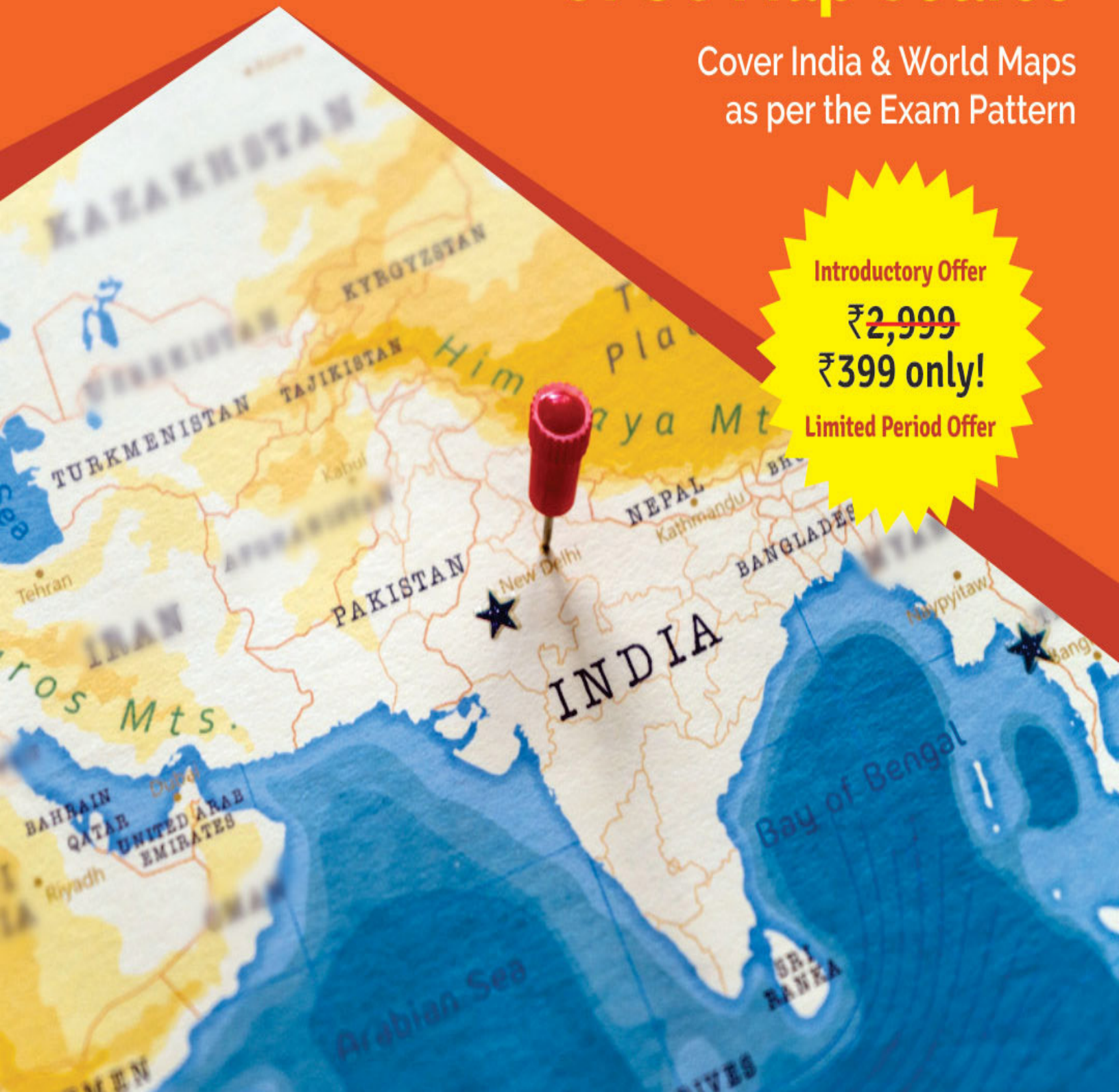
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Miscellaneous/ Prelims Factoids

Jnanpith Award 2019

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Jnanpith Award)

What's the NEWS

- The prestigious Jnanpith Award for literature has been announced for the Malayalam poet Akkitham Achuthan Namboodri.
- The award consists of Rs 11 lakh, a statue of Vagdevi, a citation and a memento.

Know! about Jnanpith Award

- The Jnanpith Award is the highest literary award given by the Indian Jnanpith Trust for Indian literature.
- Any citizen of India who writes in any of the 22 languages mentioned in the Eighth Schedule is eligible for this award.
- An award of eleven lakh rupees, a citation and a bronze statue of Vagdevi are given in the award.
- This award, which started in 1965 with prize money of Rs 1 lakh, has been increased to Rs 7 lakh in 2005, which have now been eleven lakh rupees.

