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Current Affairs (CONSOLIDATION)

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(PART – II)

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Contents

Polity and Governance	1
• Contempt of Court.....	1
• Review Petition.....	2
• 250 th Session of Rajya Sabha.....	3
• The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019	4
• Bill to Change Stature of Official Languages.....	5
• Starred Questions In Parliamentary Proceedings	6
• Legislative Council	7
• 70 th Constitution Day	7
• Fundamental Duties.....	8
• Consultative Committees	8
• Citizenship by Registration.....	9
• Water Quality Report.....	10
• Lokpal and Lokayukta.....	10
• Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu (Merger of Union Territories) Bill, 2019	11
• National Institute for Sowa Rigpa	11
• Convention on Global Cybercrime.....	12
• Steps to Curb Abuse of Synthetic Drugs	13
• Road Accidents in India–2018	14
• National Skills Study.....	15
• Supplementary Grants.....	15
• Quota for Disabled in Panchayats	16
• Maharashtra Bill to Protect Media persons.....	17
• Cases Under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act	18
• UNDP's Accelerator Lab	19
Economic Scenario	20
• GDP Growth.....	20
• Essar Insolvency Case	21
• Currency Swap Arrangement for SAARC	22
• Hong Kong Convention for Ship Recycling.....	23
• Industrial Corridors	23
• Automotive Mission Plan (2016-26).....	24
• Deposit Insurance	25
• Chit Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2019	25
• Organic Food Regulatory System in India	26
• Shadow Banking	27

International Relations28

- OPEC +28
- Viability of BRI and CPEC.....29
- Indian Diaspora Largest in the World: UN Report30
- New START Treaty30
- World Anti-Doping Agency31
- Kimberley Process31
- ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus32
- West Bank Settlements.....32
- Bougainville.....33
- U.S. Minimises its Share in NATO Budget34

Science and Technology35

- Seismometers Defunct in Earthquake-Prone Zones35
- Smog Tower Planned For Delhi.....36
- Cartosat-337
- Space Internet38
- Solar Eclipse.....39

Environment and Ecology40

- International Conference on "Landslides Risk Reduction and Resilience40
- Avian Botulism at Sambhar Lake.....41
- Panna Tiger Reserve.....41
- Atapaka Bird Sanctuary42
- Dudhwa National Park42
- Etalin Hydroelectric Project.....42
- Living Root Bridges.....43
- SAMEER App.....43
- Assam Roofed Turtle44
- Sumatran Rhino44

Art & Culture45

- Maha Bodhi Temple Complex45
- Ain-i-Akbari.....45
- Rani Lakshmi Bai.....46

Social Issues47

- International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women47
- Child Abuse Prevention and Investigation Unit.....48
- World Children's Day.....48
- SAANS Campaign.....49
- Bhopal Gas Tragedy50

Security51

- Defence Acquisition Council51
- Defence Industrial Corridors51
- MK-45 Naval Guns.....52
- Exercise Mitra Shakti52
- SURYA KIRAN - XIV52
- Bilateral Maritime Exercise Za'ir-Al-Bahr.....53

Miscellaneous54

- Jharkhand Foundation Day54
- Sisseri River Bridge.....54
- National Agrochemicals Congress55
- Plastic Parks in India55
- Persecution of Uighurs55
- Willingdon Island.....56
- Jayakwadi Dam.....56
- Mhadei River.....56
- Pavor-Uliya Island57
- 8th International Conference on Agricultural Statistics (ICAS-VIII)57
- Target Olympic Podium (TOP) Scheme57
- Srisaillam Dam.....57
- Tear Gas58
- Winter Grade Fuel in Ladakh58
- Pink Ball Cricket59
- Golden Rice59
- Rohtang Tunnel.....60

Polity and Governance

Highlights

- Contempt of Court
- Review Petition
- 250th Session of Rajya Sabha
- The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019
- Bill to Change Stature of Official Languages
- Starred Questions In Parliamentary Proceedings
- Legislative Council
- 70th Constitution Day
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- Water Quality Report
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- National Institute for Sowa Rigpa
- Convention on Global Cybercrime
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- Road Accidents in India - 2018
- National Skills Study
- Supplementary Grants
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Contempt of Court

Why in News

Recently, the Supreme Court of India has held former Ranbaxy promoters guilty of **contempt for violating its order**.

