drishti

Current Affairs
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Polity and Governance

Highlights

- *Legal Framework for Illegal Migrants in India*
- *Nagaland Extends ILP in Dimapur*
- *Heavy Metals Contaminating India's Rivers*
- *Special Protection Group (Amendment) Bill, 2019*
- *Demand for Reforms in Rajya Sabha*
- *Code of Conduct for Lok Sabha MPs*
- *Validity of Oaths Taken by Ministers*
- *Removal of Anglo-Indians Reservation in Legislative Bodies*
- *Poll Spend Limit*
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- *Right To A Fair Trial*
- *Essential Medicines*
- *Centre Stops Online Sale of Medicines*

Legal Framework for Illegal Migrants in India

Why in News

Recently, the Home Minister informed in the Rajya Sabha that the **National Register of Citizens (NRC)** will be implemented across India, and repeated **again in Assam**.

- According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, the implementation of NRC is expected to keep a check on illegal migrants.
- However, India already has a number of rules and regulations in place to control illegal migration in the country.

Existing Legal Framework

- **The clause for the expulsion of foreigners:**
  - **Foreigners Act, 1864**
    - It was the **first** enactment made for dealing with foreigners that provided for the **expulsion of foreigners**.
    - It also allowed arrest, detention, and for a ban on foreigners entry into India after detention.
- **Introduction of Passport:**
  - **The Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920**
    - The act empowered the union government to make rules requiring persons entering India to be in possession of passports.
    - It also granted the government the power to remove from India any person who entered without a passport.
- **Concept of 'burden of proof' lies with the person, and not with the authorities:**
  - **Foreigners Act, 1940**
    - It was enacted during the Second World War, under which the concept of **"burden of proof"** was introduced.
    - This meant that whenever a question arose with regard to the nationality of a person, the onus of proving that he is not a foreigner lay **upon the person**.
  - **Foreigners Act, 1946**
    - It **replaced** the Foreigners Act, 1940 conferring wide powers to deal with all foreigners.
    - The act empowered the government to take such steps as are necessary to prevent illegal migrants including the use of force.
    - The concept of **'burden of proof' lies with the person, and not with the authorities**. This provision is **still applicable in all States and Union Territories**. This concept has been **upheld** by a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court.
    - The act empowered the government to establish **tribunals which would have powers similar** to those of a **civil court**.
    - Recent **amendments (2019)** to the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964 empowered district magistrates in all States and Union Territories

Note:

to set up tribunals to decide whether a person staying illegally in India is a foreigner or not.

- Before this amendment, only union government was empowered to establish foreigner tribunals.

- **Increased burden of migrants because of absence of the "burden of a proof" clause:**
  - **Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983**
    - The **absence** of any provision related to the **'burden of proof'** in the **Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983** put a very **heavy burden upon the authorities** to establish whether a person is an illegal migrant.
    - Moreover, **a number of non-Indians** who may have entered Assam after March 25, 1971, without possession of valid documents, continued to reside in Assam.
    - The **act was struck down** by the **Supreme Court in Sarbananda Sonowal v. Union of India (2005)**. The Supreme Court also closed all tribunals in Assam functioning under the Act.
    - The Supreme Court, then, **transferred all pending cases** at the IMDT tribunals to the **Foreigners Tribunals** constituted under the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964.
- **Existing Procedure for Appeal:**
  - **Assam:**
    - Currently, any person excluded from the National Register of Citizens (NRC) can approach the Foreigners Tribunals, established only in Assam, within 120 days of receiving a certified copy of rejection.
  - **Other states and Union Territories:**
    - In other States, a person suspected to be a foreigner is produced before a local court under the Passport Act, 1920, or the Foreigners Act, 1946.

Nagaland Extends ILP in Dimapur

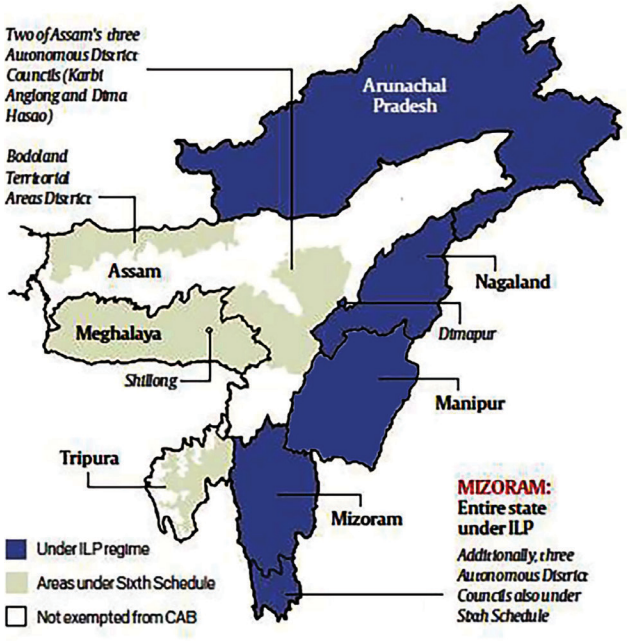
Why in News

Recently, the **Nagaland government** has extended the **Inner Line Permit (ILP)** system to the **district of Dimapur**.

- This step was taken to exempt the entire district from the purview of the **Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB)**.
- So far, Dimapur was the only place in Nagaland which was not under the ILP system because the district is a commercial hub and has a mixed population (often referred to as 'Mini India').
- Recently **Manipur** has also been brought **under the purview of ILP System**. Thus, the entire northeast India has been exempted from CAB **except for Sikkim and non-tribal areas in Assam and Tripura**.

Key Points

- The extension of ILP to Dimapur has been issued under section 2 of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873 by the governor of Nagaland.
- The extension of the ILP regime makes it mandatory for "every non-indigenous person" who entered the district after November 21, 1979, to obtain an ILP within 90 days.
- **Exemptions:**
  - Any non-indigenous persons living in Dimapur prior to November 21, 1979, with a certificate from the Deputy Commissioner.



ARUNACHAL PRADESH: Entire state under ILP regime

NAGALAND: Entire state under ILP regime

TRIPURA: Sixth Schedule covers 70% of geographical area

MEGHALAYA: Almost entire sstate covered under Sixth Schedule, except a part of Shilong

ASSAM: 3 Autonomous District Councils under Sixth Schedule

MANIPUR: Entire state under ILP regime

Note:

- Any non-indigenous person passing through Dimapur to other states as a transit passenger with a valid document.

Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2019 and North-East India

- **Protected by the ILP System:** Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Mizoram have been exempted from the provisions of the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB), 2019.
- **Sixth Schedule Areas:** The whole of Meghalaya (except a part of Shillong), Mizoram and the tribal areas of Tripura and Assam are also exempted from the CAB.
  - The Sixth Schedule contains special provisions for the administration of tribal areas in the four north-eastern states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

Inner Line Permit

- Inner Line Permit is an official travel document issued by the concerned **State Government** to allow inward travel of an Indian citizen into a protected/ restricted area for a limited period.
- It is based on the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act (BEFR), 1873.
  - This act was enacted during the British era to protect the British interests from the hill tribals who used to invade the British subjects.
  - An imaginary line known as the inner-line was created to divide between the two communities so that neither party could go beyond the line without a permit from the appropriate authorities.

Heavy Metals Contaminating India's Rivers

Why in News

Recently, the **Central Water Commission (CWC)** has reported that the samples from **two-thirds of the water quality stations** spanning India's major rivers are contaminated by **one or more heavy metals, exceeding safe limits** set by the **Bureau of Indian Standards**.

- The samples from only **one-third** of water quality stations were **safe** whereas **65%** were **polluted** by **heavy metals**.
  - Heavy metals are naturally occurring elements that have a high atomic weight and a density of at least 5 times greater than that of water.
- The exercise was **limited to surface water** and **did not cover groundwater** contamination.
- The **presence of metals** in drinking water to **some extent** is **unavoidable** and certain metals, in **trace amounts**, are required for **good health**. However, when present above safe limits, they are associated with a range of disorders.
  - **Long-term exposure** to the heavy metals may result in physical, muscular, and neurological degenerative processes that mimic Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis.

Key Points

- **Iron** emerged as the **most common contaminant** with **above safe limits** across the country.
- **Arsenic and zinc** are the two toxic metals whose concentration is always found within the limits.
  - Arsenic contamination is a major environmental issue that affects **groundwater**.
- The other **major contaminants** found in the samples were **lead, nickel, chromium, cadmium** and **copper**.
- The contamination of water sites depends on the season. The **varied presence of contaminants** is found in **different seasons** namely, **Non-Monsoon, and Monsoon**.

Reasons for Contamination of Surface Water

- The main sources of heavy metal pollution are mining, milling, plating and surface finishing industries that discharge a variety of toxic metals into the environment.

River	Chromium	Lead	Iron
Ganga	Exceeds		Exceeds
Yamuna			Exceeds
Brahmaputra			Exceeds
Ramganga		Exceeds	
Rapti	Exceeds		Exceeds
Narmada			Exceeds
Godavari			Exceeds

SOURCE: CENTRAL WATER COMMISSION STUDY

Note:

- The population growth and rise in agricultural and industrial activities are also responsible for contamination of surface water.

Special Protection Group (Amendment) Bill, 2019

Why in News

Recently, the Parliament has **passed the Special Protection Group (Amendment) Bill, 2019**. The SPG Bill will amend the SPG Act of 1988.

- The proposed amendments in the **Special Protection Group (SPG) Bill** aims to **reduce the financial burden of VIP security on the state exchequer**.
- The reduction of SPG coverage will also help to **eliminate the notion of a status symbol** attached to it.

Special Protection Group

- The SPG was raised in **1985** to provide security cover to the **Prime Minister, former Prime Ministers and their immediate family members**.
- The SPG comprises of the personnel from the CRPF, Border Security Force and other Central and State forces.

Amendments

- **Reduced SPG Coverage:**
  - The protection to be offered **only to the Prime Minister, former Prime Ministers and their immediate family** members that will reside with him at **his official residence**.
  - Currently, the security cover is provided to the Prime Minister, former Prime Ministers and their immediate family members.
- **Time period:**
  - The security will be provided **only for a period of five years to the former Prime Ministers** and their immediate family **after they leave the office**.
  - However, the immediate family members need to be residing with the Prime Minister at the allotted residence.
- **Withdrawal:**
  - When the proximate security is withdrawn from a former Prime Minister such proximate security will also stand withdrawn from members of his immediate family.

Demand for Reforms in Rajya Sabha

Why in News

Recently, the members of Parliament have demanded equal representation for states and more time to speak in Rajya Sabha.

Representation for States

- The Upper House is the Council of States and thus it is expected to reflect the true spirit of federalism through the uniform representation for all states.
  - But, currently, the seats in Rajya Sabha are allotted on the **basis of population of the particular state**. Hence, the number of representatives **varies from state to state**. For example, Uttar Pradesh has 31 members while Tripura has 1 member only.
- Also, smaller states need to have more number of representatives in the house according to issues and needs of the state.
  - Currently, the northeastern states, barring Assam have only one seat each in the Rajya Sabha.
- The recent demand asks for allocation of seats in Rajya Sabha **on the lines of USA**.
  - In the USA, all states are given equal representation in the Senate, irrespective of their population. The USA has 50 states and the Senate has 100 members—2 from each state.

Time to Speak in Rajya Sabha

- Currently, the **independent or nominated members** and MPs from **smaller parties** get **less time** to speak in the House. The **inadequacy of time** to speak for the **nominated members restricts** the **benefits** from their **special expertise**.
  - The members of Rajya Sabha are given time to speak according **to the strength of their party** in the House.

Code of Conduct for Lok Sabha MPs

Why in News

The **Lok Sabha Ethics Committee** is all set to **form a code of conduct** for the Members of Parliament (MPs) in the Lok Sabha.

Note:

- It has become necessary that the MPs follow certain decorum in speaking inside the House as well as outside.
- A Code of Conduct is also necessary because of advancements of new technologies in the communication sector. The remarks on the floor of the House spread fast, even if they are removed from the records.

Code of Conduct: Evolution

- A **code for Union ministers was adopted in 1964**, and state governments were advised to adopt it as well.
- In the case of MPs, the first step was the constitution of Parliamentary Standing Committees on Ethics in both the Houses.
  - The **Committee in Rajya Sabha was inaugurated in 1997** to oversee the moral and ethical conduct of the Members and to examine the cases referred to it with reference to ethical and other misconduct of Members.
  - The **first Ethics Committee in Lok Sabha was constituted in the year 2000**.

Code of Conduct in Rajya Sabha

- A 14-point Code of Conduct for members of the House has been in force since 2005. These include:
  - Private interests are subordinate to the duty of the public office.
  - Public interest is not jeopardised.
  - Members should never expect or accept any fee, remuneration or benefit for a vote given or not given by them on the floor of the House, for introducing a bill, etc.
  - Members shall not do anything that brings disrepute to the Parliament and affects their credibility.
  - Members must utilise their position as Members of Parliament to advance general well-being of the people.
  - Members should not be disrespectful to any religion, and work for the promotion of secular values.
  - Members should consider the fundamental duties listed in part IVA of the Constitution with higher regards.
  - Members are expected to maintain high standards of morality, dignity, decency and values in public life.
- A **'Register of Member's Interests'** maintained under the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of States is available to Members for inspection on request. The Register is also accessible to ordinary citizens under the **Right To Information (RTI) Act, 2005**.

Code of Conduct in Lok Sabha

- The Ethics Committee has been **constituted for every newly elected Lok Sabha** (since 13th Lok Sabha).
- The Ethics Committee was **mandated in August 2015** to formulate a code of conduct for Lok Sabha members and suggest amendments to the code from time to time.
- The Committee **examines every complaint relating to unethical conduct of a member** of Lok Sabha referred to it by the Speaker and make such recommendations as it may deem fit.

International Practice

- In the **United Kingdom,** a code of conduct for MPs was "prepared pursuant to the Resolution of the House of 19 July 1995".
- The **Canadian** House of Commons has a Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner with powers to examine violations of the Conflict of Interest Code at the request of another Member or by Resolution of the House or on his own initiative.
- **Germany** has has a Code of Conduct for members of the Bundestag since 1972.
- The **United States of America (USA)** has a Code since 1968.
- **Pakistan** has a Code of Conduct for members of the Senate.

Validity of Oaths Taken by Ministers

Why in News

During the oath-taking ceremony of the new government, the Chief Minister of Maharashtra with other ministers has altered the oath by invoking the names other than mentioned in the Constitution.

Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 164(3):** It states that before a Minister enters upon his office, the **Governor** shall administer to him the **oaths of office and of secrecy** according to the forms set out in the **Third Schedule**.

Note:

- Article 164 makes it clear that the **text of the oath is sacrosanct**, and the person taking the oath has to read it out exactly as it is, in the given format.

- **Third Schedule:** It requires the person taking oath to either **"swear in the name of God"** or to **"solemnly affirm"** to **"bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution"**.
- **Role of the Governor:** If a person wanders from the text of the oath, it is the responsibility of the person administering the oath — in this instance, **the Governor** — to interrupt and ask the person being sworn in to read it out correctly.
  - Once Governor takes it as read, and the Secretary to the Governor has attested that the oath has been administered, it **cannot** be **legally challenged**.

Schedule Number	Subject Matter
First Schedule	Names of the States and Union Territories with their territorial jurisdiction.
Second Schedule	Provisions relating to the emoluments, allowances, privileges.
Third Schedule	**Forms of Oaths or Affirmations.**
Fourth Schedule	Allocation of seats in the Rajya Sabha to the states and the union territories.
Fifth Schedule	Provisions relating to the administration and control of scheduled areas and scheduled tribes.
Sixth Schedule	Provisions relating to the administration of tribal areas in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
Seventh Schedule	Division of powers between the Union and the States in terms of List I (Union List), List II (State List) and List III (Concurrent List).
Eighth Schedule	Languages recognized by the Constitution.
Ninth Schedule	Acts and Regulations of the state legislatures dealing with land reforms and abolition of the zamindari system and of the Parliament dealing with other matters.
Tenth Schedule	Provisions relating to disqualification of the members of Parliament and State Legislatures on the ground of defection.
Eleventh Schedule	Specifies the powers, authority and responsibilities of Panchayats.
Twelfth Schedule	Specifies the powers, authority, and responsibilities of Municipalities.

Instances of Deviation

- In **1990**, the oath taken by **Devi Lal as deputy Prime Minister** was challenged as being unconstitutional as the Constitution provides only for the Prime Minister and ministers.
  - The **Supreme Court upheld the oath as valid** and stated that describing a person as Deputy Prime Minister is descriptive only and such description does not confer on him any powers of Prime Minister.
  - It also ruled that the description of a minister as Deputy Prime Minister or any other type of ministers such as minister of state or deputy minister of which there is **no mention in the Constitution does not vitiate the oath** taken by him so **long as the substantive part of the oath is correct**.
- In **2012**, Azam Khan (then a member of Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly) had to retake his oath after he skipped the oath of office of a cabinet minister, and only took the oath of secrecy.

Removal of Anglo-Indians Reservation in Legislative Bodies

Why in News

Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved the **removal of reservation for Anglo-Indians in legislative bodies**.

- Anglo-Indians were provided **two nominated seats in the Lok Sabha and one nominated seat in the State Legislative Assemblies** to ensure adequate representation of the community in elected legislative bodies.
- Anglo-Indians constitute a **religious, social, as well as a linguistic minority**. Being numerically an extremely small community, and being interspersed all over India, the Anglo-Indians were provided reservations in legislative bodies.
- The reservation for the Anglo-Indian community was extended till the year 2020 through the **95th Amendment, 2009**.