Defence: Indian Army successfully test-fires Spike LR missile



Relevance IN – Prelims (about Spike Long Range missile) + Mains (GS III security challenges and their management)

What's the NEWS

- The Indian Army has successfully test-fired two newly-acquired Spike LR (long-range) anti-tank missiles at the Infantry School at Mhow, Madhya Pradesh.

Know! about Spike LR

- Spike LR is a fourth generation missile that can engage a target with precision at ranges up to four km.
- It is developed and designed by Israel's Rafael Advanced Defense Systems.
- The missile is man-portable and has its own vehicle-launch and helicopter-launched variants.
- In addition to fire and forget capability, the missile also has the ability to fire, observe and update, providing substantial flexibility to the firer to pinpoint the impact point, as also the ability to switch to a different target mid-flight, should he want to do so. The firer also has the option to fire from either low or high trajectory.
- The missile would help provide substantial flexibility to the shooter to pinpoint the exact impact point.
- The missile has an inbuilt seeker, which gives the firer the flexibility to use any of two modes: Day (CCD) and Night (IIR).
- The dual seeker adds to the missile's reliability, already established at more than 90 per cent during the field evaluation by the Indian Army in 2011.
- Since the induction and training, this was the first time that soldiers from the Indian Army carried out practice firing of the missile.

- The missile also has the ability to switch to a different target mid-flight, if the shooter decides to do so. It also offers the shooter, the option to fire from either low or high trajectory.
- As of date, more than 5,000 Spike missiles have been fired worldwide, with the overall hit percentage being more than 95 per cent.

Governance/Reports: Most Corrupt States in India 2019: Rajasthan Tops, Delhi & Odisha Among Least; India Corruption Survey 2019

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the findings of India corruption survey)

What's the NEWS

- Rajasthan tops the corruption chart in India, according to the latest India Corruption Survey conducted by the Local Circles and the Transparency International India.

Sl.no	India's top 15 corrupted states	% of citizens who paid a bribe
1	Rajasthan	78
2	Bihar	75
3	Jharkhand	74
4	Uttar Pradesh	74
5	Telangana	67
6	Karnataka	63
7	Punjab	63
8	Tamil Nadu	62
9	Chhattisgarh	57
10	Madhya Pradesh	55
11	Maharashtra	55
12	Uttarakhand	50
13	Andhra Pradesh	50
14	Gujarat	48
15	Delhi	46

Know! about the survey and its findings

- As per the survey, 78 per cent people in Rajasthan, participating in the survey, admitted to paying a bribe to get the work done.
- As compared to 2018, India's overall ranking in **Corruption Perception Index** has risen 3 places to 78 out of 180 countries. While an average of 56% of respondents admitted to paying bribes in 2018, the number has come down to 51% in 2019.
- Rajasthan is followed by Bihar where 75% of citizens admitted to paying a bribe to get their work done.
- Uttar Pradesh ranks third in the list where 74% of citizens admitted to paying a bribe
- Jharkhand shares the third spot with UP, where 74 per cent citizens admitted to paying a bribe to get their work done.
- Telangana rounds off the top 5 list of 'Most Corrupt States in India'. Approximately 67 per cent of citizens said that they paid bribes to get numerous pending work completed. (Image: Reuters)
- Punjab ranks sixth in the list where 63 per cent citizens in Punjab accepted to paying bribes to get their work done.
- Kerala is one of the least corrupt states according to the list where only 10 per cent of people admitted to paying a bribe to get their work done
- Besides Kerala, Gujarat, Goa, West Bengal, Odisha, Haryana and Delhi are the least corrupt states.

Defence: Exercise Hand-in-Hand-2019



Relevance IN – Prelims (about Exercise Hand -in – Hand)

What's the NEWS

- The 8th India-China joint training exercise 'HAND-IN-HAND 2019' with the theme counter terrorism under United Nations mandate is scheduled to be conducted at Umroi, Meghalaya from 07 to 20 December 2019.

Know! more about the exercise

- The Chinese contingent from the Tibet Military command comprising of 130 personnel and the Indian Contingent of similar strength will participate in the 14 day long training exercise.
- The aim of the exercise is to practice joint planning and conduct of counter terrorist operations in semi urban terrain.
- The exercise schedule is focused upon training on various lectures & drills associated with counter terrorist handling & firing with each others weapons, special heliborne operations and case studies of various operations carried out in counter terrorist environment.