- The expression '**contempt of court**' has **not** been defined by the **Constitution**.
- As per the **Contempt of Courts Act 1971**, contempt refers to the offence of showing disrespect to the dignity or authority of a court.
- The act divides contempt into **civil and criminal contempt**.
 - **Civil contempt**: It is **willful disobedience** to any judgment, decree, direction, order, writ or other processes of a court or wilful breach of an undertaking given to the court.
 - **Criminal contempt**: It is any publication which may result in:
 - **Scandalising the court** by lowering its authority.
 - **Interference** in the due course of a judicial proceeding.

- An **obstruction** in the administration of justice.

- However, innocent publication and distribution of some matter, fair and reasonable criticism of judicial acts and comment on the administrative side of the judiciary do not amount to contempt of court.

Contempt of Court Act, 1971

- The act defines the power of courts to punish for their contempt and regulates their procedure.
- It was **amended** in **2006** to include the defence of truth under **Section 13** of the original legislation. Implying that the court must permit justification by truth as a **valid defence** if it is satisfied that it is in the public interest.

Punishments for Contempt of Court

- The supreme court and high courts have the power to punish for contempt of court, either with simple imprisonment for a term up to **six months** or with **fine up to 2,000** or with both.
- In **1991**, the Supreme Court has ruled that it has the power to **punish for contempt not only of itself** but also of **high courts, subordinate courts and tribunals** functioning in the entire country.

Note:

- On the other hand, High Courts have been given special powers to punish contempt of subordinate courts, as per **Section 10 of The Contempt of Courts Act of 1971**.

Need for Contempt Law

- The purpose of contempt jurisdiction is to uphold the majesty and dignity of the judiciary.
- Contempt powers help judges to do their duties of deciding cases without fear, favour, affection or ill will.

Constitutional Background

- **Article 129:** Grants Supreme Court the power to punish for contempt of itself.
- **Article 142(2):** Enables the Supreme Court to investigate and punish any person for its contempt.
- **Article 215:** Grants every High Court the power to punish for contempt of itself.

Issues with Contempt Law

- **Article 19(1)(a)** of the Constitution gives the right to freedom of speech and expression to all citizens, while "**contempt provisions**" curb people's freedom to speak against the court's functioning.
- The law is **very subjective** which might be used by the judiciary **arbitrarily to suppress** their criticism by the public.

Review Petition

Why in News

The **Supreme Court** has agreed to **review its Sabarimala verdict**, in which it lifted the centuries-old entry ban on women of all ages in the shrine.

Key Points

- **Constitutional Provision:** Under **Article 137** of the Constitution, the Supreme Court has the power to review any of its judgments or orders.
- **Scope of Review**
 - The Court has the power to review its rulings to **correct a "patent error" and not "minor mistakes of inconsequential import"**. A review is **by no means an appeal in disguise**.
 - That means the Court is allowed not to take fresh stock of the case but to correct grave errors that have resulted in the miscarriage of justice.

Filing Review Petition

- As per the Civil Procedure Code and the Supreme Court Rules, **any person aggrieved by a ruling can seek a review**. This implies that it is not necessary that only parties to a case can seek a review of the judgment.
- A Review Petition has to be filed **within 30 days** of the date of judgment or order.
 - In certain circumstances, the court can condone the delay in filing the review petition if the petitioner can establish strong reasons that justify the delay.

Note:

- It needs to be noted that **judgment is a final decision** in a case whereas **order is an interim ruling** that is subject to its final judgement.

Grounds for Considering Review Petition

- It needs to be noted that the Court does not entertain every review petition filed. It exercises its **discretion** to allow a review petition only when it shows the grounds for seeking the review.
- The Supreme Court has laid down **three grounds** for seeking a review of a verdict it has delivered:
 - The **discovery of new and important matter** or evidence which, after the exercise of due diligence, was not within the knowledge of the petitioner or could not be produced by him;
 - **Mistake or error apparent** on the face of the record; or
 - **Any other sufficient reason** that is analogous to the other two grounds.