Note:

Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 366:** It **defines Anglo-Indian** as a person whose father or any of whose other male progenitors in the male line is or was of European descent but who is domiciled within the territory of India and is or was born within such territory of parents habitually resident therein and not established there for temporary purposes only.
- **Article 331:** It states that the **President** can nominate two members of the Anglo-Indian community to the Lok Sabha if the community is not adequately represented.
- **Article 333:** It states that the **Governor** of a State may if he is of the opinion that the Anglo Indian community needs representation in the Legislative Assembly of the State and is not adequately represented therein, nominate one member of that community to the Assembly.
- **Article 334(b):** The reservation of the Anglo Indian community in the Legislative bodies was **extended for 40 years in 1949** through the insertion of this article.
  - Originally, this provision was to **operate till 1960**.
- **National Commission for SCs (Article 338):** It investigates all matters relating to the **Constitutional and other legal safeguards for the Anglo-Indian community** and report to the President upon their working.

Poll Spend Limit

Why in News

A Private Member's bill was introduced in the Parliament which intends to **do away with the cap on election spending by candidates**.

- The Bill has been introduced on the ground that the **ceiling on election expenses ends up being counterproductive** and encourages candidates to under-report their expenditure.
- Also, the **ceiling currently** prescribed by the **Election Commission of India (ECI)** is meant for **legitimate expenditure**. A lot of money in elections is being spent for illegitimate purposes.

Current Scenario

- At present, under **Rule 90 of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961,** a candidate contesting **Lok Sabha polls** can spend **up to Rs 70 lakh and up to Rs 28 lakh** in an **assembly election** depending on the state in which s/he is contesting polls.
- Under **Section 77 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951,** every candidate shall keep a **separate and correct account of all expenditure** incurred between the date on which he has been nominated and the date of declaration of the result.
- All **candidates** are required to **submit** their **expenditure statement** to the ECI **within 30 days of the completion of the elections**.
- An **incorrect account or expenditure beyond the cap** can lead to **disqualification of the candidate by the ECI for up to three years,** under Section 10A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.
- It can be noted that **there is no cap on a political party's expenditure,** which is often exploited by candidates of the party. However, all **registered political parties have to submit a statement** of their election expenditure **to the ECI within 90 days** of the completion of the elections.

International Anti - Corruption Day

Why in News

The **International Anti-Corruption Day** is observed on **9th December** every year.

- The United Nations General Assembly on 31st October, 2003, adopted the United Nations Convention against Corruption, and designated December 9 as International Anti-Corruption Day, in order to raise awareness about corruption and of the role of Convention in fighting and preventing it.
- The convention came into force in the year 2005, and since then the day is being observed annually.
- The **theme** for the year 2019 is, **'United Against Corruption'**.

Corruption

- Corruption may be defined as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain.
- **Related Global Data**
  - Every year $1 trillion is paid in bribes while an estimated $2.6 trillion are stolen annually through corruption – a sum equivalent to more than 5% of the global GDP.

Note:

- In developing countries, funds lost to corruption are estimated at 10 times the amount of official development assistance.

➢ **Data Specific To India**

- According to the 'India Corruption Survey 2019', conducted by independent agencies Transparency International India (TII) and LocalCircles, the percentage of people who had paid bribes fell from 58% in 2018 to 51% in 2019. In 2017, the figure was 45%.
- The survey revealed that people in Delhi, Haryana, Gujarat, West Bengal, Kerala, Goa and Odisha reported low instances of corruption while Rajasthan, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand and Punjab had higher occurrences.
- Also, India was ranked at **78th place** out of 180 countries in **'Corruption Perception Index'** (CPI) released by Transparency International in 2018. India was ranked 81 in 2017 and 79 in 2016.

➢ **Steps Taken by India**

- The **Central Vigilance Commission** though created in 1964, became an **independent statutory body** only in 2003 by an Act of Parliament. Its mandate is to oversee the vigilance administration and to advise and assist the executive in matters relating to corruption.
- **Related Legislations:** Right to Information Act, 2005, Prevention of Corruption Act, the Judges (Inquiry) Act, the Lokpal and Lokayukta Act 2013, WhistleBlowers Protection Act 2011, Prevention of Money Laundering Act 2002, Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Act 2016, etc.
- Ratification of United Nations Convention Against Corruption in 2011.
- Introduction of e-governance and direct benefit scheme.

Right To A Fair Trial

Why in News

The Supreme Court (SC), in a recent verdict, has held that the routine practice of investigating agencies of producing documents in sealed covers and the judges reproducing them as judicial findings of their own will affect the right to a fair trial of accused.

Key Points

➢ **Routine Practice**

- The apex court reacted sharply to the recent trend of agencies like the CBI and the Enforcement Directorate presenting documents in sealed covers to the courts, as evidence collected against the accused in the course of investigation.
- The situation is made worse when judges convert the findings of the investigative agencies in these documents into their own judicial findings and reproduce them in orders, refusing the accused bail.

➢ **Verdict**

- The Supreme Court held that though it was open for a judge to receive the materials/documents collected during the investigation in order to either "satisfy its conscience that the investigation is proceeding on the right lines" or to grant bail, the judge cannot reproduce the material as his own findings in a judicial order.
- It would be against the concept of a fair trial if in every case the prosecution presents documents in sealed cover and the findings on the same are recorded as if the offence is committed and the same is treated as having a bearing for denial or grant of bail.
- The merits of a case should be left for the trial where the accused can defend himself.

Rights of an Accused under Indian Constitution

➢ **Article 22** of the Indian Constitution confers the following rights on a person who is arrested or detained under an ordinary law:

- Right to be informed of the grounds of arrest.
- Right to consult and be defended by a legal practitioner.
- Right to be produced before a magistrate within 24 hours, excluding the journey time.
- Right to be released after 24 hours unless the magistrate authorises further detention.

➢ It needs to be noted that the above safeguards are **not available to an enemy alien** or a **person arrested or detained** under a **preventive detention law**.

Note:

Essential Medicines

Why in News

India's drug pricing regulator, **National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA)**, has allowed an increase in the maximum retail prices of 21 drugs currently under price control by as much as 50%.

- The decision has been taken by invoking **paragraph 19 of the Drug Prices Control Order (DPCO), 2013** which until now has been used only to reduce the prices of stents and knee implants.
- Most of these drugs are used as the first line of treatment and are crucial to the public health program of the country.
- The decision by the NPPA will apply to formulations like the BCG vaccine for tuberculosis, vitamin C, antibiotics like metronidazole and benzylpenicillin, antimalarial drug chloroquine and leprosy medication dapsone.

Background

- Manufacturers have been citing **difficulties in supplying these drugs** and many companies even have applied for discontinuation of the product on account of unviability.
- NPPA has been receiving applications for upward price revision under para 19 of DPCO, 2013, since last two years citing reasons like "increase in **Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient - API (key ingredient)** cost, increase in cost of production, exchange rates etc. resulting in unviability in sustainable production and marketing of the drugs.

Drug Prices Control Order, 2013

- Under the provisions of DPCO 2013, only the prices of drugs that figure in the **National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM)** are monitored and controlled by the regulator, the National Pharma Pricing Authority.
  - Essential medicines are those that satisfy the priority healthcare needs of the majority of the population. The primary purpose of NLEM is to promote rational use of medicines considering the three important aspects i.e. cost, safety and efficacy.
- Paragraph 19 of the DPCO, 2013, deals with **increase or decrease in drug prices under extraordinary circumstances**. However, there is neither a precedent nor any formula prescribed for upward revision of ceiling prices.
- **India is dependent on China for over 60% of its API requirement,** higher API costs for price-controlled medicines reduce profits and sometimes even make production of these drugs unviable in India. For instance, the cost of ingredients to make vitamin C went up as much as 250%, leading to a 25-30% shortage of this drug in India in 2019.

Key Points

- The decision has been taken to ensure that the **life saving essential drugs must remain available** to the general public at all times. This is to avoid a situation where these drugs become unavailable in the market and the public is forced to switch to costly alternatives.
- This is the first time the NPPA — which is known to slash prices of essential and life-saving medicines — is increasing prices in public interest.

On a longer term, **India needs to build capabilities to manufacture the key ingredients** for these medicines.

Centre Stops Online Sale of Medicines

Why in News

Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) has directed all states and Union territories to prohibit the sale of medicines through unlicensed online platforms as per the Delhi High Court order.

- In the **Zaheer Ahmed case (2018)**, the Delhi High Court had ruled that online sale of medicines should be prohibited until draft rules to regulate e-pharmacies are finalized and put in place.
- Online sale of prescription medicines is a relatively recent phenomenon in India and laws are yet to be framed to regulate the industry.

Key Points

- The government has prepared draft e-pharmacy rules that are under consideration of a group of ministers (GoM) headed by the Defence Minister.
- The Delhi High Court had stated that the drugs were sold online in **violation of the Drugs and Cosmetics (D&C) Act, 1940**. Under the D&C Act, 1940 and D&C Rules, 1945 sale of spurious drugs is a punishable offence and State Licensing Authorities are empowered to take action in this regard.

Note:

- However, e-pharmacies continued to sell online, after securing a stay from the Madras High Court in January 2019.
  - In December 2018, a single-judge Bench of the Madras High Court had told traders not to proceed with their online business in drugs till the rules are notified by the Central government.
- E-pharmacies have claimed that their **business model is well covered by the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000** under the concept of intermediaries, and the **pharmacy retail operations are covered by the Drugs and Cosmetics Act**.

The Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940

- It regulates the import, manufacturing and distribution of drugs in India.
- Its objective is to ensure that the drugs and cosmetics sold in India are safe, effective and fulfills the safety standards and parameters.

Some Provisions of Draft Rules on Sale of Drugs by e-pharmacy

- Those who want to sell pharmacy online will **have to register with the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO)**, the country's apex drug regulator and central licensing authority.
  - Also, they must retain prescriptions and verify details of patients and doctors.
- **No e-pharmacy shall advertise** any drug on radio or television or the Internet or print or any other media for any purpose.
- The supply of any drug shall be made against a cash or credit memo generated through the **e-pharmacy portal** and such memos shall be maintained by the e-pharmacy registration holder as a record.

e-Pharmacy Sector

- **Advantages:**
  - e-pharmacies **offer discounts, doorstep delivery, accountability** in case of delay in services or non-availability of a particular brand or combination of drugs at the click of a button.
  - They offer the customers the **convenience to compare and select their medicines**.
- **Disadvantages:**
  - They present **stiff competition and threaten the business of traditional pharmacies**. Their growth can impact the livelihood of nearly a million chemists, distributors and their employees
  - **Monitoring of fake and illegal e-pharmacies** could be a challenge and cyber experts need to be employed to tackle such cases.
  - **A scanned copy of a prescription is not considered authentic** under the D&C Act 1940 as well as under the IT Act 2000.
  - **Drug Abuse:** One prescription can be uploaded on two different e-pharmacy sites, leading to drug abuse. Such multiple dispensing of prescriptions can lead to misuse of drugs and increase the number of drug addicts, especially youth.

■■■

Note:

Economic Scenario

Highlights

- *Consumer Expenditure Survey*
- *Data Bank of Independent Directors*
- *GST Compensation*
- *Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2019*
- *Bharat Bond Exchange Traded Fund*
- *Repo Rate Unchanged*
- *Guidelines for Licencing of Small Finance Banks*
- *Forex Reserves*
- *Remission of Duties or Taxes on Export Product*
- *Contraction in Index of Industrial Production*

Consumer Expenditure Survey

Why in News

The Government has decided **not to release the results of the all-India household Consumer Expenditure Survey (CES)**, conducted during 2017-18, due to data quality issues.

- The Government is now examining the feasibility of conducting the next Consumer Expenditure Survey (CES) in 2020-2021 and 2021-22 after incorporating all data quality refinements in the survey process.
- According to the 2017-18 survey, the country has witnessed the first such drop in the **Monthly Per Capita Consumer Expenditure (MPCE)** since 1972-73.
- Previous survey on consumer expenditure was conducted during the period : July 2011 to June 2012.

Consumer Expenditure Survey

- **Time Interval:** Traditionally, a **quinquennial (recurring every five years)** survey is conducted by the **National Sample Survey Office - NSSO** (comes under the National Statistical Office), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
- **Scope:** Collects information on the **consumption spending patterns of households** across the country, both **urban and rural**.
- **Information Generated**
  - Reveals the average expenditure on **goods (food and non-food) and services**.
  - Helps generate estimates of household **Monthly Per Capita Consumer Expenditure (MPCE)** as well as the distribution of households and persons over the MPCE classes.
- **Significance in General**
  - Helps in calculating the **demand dynamics** of the economy.
  - Helps in understanding the shifting priorities in terms of baskets of goods and services, thus provides **pointers to the producers of goods and providers of services**.
  - To **assess living standards** and growth trends across multiple strata.
- **Significance for Policymakers**
  - The CES is an analytical as well as a forecasting tool which helps the Government in **planning required interventions and policies**.
  - To spot and address possible structural anomalies that may cause demand to shift in a particular manner in a specific socio-economic or regional division of the population.
  - To **rebase the Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** and other macro-economic indicators.

Consequences of not releasing the data

- Instead of a six-year gap, the next survey's findings — depending on when the Ministry decides to actually undertake it, 2020-21 or 2021-22 — would end up coming after 9 or 10 years after the 2011-12 round.
- As the survey forms the **basis of the estimation of inequality** in India, and is used for adjusting the consumer price index as well as the GDP data, scrapping the survey means further **delays in updating these key statistics**.
- **Against IMF's Obligations**

Note:

Findings of CES (2011-12)

- **Urban and Rural Expenditure**
  - Average urban MPCE (at ₹2,630) was about 84% higher than average rural MPCE (₹1,430) for the country as a whole.
  - The most noticeable rural-urban differences in the 2011-12 survey related to spending on cereals (urban share: 6.7%, rural share: 10.8%), rent (urban: 6.2%, rural: 0.5%) and education (urban: 7%, rural: 3.5%).
- **Expenditure on Food**
  - Food accounted for about 53% of the value of the average rural Indian household's consumption during 2011-12 and 42.6% of the average consumption budget for urban India.
- **Inequalities**
  - Sharp variations between States with better socio-economic indices and those still aiming to improve reflected urban-rural divide and highlighted the gap between the highest spending and lowest spending groups.

  - India is a subscriber to the **International Monetary Fund's Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS)**.
  - Thus, India is obliged to follow good practices in **four areas in disseminating macroeconomic statistics** to the public. These comprise:
    - Coverage, periodicity, and timeliness of data;
    - Public access to those data;
    - Data integrity;
    - Data quality.
- IMF's **'Annual Observance Report' for 2018** has already flagged concerns about India's delays in releasing economic data. By not releasing the CES data, the country risks contravening its SDDS obligations.

Way Forward

- The Government can release the data while acknowledging its limitations. Suppressing data will only further erode its credibility.
- The Government should realise that reliable and timely availability of data form the bedrock of sound policy-making and any doubts over official data weaken the credibility of the entire institutional set-up.

Data Bank of Independent Directors

Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Corporate Affairs** launched the **Independent Directors Databank** in accordance with the provisions of the **Companies Act, 2013** and the rules made thereunder.

Background

- The ministry was working on ways to **strengthen the framework for independent directors**, who have an important role in ensuring good corporate governance practices at companies.
- It seeks to make the process stringent because in many cases political appointees with standard financial background were also getting rehabilitated in several companies as independent directors.
- Recent **Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services (IL&FS) crisis** highlighted the reckless grading by credit rating agencies who liberally granted and downgraded the companies as per their wish and got away with it.
- Apart from the launch of **Independent Directors Data Bank**, the government has also decided to **conduct examinations for appointments** of independent directors in which a **score of 60% marks** will be mandatory criteria for qualification.
  - The change is in line with the amended **Companies Act 2013**. The government will also maintain a database of professionals qualifying in the test that can be used by companies looking to expand their board or making fresh appointments under the current regulations.

Significance

- Independent directors **must not assume a passive role**, merely reacting to ideas foreseen by the controlling shareholder or their appointees. They should be willing to question the status quo in the interest of shareholders, and not play a risk-free mute spectator limiting to attending just number of board meetings.
- **Strict accountability and eligibility** will curb promoters placing their own ineligible candidates and family members on the listed company boards.

Note:

- The concept of the institution of Independent Director is of utmost importance for **Corporate Governance** who should act as the trustees of stakeholders.

Data Bank

- It is being developed and maintained by the **Indian Institute for Corporate Affairs (IICA)** under Ministry of Corporate Affairs.
- It is a **first of its kind initiative** which 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**.
- It provides an **easy to access navigation platform** for the registration of existing **Independent Directors** as well as individuals aspiring to become independent directors.
- **Companies can register** themselves with the databank to search, select and connect with individuals aspiring to be Independent Directors.

Independent Director

- An **Independent Director (also sometimes known as an outside director)** is a director on a board of directors representing minority shareholders and **who does not have a pecuniary relationship** with the company or related persons, except for sitting fees.
- Their role is to take a stand unambiguously and independently to have a check and balance on the exuberance of majority shareholders that may expose the company to unwarranted risks.
- The Companies Act, 2013 has mandated all listed public companies to have **at least one-third** of the total Directors to be independent.
- Their role requires them to be clinical while businesses expect them to be practical, that's the tight rope they walk on.