Exercise Mitra Shakti -VII: 2019

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Mitra Shakti)



What's the NEWS

- The seventh edition of Exercise MITRA SHAKTI- 2019 aimed at enhancing interoperability and operational efficiency amongst the armies of both India and Sri Lanka when deployed as part of United Nations peace keeping forces commenced on 01 December at Aundh Military Station, Pune.

Know! more about the exercise

- The objective of the exercise is to build and promote positive relations between armies of India and Sri Lanka through focus on sub unit level training on counter insurgency and counter terrorism operations in urban and rural environment under United Nations mandate.
- The joint training exercise also signifies the strength of India-Sri Lanka relations in the field of military cooperation and engagement, which is vital for refining the interoperability and operational preparedness.
- The joint exercise is designed for incorporating the current dynamics of United Nations peace keeping operations through practical and comprehensive discussions and tactical exercises.
- The primary focus of the joint training exercise will remain on field craft, battle drills and procedures as also the ability to operate jointly with seamless interoperability.

State Specific: 20th Edition of Hornbill Festival begins in Nagaland



Relevance IN – Prelims (about Hornbill festival)

What's the NEWS

- The much-awaited festival, the Hornbill Festival began with a colourful blend of culture and tradition with a modern twist at Naga Heritage Kisama in Nagaland this evening. This is the 20th edition of Hornbill Festival.

Know! more about the festival

- The festival organised by Nagaland Government is an annual tourism promotional event to showcase the state's traditional and rich cultural heritage in all its ethnicity, diversity and grandeur.
- The 10 Days Hornbill Festival began with the traditional blessing and by beating the traditional song. The Hornbill Festival coincides with Nagaland Statehood Day
- A display of Sukhoi aircraft flying over Kisama site was also organised in close coordination between the state government and headquarter, Eastern Air Command (IAF) Shillong.

Prelims Factoids: Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik launches “MadhuApp” for school children



Relevance IN – Prelims (about Madhu App)

What's the NEWS

- Chief Minister of Odisha, Naveen Patnaik launched a smart learning phone application “MadhuApp” for school children.

Know! more about it

- The app named after ‘Utkal Gourab’ Madhusudan Das, has been developed by the Ganjam district administration in accordance with the 5T initiative of the state government.
- This app is aimed at helping school students in learning their lessons through videos and tutorials.
- The application is equipped with video lectures and exercises in Odia language by leading subject experts and educationists. In the first phase, the study material has been created for Mathematics and Science Subjects of classes V to VIII.

Defence: Exercise INDRA 2019

Relevance IN – Prelims (about INDRA 2019)

What's the NEWS

- Exercise INDRA 2019 a joint, tri services exercise between India and Russia will be conducted in India from 10 — 19 December 2019 simultaneously at Babina (near Jhansi), Pune, and Goa.

Know! more about INDRA

- The INDRA series of exercise began in 2003 and the First joint Tri Services Exercise was conducted in 2017.
- It will be a historic occasion for two of the world's greatest Armed Forces to join hands and successfully conduct an exercise of this magnitude with professionalism, to imbibe the best practices from each other, jointly evolve and drills to defeat the scourge of terror under the United Nation mandate.
- Company sized mechanised contingents, fighter and transport aircraft as well as ships of respective Army, Air Force and Navy will participate in this exercise of ten days duration.
- The exercise will consist of a five day training phase consisting of a comprehensive training curriculum.



Prelims Factoids: President of India presents the National Florence Nightingale Awards

Relevance IN – Prelims (about National Florence nightingale awards)

What's the NEWS

- The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, presented the National Florence Nightingale Awards to nursing personnel in New Delhi (December 5, 2019) on the occasion of International Nurses Day.

Know! more about it

- Nurses play a vital role in delivering quality and cost effective healthcare, addressing multiple health challenges and responding to health needs of individuals, families and communities.
- The world is more and more in need of care and compassion, and nurses indeed are a symbol of seva, shushrusha, karuna.
- The World Health Organisation has announced 2020 as the Year of the Nurse and Mid-wife.