GST Compensation

Why in News

The **GST Council** has informed all the States that the central government might not be able to compensate them for losses arising out of the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

- The GST Council is a **constitutional body** chaired by the Union Finance Minister and comprises the Minister of State for Finance/ Revenue and Finance Ministers of all States.
- It **makes recommendations** on all important issues related to the Goods and Services Tax.

Background

- The GST became applicable from 1st July, 2017 after the enactment of the 101st Constitution Amendment Act, 2016. With GST, a large number of central and state indirect taxes merged into a single tax.
- As per the GST Act, states are guaranteed compensation for any revenue shortfall below 14% growth (base year 2015-16) for the first five years ending 2022. GST compensation is **paid out of Compensation Cess every two months** by the Centre to states.
  - The Compensation Cess is being collected on the supply of select goods and or services or both till 1st July 2022.
  - All the taxpayers, except those who export specific notified goods and those who have opted for GST composition scheme, are liable to collect and remit the GST compensation cess to the central government.
  - Subsequently, the central government distributes it to the states.
- The Centre has already delayed compensating states for the shortfall in GST revenues for August-September 2019, payment for which was due in October, 2019. At least five states/UTs – Kerala, West Bengal, Delhi, Rajasthan and Punjab issued a joint statement on 20th November 2019 raising concerns about the same.

Key Points

- **Revenue Status:** The government budgeted for ₹6,63,343 crore in GST collections for the current financial year 2019-20, out of which it has collected only about 50% in the first eight months. It targeted ₹1,09,343 crore of compensation cess collections, of which it has so far collected ₹64,528 crores.
- **Compensation Status**
  - The Centre collected Rs 64,528 crore in compensation cess during April-November, 2019 and paid out Rs 45,744 crore for April-July period.
  - It has been reported that the payments were held back to the states for August - September in anticipation of the shortfall in collections and the resultant impact on the government's fiscal deficit.

Note:

- The GST Council has also asked states to give their inputs and proposals regarding review of items under the exemption, GST and compensation cess rates on various items among others by 6th December 2019.
  - Given that cess is imposed only on luxury and sin goods under GST, any measure to generate more cess collections would either include imposing a higher cess on those items or tinkering at the highest tax slab of 28% under the GST regime.

Impact

- A shortfall in Centre's tax receipts hurts states more since the absolute amount they receive as per the devolution formula takes a hit.
- At a time when growth is faltering, the delays in paying compensation to states as guaranteed by the GST Act will make it more difficult for them to meet their own finances.

Way Forward

- There is a need to boost the economic growth of the country.
- The Government needs to think about the ways through which it can increase GST collections.

Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2019

Why in News

The Rajya Sabha approved the **Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2019**, replacing an ordinance that was promulgated to cut corporate tax rates to boost growth rate in a slowing economy. Since it deals with taxes, the bill was introduced as a money bill in the Lok Sabha earlier.

- Corporate tax is a tax imposed on the **net income of the company**.

Key Points

- The **Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2019** replaces an ordinance that **reduced the tax rate for domestic companies from 30% and 25%** (for those with an annual turnover of over ₹400 crores) to **22%**.
  - These rates are applicable for companies if they don't claim certain exemptions under the Income Tax Act.
- The rate for **new domestic manufacturing companies** set up after October 1 was **lowered to 15%**.
- The new effective tax rate inclusive of surcharge and cess for domestic companies would be 25.17% and for new domestic manufacturing companies would be 17.01%.

Money Bill

- A Bill is said to be a Money Bill if it only contains provisions related to **taxation**, borrowing of money by the government, expenditure from or receipt to the Consolidated Fund of India.
- A Money Bill may **only be introduced in Lok Sabha**, on the recommendation of the President. It must be passed in the Lok Sabha by a simple majority of all members present and voting.
- The **Rajya Sabha cannot amend money bills** but can recommend amendments. A money bill, that solely concerns taxation or government spending, must be returned to the Lok Sabha **within 14 days**, or the bill is deemed to have been passed by both houses in the form it was originally passed by the Lok Sabha.

Bharat Bond Exchange Traded Fund

Why in News

The **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs**, chaired by the Prime Minister of India, has approved the Government's plan to create and launch **India's first corporate bond Exchange Traded Fund (ETF) — Bharat Bond ETF**.

- The Fund will provide additional source of money for Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs) Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs), Central Public Financial Institutions (CPFIs) and other Government organizations to meet their borrowing requirements, apart from bank financing.

Features of Bharat Bond ETF

- The ETF will comprise a basket of bonds issued by the CPSEs, CPSUs, CPFIs, and other government organisations.
- The **unit size** of the bond has been kept at **just ₹1,000** so that even retail investors can invest.

Note:

Exchange Traded Fund

- An Exchange-Traded Fund (ETF) is a **basket of securities that trade on an exchange,** just like a stock.
- ETF **reflects the composition of an Index,** like BSE Sensex. Its trading value is based on the Net Asset Value (NAV) of the underlying stocks (such as shares) that it represents.
- ETF share prices fluctuate all day as it is bought and sold. This is **different from mutual funds** that only trade once a day after the market closes.
- An ETF can own hundreds or thousands of stocks across various industries, or it could be isolated to one particular industry or sector.
- **Bond ETFs** are a type of ETFs which may include government bonds, corporate bonds, and state and local bonds—called municipal bonds.
  - A **bond** is an instrument that represents a loan made by an investor to a borrower (typically corporate or governmental).
- Besides being cost efficient, ETFs offer a diversified investment portfolio to investors.

- Each ETF will have a fixed maturity date and initially they will be issued in two series, of 3 years and 10 years. Each series will have a separate index of the same maturity series.
  - Index will be constructed by an independent index provider – **National Stock Exchange**.

Advantages

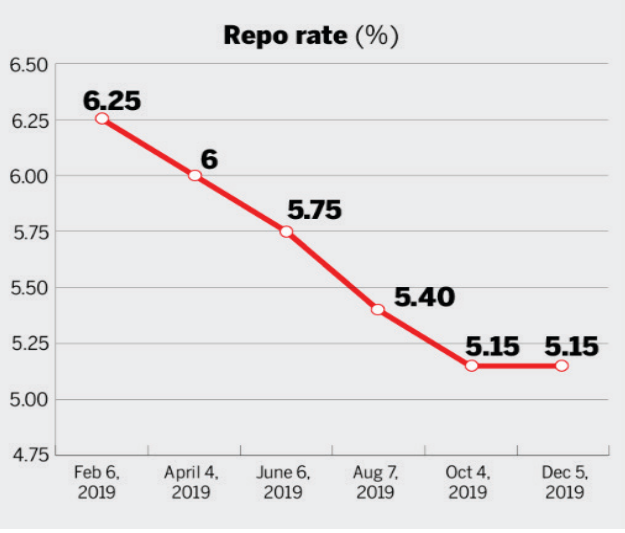
- The Bharat Bond ETF will ensure **broader investor base** through the participation of retail and High Networth Individuals (HNI). This will lead to an increase in the demand for bonds, thus **reducing the cost of borrowing** for borrowers i.e. government organizations.
- The Bond ETF will provide safety, liquidity and predictable tax efficient returns.
- The launch of this ETF is expected to eventually **increase the size of bond ETFs in India** leading to achieving key objectives at a larger scale - deepening bond markets, enhancing retail participation and reducing borrowing costs.

Repo Rate Unchanged

Why in News

The **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** of the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has decided to keep the **repo rate unchanged at 5.15%** in the recent bimonthly policy review.

- This is the first bi-monthly monetary meeting in 2019 in which the repo rate has been kept unchanged. **Since February 2019,** the RBI has cumulatively **cut rates by 135 basis points (bps)**.
- The market was expecting the central bank to cut the repo rate further owing to the weak economic growth rate.
- The repo rate has been kept **unchanged owing to inflation pressure**.
  - The RBI has revised its inflation forecast for the second half of the 2019-20 to 4.7-5.1% from earlier 3.5-3.7%.



Note:

Monetary Policy Committee

- The Monetary Policy Committee is a statutory and institutionalized framework under the **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934,** for maintaining price stability, while keeping in mind the objective of growth.
- The **Governor of RBI** is **ex-officio Chairman** of the committee.
- The MPC determines the policy interest rate (repo rate) required to achieve the inflation target (4%).
- An RBI-appointed committee led by the then deputy governor Urjit Patel in 2014 recommended the establishment of the Monetary Policy Committee.

Repo rate

- It is the **rate at which the central bank of a country (Reserve Bank of India in case of India) lends money to commercial banks** in the event of any shortfall of funds.
- It is used by monetary authorities to **control inflation**.
  - In the event of inflation, central banks increase repo rate as this acts as a disincentive for banks to borrow from the central bank. This ultimately reduces the money supply in the economy and thus helps in arresting inflation.
  - The central bank takes the contrary position in the event of a fall in inflationary pressures.
- Ideally, a low repo rate **should translate into low-cost loans for the general masses**. When the RBI slashes its repo rate, it expects the banks to lower their interest rates charged on loans.

- The **RBI has also slashed its GDP growth forecast** for 2019-20 from 6.1% projected earlier to 5%.

Current Economic Scenario

- **Headline inflation spiked above the 4%** medium-term target in October, 2019.
  - The **food and fuel inflation** form one of the components of headline inflation in India.
  - The increase was largely due to increase in food prices as fuel group prices have been in deflation for four months in a row.
  - **Headline Inflation is different from Core Inflation. Core Inflation excludes volatile goods** from the basket of commodities tracking Headline Inflation. These volatile commodities mainly comprise food and beverages (including vegetables) and fuel and light (crude oil).
- **Manufacturing has seen a 1% contraction** in the second quarter after almost a flat first quarter. This is clearly reflected in capacity utilisation of the industry that has dropped to 68.9% in July-September 2019 compared with 73.6% in April-June 2019.
- The **output in eight core industries** — which make up 40% of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP)— **contracted** for the second consecutive month in October 2019.

RBI's Stand

- Several measures already initiated by the Government and the monetary easing undertaken by the Reserve Bank since February 2019 are gradually expected to further feed into the real economy.
  - The focus must be on the need to **maximise the impact of rate reductions**.
  - The Weighted Average Lending Rate (WALR) of scheduled commercial banks between December 2018 and October 2019 increased by 5 basis points bps against a cumulative policy rate cut to the tune of 135 bps. This implies that retail borrowers are yet to experience reduction in commercial lending rates of banks. For them, the cost of borrowing has yet not come down.
- Data on corporate finance and on projects sanctioned by banks and financial institutions suggest some early signs of recovery in investment activity, though its sustainability needs to be watched closely. The need at this juncture is to **address impediments, which are holding back investments**.
- The **introduction of external benchmarks** is expected to strengthen monetary transmission. In this context, there is also a need for greater flexibility in the adjustment in interest rates on small saving schemes.
- The **forthcoming union budget (2020-21)** will provide better insight into further measures to be undertaken by the Government and their impact on growth.

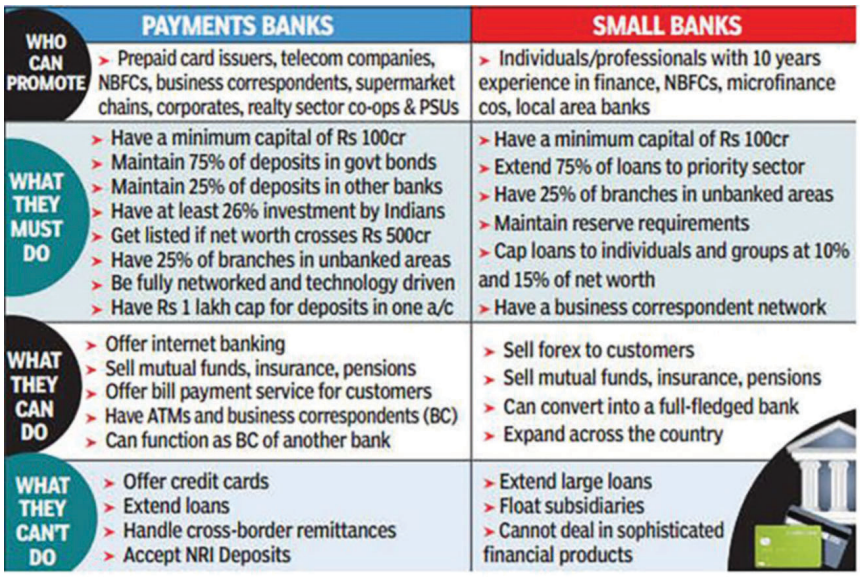
Guidelines for Licencing of Small Finance Banks

Why in News

Recently, the Reserve Bank of India has released final **Guidelines for 'on tap' Licencing for Small Finance Banks (SFBs)**.

Note:

- RBI had issued in-principle approval to ten applicants for SFB in 2015. It was mentioned that after gaining experience in dealing with these banks, RBI would grant 'on-tap' licensing.
  - An "on-tap" facility would mean the RBI will **accept applications and grant licences** for banks **throughout the year**.



Guidelines for 'on-tap' Licencing

- **Capital requirement:** The minimum paid-up voting equity capital/ net worth requirement shall be **₹ 200 crores**.
  - For **Primary (Urban) Co-operative Banks (UCBs)**, desirous of voluntarily transiting into SFBs initial requirement of net worth shall be at **₹ 100 crores**, which will have to be **increased to ₹ 200 crores** within **5 years** from the date of commencement of business.
- **Scheduled bank status to SFBs:** SFBs will be given scheduled bank status **immediately upon commencement of operations**. Also, SFBs will have general permission to **open banking outlets** from the date of commencement of operations.
- **Payments Banks conversion to SFBs:** The payment banks can apply for conversion into SFB after **5 years of operations** if they are otherwise eligible as per these guidelines.

Small Finance Bank

- The small finance bank can primarily undertake **basic banking activities of acceptance of deposits and lending** to unserved and underserved sections including small business units, small and marginal farmers, micro and small industries and unorganised sector entities.
  - It can also undertake other non-risk sharing simple financial services activities such as the distribution of mutual fund units, insurance products, pension products, etc. with the prior approval of the RBI
- **Eligible candidates** for setting up SFB are:
  - Resident **individuals/professionals with 10 years of experience in banking and finance**.
  - The **companies and societies** owned and controlled by **residents**.
  - **Existing** Non-Banking Finance Companies (NBFCs), Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs), Local Area Banks (LABs) and payment banks that are owned and controlled by residents.
- It needs to open at least **25%** of its banking outlets in **unbanked rural centres**.
- The bank will be required to extend **75% of its adjusted net bank credit** to the **Priority Sector Lending (PSL)**.
- At least **50% of its loan portfolio** should constitute loans and advances of up to **₹ 25 lakhs**.
- The **maximum loan size and investment limit** exposure to a single and group would be restricted to **10% and 15% of its capital funds,** respectively. They **cannot extend large loans**.
- If the initial shareholding by promoters in the bank is in **excess of 40% of paid-up voting equity capital,** it should be brought **down to 40% within a period of 5 years**.
- The small finance banks will be subject to **Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR)** and **Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR)**.
  - Banks are required to hold a certain proportion of their deposits in the form of cash is known as the **CRR**. This minimum ratio (that is the part of the total deposits to be held as cash) is stipulated by the RBI.
  - The share of Net Demand and Time Liabilities that a bank is required to maintain safe and liquid assets, such as government securities, cash, and gold is termed as **SLR**.

Note:

Forex Reserves

Why in News

India's Foreign Exchange (Forex) reserves have **crossed the $450-billion mark** for the first time ever on the back of strong investment inflows which enabled the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to buy dollars from the market.

- India's forex reserves were at $451.7 billion on 3rd December 2019, an increase of $38.8 billion over end-March 2019.
  - The rise in forex reserves will give the central bank the leeway to act against any sharp depreciation of the rupee.
  - At $451.7 billion, the country's import cover is now over 11 months.
- India's forex 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.

Foreign Exchange Reserves

- Foreign exchange reserves are **assets held on reserve by a central bank in foreign currencies**, which can include bonds, treasury bills and other government securities.
  - It needs to be noted that most foreign exchange reserves are held in U.S. dollars.
- These assets serve many purposes but are most significantly held to ensure that the **central bank has backup funds if the national currency rapidly devalues** or becomes altogether insolvent.
- **India's Forex Reserve include:**
  - Foreign Currency Assets (such as dollar)
  - Gold
  - Special Drawing Rights
    - Special drawing rights, or SDR, are **artificial currency instrument created by the International Monetary Fund,** which uses them for internal accounting purposes.
    - The value of the SDR is calculated from a weighted basket of major currencies, including the U.S. dollar, the euro, Japanese yen, Chinese yuan, and British pound.
    - The SDR interest rate (SDRi) provides the basis for calculating the interest rate charged to member countries when they borrow from the IMF and paid to members for their remunerated creditor positions in the IMF.
  - Reserve Position in the International Monetary Fund
    - A reserve tranche position implies a **portion of the required quota of currency each member country must provide to the International Monetary Fund (IMF)** that can be utilized for its own purposes.
    - The reserve tranche is basically **an emergency account** that IMF members can access at any time without agreeing to conditions or paying a service fee.

Remission of Duties or Taxes on Export Product

Why in News

There has been rising demand from the Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises **(MSME) sector** seeking clarification on the new export policy viz. **Remission of Duties or Taxes on Export Product (RoDTEP)**.