Prelims Factoids: Head on Generation (HOG)

Relevance IN – Prelims (about EOG and HOG)

Know! about EOG and HOG and the benefits of HOG

- Premium passenger trains fitted with Air-Conditioned coaches and running traditionally on the End-on-Generation (EOG) system are also contributing towards air and noise pollution.
- Indian Railways have come up with an energy efficient and environment friendly innovative solution to address the issues of air & noise pollution and energy efficiency in running of passenger trains.
- An improvised converter has been developed, which is fitted in Electric locomotives which can replace these diesel generators.
- It uses power from overhead catenary to feed auxiliaries in the coaches hauled by Electric locomotives. It saves up to 1 Million liters of diesel per train per annum.
- This requires locomotives as well as coaches to be modified for making them suitable for HOG.
- Locomotives have been manufactured by Chittaranjan Locomotive Works (CLW), over the years, which are HOG compliant.

The major advantages of HOG system include:

- **Reduction in noise-** from 100dB noise to noise less,
- **Significant reduction** of CO₂ (over 2500Ton) & NO_x(over 10Ton) emissions till now
- **Reduced Diesel Consumption** leading to huge savings in operational costs to the tune of over Rs.1100 crores per annum
- **Economical-** EOG Power Rs 22/unit, HOG Power Rs 6/unit.

Defence: Exercise Hand-In-Hand-2019



Relevance IN – Prelims (about the exercise Hand in Hand)

What's the NEWS

- The Eighth Edition of India China joint training exercise 'Hand-in-Hand-2019' commenced at Joint Training Node, Umroi, Meghalaya on 07 December 2019.

Know! more about the exercise

- The People's Liberation Army (PLA) contingent from the Tibet Military Command & Indian Army contingent comprising of one Infantry company along with supporting staff are participating in the 14 days long joint training exercise.
- The exercise aims to enrich both the contingents from each other's experience in counter - terrorism operations. Besides counter-terrorism operations, discussions on Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief (HADR) operations will also be conducted as part of the exercise.

- The exercise will send a strong signal to the world that both India and China well understand the emerging threat of terrorism and stand shoulder to shoulder in countering this menace plaguing the world.

Culture: The government launches a portal to showcase Indian culture

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the portal launched by Culture Ministry) + Mains (GS I Indian Culture)



What's the NEWS

- Culture Minister Prahlad Singh Patel unveiled a portal on Indian culture that brings together all the cultural resources of the country on one platform.
- Created by the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, in collaboration with IGNOU, over a course of three years, <http://www.indianculture.gov.in> is a digital resource of documents, artefacts, paintings and other items available in the archive.

The diversity of the Indian subcontinent is captured in the experience that is Indian culture. It relates to the way of life of 1.3 billion Indians, encompassing the festivals they celebrate, the food they eat, the rituals and practices of their faith, the clothes they wear, their dances, songs and theater. It even reflects in people's day to day activities.

Its immeasurable vastness expands both across its geographical length and into its historical past. Every home, district, town, city would have its own traditional, cultural and spatial uniqueness, a dynamism that makes our culture thrive in this age of globalization

See it all on www.indianculture.gov.in

Launching on 10th December 2019

Know! more about it

- We are not able to display even one-tenth of our cultural treasures to the public, owing to lack of space. Our history and culture should be out in the public domain so that more people in the country and abroad can see and experience it
- The portal currently has details on 90 lakh items, including manuscripts, archives, research papers, audio books and folk tales.
- It also has information on UNESCO sites, reports and proceedings of various events organised by the Ministry of Culture as well as details of museum collections.
- This pertains to all the organisations that come under the aegis of the Ministry, such as the National Archives of India, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Smriti, Archaeological Survey of India and Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts.
- The timeline of the content dates back to 4,000 years, and includes sculptures and paintings from the repository of the National Museum and several rare manuscripts.
- Till now, all the content on the portal pertains to the Ministry and its branches, and the state museums and archaeology departments haven't been involved and this gap may gradually be filled.

Prelims Factoids: FSSAI, Nasscom Foundation partner to develop app to prevent food wastage

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the mobile app launched by FSSAI and NASSCOM)

What's the NEWS

- To prevent food wastage, Food regulator FSSAI and Nasscom Foundation have joined hands to a develop an app and set up a 24x7 helpline number to connect donors with surplus edibles to food distribution organisations.

Know! more about it

- India will soon have access to a common help-line and a mobile application 'Food Donation in India' to donate food to the needy.
- FSSAI and NASSCOM Foundation have signed an MoU to jointly build a technology platform for Food Donation in India
- The platform will also facilitate registration of surplus food distribution organisations, and initially, the network of 81 such organizations across PAN India, known as the Indian Food Sharing Alliance (IFSA) will be a part of this platform

- The solution, FSSAI said, will provide an easy accessible platform that will cater to different stakeholders like food businesses, hoteliers, caterers, individuals etc and facilitate food donations in any part of the country.
- This would definitely provide a recognition to the organisations involved in surplus food distribution and would help in reducing the wastage of food in the country through food donation

Prelims Factoids: India to Host 36th International Geological Congress in March 2020

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the 36th International Geological Congress)

What's the NEWS

- India is gearing up to host the 36th International Geological Congress (IGC) in the capital during the first week of March next year.
- The theme of the forthcoming conference is 'Geosciences: The Basic Science for a Sustainable Development'.

Know! more about IGC

- 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 36th IGC is expected to provide a platform for international cooperation in all major field of geosciences including launching of collaborative programs, provision of investment opportunities in mining, mineral exploration and environmental management and related enterprises.
- The forthcoming IGC would help us in dealing with the problems of sustainability, energy crisis, water crisis, climate change, environmental issues and resource management.
- 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.SarvepalliRadhakrishnan. 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

Arms Amendment Bill 2019

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the new provisions of arms amendment bill)



What's the NEWS

- Parliament approved a legislation providing for a maximum punishment of life imprisonment for manufacturing and carrying illegal arms.
- The Arms (Amendment) Bill, 2019, which also has a provision for imprisonment of two years or fine which may extend to Rs 1 lakh or both for those using firearms in a rash or negligent manner in celebratory gunfire, endangering human life or personal safety
- The new Arms bill proposes jail term between 7-14 years and fine for acquisition, possession or carrying of prohibited ammunition without a license.
- The bill proposes stringent punishment to those possessing illegal arms and those indulging in a rash or negligent celebratory gunfire, endangering the life and personal safety of others.

Know! more about Arms (Amendment) Bill, 2019

- The bill introduces new categories of offences.
- Forcefully taking a firearm from police or armed forces.
- Using firearms in celebratory gunfire in public gatherings such as religious places, marriages or other functions, which endangers human life or personal safety of others.
- The bill reduces the number of allowed firearms from three to one.
- The bill proposes one year's time to deposit extra firearms with the officer-in-charge at the nearest police station or with a licensed arms dealer.
- The new arms bill increases the duration of the validity of a firearm license from three years to five years.
- Special status to a sports person who needs firearms and ammunition for practice and participating in tournaments.

State Specific: Naveen launches 'Jalsathi' programme to supply safe drinking

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Jalsathi programme)

What's the NEWS

- Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik launched the 'Jalsathi' programme which will ensure supply of safe drinking water to all households in the state.

Know! more about the programme

- Patnaik also distributed water quality testing kits and POS (point of sale) machines to the women volunteers - 'Jalasathis'.
- They 'Jalasathis' will be responsible for water quality testing, facilitating new water connections, regularising connections, reassessment of demands, meter reading, bill generation, bill delivery, collection of water charges and facilitating complaints redressal
- Clean water is most important factor for good health. Inclusion of woman volunteers from Mission Shakti for piped water supply is a cherished step as they will serve the people as 'Jalasathis'. This will boost their economic empowerment
- Earlier, the state government had engaged the women self-help groups under the 'Mission Shakti', for the collection of power dues, paddy procurement and mid day meal preparation activities.
- Now under the 'Jalsathi' programme, about 5,000 women will be engaged for supplying safe drinking water.
- For implementation of the 'Jalsathi' programme, the Water Corporation of Odisha (WATCO) and women federations in Bhubaneswar signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU)
- Initially, the 'Jalasathi' programme will be implemented in as many as eight wards of Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation under the 5T initiative of the Housing and Urban Development,

Defence: Successful flight test of two Pinaka missiles in salvo mode



Relevance IN – Prelims (about Pinaka missile)

What's the NEWS

- As part of the series of flight trials of Pinaka missile system, two test firings have been conducted by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- The mission objective was to test low range, functioning of live warhead along with its proximity initiation and salvo launch.
- Two Pinaka missiles were launched in salvo mode with 60 seconds interval between two firings.
- Both the missiles were fired to engage a target located at 20 kilometre range and high accuracy was achieved.
- The missile was integrated with live warhead with proximity fuse and was tracked by multiple range systems viz. telemetry, radars, Electro-Optical Tracking System (EOTS), which confirmed the text book flight performance.

Know! more about Pinaka Missile

- Pinaka Missile System, developed by Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO), was recently successfully tested in Chandipur, Odisha.
- The Pinaka Mark-2 is capable of firing 12 rockets in just 44 seconds. It has successfully hit all targets.
- The upgraded version of the Pinaka weapon system includes a specific guidance kit, which is equipped with advanced navigation and control systems.
- Its navigation is channelized through the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS), also known as 'NAVIC'.