- The new scheme will be implemented from 1st January 2020 and will replace the existing **Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS)** and create a fully automated route for **Input Tax Credit (ITC)** in the GST to help increase exports in India.
  - It is expected to adequately incentivize exporters by **reducing duties paid on exports** and will initiate the refund of various taxes to exporters.
  - **ITC** is provided to set off tax paid on the purchase of raw materials, consumables, goods or services that were used in the manufacturing of goods or services. This helps in **avoiding double taxation and the cascading effect of taxes**.
- By adopting to RoDTEP scheme, Indian exporters will be able to **meet the international standards** for exports as affordable testing and certification will be made available to exporters within the country instead of relying on international organizations.
  - Also under it, tax assessment is set to become fully automatic for exporters. Businesses will get access to their refunds for GST via an **automatic refund-route**.

Note:

- This would **increase the economy** for the country and **working capital** for the enterprise.

- **WTO Compliant:** Apart from boosting the export sector of our country, RoDTEP will coordinate with the World Trade Organization (WTO) to reduce the post-production transaction costs for exporters. The implementation of the scheme thereby must provide a **production-oriented process along with WTO**, which in turn can boost the production of SMEs, MSMEs.
  - RoDTEP is a **WTO-consistent scheme** under which indirect taxes on inputs are consumed in the production process.
    - In general, according to principle recognised in WTO, indirect taxes on exports are reimbursed.
    - A number of indirect taxes, such as import tariffs and goods and services tax (GST), are already reimbursed for exports in India and most other countries. RoDTEP would cover central and state indirect taxes, which are not currently reimbursed thereby complying with WTO rules.
- **Merchandise Export from India Scheme (MEIS)** was not WTO rules compliant. It was introduced in the **Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) 2015-20** w.e.f. 1st April 2015 with the objective to offset infrastructural inefficiencies and associated costs involved in exporting goods/products which are produced /manufactured in India including products produced/manufactured by MSME Sector.

Contraction in Index of Industrial Production

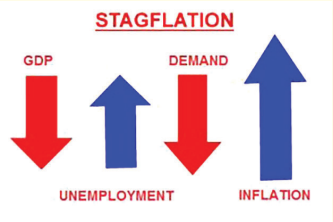
Why in News

According to the data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), the quick estimates of **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)** stands at 127.7 for October 2019, which is **3.8% lower** as compared to the level in the month of October 2018. This contraction is due to demand slump in economy and fall in activity across sectors such as manufacturing, electricity, infrastructure etc.

- **Retail inflation** (measured by the Consumer Price Index) surged to a **40-month high** of **5.54%** in November 2019, owing to rising food inflation.
- The combination of contraction in industrial activity and rising inflation has led experts to fear that India is entering a phase of **stagflation**.

Stagflation

- Stagflation means a situation characterized by **simultaneous increase in prices** and **stagnation of economic growth**.



- It is described as a situation in the economy where the growth rate slows down, the level of unemployment remains steadily high and yet the inflation or price level remains high at the same time.
- **Dangerous for the economy**
  - In a usual low growth situation, central banks and government try to stimulate the economy through higher public spending and low interest rates to create demand.
  - These measures also tend to elevate prices and cause inflation. So, these tools cannot be adopted when inflation is already running high, which makes it difficult to break out of low growth-high inflation trap.
- The **solution** lies in increasing productivity, this enables higher growth without inflation.

Index of Industrial Production

- The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) maps the **change in the volume of production in Indian industries**.
- It is estimated and published on a monthly basis by the **Central Statistical Organisation (CSO)** under MoSPI.
- It is currently calculated using **2011-2012 as the base year**.
- The IIP is basically divided into three sectors, though a use-based classification is also provided by the CSO.
  - The **three sectors** include: Mining, Manufacturing and Electricity.
    - Electricity, crude oil, coal, cement, steel, refinery products, natural gas, and fertilisers are the

% y-o-y	Weight %
Industrial output	**100**
Use-based classification	
Primary goods	34.1
Capital goods	8.2
Intermediate goods	17.2
Infrastructure/ Construction	12.3
Consumer durables	12.8
Consumer nondurables	15.3
Sectoral classification	
Mining	14.4
Manufacturing	77.6
Electricity	8.0

Note:

eight core industries that comprise about 40% of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production.

- **Use based classification include:** Primary Goods, Capital Goods, Intermediate Goods, Infrastructure/ Construction goods, Consumer durables and Consumer nondurables.

➢ **Calculation**

- The index is created by giving different weights to each sector and every month, production is tracked.
- Finally, the index value is compared to the value it had in the same month last year to figure out the economy's industrial health.

Consumer Price Index

➢ **Inflation** refers to the rise in the prices of most goods and services of daily or common use, such as food, clothing, housing, recreation, transport, consumer staples, etc.

- It measures the average price change in a basket of commodities and services over time. The opposite and rare fall in the price index of this basket of items is called 'deflation'.
- It is indicative of the decrease in the purchasing power of a unit of a country's currency. This is measured in percentage.

➢ In India, inflation is primarily measured by two main indices — **WPI (Wholesale Price Index)** and **CPI (Consumer Price Index)**, which measures wholesale and retail-level price changes, respectively.

- The goods or services sold by businesses to smaller businesses for selling further is captured by the WPI.
- The CPI is an index measuring retail inflation in the economy by collecting the change in prices of most common goods and services used by consumers.

■■■

Note:

International Relations

Highlights

- *Saudi Arabia Becomes First Arab Nation to Lead G20*
- *India - Srilanka*
- *SAARC Founding Day*
- *19th IORA Council of Ministers Meeting*

Saudi Arabia Becomes First Arab Nation to Lead G20

Why in News

Recently, **Saudi Arabia became the first Arab nation** to take over the **G20 Presidency** on **December 1, 2019**.

- It has taken over from Japan and it will host the **G20 Summit** in its capital, **Riyadh** on **November 21** and **22, 2020**.
- The **theme** of Summit – **"Realising Opportunities of the 21st Century for All"**.
- **The three key aims of the G20 Presidency, 2020 are:**
  - **Empowering People** by creating the conditions in which all people mainly women and youth can live, work and thrive.
  - **Safeguarding the Planet** by fostering collective efforts to protect our global common-pool resources.
  - **Shaping New Frontiers** by adopting long-term and bold strategies to share the benefits of innovation and technological advancement.

Challenges

- As the presiding nation, Saudi Arabia has to **work towards mitigating global risks** like climate change, demographic issues, such as low birth rates, rising life expectancy and aging societies which requires coordinated efforts at global level. However, **rising populism and nationalism** may prevent the progress at the multilateral level.
- It has promoted a **liberalisation drive**, including granting greater rights to women. However, incidents like the **murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi drew intense global criticism over human rights issues in Saudi Arabia**.
- Therefore, G20 member states should **exert pressure on the Saudi Arabia** for its **authoritative policies** and hold it accountable for its human rights obligations.

G20

- **About**
  - The G20 is an **informal group of 19 countries and the European Union**, with representatives of the **International Monetary Fund** and the **World Bank**.
  - The G20 membership comprises a mix of the world's largest advanced and emerging economies, representing about two-thirds of the world's population, 85% of global gross domestic product, 80% of global investment and over 75% of global trade.
- **Headquarter**
  - The G20 operates as a forum and not as an organisation. Therefore, it **does not have any permanent secretariat or management and administrative structure**.
- **Origin**
  - **1997-1999 Asian Financial Crisis:** This was a **ministerial-level forum** which emerged after G7 invited both developed and developing economies. The finance ministers and central bank governors began meeting in 1999.
  - **Amid 2008 Financial Crisis** the world saw the need for a new consensus-building at the highest political level. It was decided that the G20 leaders would begin meeting once annually.
- **Members**
  - The members of the G20 are **Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union**.

Note:

- One nation holds the Chair every year, known as **'G20 Presidency'**. Argentina chaired the G20 summit of 2018 and Japan for 2019.

India - Srilanka

Why in News

The newly elected **Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa** visited India from 28th - 30th November, 2019.

- The Sri Lankan President played a major role in ending the country's **civil war (1983-2009)**.
- The President's two brothers, Mahinda Rajapaksha and Chamal Rajapaksha, holds the position of the Prime Minister and Agricultural Minister respectively in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka's Civil War

- Sri Lanka has been **mired in ethnic conflict** since the country, formerly known as Ceylon, became independent from British rule in 1948.
- After independence, the Sinhalese majority immediately began to pass laws that discriminated against Tamils (Hindu in religion), particularly the Indian Tamils brought to the island by the British.
- In 1972, the Sinhalese dominated government changed the country's name from Ceylon and made Buddhism the nation's primary religion.
- As ethnic tension grew, in **1976**, the **LTTE or the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam** was formed under the leadership of Velupillai Prabhakaran, and it began to campaign for a Tamil homeland in northern and eastern Sri Lanka, where most of the island's Tamils reside.
- The conflict between the Sri Lankan government and LTTE lasted nearly three decades, **ending in 2009**, when the LTTE forces were finally defeated.
- The war was one of the longest-running civil wars in Asia.

Key Points

- **Issues Discussed:** Strengthening of trade ties, boosting maritime security, addressing concerns of the fishermen, fulfilling aspirations of tamil community in Sri Lanka and to fight against terrorism.
- **Line of Credit**
  - India extended a **$400 million** line of credit to Sri Lanka to help strengthen its infrastructure and economy.
  - An additional **$50 million** to help Sri Lanka combat terrorism.
- Sri Lankan President extended an **invitation to the Prime Minister of India to visit Sri Lanka** at a mutually convenient time.

India - Sri Lanka Relations

- **India is Sri Lanka's closest neighbour.** The relationship between the two countries is more than 2,500 years old and both sides have built upon a legacy of intellectual, cultural, religious and linguistic intercourse.
- During the course of the civil war, India supported the right of the Government of Sri Lanka to act against terrorist forces.
- The **Indian Housing Project**, with an initial commitment to build 50,000 houses for those affected by the civil war as well as for the estate workers in the plantation areas, is Government of India (GoI)'s flagship project of developmental assistance to Sri Lanka.
- Given the proximity of the territorial waters of both countries, especially in the Palk Straits and the Gulf of Mannar, incidents of straying of fishermen are common. Both countries have agreed on **certain practical arrangements to deal with the issue of bona fide fishermen** of either side crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line.
- Recently, the **Chennai (India) – Jaffna (Sri Lanka) flight service has resumed** after a gap of 41 years.
  - The flight operations were suspended during the decades old civil war in Sri Lanka.

SAARC Founding Day

Why in News

The Prime Minister of India has addressed a letter to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Secretariat on the founding day of the bloc.

- The letter highlighted the need for **greater collaboration** among countries in South Asia in order to **resist the threat of terrorism** that poses a challenge to prosperity and peace in the region.

Note:

- **In the last three years, India has been distancing itself from the SAARC,** citing security challenge facing the region from terror networks based in Pakistan, which is also a member of the grouping.

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

- SAARC was established with the signing of the SAARC Charter in Dhaka (Bangladesh) on **8th December 1985**.
- **Eight Member States:** Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
- **Secretariat:** Kathmandu (Nepal)
- **Objective:** To promote the welfare of the people of South Asia and to improve their quality of life, and to accelerate economic growth, among other things.
- **SAARC Summits:**
  - These are usually held biennially and hosted by member states in alphabetical order.
  - The **last SAARC Summit in 2014** was held in Kathmandu (Nepal), which was attended by India.
  - The 2016 SAARC summit was to be held in Islamabad. The summit was called off after India, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Afghanistan declined to participate in the Islamabad meet, because of an attack on an Indian army camp in Uri (Jammu and Kashmir).
- The latest meeting of the SAARC Foreign Ministers took place in New York on 26th September, 2019 on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, which was attended by the Minister of External Affairs of India.

19th IORA Council of Ministers Meeting

Why in News

Recently, the **19th Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Council of Ministers (COM) Meeting** was held in **Abu Dhabi (UAE)** under the theme of **"Promoting a Shared Destiny and Path to Prosperity in the Indian Ocean"**.

- The **United Arab Emirates (UAE)** has assumed the position of **Chair** while **Bangladesh** will be Vice-Chair of the IORA for the period of **2019-2021**.
  - The **Republic of South Africa** was the chair for the period of **2017-2019**.
- The meeting was attended by **IORA's 22 Member States and nine Dialogue Partners**.

Indian Ocean Rim Association

- It was **established in 1997** and is a regional forum that seeks to build and expand understanding and mutually beneficial cooperation through a consensus-based, evolutionary and non-intrusive approach.
- **IORA has 22 member states**, including Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, UAE, and Yemen.
- Its **Secretariat is based in Cyber City, Ebène, Mauritius**.
- It manages, coordinates, services and monitors the implementation of policy decisions, work programmes and projects adopted by the member states.
- The association gains importance by the fact that the Indian Ocean carries half of the world's container ships, one-third of the world's bulk cargo traffic and two-thirds of the world's oil shipments.
- It is a lifeline of international trade and transport and the Indian ocean region is woven together by trade routes and commands control of major sea-lanes.

Key Points

- It is the **only ministerial-level organization** that focuses purely on the Indian Ocean region, bound together by growing economic and trade linkages and a shared interest in promoting prosperity, peace and stability.
- In **2014, India** hosted the **first Indian Ocean Dialogue in Kochi, Kerala** bringing together officials, academics and other strategic thinkers to discuss **six broad themes** – the geo-political contour of the Indian Ocean Region, maritime security challenges, strengthening regional institutions, information sharing, cooperation in disaster relief and management, and economic cooperation. The **Kochi Consensus** was adopted as its outcome document.
  - The **Indian Ocean Dialogue (IOD) is a flagship initiative** of IORA, with its origins in the 13th Council of Ministers meeting, held in November 2013 in Perth, Australia.
  - The **sixth edition of IOD will be held on 13 December 2019 in New Delhi, India**.

Note:

India's Role

- India continues to promote its official policy of **"coordination, cooperation and partnership"** in the regional maritime domain.
- As coordinator to the priority area on disaster risk management, India has **published guidelines for IORA**. It has also urged partners to join the **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure** launched at the **UN in September 2019**.
- India has been **trying to emerge as the net provider of information** in the IOR and in that direction it created the **Information Fusion Centre** located in **Gurugram** to assist member countries of IOR with real-time crisis information. **Bangladesh, Mauritius, Maldives, Sri Lanka** and **Seychelles** have been part of the information support structure of India.
- Indian policy takes into consideration that IOR is not an India-run maritime domain and that is reflected in the government's **Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) programme**, which **aims to turn the region more inclusive**.

■■■

Note:

Science and Technology

Highlights

- *White Dwarfs System*
- *Swedish Technology to Reduce Stubble Burning*
- *Combination Therapy for TB*
- *Typbar TCV Vaccine*
- *World Malaria Report, 2019*
- *50th PSLV Launch*

White Dwarfs System

Why in News

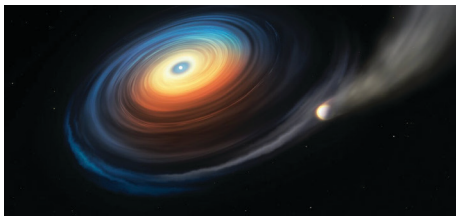
- For the first time ever, astronomers have found an indirect evidence of a giant planet orbiting a **white dwarf star (WDJ0914+1914)**. The system was found in the Cancer constellation.
- The planet was **not seen directly** but evidence of its presence was in the form of a disc of gas (hydrogen, oxygen and sulphur) formed due to its evaporating atmosphere.
- Spikes of gas were detected by the Very Large Telescope of the European Southern Observatory in Chile.

Significance

- This is the **first evidence of an actual planet revolving around a white dwarf star**. Prior to this discovery, only smaller objects such as asteroids had been detected.
- WDJ0914+1914 is providing us with a glimpse into the very distant future of our own solar system. In about 4.5 billion years from now, the Sun will become a white dwarf evaporating all the planets.

White Dwarfs

- Stars like our sun **fuse hydrogen in their cores into helium** through nuclear fusion reactions. White dwarfs are stars that have **burned up all of the hydrogen** they once used as nuclear fuel. Such stars have very high density.



- Fusion in a star's core produces **heat and outward pressure** (they bloat up as enormous **red giants**), but this pressure is kept in balance by the inward push of gravity generated by a star's mass.
- When the hydrogen, used as fuel, vanishes and fusion slows, gravity causes the star to **collapse in on itself into white dwarfs**.
- **Black Dwarf:** Eventually—over tens or even hundreds of billions of years—a white dwarf cools until it becomes a **black dwarf, which emits no energy**. Because the universe's oldest stars are only 10 billion to 20 billion years old there are no known black dwarfs
- It must be noted that not all white dwarfs cool and transform into black dwarfs. Those white dwarfs which have enough mass reach a level called the **Chandrasekhar Limit**. At this point the pressure at its center becomes so great that the star will detonate in a **thermonuclear supernova**.

Chandrasekhar Limit

- **Chandrasekhar Limit** is the maximum mass theoretically possible for a stable white dwarf star. A limit which mandates that no white dwarf (a collapsed, degenerate star) can be more massive than about **1.4 times the mass of the Sun**. Any degenerate object more massive must inevitably **collapse into a neutron star or black hole**.
- The limit is named after the **Nobel laureate Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar**, who first proposed the idea in 1931. He was awarded the **Nobel Prize in Physics in 1983 for his work on the physical processes involved in the structure and evolution of stars**.