Prelims Factoids: EChO Network

Relevance IN – Prelims (about EChO network)

What's the NEWS

- EChO Network launched to catalyze cross-disciplinary leadership in India; will train educators and students in interdisciplinary manner

Know! about EChO Network (objective + need)

- EChO Network, a national program to provide a template for cross-disciplinary leadership in India with the specific focus of increasing research, knowledge, and awareness of Indian ecology and the environment was launched recently
- The objective is to train a new generation of educators and students who can identify and solve problems in an interdisciplinary manner and who can listen to our natural world and tackle real-world problems in medicine, agriculture, ecology, and technology
- EChO Network would develop a national network to catalyse a new generation of Indians who can synthesize interdisciplinary concepts and tackle real-world problems in medicine, agriculture, ecology, and technology.

How to achieve the network

- Through interactive sessions with citizens, industry, academia, and the government, the Network will identify gaps in knowledge regarding selected topics in human and environmental ecosystems.
- The program will then train postdoctoral leaders in research and outreach on these topics, while also incorporating current public and private efforts into a national network.
- It would then go on to establishing nation-wide awareness in these issues through public discourse and education for citizens, industry, and government with information exchange at all educational levels.
- Over time EChO Network intends to create an international distributed institute comprising individuals housed within industry, government, private, and academic sectors, combining their expertise and resources collectively to tackle large scale problems

Tripura gets its first SEZ

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the benefits of SEZ)

What's the NEWS

- The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has notified the setting up of the first ever Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Tripura.

Know! more about SEZ

- The SEZ is being set-up at Paschim Jalefa, Sabroom, South Tripura District, which is 130 km away from Agartala. It will be a Sector Specific Economic Zone for Agro-Based Food Processing.
- The estimated investment in the project will be around 1550 Crore.
- The developer of the SEZ will be Tripura Industrial Development Corporation (TIDC) Ltd. The SEZ is estimated to generate 12,000 skilled jobs.
- Rubber based industries, textile and Apparel Industries, bamboo and Agri-food Processing Industries will be set-up in the SEZ.
- Setting up of the SEZ in Sabroom will open up new avenues to attract private investment considering the proximity of the Chittagong Port and construction of the bridge across Feni River in South Tripura which is underway.
- After it is set up, 100 percent Income Tax exemption will be provided on export income for SEZ units under Section 10AA of the Income Tax Act for the first 5 years. Also 50 percent exemption will be provided for the next 5 years and 50 percent of the ploughed back export profit for another 5 years.

QCI Conclave in Uttarakhand

Relevance IN – Prelims (about QCI)

What's the NEWS

- Quality Council of India (QCI) along with PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) is organizing its 11th Regional Quality Conclave (RQC) on 20th December 2019

Know! more about it

- The theme of the RudrapurRQC is “Advance Manufacturing with Quality, Innovation & Technology Interventions.”
- The objective of the Conclave is to create awareness about significance of quality culture in businesses, deliberate on how organizations could continuously improve and innovate and share the technological advancement like Industry 4.0 and predictive maintenance.
- The Conclave will have sessions on Adding Value in Manufacturing and Supply Chain with Digital Transformation, Mapping Organization's Route to Quality, Up skilling for Industry 4.0
- Through this Conclave the Quality Council of India hopes to reach out to industries in the hilly regions of the country.

Know! more about QCI

- Quality Council of India (QCI) was set up in 1997 by Government of India jointly with Indian Industry as an autonomous body under the administrative control of the Department to establish and operate the National

Accreditation Structure for conformity assessment bodies; providing accreditation in the field of education, health and quality promotion.

- Besides the role of putting in place the accreditation structure, it also promotes the adoption of quality standards relating to Quality Management Systems (ISO 14001 Series), Food Safety Management Systems (ISO 22000 Series) and Product Certification and Inspection Bodies through the accreditation services provided by National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB).
- Indian industry is represented in QCI by three premier industry associations namely ASSOCHAM; CII; and FICCI.
- QCI is assigned the task of monitoring and administering the National Quality Campaign a plan scheme of the department, and also to oversee function of the National Information and Enquiry Services.
- To realize the objective of improving quality competitiveness of Indian products and services, QCI provides strategic direction to the quality movement in the country by establishing conformity assessment system which is recognized at the international level

Know! about Industry 4.0

- Industry 4.0 is the subset of the fourth industrial revolution that concerns industry. The fourth industrial revolution encompasses areas which are not normally classified as an industry, such as smart cities, for instance.
- Although the terms “industry 4.0” and “fourth industrial revolution” are often used interchangeably, “industry 4.0” factories have machines which are augmented with wireless connectivity and sensors, connected to a system that can visualise the entire production line and make decisions on its own.
- In essence, industry 4.0 is the trend towards automation and data exchange in manufacturing technologies and processes which include cyber-physical systems (CPS), the internet of things (IoT), industrial internet of things (IIOT), cloud computing, cognitive computing and artificial intelligence.