Note:

Swedish Technology to Reduce Stubble Burning

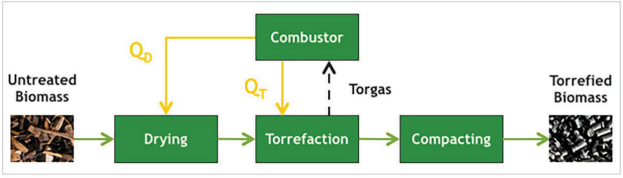
Why in News

The pollution from **stubble burning** in winter is a major factor for the sharp **decline in air quality in Delhi**. To overcome this issue, India is testing **Swedish technology — torrefaction** that can convert rice stubble into **'bio-coal'**.

- The government has funded a **pilot project** at the **National Agri-Food Biotechnology Institute in Mohali (Punjab)** with a Swedish company to evaluate the feasibility of the technology.

Torrefaction Technology - Stubble to Bio-coal

- Torrefaction is a **thermal process** to **convert biomass into a coal-like material**, which has better fuel characteristics than the original biomass.
- The process involves **heating up** straw, grass, sawmill residue and wood biomass to **250 degrees celsius - 350 degrees celsius**.
- This changes the elements of the biomass into **'coal-like' pellets**. These pellets can be used for combustion along with coal for industrial applications like steel and cement production.



Advantages

- The project has a capacity of converting **150-200 kilograms of paddy straw to bio-coal every hour and reduce Co_2 emissions by 95%**.
- Torrefied biomass is **more brittle**, making grinding easier and **less energy-intensive**.
- Compared to fresh biomass, **storage** of the torrefied material can be substantially simplified since **biological degradation** and water uptake is **minimized**.
- The torrefied pellets are ideal for **coal replacement** because it has lower shipping and transport costs, **lower sulfur and ash content (compared with coal),** etc.

Disadvantages

- The volume of torrefied biomass is **reduced only slightly, ~ 10-20%** lower than the dried feedstock during the process.
- Despite higher calorific values, **energy density** is **not improved significantly**.
  - **Energy density** is the amount of energy stored in a given system or region of space per unit volume.
- Torrefaction **does not reduce corrosion** of machinery especially boiler tubes.

Bio-coal

- Bio-coal, also commonly referred to as **synthetic coal**, is created through the torrefaction of biomass.
- The bio-coal has **similar characteristics to traditional fossil-based coal**, and thus viable option **to reduce greenhouse gas emissions**.

Combination Therapy for TB

Why in News

Researchers from Bengaluru have made an important discovery of the mechanism used by Tuberculosis (TB) bacteria to tolerate TB drugs.

What is the Mechanism?

- **Macrophages** (a type of white blood cell), when infected with **pathogens** (such as bacteria or virus), as a first-line of defence, **reduce the pH range in the body**, i.e. making pH acidic.
- The researchers found that instead of controlling the TB bacteria, **the mildly acidic pH was actually facilitating a fraction of the bacteria to continue multiplying** and develop drug tolerance.
  - Anti-TB drugs induce oxidative stress to kill bacteria inside macrophages.
  - However, the drug tolerant bacteria have a remarkable ability **to counter oxidative stress**.
  - The bacteria uses the acidic pH of macrophages as a cue to specifically increase its capacity to deal with oxidative stress.
  - The bacteria also induce efflux pumps (to expel antibiotics) as an additional mechanism to reduce antibiotic efficacy.

Note:

- This is against the common notion that only the non-replicating or slowly metabolising TB bacteria become tolerant to anti-TB drugs.
- The mechanism was found responsible for longer TB treatment of six-nine months.
- The drug-tolerant bacteria were found in macrophages that were more acidic (pH 5.8) while the drug-sensitive bacteria were seen in macrophages that were less acidic (pH 6.6).

Researchers' Solution

- The researchers used already approved **anti-malaria drug chloroquine in combination with a TB drug isoniazid** in mice and guinea pigs.
- The **chloroquine drug neutralised the pH** within the macrophages. This prevented the bacteria from inducing the mechanism to protect themselves from oxidative stress. So no drug-tolerant TB bacteria emerged.
- Once the pH was neutralised, the **isoniazid drug** was able to **eradicate TB from animals**.
- The two-month treatment was able to completely sterilise mouse lungs and a near-complete eradication was observed from the lungs of guinea pigs.
- In addition, it was found that the drug combination also reduces the chances of TB relapse.

Tuberculosis

- TB is caused by **bacteria (Mycobacterium tuberculosis)** that most often affect the **lungs**.
- **Transmission:** TB is spread from person to person through the air. When people with lung TB cough, sneeze or spit, they propel the TB germs into the air.
- **Symptoms:** Cough with sputum and blood at times, chest pains, weakness, weight loss, fever and night sweats.
- **Treatment:** TB is **treatable and curable disease**. It is treated with a standard 6 month course of 4 antimicrobial drugs that are provided with information, supervision and support to the patient by a health worker or trained volunteer.
- Anti-TB medicines have been used for decades and strains that are resistant to 1 or more of the medicines have been documented in every country surveyed.
  - **Multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB)** is a form of TB caused by bacteria that do not respond to isoniazid and rifampicin, the 2 most powerful, first-line anti-TB drugs. MDR-TB is treatable and curable by using second-line drugs.
  - **Extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB)** is a more serious form of MDR-TB caused by bacteria that do not respond to the most effective second-line anti-TB drugs, often leaving patients without any further treatment options.

Typbar TCV Vaccine

Why in News

Hyderabad-based **Bharat Biotech** has developed a **typhoid vaccine (Typbar TCV)** which has **better efficacy** than the previously used vaccinations in preventing typhoid fever.

- Typbar TCV is a type of **conjugate vaccine** which has already been pre-qualified by the **World Health Organisation's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (WHO-SAGE)**.
- Currently, two typhoid vaccines viz. Polysaccharide Typhoid Vaccine and Live, Weakened Typhoid Vaccine are used in India. However, their efficacy is lower than the conjugate vaccine as they offer 60-70% protection, unlike the conjugate vaccine which confers nearly 82% protection.

Typbar TCV

- It is a **type of conjugate vaccine. Conjugate vaccines** are made using a combination of two different components. In Typbar TCV, an **antigen** is **chemically linked to a carrier protein** to create more powerful combined immune response.
  - The conjugate vaccine can be given to babies as young as six months, while the other two typhoid vaccines — **polysaccharide typhoid vaccine** and **live, weakened typhoid vaccine** cannot be given to children below two years of age.
- Its **single dose** is effective in preventing typhoid in children aged **9 months to 16 years**. It confers protection two-three weeks after the administration.
- Typhoid bacteria can be treated with antibiotics but the microbes have **developed resistance against multiple antibiotics**.
  - **Extensively drug-resistant (XDR) typhoid** outbreaks have been found in **India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan**.

Note:

- Typbar TCV is the **world's first clinically proven conjugate** Typhoid vaccine.
  - Bharat Biotech has been supplying the typhoid conjugate vaccine to Pakistan since 2017. **Pakistan is also the first country** to introduce the **typhoid conjugate vaccine** as part of its **national immunisation programme**.

Typhoid

- Typhoid fever is caused by the highly contagious **Salmonella Typhi bacteria**. The bacteria spread through **contaminated food or water**.
- **Symptoms** are prolonged fever, headache, nausea, loss of appetite, and constipation or sometimes diarrhoea.
  - These are often non-specific and clinically non-distinguishable from other febrile illnesses.
- Clinical severity varies and severe cases may lead to **serious complications** or even **death**.
- According to the WHO, a large proportion of **severe typhoid** fever cases occur in **children aged below two years**.

World Malaria Report, 2019

Why in News

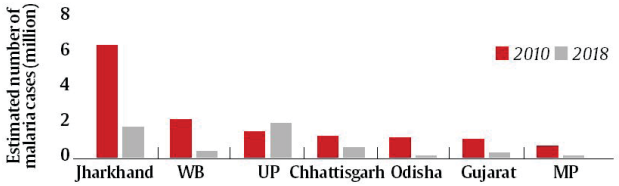
The **World Health Organisation (WHO)** has released the **World Malaria Report, 2019**.

- The report provides a comprehensive update on global and regional malaria data and trends including prevention, diagnosis, treatment, elimination and surveillance.
- According to the report, **228 million cases** of malaria are observed **worldwide, down from** 251 million cases in **2010**.
- **Highest Burden:** India along with 19 countries in sub-Saharan Africa carried almost **85% of the global malaria burden**.
  - Though **India** has observed the **largest absolute reductions** among the countries that share 85% of the malaria burden.

Key Points

- **Global Analysis:**
  - **Incidence rate:** It has declined globally between 2010 and 2018, from 71 to 57 cases per 1000 population.
  - **Deaths:** The **number of deaths due to malaria has decreased** globally. (405,000 deaths in 2018 from 416,000 deaths in 2017).
- **National Analysis:**
  - **Incidence rate:** India reported **2.6 million fewer cases** in 2018 compared to 2017. Thus the overall incidence of malaria in the country has reduced.
    - However, **7 states** (Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Gujarat, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh) account for about **90% of the burden** of malaria cases in India.
  - **Deaths:** Overall number of deaths due to malaria in India have reduced.

ESTIMATED MALARIA CASES IN INDIA, 2010 VERSUS 2018



Steps taken at the global level

- WHO's Global Technical Strategy for Malaria, 2016-2030.
- WHO has also released a new country-driven approach – **"High burden to high impact"** to enhance response to malaria in countries where malaria cases increased in 2018 as compared to 2017

Steps taken by the Indian government

- **National Strategic Plan for Malaria Elimination (NSPME) (2017-22)**
  - The Strategic Plan gives year wise elimination targets in various parts of the country depending upon the endemicity of malaria in the next 5 years.
  - It is based on the **National Framework for Malaria Elimination 2016** which is in line with **WHO's Global Technical Strategy for Malaria, 2016-2030**.
- Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has established **'Malaria Elimination Research Alliance-India (MERA-India)** which is a conglomeration of partners working on malaria control.

Malaria

- Malaria is caused by **Plasmodium parasites**.
- The parasites are spread to people through the bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes, called **"malaria vectors"**.

Note:

- **World Malaria Day** is observed on **25th April**.
- It can be noted that WHO officially endorses disease-specific global awareness days for only four diseases viz. HIV-AIDS, TB, Malaria, and Hepatitis.

50th PSLV Launch

Why in News

Recently, India's **Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C48)** marked its **50th launch** by injecting **India's advanced radar imaging earth observation satellite RISAT-2BR1**.

- PSLV-C48 also injected 9 **other customer satellites** from Japan, Italy, Israel and the U.S.A. into their intended orbits.
- This was **75th launch vehicle mission** from **Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota**.

RISAT-2BR1

- The **628 kg RISAT-2BR1,** is placed into a **576-km orbit** at an **inclination of 37 degrees**.
- It is the **second satellite** in the RISAT-2B series and along with the CARTOSAT-3, it is the **part** of **'spy' satellites**.
  - These satellites will keep a check on infiltration by allowing round-the-clock surveillance across the border.
- RISAT-2BR1 is expected to bolster the country's **border monitoring measures** besides aiding in disaster management, agriculture and tracking forest cover.
  - It is equipped with a **Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR)** that can take pictures of the earth both during the **day and night**, irrespective of the cloud conditions.

Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle

- Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) is the **third generation launch vehicle** of India.
- It is a **four-staged** launch vehicle with **first and third** stage using **solid** rocket motors and **second and fourth** stages using **liquid** rocket engines.
  - It is the **first Indian launch vehicle** to be equipped with **liquid stages**.
- Initially, PSLV had a **carrying capacity** of 850 kg but has been **enhanced to 1.9 tonnes**.
- The PSLV has helped take payloads into almost **all the orbits in space** including Geo-Stationary Transfer Orbit (GTO), the Moon, Mars and would soon be launching a mission to the Sun.
  - Between 1994 and 2019, the PSLV launched 50 Indian satellites and 222 foreign satellites for over 70 international customers from 20 countries.
- It has a history of successful launches of payloads that include **Chandrayaan-1, Mars Orbiter Mission(MOM) and the space recovery mission, etc**.
  - The PSLV has **failed only twice** in its history — the maiden flight of the **PSLV D1 in 1993** and the **PSLV C-39 in 2017**.

■■■

Note:

Environment and Ecology

Highlights

- *COP25 Climate Summit*
- *Global Climate Risk Index 2020*
- *Green Activists Opposes Coastal Highway*

COP25 Climate Summit

Why in News

'Carbon Markets' has become a contentious issue at the **Conference of Parties 25 (CoP 25)** to the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** was held in Madrid (Spain) from 2nd - 13th December, 2019.

- **Originally,** the Summit was scheduled to be held at **Chile (South America)** but violent mass movement across the country made Chile reluctant from hosting the event.
  - The location of this conference is **rotated every year in different regions** of the world. This year it was the **turn of South America** to host the event.

Agenda for COP25

- The **prime objective** of the conference is to **complete the rule-book to the 2015 Paris Agreement** that will become **effective** in **2020** to **replace** the **1997 Kyoto Protocol** (comes to an end in 2020).
  - The issues like the creation of new **carbon markets**, emission reduction targets, country's individual targets, etc. **remained unresolved** during **COP24 at Katowice (Poland) 2019**. Thus the rulebook under the Paris Agreement could not be finalized.

Kyoto Protocol

- The Kyoto Protocol is an **international agreement** linked to the UNFCCC, which commits its Parties by setting **internationally binding** emission reduction targets.
- The Kyoto Protocol was adopted in Kyoto, Japan, in **1997** and entered into force in **2005**.
- It recognized that developed countries are principally responsible for the current high levels of GHG emissions in the atmosphere as a result of more than 150 years of industrial activity
- The detailed rules for the implementation of the Protocol were adopted at COP-7 in Marrakesh, in 2001, and are referred to as the **Marrakesh Accords**.
- Kyoto Protocol Phase-1 (2005-12) gave the target of cutting down emissions by 5%.
- Phase-2 (2013-20) gave the target of reducing emissions by at least 18% by the industrialized countries.

- The summit will also discuss about the functioning of international emissions trading systems, compensation for poor countries to deal with rising sea levels and other consequences of climate change.
- It will consider the **annual Emissions Gap Report**, produced by the **UN Environment Programme (UNEP)** and a series of reports from the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)**.
  - Both the reports summarise that the goal of keeping average temperatures within 1.5°C from pre-industrial times is **"on the brink of becoming impossible." As** the **overall emissions** are **still increasing** worldwide.
- The processes and methods of reporting information about climate change would be fixed during the summit. Specifically, the **developing countries** will try to ensure that there are greater **appreciation and recognition** of the **issue of loss and damage** due to climate change.
  - There is a demand to institute a mechanism to compensate countries that suffer major losses due to climate change-induced events like cyclones or floods.

Note:

- Efforts to commit to a long-term action plan to fight climate change.
  - So far, only 71 countries, most of them small emitters, have committed themselves to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

India's Agenda

- India is **unlikely** to announce any **enhanced targets** during the summit.
- India's current efforts are already much more compared to even rich and developed countries. Thus, India will reiterate its stand for **"Common but Differentiated Responsibilities"**.
  - Developed countries are major contributors to climate change and they are doing proportionately less, especially when it comes to providing finance and technology to the less developed world.

Carbon Market

- A carbon market allows countries, or industries, to earn carbon credits for emission reductions they make in excess of what is required of them.
- These credits can be traded to the highest bidder in exchange for money.
- The buyers of carbon credits can show the emission reductions as their own and use them to meet their own emission reduction targets.
- For example, technology upgradation and emission reduction of a brick kiln in India can be achieved in two ways:
  - A developed country which is unable to meet its reduction target can **provide money or technology** to the brick kiln in India, and thus **claim the reduction** of emission as its own.
  - Alternatively, the kiln can make the investment, and then offer on sale the emission reduction, **called carbon credits**. Another party, struggling to meet its own targets, can buy these credits and show these as their own.
- A carbon market already existed under the 1997 Kyoto Protocol but several countries walked out of the Kyoto Protocol and thus the demand for carbon credits had waned.
- As a result, developing countries like India, China and Brazil had accumulated huge amounts of carbon credits. These credits are now in danger of getting redundant.

Carbon Markets under the Paris Agreement

- The provisions relating to setting up a new carbon market are described in Article 6 of the Paris Agreement.
  - It enables bilateral arrangements for transfer of emissions reductions.
  - It also provides a wider carbon market in which reductions can be bought and sold by anyone.
  - It provides for making 'non-market approaches' available to countries to achieve targets.

Global Climate Risk Index 2020

Why in News

The international environmental think tank 'Germanwatch' has recently released the Global Climate Risk Index 2019.

- The index analyses the extent to which countries and regions have been affected by the impacts of weather-related loss events (storms, floods, heat waves etc.).

Key Findings

- **Worst affected in 2018:** Japan, Philippines and Germany
- **Worst affected between 1999-2018 (long-term index):** Puerto Rico, Myanmar and Haiti.
- **Deaths and financial loss between 1999-2018:** Altogether, lakhs of people died during extreme weather events globally.
- **Low income or lower-middle income countries had to face much higher impacts:** Of the ten most affected countries and territories in the period 1999-2018, seven were developing countries.
- **Link between climate change and the frequency & severity of extreme heat:** Heatwaves were one major cause of damage in 2018.
  - Germany, Japan and India were suffering from extended periods of heat.

Ranking 2018 (2017)	Country
1 (36)	Japan
2 (20)	Philippines
3 (40)	Germany
4 (7)	Madagascar
5 (14)	India
6 (2)	Sri Lanka
7 (45)	Kenya
8 (87)	Rwanda
9 (42)	Canada
10 (96)	Fiji

Note:

- Across Europe, extreme heat spells are now up to 100 times more likely than a century ago.
- Impact of heatwaves on African countries may be under-represented due to a lack of data.