Prelims Factoids: Kisan Diwas 2019: India Observes National Farmers’ Day, Honours Former PM Chaudhary Charan Singh

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Kisan Diwas + about Chaudhary charan singh)

What’s the NEWS

- Kisan Diwas or National Farmers’ Day is observed across India on December 23.

Know! more about Kisan Diwas and about Chaudhary Charan Singh

- The day honours Chaudhary Charan Singh, the 5th Prime Minister of India whose was born on this day.
- It was in the year 2001, the Government of India decided to observe December 23 every year as Kisan Diwas.
- During his tenure as the Prime Minister of India from July 1979 to January 1980, Chaudhary Charan Singh introduced a slew of policies to improve the lives and conditions of farmers in the country.
- He also played a leading role in the agricultural sector of the country by introducing bills for farmers’ reforms.
- Farmers are considered to be the backbone of India’s economic development.
- Kisan Diwas is being celebrated every year to promote awareness among people about the importance of the farmers to the society and overall economic and social development of the country.

Prelims Factoids: Deepika Padukone, 3 others selected for WEF’s Crystal Award

Relevance IN – Prelims (about WEF crystal award)

What’s the NEWS

- Cine star Deepika Padukone, China’s popular media personality Jin Xing and two other artists have been selected for Crystal Award by the World Economic Forum (WEF).
- The winners would be honoured during the opening session of the WEF Annual Meeting 2020 at Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, on January 20, 2020.

Know! more about the awards

- The award celebrates the achievements of artists and cultural figures whose leadership inspires inclusive and sustainable change.
- Padukone would be given the award for her leadership in raising mental health awareness
- More than 300 million people suffering with the illness, depression is the leading cause of ill health and disability in the world today and a major contributor to the overall global burden of disease.
- It is therefore increasingly clear that, now more than ever before, we need to aggressively address what is an invisible and overlooked health and social burden
- Sir David Attenborough, Margaret Atwood, Sir Elton John and Shah Rukh Khan are among the previous recipients of Crystal Award

World Economic Forum's 2020 Annual Meeting (Davos-Klosters Switzerland)

- The 2020 annual meeting will take place from 22-25 January under the theme, 'Stakeholders for a Cohesive and Sustainable World'.
- The WEF Annual Meeting brings together leaders from international organisations, government, civil society, culture and media, business, foremost experts and young generation from all over the world, at highest level and in representative ways.

Prelims factoids: Mahila Police Volunteers (MPVs)

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Mahila Police Volunteers)

What's the NEWS

- Ministry of Women and Child Development in collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs has envisaged engagement of Mahila Police Volunteers (MPVs) in the States/UTs who will act as a link between police and community and help women in distress.

Know! more about it

- All Chief Secretaries of States/UTs were requested to adopt this initiative in their respective States.
- Haryana was the first state to adopt the initiative at Karnal and Mahendergarh District on a pilot basis under Nirbhaya Fund during the financial year 2016-2017.
- Further, the proposals of Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Mizoram, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh have also been approved for implementation of MPVs.
- The Government has also launched Mahila aur Shishu Rakshak Dal (MASRD) in the country.
- Under the Mahila Police Volunteers Scheme, one of the activities/ responsibilities of Mahila Police Volunteers is to motivate and mobilize individuals to form themselves into MASRDs as well as to integrate the existing groups working in the community on women empowerment issues with MASRDs.
- The Scheme of Mahila Police Volunteers is a central sector scheme which is required to be implemented with active financial and administrative participation of State Governments and UT Administrations.

Defence: Quick Reaction Surface to Air Missile successfully flight-tested off Odisha coast

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Quick reaction surface to air missile)

What's the NEWS

- Quick Reaction Surface to Air Missile (QRSAM) system developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) was successfully flight-tested

Know! more about QRSAM

- The missile was flight-tested with full configuration in deployment mode intercepting the target mid-air, meeting the mission objectives.
- The QRSAM weapon system, which operates on the move, comprises of fully automated Command and Control System, Active Array Battery Surveillance Radar, Active Array Battery Multifunction Radar and Launcher.



- Both radars are four-walled having 360-degree coverage with search on move and track on move capability.
- The system is compact with minimum number of vehicles for a firing unit.
- Single stage solid propelled missile has midcourse inertial navigation system with two-way data link and terminal active seeker developed indigenously by DRDO.
- The missile successfully engaged the aerial target establishing its capability.
- With this mission, the developmental trials of the weapon system are successfully completed and the weapon system is expected to be ready for induction by 2021.

State Specific: Himachal Pradesh Global Investors' Meet

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the global Investor's meet and benefits of it) + Mains (GS II Centre-state relations – steps taken by the centre for promoting economic affairs in states)



What's the NEWS

- Union Minister of Home Affairs Shri Amit Shah addresses the 1st Ground Breaking Ceremony of Himachal Pradesh Global Investors' Meet at Shimla

Know! more about the Global Investor meet

- The Global Investor Meet 2019 is the flagship business event of the Government of Himachal Pradesh. The State will be organizing the inaugural edition of the marquee event at Dharamshala
- In this event Himachal will showcase the policy & regulatory environment, investment opportunities across eight focus sectors to boost manufacturing and employment generation in the state.
- The state is in accelerated socio- economic growth phase and has transitioned from agrarian economy to an industry and services led economy.
- Abundance of industrial power that is amongst the cheapest in the country, open and progressive policies of the State Government backed by fast track project clearances, continuous investment in upgradation of infrastructure development, human capital and social welfare has made Himachal Pradesh as the preferred destination in India for entrepreneurs.
- The Himachal Pradesh government is inviting the investors for tourism, agriculture, infrastructure, and pharmaceutical sectors.
- Himachal Pradesh is leading in hydel power generation which supplies power 24 hours a day along with peaceful atmosphere, law-abiding citizens, surplus supply of water and good connectivity.
- The Home Minister addressed the function at the groundbreaking ceremony of 250 projects totaling 13,000 crore rupees.

Losar Festival



Relevance IN – Prelims (about LOSAR festival)

What's the NEWS

- Union Territory of Ladakh is celebrating Losar Festival on 27 December 2019, to mark the Ladakhi or Tibetan New Year.

Know! more about Losar festival

- The holiday is celebrated on various dates depending on location (Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal, India, Pakistan) tradition.
- The holiday is a new year's festival, celebrated on the first day of the lunisolar Tibetan calendar, which corresponds to a date in February or March in the Gregorian calendar.
- Losar Festival is celebrated in the 11th month of Tibetan calendar. Devotees make symbolic meals and offerings and decorate houses with good luck signs.
- Buddhist community prayed for longevity and prosperity on this auspicious occasion. Losar is an important festival that attracts tourists in large numbers.
- Until 2018, Losar gathering use to have 'UT Status for Ladakh' as a resolution for New Year.

- This year, it will be joyous Losar festival celebrations in newly born Union Territory Ladakh. Losar festival, which has its origin in 15th century, is also observed in all Himalayan states of country but in different times.
- People of various parts of Ladakh region, annually celebrate Losar Festival on 1st Day of Eleventh Month of Tibetan Calendar correlating to a date in Gregorian calendar. The celebrations continue for 3-9 days in different parts of Ladakh.
- The festival is regarded as the most important socio-religious event of Ladakh. It is also one of the major attractions for tourists in winter season, as the festival coupled with several ritual performances and traditional events.
- Ladakh Buddhist Association in collaboration with Union Territory Administration is also organizing a grand celebration at Chokanga Vihara in Leh

Prelims Factoids: DGCA launches Phase-1 services of e-GCA

Relevance IN – Prelims (about eGCA PROJECT)

What's the NEWS

- Phase-1 services of the e-Governance (eGCA) project of Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) was launched by the Ministry of Civil Aviation
- With this launch, the issue of Commercial Pilot License (CPL-A) with Flight Radio Telephony Operators License (FRTOL) and Instrument Rating has been automated.

Know! more about eGCA project

- Rolling out the CPL-A in automated form would help in expediting the process of issue of these licenses and would do away with manual handling and processing of applications. With this roll out almost seven hundred aspirant pilots would be benefited every year.
- The eGCA project is being implemented with TCS as Service Provider and PWC as Project Management Consultant.
- The project has been conceptualized for automation of the processes and functions of DGCA.
- The project would enhance the efficiency of the various services provided by the DGCA and would ensure transparency and accountability in all DGCA functions.
- The eGCA project is expected to be completed by the end of year 2020.

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