India

- India, which suffered water shortages, crop failures and worst flooding, holds the **5th position**.
  - India has also recorded the **highest number of fatalities due to climate change** and the **second-highest monetary losses from its impact in 2018**.

Suggestions

- The Global Community needs to address the lack of additional climate finance like carbon markets to help developing countries to address loss and damage.
- There must be consensus on issues like climate finances and implementation of green technologies.

Germanwatch

Germanwatch, based in Bonn and Berlin (Germany), is an independent development and environmental organisation which works for sustainable global development.

Green Activists Opposes Coastal Highway

Why in News

Green Nobel Prize winner Prafulla Samantara with other green activists has **opposed the 415-km-long coastal highway** from Digha in **West Bengal** to Gopalpur in **south Odisha** proposed by the Central and State governments.

- The proposed highway will pass through **Chilika lake**, **Bhitarkanika and related eco-sensitive areas**.
  - The project will **destroy more than 33% of the natural mangrove forests** in these areas and may lead to increased sea erosion.

Green Nobel Prize

- The **Goldman Environmental Prize** (also known as **Green Nobel Prize**) recognizes **individuals** for sustained and significant efforts **to protect and enhance the natural environment,** often at great personal risk.
- It is awarded **annually by Goldman Environmental Foundation since 1990**.
- It honours people from the world's **six** continental regions: **Africa, Asia, Europe, Islands & Island Nations, North America** and **South & Central America**.
- The Goldman Prize views **"grassroots" leaders** as those involved in local efforts, where positive change is created through community or citizen participation in the issues that affect them.
- Goldman Prize recipients are usually people from isolated villages or inner cities who choose to take great personal risks to safeguard the environment.
- The **winners are announced** on Earth Day which is observed on **22nd April** every year.
- So far, **five Indians** have received the Goldman Environmental Prize. They are:
  - **Prafulla Samantara (2017):** Campaign against drilling and mining in Niyamgiri Hills, Odisha.
  - **Ramesh Agrawal (2014):** Protested coal mining in Chhattisgarh.
  - **Rashida Bee & Champa Devi Shukla (2004):** Union Carbide gas leak (Bhopal) related environmental justice.
  - **MC Mehta (1996):** Industrial pollution fouling the Ganges and eroding the Taj Mahal.
  - **Medha Patkar (1992):** Narmada Bachao Andolan.

■■■

Note:

Art & Culture

Highlights

- *Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's 63rd Mahaparinirvan Diwas*
- *Sattriya Dance*
- *Shore Temple*

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's 63rd Mahaparinirvan Diwas

Why in News

Mahaparinirvan (achievement of nirvana after death) Diwas is observed every year on Dec 6 to commemorate death anniversary of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

- He is known as the **Father of the Indian Constitution** and was independent **India's first law minister**.

"Constitutional morality is not a natural sentiment. It has to be cultivated. We must realise that our people have yet to learn it. Democracy in India is only a top-dressing on an Indian soil which is essentially undemocratic."

— B.R. Ambedkar, Annihilation of Caste

"I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved"

— Babasaheb Ambedkar.

About Dr. Ambedkar

- Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was **born on 14 April 1891 in Mhow, Central Province** (now Madhya Pradesh).
- He founded **Bahishkrit Hitkarni Sabha (1923)**.
- He led the **Mahad Satyagraha in March 1927** to challenge the regressive customs found in Hinduism.
- He **participated in all the three round-table conferences**.

Round Table Conferences

- **First Round Table Conference:** It was held in **London on Nov. 12, 1930** but the **Congress did not participate** in it.
- In March 1931, Mahatma Gandhi and Lord Irwin (Viceroy of India 1926-31) entered into a Pact, **called Gandhi-Irwin Pact**, by which the Congress called off the Civil Disobedience Movement and agreed to participate in the Round Table Conference.
- **Second Round Table Conference:** It was held in London on the **7th of September, 1931**.
- **Third Round Table Conference:** It was held in London on the **17th of November, 1932** to consider the reports of various sub-committees appointed from time to time. It ultimately led to the **passage of Govt. of India Act, 1935**.
- The **Congress did not participate** as most of the leaders were in jail.

- In 1932 he signed **Poona pact with Mahatma Gandhi**, which abandoned the idea of separate electorates for the depressed classes (Communal Award). However, the seats reserved for the depressed classes were increased from 71 to 147 in provincial legislatures and to 18% of the total in the Central Legislature.
- In 1936, he was elected to the Bombay Legislative Assembly as a legislator (MLA).
- In 1947, Dr. Ambedkar accepted PM Nehru's invitation to **become Minister of Law in the first Cabinet of independent India**.
- On August 29, 1947, he was appointed Chairman of the Drafting Committee for the new Constitution.
- He resigned from the cabinet in 1951, over differences on the Hindu Code Bill.
- In 1956, he converted to Buddhism.
- He passed away on **6th December 1956**.
- Dr. Ambedkar was a social reformer, jurist, economist, author, polyglot orator, a scholar and thinker of comparative religions.
- **Chaitya Bhoomi** is a memorial to B. R. Ambedkar located in Dadar, Mumbai.

Note:

Sattriya Dance

Why in News

Dance historian Dr. Sunil Kothari has recently been bestowed with the Madhabdev Award by the Government of Assam for popularising Sattriya dance.

Sattriya

- **Origin**
  - Sattriya originated in **Sattra, monastery,** as a part of **neo-Vaishnavite movement** started by **Srimanta Sankardev in Assam**, in the **15th Century**. He propagated the "ek sharan naama dharma" (chanting the name of one God devotedly).

- **Classical Dance:** Sattriya was given the status of a classical dance in the year 2000 by **the Sangeet Natak Akademi**. Other classical dances of India are: Bharatnatyam (Tamil Nadu), Kathakali (Kerala), Kuchipudi (Andhra Pradesh), Kathak (North India), Mohiniyattam (Kerala), Manipuri (Manipur) and Odissi (Odisha).
- **Features**
  - Sattriya dances differ from other dance forms in **its basic stance**. For male it is known as **Purush Pak** while for female, **Prakriti Pak**. The dance is based on **mythological themes**.
  - They have special mnemonic bols, typical **Assamese music known as Borgeet,** musical instruments like large cymbals, drums, colourful costumes, besides complicated choreographic patterns using various talas for each stanza sung by the vocalist.
  - Corpus of Sattriya dances consists of ankiya bhaona and also Ojapali dances in which the main singer sings and enacts abhinaya, telling stories and a group of dancers dance as back up dancers playing small cymbals.
- **Two Separate Streams**
  - One, the **Bhaona-related repertoire** starting from the Gayan-Bhayanar Nach to the Kharmanar Nach.
  - Second, the dance numbers which are independent, such as Chali, Rajagharia Chali, Jhumura, Nadu Bhangi etc.
- **Popular Artists**
  - Guru Jatin Goswami and Sharodi Saikia among others.

Shore Temple

Why in News

The shoreline on the northern side of the Shore temple in **Mamallapuram, Tamil Nadu** is facing severe sea erosion.

- Shore Temple is one among a number of Hindu monuments at Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram), on the Coromandel Coast of **Tamil Nadu**.
- It is considered the finest early example of medieval southern Indian temple architecture.
- It was built probably in the reign of **Narasimhavarman II, also known as Rajasimha (Pallava ruler)** who reigned from 700 to 728 CE.
- Unlike most of its neighbours at the site, it is **built of cut stones** rather than carved out of caves.
- It has 3 shrines, 2 dedicated to **Shiva and the other to Vishnu**.
- Its style is characterized by a **pyramidal *kutina*-type tower** that consists of stepped stories topped by a cupola and finial, a form quite different from the northern Indian *sikhara*.
- The Mamallapuram monuments and temples, including the Shore Temple complex, were collectively designated a **UNESCO World Heritage site in 1984**.

■■■

Note:

Social Issues

Highlights

- *International Day of Persons with Disabilities*
- *Anaemia in Indian Children*
- *Susceptibility of Infants to Measles*
- *Rare Diseases in India*
- *International Human Rights Day*
- *Human Development Index*
- *Breast Milk Banks*
- *Ekal School Abhiyan*
- *Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan*
- *Accessible India Campaign*

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Why in News

International Day of Persons with Disabilities was celebrated worldwide on **3rd December 2019**.

Key Points

- It was **proclaimed in 1992** by **United Nations General Assembly resolution 47/3**.
- The **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was adopted in 2006**. It has further advanced the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in the implementation of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and other international development frameworks.
- **Significance:**
  - It **aims** to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society and development and to increase awareness of the situation of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life.
- **Theme for 2019:**
  - **Promoting the participation of persons with disabilities and their leadership: taking action on the 2030 Development Agenda.**
  - This year it focuses on the empowerment of persons with disabilities for inclusive, equitable and sustainable development as anticipated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which pledges to **'leave no one behind'** and recognizes disability as a cross-cutting issues, to be considered in the implementation of its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- **The United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy:**
  - The United Nations launched it in **June 2019** in line with its commitment to make the UN an inclusive organization for all.
  - It provides for the foundation for sustainable and transformative progress on disability inclusion through all pillars of the work of the United Nations.
- **India also celebrated** International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Vice President of India presented the **National Awards for the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities** and **suggested measures** to improve facilities for their holistic development.
- **Steps taken by the government:**
  - **Article 41** of the **Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP)** states that State shall make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness, and disablement, within the limits of its economic capacity and development.
  - **Right of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016**
    - This act **defines disability** based on an evolving and dynamic concept.
    - Under the act, the types of disabilities have been **increased from 7 to 21**. In addition, the Government has been authorized to notify any other category of specified disability.
    - The act is implemented by the **Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment**.
  - **Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS).**

Note:

- **Scheme of Assistance to Disabled Persons for purchase/fitting of Aids/appliances (ADIP Scheme)**
- **Scheme for Implementation of Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 (SIPDA)**
- **District Disability Rehabilitation Centres (DDRC)**
- **Accessible India Campaign**
- **Other Scholarship Schemes**

➢ **Steps Needed:**

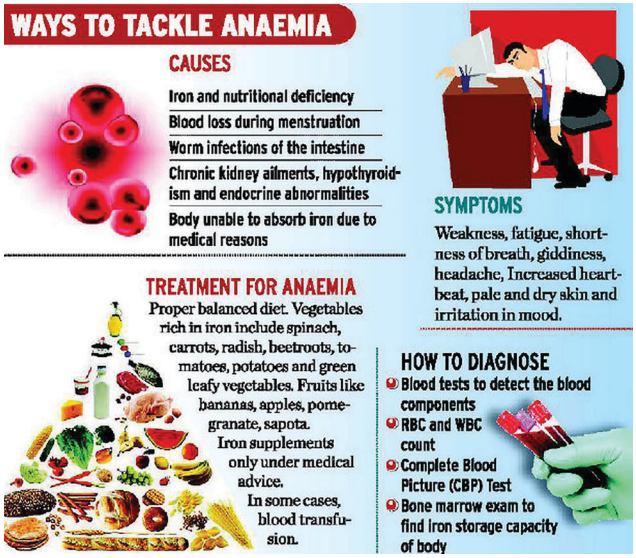
- Society should be inclusive and sensitive towards the needs of differently-abled.
- Creation of accessible infrastructure should be of paramount importance.
- Schools must inculcate sensitivity towards disability among children early in their lives.
- Safety at road and workplace should be enhanced for the prevention of debilitating accidents.
- Social attitude towards disability should be changed.
- Good cinema should be encouraged on the topic of disability.

Anaemia in Indian Children

Why in News

A paper published in 'Scientific Reports' pointed out that **about 58.5% of children below five years of age in India are anaemic**.

➢ Over one lakh children were analyzed using the **National Family Health Survey (2015-16) data**.



➢ **Socio-demographic factors** such as the wealth of the family, maternal education, maternal age, type of residence are the main reasons behind the incidence of childhood anaemia.

➢ Recently, a 'Lancet Global Health report' also revealed that 23% of Indian men suffer from anaemia.

Anaemia

➢ The **World Health Organization (WHO)** defines anaemia as a condition in which the **number of red blood cells or their oxygen-carrying capacity is insufficient to meet physiological needs**.

➢ **Iron deficiency** is the **most common cause** of anaemia, although other conditions, such as folate, vitamin B12 and vitamin A deficiencies, chronic inflammation, parasitic infections, and inherited disorders can all cause anaemia.

➢ In its severe form, it is associated with fatigue, weakness, dizziness and drowsiness. **Pregnant women and children are particularly vulnerable.**

Key Findings

➢ **Maternal Education**

- Maternal education increases the chances of mothers being aware of different health issues and thus taking the correct and appropriate steps towards preventing such issues.
- There exists an inverse relationship between the mother's education and the incidence of childhood anaemia. In other words, as the mother's education level increases, the tendency of the child to be anaemic decreases significantly.

➢ **Wealth of the Family**

- 52.9% of children in rich households were marked anaemic.
- The number was 63.2% in the poorest households.
- This suggests that a large number of children in poor households are anaemic, though the situation in rich households is also not that well.

➢ **Maternal Age**

- There exists an inverse relationship between the age of mothers and the incidence of anaemia in children. The children of younger mothers are more anaemic.
- This reveals the powerlessness of mothers in the age group 15-19 years in ensuring that the children get the right food.

Note:

- This also reveals the power dimension in the allocation and use of resources in the household.

Indian Programmes Related to Anaemia

- In **2018**, the government of India launched **Anaemia Mukt Bharat (AMB)** as part of the **Intensified National Iron Plus Initiative (NIPI) Program** for **accelerating** the **annual rate of decline** of anaemia from **one to three percentage points**.
  - The target groups for AMB are **Children** (6-59 months, 5-9 years), **Adolescent Girls & Boys** (10-19 years), **Women of Reproductive Age** (15-49 years), **Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers**.
- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has also launched the **Weekly Iron and Folic Acid Supplementation (WIFS)** Programme to meet the challenge of high prevalence and incidence of anaemia amongst **adolescent girls and boys**.
- Other programmes introduced include Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), National Nutritional Anemia Control Program (NNACP), etc to combat anemia.

Way Forward

- A broader health strategy is required to effectively address the issue of anaemia. Also, there is a need to bridge the gap between policy and practice.
- The mother's health needs to be addressed as anaemia in mothers and premature delivery can also lead to childhood anaemia.
- In addition to the maternal influence on childhood anaemia, paternal and overall household influences need to be considered for a more comprehensive policy framework for intervention at the household level.

Susceptibility of Infants to Measles

Why in News

According to recent studies, infants become susceptible to **measles infection at the end of three months after birth** and not six months as earlier thought.

- A study observed that **maternal antibodies disappear by the end of three months, contrary** to the **common notion** that **maternal antibodies** against measles **protect** infants for the **first six months of age**.
- Currently, in countries like **India** with **ongoing transmission of measles** the **first dose** of **vaccination is given only at 9-12 months of age**.
  - In countries with **no ongoing transmission**, the **first dose** is administered when the baby is **12-15 months of age**.
- Thus babies remain susceptible to measles infection for a longer period of time before they get vaccinated with the first dose.

Key Points

- **Measles Burden:** In 2018, measles caused an estimated 10 million cases and 1,42,000 deaths globally. Nearly **72,000 cases** have been reported in **India during** 2018-2019 which is the **third-highest** in the **world**.
  - At **2.3 million**, India has the **second-highest** number of children who are **not vaccinated** against measles after Nigeria.
  - But the number of unvaccinated children in India had **reduced** from 2.9 million (2017) to 2.3 million (2018).
- **Vaccination Coverage:** The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends the **high coverage [over 95%]** of **two doses** of measles-containing vaccine to protect infants from measles.
  - But, in 2018, **86%** of children received the **first dose** and only **69%** received the **second dose** globally.
- **Time for Vaccination:** The vaccine-induced protection is **less in infants** if the vaccine is given **earlier than recommended**.
  - Also, **early vaccination may "alter response"** after the second dose of vaccine, leading to "lower levels of the antibody" compared with children who are vaccinated as per schedule.
  - The **pregnant mothers cannot** be administered measles vaccine as the vaccine uses live, weakened virus. The weakened or live virus after the injection may cause an **infection in the vaccinated person's body**.
- **Threshold level of Protection:** In the case of India, many mothers gain immunity through **natural infection** and are also continually exposed to the virus, leading to **"repeated immunologic boosting and more robust antibody levels"**.
  - Infants born to mothers in **countries where measles virus** has been **eliminated** have **lower maternal**

Note:

antibodies and these antibodies quickly fall below the threshold of protection before they receive the first measles vaccination dose.

- **Maternal Age:** The **probability** of infants getting infected **increases with maternal age**. This is because **pregnant mothers** remain **protected through vaccination** and not through natural infection.
  - A one-month-old infant has a 25% probability of getting infected with measles if the mother is 25 years old but the probability increases to 40% if the mother is 40 years old.

Indian Government Initiatives

- **Measles-Rubella (MR) vaccination**
  - The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare launched MR Vaccination program in 2017.
  - The MR campaign targets around 41 crore children across the country, the largest ever in any campaign.
  - All children aged between 9 months and less than 15 years will be given a single shot of Measles-Rubella (MR) vaccination irrespective of their previous measles/rubella vaccination status or measles/rubella disease status.
  - MR vaccine will be provided free- of- cost across the states.
- Other Initiatives include Universal Immunization Programme (UIP), Mission Indradhanush and Intensified Mission Indradhanush.

Measles

- Measles **virus** is an enveloped, ribonucleic acid virus of the genus Morbillivirus.
- Measles is highly contagious, and an infected person often transmits the virus to over **90% of unprotected close contacts**.
- The virus infects the **respiratory tract**, then spreads throughout the body. Measles is a **human disease** and is **not known to occur in animals**.
- Measles can be entirely prevented through a **two-dose vaccine** and had been officially eliminated in many countries with advanced healthcare systems.
  - The **first dose of measles vaccine** was introduced in the **1990s** in India.
  - India introduced the **second dose** from **2010 onwards**. India was **one of the last countries** to add a second dose of measles vaccine.
- **Treatment**
  - **No specific antiviral treatment** exists for measles virus.
  - Severe complications from measles can be avoided through medical care that ensures good nutrition, adequate fluid intake, and treatment of dehydration.

Rare Diseases in India

Why in News

Recently, it was reported that the application of the majority of patients suffering from **Lysosomal Storage Disorders (a rare disease)** has been pending with the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for several months.

- There are more than **2,000 children infected with rare diseases** across the country. Many of them require **Enzyme Replacement Therapy (ERT)**.
  - ERT is a medical treatment which replaces an enzyme that is deficient or absent in the body.
- There is also a demand for the **reformulation** of **National Policy for Treatment of Rare Diseases, 2017**.

Lysosomal Storage Disorders

- Lysosomal storage disorder is an **inherited metabolic disease** that is characterized by an **abnormal build-up of various toxic materials** in the **body's cells** as a result of **enzyme deficiencies**.
- It may affect different parts of the body, including the skeleton, brain, skin, heart, and central nervous system.
- There is currently **no approved treatment** for many lysosomal storage diseases.

Rare Diseases

- A rare disease is a health condition of **low prevalence** that affects a **small number of people** comparedwith other prevalent diseases in the general population.
  - There is **no universally accepted definition** of rare diseases and the definitions usually vary across different countries.
- Though rare diseases are of **low prevalence and individually rare,** collectively they affect a **considerable proportion of the population**.

Note:

- **80%** of rare diseases are **genetic in origin** and hence disproportionately **impact children**.
- In India there are **56-72 million people** affected by rare diseases.

National Policy for Treatment of Rare Diseases, 2017

- The policy highlights the **measures and steps**, both in the **short as well as in the long term**, that need to be taken to deal comprehensively with rare diseases.
- The policy intends to constitute an **Inter-ministerial Consultative Committee** to coordinate and steer the initiatives of different ministries and departments on rare diseases.
- It also mentions for the **creation of a corpus fund** at **Central and State** level for funding treatment of rare diseases.
- The policy aims to create a **patient registry for diseases** housed in Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).
- However, recognizing the higher cost of treatment for rare diseases, the policy also seeks to **strike a balance between access to treatment with health system sustainability**.
- It also aims to create awareness among health professionals, families of patients and the public in general, about rare diseases

International Human Rights Day

Why in News

The International Human Rights Day is **observed every year on 10th December**. The day marks the adoption of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** by the **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** in **1948**.

- The **theme** for **2019** is **"Youth Standing up for Human Rights"**.
  - The campaign, **#StandUp4HumanRights** has also been launched by the **Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)**, to encourage, galvanise, and showcase how youth all over the world stand up for rights.
- Human rights are at the heart of the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, as in the absence of human dignity, sustainable development cannot be achieved.
  - Human Rights are driven by progress on all SDGs, and the SDGs are driven by advancements on human rights.
- India has enacted the Protection of Human Rights Act,1993 to ensure the protection of human rights. Recently, **several amendments were made to the Protection of Human Rights Act,1993 through Protection of Human Right (Amendment) Bill, 2019**. These are:
  - **Eligibility:** Not only a person who has been Chief Justice of India but also a person who has been a **judge of the Supreme Court is also made eligible to be appointed** as Chairperson of the Commission in addition to the person who has been the Chief Justice of India.
  - **Strength:** It increases the members of the Commission from **two to three of which, one shall be a woman**.
  - **Members of National Commission:** Apart from Chairperson of **four National Commissions (Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Women and Minorities),** it also intends to **include** Chairperson of the National Commission for Backward Classes, Chairperson of the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights and the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities as deemed members of the Commission.
  - **Tenure:** The amendment **reduces the term** of the Chairperson and Members of the Commission and the State Commissions **from five to three years and shall be eligible for re-appointment**.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights was proclaimed under UNGA resolution 217 A in Paris. It set out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected.
- It states that 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.'
- It entitles everyone to all the rights and freedoms and prohibits slavery and slave trade in all forms.
- Other rights recognized under the declaration are right to a nationality, right against arbitrary arrest, detention or exile, the right to seek asylum from prosecution, the right to freedom of movement and residence, etc.

Note:

- The Universal Declaration is **not a treaty**, so it does not directly create legal obligations for countries. However, it is an expression of the fundamental values which are shared by all members of the International community.
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights holds the **Guinness World Record** as the **most translated document**.

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

- The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights **(UN Human Rights)** is the leading **UN entity** on human rights.
- It was established in **1993** and is a **part of the United Nations Secretariat**.
- OHCHR is **headquartered in Geneva**.
- UN Human Rights plays a crucial role in safeguarding the integrity of the **three interconnected pillars of the United Nations** – peace and security, human rights and development.
- It also provides assistance in the form of technical expertise and capacity development in order to support the implementation of international human rights standards on the ground.

Human Development Index

Why in News

India was ranked **129** out of 189 countries on the **2019 Human Development Index (HDI) improving** from the **130th** position in **2018**.

- HDI is part of the **Human Development Report** that is **published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**.
- The other indices that form the part of the 2019 Report are:
  - Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI),
  - Gender Development Index (GDI),
  - Gender Inequality Index (GII) and
  - Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI).
- The **focus** of the 2019 Report titled **"Beyond income, beyond averages, beyond today"** is on **'Inequality in Human Development'**.

Human Development Index

- HDI emphasizes that **people and their capabilities** should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country, not economic growth alone.
- HDI measures average achievement of a country in **three basic dimensions** of human development:
  - A long and healthy life,
  - Access to knowledge, and
  - A decent standard of living.
- **Top Performers in 2019**
  - Norway, Switzerland, Ireland occupied the top three positions in that order.
  - Germany is placed fourth along with Hong Kong, and Australia secured the fifth rank on the global ranking.
- **India's Neighbours**
  - Sri Lanka (71) and China (85) were higher up the rank scale.
  - Bhutan (134), Bangladesh (135), Myanmar (145), Nepal (147), Pakistan (152) and Afghanistan (170) were ranked lower on the list.
- **Region Wise Performance**
  - South Asia was the fastest growing region in human development progress witnessing a 46% growth over 1990-2018, followed by East Asia and the Pacific at 43%.
- **India's Performance**
  - India's HDI value increased by 50% (from 0.431 to 0.647), which places it above the average for other South Asian countries (0.642).
  - In India, between 1990 and 2018, life expectancy at birth increased by 11.6 years, mean years of schooling increased by 3.5 years and expected

Ups and downs

Among India's neighbours Sri Lanka moved up five rungs on the HDI ladder while Madives fell three ranks. While Pakistan slipped two spots, Bangladesh moved up one

Source: Human Development Report, UN

Country	2017 Rank	2018 Rank
India	130	129
Brazil	79	79
China	86	85
Russia	49	49
South Africa	113	113
Pakistan	150	152
Afghanistan	168	170
Sri Lanka	76	71
Bhutan	134	134
Nepal	149	147
Bangladesh	136	135
Maldives	101	104

Note:

years of schooling increased by 4.7 years. Per capita incomes rose by over 250%.

Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index

- The IHDI indicates **percentage loss in HDI due to inequality**.
- India's position worsened by one position to 130 (as compared to the HDI Index 2019- 129) with a score of 0.477. Although, the IHDI score has improved from 0.468 in 2018.

Gender Development Index

- GDI measures **disparities on the HDI by gender**.
- India is only marginally better than the South Asian average on the Gender Development Index (0.829 vs 0.828).

Gender Inequality Index

- GII presents a composite measure of gender inequality using **three dimensions**:
  - Reproductive health,
  - Empowerment and
  - The labour market.
- In GII, **India is at 122 out of 162 countries**. Neighbours China (39), Sri Lanka (86), Bhutan (99), Myanmar (106) were placed above India.
- The report noted that group-based inequalities persist, especially affecting women and girls and no place in the world has gender equality.
- The report notes that the world is not on track to achieve **gender equality** by 2030 as per the **UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG -5)**. It forecasts that it may take 202 years to close the gender gap in economic opportunity.
- The report presents a new **"social norms index"** indicating how prejudices and social beliefs obstruct gender equality, which shows that only 14% of women and 10% of men worldwide have no gender bias.
- The report highlights that **new forms of inequalities** will manifest in future through **climate change and technological transformation** which have the potential to deepen existing social and economic fault lines.

Multidimensional Poverty Index

- MPI captures the multiple **deprivations that people in developing countries** face in their **health, education and standard of living**.
- India accounts for 28% of the 1.3 billion multidimensional poor.

Breast Milk Banks

Breast Milk Banks are established under **"National Guidelines on Establishment of Lactation Management Centres in Public Health Facilities"** by the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.

- Under the guidelines, Breast Milk Banks follow a structural hierarchy, which can be simplified as:
  - **Comprehensive Lactation Management Centre**
    - It is established for the purpose of **collecting, screening, processing, storing and distributing** donor human milk at Government Medical Colleges or District Hospitals with **high delivery load** and **availability** of newborn treatment units.
  - **Lactation Management Unit**
    - It has a **collection and storage facility** of **mother's own milk** in District Hospital/Sub-district Hospital with at least **12 beds**.
  - **Lactation Support Units**
    - These are established at **all delivery points** to provide breastfeeding support, lactation counselling and **Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC)** support to mothers.
    - KMC is a method of care for preterm infants. The method involves infants being carried, usually by the mother, with skin-to-skin contact.
- The **first** Breast Milk Bank of India was established in **1989 at Mumbai**.

Importance of Breastfeeding

- Breast milk is the **optimum source of nutrition** for the **first six months** of life of an infant.
- It prevents infections like diarrhoea and acute respiratory infections in early infancy and thus **reduces infant mortality**.
- It **decreases** the risk of mothers developing breast cancer, ovarian cancer, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease.
- It also protects infants from obesity-related illnesses, diabetes and increases IQ.

Initiatives By Indian Government

- **MAA – "Mothers Absolute Affection"**

Note:

- **MAA** is a nationwide programme of the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** to promote breastfeeding.

- **Vatsalya – Maatri Amrit Kosh**
  - **Vatsalya**, a **National Human Milk Bank** and Lactation Counselling Centre has been established in collaboration with the Norwegian government.

Ekal School Abhiyan

Why in News

Recently, the Prime Minister admired the role of **Ekal Vidyalaya Sangathan** for leading the **'Ekal School Abhiyan'** and in **nation-building by imparting education and awareness** to millions of rural and tribal children who reside in the remotest locations across **India** and **Nepal**.

Key Points

- **'Ekal School Abhiyan'** aims to **promote education among rural and tribal children**.
- The Sangathan has remarkably promoted the education amongst rural and tribals through the **'Panchatantra Model of Education'** that include:
  - Promotion of nutrition through **Poshan Vatikas**,
  - Training for **bio-fertilizers** use in farming,
  - Imparting **skills** for using medicinal qualities of herbs,
  - Training for employment, and
  - Generation of Social Awareness.
  - This helps in realizing **Gandhi's ideals** of 'Gram Swaraj', 'Social Justice' of **Baba Saheb**, 'Antyodaya' of **Deen Dayal Upadhyay**, and **Swami Vivekanand's** 'dream of a Glorious India'.
- Ekal Sangathan makes the use of **e-education and digitization** to achieve the desired objective and aims to launch a **single real-time dashboard** for monitoring the progress of all the Ekal Vidyalayas in a comprehensive way.
- Ekal Vidyalaya is a **movement** involving **integrated and holistic development** of rural & tribal people of India and Nepal. The main activity undertaken in this movement is to **run one-teacher schools (known as Ekal Vidyalayas)** all over India, in the remotest villages so as to educate every child.
  - The Ekal movement aims to help **eradicate illiteracy** following the **philosophy of rural development** based on the criteria of equality and inclusiveness across all the sections of the society.
- The Ekal Vidyalaya Sangathan has been awarded the **Gandhi Peace Prize in 2017** for its contribution in providing education for rural and tribal children in remote areas, rural empowerment, gender, and social equality.
- Other schemes of government like scholarship for scheduled tribe's children, **Eklavya model residential school, Poshan Abhiyan, Mission Indradhanush** and school holidays on the occasion of tribal festivals, etc. have helped not only in checking the school dropout rates but also promoted the holistic development of children.

Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan

Why in News

Ministry of Human Resource Development is implementing the **Scheme of Vocationalisation of School Education**.

- Under the scheme, a vocational subject is offered for Classes IX to XII along with the general education to provide necessary employability and vocational skills for a variety of occupations.
- The above scheme is being implemented under the umbrella of **'Samagra Shiksha – an integrated scheme for school education'**.

Samagra Shiksha

- **Key Provisions:**
  - Samagra Shiksha is an **integrated** scheme for school education extending from **pre-school to class XII** to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education at **all levels** of school education.
  - It **subsumes** the three Schemes of **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE)**.
    - The scheme treats school education holistically as a **continuum from Pre-school to Class 12**.
  - The main emphasis of the Scheme is on improving the quality of school education by focussing on the **two T's – Teacher and Technology**.
- **Vision:**
  - The vision of the Scheme is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education from pre-school to senior secondary stage in accordance with the **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)** for Education.

Note:

- **SDG-4.1:** Aims to ensure that all boys and girls complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.
- **SDG 4.5:** Aims to eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education.

- The scheme mainly aims to support States in the implementation of the **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009**.
- Right to Education Act (RTE) is a fundamental right under **Article 21-A** of the Constitution of India.

- **Funding Pattern:**
  - The Scheme will be implemented as a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme**.
    - The fund sharing pattern for the scheme between Centre and States is at present in the ratio of **90:10 for the North-Eastern States and the Himalayan States** and **60:40 for all other States and Union Territories with Legislature**.
    - It is **100% centrally sponsored** for **Union Territories without Legislature**.
  - The scheme also proposes to give flexibility to the States and UTs to plan and prioritize their interventions within the scheme norms and the overall resource envelope available to them.

Accessible India Campaign

Why in News

The deadline for the government's **Accessible India Campaign (AIC)** has been extended to March 2020 due to slow progress.

- AIC is the nationwide flagship campaign of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**.
- The aim of the Campaign is to make a **barrier-free and conducive environment for Divyangjans** (Persons with Disabilities - PwDs) all over the country.

Accessible India Campaign

- **Launched** by the Prime Minister of India on International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3rd December 2015.

Background

- **Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995** categorically provided for non-discrimination in transport and in the built environment.
  - It needs to be noted that the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016** replaced the PwD Act, 1995.
- **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD),** to which **India is a signatory,** under Article 9 casts obligations on the Governments for ensuring to PwDs accessibility to (a) Information, (b) Transportation, (c) Physical Environment, (d) Communication Technology and (e) Accessibility to Services as well as emergency services.

Three Components of AIC

- Built Environment Accessibility
- Transportation System Accessibility
- Information and Communication Eco-System Accessibility

Targets entailed under the three components

- Making 50% of all the government buildings of National Capital and all the State capitals fully accessible by December 2018.
- Completing accessibility audit of 50% of government buildings and making them fully accessible in 10 most important cities/towns of States by December 2019.
- Ensuring that 50% of railway stations in the country are converted into fully accessible railway stations by March 2018.
- Ensuring that 25% of Government owned public transport carriers in the country are converted into fully accessible carriers by March 2018.
- Conducting accessibility audit of 50% of all government (both Central and State Governments) websites and converting them into fully accessible websites by March 2017.

■■■

Note:

Security

Highlights

- *Pathalgarhi Movement*

Pathalgarhi Movement

Why in News

Recently, the Union government withdrew amendments to the **Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006** which would have diluted tribal rights over forests. These amendments evoked sustained protests by tribal and environmental activists.

- The state government of **Jharkhand** tried to amend the **Chotanagpur Tenancy Act, 1908** and **Santhal Parganas Tenancy Act, 1876** to facilitate easier land acquisition norms which added to the problem. They were also withdrawn later on.
- However, these decisions gave rise to the **Pathalgarhi incidents** in the tribal belt demanding implementation of the FRA and provisions of the **Panchayats (Extension of Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), 1996**.

- **Birsa Munda's** struggle against the exploitation and discrimination faced by tribals led to the passing of the **Chotanagpur Tenancy Act in 1908** which restricted the passing of land from the tribal people to non-tribals.
- The **Santhal Parganas Tenancy Act, 1876** prohibits the sale of Adivasi land to non-Adivasis in Santhal Pargana region along Jharkhand's border with Bengal.

Pathalgarhi Rebellion

- It is a **protest** in which tribal people embed stone slabs (pathals) on the outskirts of a village or area, demarcating the limits of where their writ runs, prohibiting the entry of any institution connected to the state.
- It is mainly concentrated in the four district of Jharkhand — namely **Khunti, Gumla, Simdega and West Singhbhum**.
- In Munda tribal custom, placement of a huge stone marks the death of a person. The Pathalgadi movement draws on this tradition of honouring the community's ancestors.

The Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Area) Act, 1996

- It **safeguards and preserves** the traditions and customs of the people, and their cultural identity, community resources and customary mode of dispute resolution.
- PESA **empowers** Gram Sabha/Panchayat at an appropriate level with the right to mandatory consultation in land acquisition, resettlement and rehabilitation of displaced persons.
- It seeks to **reduce alienation** in tribal areas as they will have better control over the utilisation of public resources.
- It will help **minimise exploitation** of tribal population as they will be able to control and manage money lending, consumption and sale of liquor and also village markets.
- It **promotes cultural heritage** through the preservation of traditions, customs and cultural identity of tribal population.

■■■

Note:

Miscellaneous

Highlights

- *INSTEX Barter Mechanism*
- *World AIDS Day*
- *Operation 'Clean Art'*
- *Navy Day*
- *Exercise Hand-in-Hand*
- *Hornbill Festival*
- *Typhoon Kammuri*
- *Islamic Republic of Mauritania*
- *Zero FIR*
- *Exercise INDRA 2019*
- *Red Tourism*
- *Icicles, Stalactites and Stalagmites*
- *White Island*
- *World Heritage Week 2019*
- *Mullaperiyar Dam*
- *Jangubai Cave Temple and Kaplai Caves*

INSTEX Barter Mechanism

Why in News

Six Countries - Belgium, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden have recently joined Instrument in Support of Trade Exchange (INSTEX).

Key Points

- A trade mechanism **INSTEX** was established by **France, Germany** and the **United Kingdom** in **January 2019** to allow European entities to maintain trade with Iran.
- The mechanism has been designed to **circumvent U.S. sanctions against trade with Iran** by avoiding the use of the dollar.
  - After withdrawing from Iran nuclear deal (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, JCPoA) in 2018 the United States imposed sanctions.
- This Paris-based mechanism **functions as a clearing house** allowing Iran to continue to sell oil and import other products or services in exchange.
- The mechanism represents continuing commitment of France, Germany and the UK to the JCPOA.
- It has been seen that the system **has not yet enabled any transactions**.

World AIDS Day

The World AIDS Day is observed on **1st December** every year all over the world.

- Founded in 1988, World AIDS Day was the first ever global health day.
- The main motto behind celebrating the day is to raise public awareness about AIDS.
  - **Acquired ImmunoDeficiency Syndrome (AIDS)**, is a pandemic disease caused due to the infection of **Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)**, which causes damage to the immune system.
- The **theme** for the year 2019 is **'Communities make the difference'**.

Note

- The **National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO)** is a division of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare that provides leadership to HIV/AIDS control programme in India through 35 HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Societies.
- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has implemented **the Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (Prevention and Control) Act, 2017 (HIV/AIDS Act, 2017)** to prevent and control the spread of HIV/AIDS and to create mechanisms for redressing the complaints of persons infected with HIV and AIDS.

Operation 'Clean Art'

Why in News

Recently, there has been a widespread crackdown on factories making **paint brushes with mongoose hair** across the country.

Note:

Key Points

- Brushes made of mongoose hair are preferred because they are of **superior quality and hold colour better**.
- There are **six species of mongoose found in India** - Indian grey mongoose, Small Indian mongoose, Ruddy mongoose, Crab-eating mongoose, Stripe-necked mongoose and Brown mongoose.
- The **Indian grey mongoose** is the **most commonly found** species and also the **most hunted**.
- Mongoose is listed in **Schedule II Part 2 of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972** and any smuggling or possession of its body parts is a non-bailable offence.
- **IUCN Red List status - Least Concerned.**
- **All six species** are listed on **CITES Appendix III** with a zero quota for commercial trade.

Operation Clean Art

- It was the **first pan India operation** to crackdown on the smuggling of mongoose hair in the country.
- It was conceived by **Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB)** with the singular **aim of ensuring that the mongoose hair brush trade should be closed down across the country**.

Navy Day

Why in News

The Indian Navy Day is celebrated on **December 4** every year to commemorate **Operation Trident**. The Navy also organises a **Beating Retreat ceremony** at the **Gateway of India in Mumbai** on the eve of the Navy Day.

Operation Trident

- It was a counter-attack by Indian Navy **on the Karachi harbour** during the **Indo-Pakistan war in 1971**.
- India used **anti-ship missiles** for the first time during this operation and destroyed the Pakistani destroyer ship **PNS Khaibar**.
- The Indian Navy's **three warships - INS Nipat, INS Nirghat and INS Veer** - played an important role in the attack.

Indian Navy

- It is **headed** by the **President of India** as its **Supreme Commander**.
- Indian Navy's **Motto** is - **Sam no Varunah** (**शं नो वरूण**) that means that the God of water, Varuna, should be auspicious unto us.
- Some of the **earliest operations** of the Indian Navy include **liberation of Goa from Portugal in 1961**.
- The Navy has developed as an admirable force with the making of the **nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine INS Arihant** and several other ships.
- Indian Navy currently has **one aircraft carrier, the INS Vikramaditya**, which was a **former Russian ship** that was commissioned into service in 2013.
- It **operates three classes of submarines: Chakra** (it has the **nuclear-powered INS Chakra**), **Sindhughosh,** and **Shishumar**.
- **Marine Commandos or MARCOS** is the special force unit of the Indian Navy, trained to conduct amphibious warfare, counter-terrorism, special reconnaissance, hostage rescue and asymmetric warfare.
  - They were the first to respond to the **26/11 Mumbai** terror attacks.

Exercise Hand-in-Hand

The 8th **India-China joint training exercise 'HAND-IN-HAND 2019'** with the theme of **'Counter Terrorism'** under United Nations mandate is scheduled to be conduct at **Umroi, Meghalaya** from 7th to 20th December 2019.

Note:

- The aim of the exercise is to practice joint planning and conduct of counter terrorist operations in semi urban terrain.
- In **2018**, the exercise was held in **Chengdu, China**.
- The exercise **did not take place in 2017** due to the 72-days long standoff between Indian and Chinese troops in Doklam.

Hornbill Festival

Hornbill Festival is celebrated in **Nagaland** to encourage inter-tribal interaction.

- It is one of the largest **indigenous festivals** organised by the **state government of Nagaland** to promote tourism in the state.
- The festival is celebrated **annually** in the **first week of December** in order to preserve, protect and revive the uniqueness and richness of the Naga heritage.
- The festival is considered as the **"Festival of Festivals"** in Nagaland.
- The festival is named after the bird **Hornbill** which is the most **revered and admired** bird for the Nagas.
  - The festival is a tribute to this bird, known for its qualities of grandeur and alertness.
  - The bird is also closely identified with the social and cultural life of the Nagas, as reflected in various tribal dances, songs and folklores.
- Hornbill festival exposes the **culture and tradition of the tribal people** and reinforces the identity of Nagaland.

Typhoon Kammuri

Why in News

Recently, a typhoon struck the Philippines, bringing heavy rains and suspending air travel. The government issued warnings of floods, storm surges and landslides.

Key Points

- It is locally known as **Tisoy** and is the 20th typhoon to hit the country in 2019.
- **Tropical Cyclone**
  - Cyclone is the formation of a very **low-pressure system** with **very high-speed winds** revolving around it. Factors like wind speed, wind direction, temperature and humidity contribute to the development of cyclones.

  - Cyclones are called **'Hurricanes' in the North Atlantic and Eastern Pacific, 'Typhoons' in South-East Asia and China** and **'Tropical Cyclones' in the South-West Pacific and Indian Ocean Region**.

Islamic Republic of Mauritania

Mauritania is located on the **Atlantic coast of Africa** and is bounded to the northwest by Western Sahara, to the northeast by Algeria, to the east and southeast by Mali and to the southwest by Senegal.

- It is the **eleventh largest country of the continent** and consists of **desert largely**.
- The capital is **Nouakchott** and it got **independence from France on 28th November 1960**.
- It has **Arab-Berber population to the north** and **black Africans to the south. Arabic and French** are the prominent **languages**.
- It is a member of the **United Nations** and the **African Union**.
- In the **Human Development Index 2019**, it was at rank 161.
- The most prominent feature of this region is the **Guelb er Richat**, also known as **the Eye of the Sahara**, which is a deeply eroded dome consisting of a variety of intrusive and extrusive igneous rocks.

Note:

Zero FIR

Why in News

In Kanchikacherla of Andhra Pradesh, a 'Zero FIR' was registered for a missing boy and he was found within 24 hours after the investigation was taken up.

- Zero FIR were registered earlier as well but this was the **first case in which it was done for "quick action"**.
- It means that an FIR can be filed in any police station, **irrespective of the jurisdictional limitations and location of the incident**.
- The respective police station takes in the FIR and **marks it as a zero FIR by giving it serial number zero** and immediately transfers the documents over to the concerned jurisdiction.
- It was initially **highlighted after the Nirbhaya Case, 2012**.
  - Zero FIRs may be registered on the basis of a woman's statement at any police station irrespective of jurisdiction. This means women can file an FIR at any police station and the complaint is required to be registered on the basis of the woman's complaint, verbatim.
- The police officers who **fail to comply** with the registration of Zero FIR **may invite prosecution under Section 166A of IPC** and also departmental action.

Exercise INDRA 2019

Exercise INDRA 2019, a joint tri services exercise between India and Russia will be conducted in India from

10th - 19th December 2019 at **Babina (near Jhansi), Pune, and Goa** simultaneously.

- The two countries will be able to imbibe the best practices from each other, jointly evolve and drill to defeat the menace of terror, under the United Nations mandate.
- The **INDRA series of exercise began in 2003**. It **was conducted as a single service exercise** alternately between the two countries. However, **the first joint Tri Services Exercise was conducted in 2017**.
- **Exercise INDRA 2018,** a joint military exercise on combating insurgency was conducted at Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh.

Red Tourism

- China has stepped up efforts to promote **"red tourism"** which features visits to sites with significance of **revolutionary history of China**.
- The 'Red tourism' focuses on **the historical heritage** of the Chinese Communist Party for tourism development.
- Significance of the glorification of the Chinese revolution are:
  - To improve the education about the party's revolutionary traditions, promote patriotism especially among youth, and stimulate economic development in revolutionary areas.
  - To eliminate rural poverty, along with the promotion of the legitimacy of the **Communist Party of China (CPC)**.
- At the heart of China's flourishing red tourism is the **Long March**. It includes locations and the choreographed stories of how the founding father of Red China, Mao Zedong, and his comrades battled for the **communist revolution in 1949**.

Note:

Long March

- The Long March was a military retreat undertaken by the **Red Army** of the **Communist Party of China** to evade the pursuit of the **Kuomintang** (KMT or Chinese Nationalist Party) army during the **Chinese Civil War (1934-35)**.
- This was not a single Long March, but a series of marches, as various Communist armies in the south escaped to the north and the west.
- It was a key moment in the civil war, and also in the development of communism in China. **Mao Zedong** emerged as the leader of communist forces from the long march. He led the communist to victory over the nationalists.

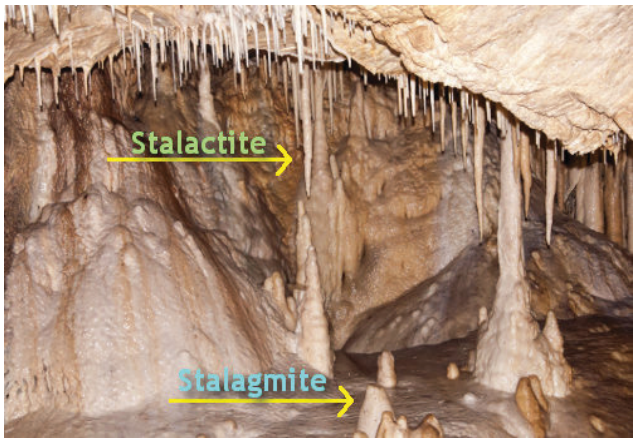
Icicles, Stalactites and Stalagmites

Icicles

- Icicles typically form on days when **the air temperature is subfreezing but sunshine warms and melts some snow or ice**. As it drips off, a water droplet freezes when it loses its heat to the cold air.
- It starts with a few frozen droplets and after reaching a certain size, drops begin to drip along the side of the structure turning into a pointy stick-like structure.
- Icicles formed in caves are known as **ice stalactites**.

Stalactite

- It is an icicle-shaped formation that hangs from the ceiling of a cave and is produced by the **precipitation of minerals** from water dripping through the cave ceiling. Most stalactites have **pointed tips**.



Stalagmite

- It is an **upward-growing mound** of mineral deposits that have precipitated from water dripping onto the floor of a cave. Most stalagmites **have rounded or flattened tips**.
- The dominant mineral in such deposits is **calcite (calcium carbonate)**, and the largest displays are formed in **caves of limestone and dolomite**. Other minerals that may be deposited include other carbonates, opal, chalcedony, limonite, and some sulfides.

White Island

Why in News

Recently a volcanic eruption took place at **White Island in New Zealand**.

- White Island is **New Zealand's most active cone volcano** which has been built up by continuous volcanic activity over the past 1,50,000 years.
- About 70% of the volcano lies under the sea and the Island forms the tip of the volcano.
- The volcano is located in the **Bay of Plenty**, about 48km (29 miles) from the east coast of New Zealand's North Island.
- Including its underwater base, White Island is the **largest volcanic structure in New Zealand**.
- The island became a **private scenic reserve in 1953**.
- The island is also known by name **Whakaari**.

World Heritage Week 2019

Why in News

Every year the World Heritage Week is celebrated by the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** from **19th to 25th November**.

Note:

- In India, the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** celebrates it.

Key Points

- Its **objective** is to make people **aware of the rich heritage** and also **strive for its preservation**.
- The Archaeological Survey of India and several other museums organise programs highlighting the significance of ancient monuments and their preservation.
  - Various **programs** related to **historical structures, palace tours and cultural and traditional heritage** of the country were initiated to celebrate the week.
  - Several **schools and colleges** celebrated it by organising quiz and painting competitions.
- The heritage sites celebrating the week include Qutub Minar, Kashi Vishwanath Temple, Delhi Red Fort, Delhi Darwaza and Bhadra Gate among others.
- There are **38 UNESCO World Heritage sites in India** which include **30 cultural sites, 7 natural sites** and **1 mixed site**.
  - **Jaipur is the latest addition** to the list of UNESCO cultural heritage sites.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

- It was founded in **1945** to develop the **"intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind"** as a means of building lasting peace.
- It is located in **Paris, France**.

Archaeological Survey of India

- It is the premier organization for the **archaeological research, scientific analysis, excavation of archaeological sites, conservation and preservation of protected monuments**.
- It is an attached office under the **Department of Culture, Ministry of Culture**.
- It was **founded in 1861 by Alexander Cunningham- the first Director-General of ASI**.

Mullaperiyar Dam

Why in News

The **Ministry of Jal Shakti** has constituted a **three-member Supervisory Committee** to settle the issue of **Mullaperiyar dam** between **Kerala** and **Tamil Nadu**.

- The tension between the two states over the issue has persisted since the **1960s**, with Kerala citing concerns regarding the **dam's safety** and arguing for the reduction of the dam's water levels.
- With the water from the dam being diverted to five districts in Tamil Nadu and its importance in the state's irrigation and power production practices, Tamil Nadu has consistently opposed this.

Mullaperiyar Dam

- It is located on the **confluence** of the **Mullayar and Periyar rivers** in **Kerala's Idukki district**.
- It is **operated and maintained** by **Tamil Nadu** for meeting the drinking water and irrigation requirements of five of its southern districts.
  - According to a 999-year lease agreement made during the British rule the operational rights were handed over to Tamil Nadu.
- The dam intends to divert the waters of the **west-flowing river Periyar** eastward to the arid rain shadow regions of the Tamil Nadu.

Periyar River

- The Periyar River is the **longest river in the state of Kerala** with a length of 244 km.
- It is also known as **'Lifeline of Kerala'** because it is one of the few **perennial** rivers in the state.

Note:

- A perennial river is a channel that has continuous flow in parts of its stream bed all year round.

- Periyar River **originates** from **Sivagiri hills of Western Ghats** and flows through the **Periyar National Park**.
- The **main tributaries** of Periyar are Muthirapuzha, Mullayar, Cheruthoni and Perinjankutti.

Jangubai Cave Temple and Kaplai Caves

Why in News

The Jangubai Cave Temple and the Kaplai Caves are considered as a **pilgrimage site** by aboriginal tribes like **Gond, Pradhan and Kolam**.

- These caves are located at **Maharashtra – Telangana border**.

Kolam Tribe

- The Kolam tribe (or in their own language, Kolavar) is a **scheduled tribe of Maharashtra**. They also live in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh.
- They have a language of their own (Kolami) which belongs, like Gondi, to the intermediate group of **Dravidian languages**.
- They are **monogamous** and follow Hinduism.
- In 2018, the Government has identified **Katkaria (Kathodia), Kolam and Maria Gond** as **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)**.
  - The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is administering the scheme "Development of PVTGs" for the overall development of PVTGs. This scheme is flexible and enables the States to focus on areas that they consider is relevant to PVTGs and their socio-cultural environment.

Gond Tribe

- It is spread over Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Bihar, and West Bengal.
- Their main concentration is in the forest and hilly areas between the Vidhyans and the Satpura.

Pradhan Tribe

- The Pardhan is a **subgroup** of the tribal Gond people who live in central India.
- The large majority of the Pardhan live in **Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh**.
- The primary language of the Pardhan people is their **own Pardhan language**. Some Pardhans also speak Hindi, Marathi and Gondi.
- The traditional occupation of the Pardhan is that of being singers and musicians at festivals and important life ceremonies.

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Note:

Key Points	Details

Summary

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