Procedure in the Court

- Review petitions are ordinarily be **entertained without oral arguments** by lawyers. Thus, it is heard "**through circulation**" by the judges in their chambers.
- However, in exceptional cases, the court allows an oral hearing. In a 2014 case, the Supreme Court held that review petitions in all death penalty cases will be heard in open court by a Bench of three judges.
- Review petitions are **heard by the same combination of judges who delivered the original order or judgment** that is sought to be reviewed.

Option after Review Petition Fails

Note:

- In **Roopa Hurra v Ashok Hurra case (2002)**, the Court evolved the concept of a **curative petition**, which can be heard after a review petition is dismissed. Anyhow, the Supreme Court's verdict cannot result in a miscarriage of justice.
- A curative petition is also entertained on very narrow grounds like a review petition and is generally not granted an oral hearing.

250th Session of Rajya Sabha

Why in News

The Rajya Sabha secretariat has released the first-ever analysis of its legislative work, "**Rajya Sabha: The Journey since 1952**" on the occasion of the **250th session of Rajya Sabha**.

Key Points

- The Rajya Sabha has passed 3,817 Bills till the end of its **249th session** (Monsoon Session, 2019).
- The **recent monsoon session of Rajya Sabha (2019)** has been reported as the **most productive session (103%)**.
 - Productivity signifies the **number of hours** the House actually functioned compared to the **number of hours officially earmarked** for it to work.
- The **representation of women** in Rajya Sabha **increased** from 15 (6.94%) in 1952 to 31 (12.76%) in 2014 but decreased to 26 (10.83%) in 2019.

Some Unique Events Related to Rajya Sabha

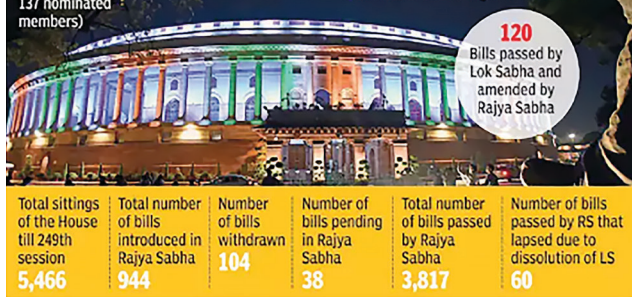
- **Casting vote by Chairman:** The first and the only time when a Presiding Officer of Rajya Sabha casted his vote was for the **Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Ordinance, 1991**.
 - The Chairman cannot vote in the first instance; he **can only exercise a casting vote** in the case of a tie.
- **President Rule approved only by Rajya Sabha:** It has happened **only twice** for extension of **President Rule in Tamil Nadu (1977)** and in **Haryana (1991)** when Lok Sabha was dissolved.
- **Bills passed at the joint sitting of both the Houses of Parliament:**
 - The **joint sitting** has passed **only three bills**, namely
 - **The Dowry Prohibition Bill, 1959** passed at a joint sitting in **1961**.

A JOURNEY SINCE 1952

Total members so far **2,282** (including 208 women and 137 nominated members)

Longest-serving members: **Mahendra Prasad**, serving the 7th term, followed by **Manmohan Singh** serving 6th term

Representation of women in Rajya Sabha increased from **15 (6.94%)** in 1952 to **31 (12.76%)** in 2014. It is currently **26**, or **10.83%**, of the strength of the House



RAJYA SABHA FIRSTS

First bill passed: The Indian Tariff (2nd Amendment) Bill, 1952

First constitution amendment bill: The Constitution (Second Amendment) Bill, 1953 for readjustment of representation in Lok Sabha by increasing the size of population per constituency

First bill on law and order: The Preventive Detention (Second Amendment) Bill, 1952

First security bill: The Armed Forces (Assam & Manipur) Spl Powers Bill, 1958

First bill on pollution: The Prevention of Water Pollution Bill, 1959

First money bill deemed to have been passed by Rajya Sabha: The Appropriation (Railways) No.4 Bill, 1978

First bill referring to terrorism: The Terrorist Affected Areas (Special Courts) Bill, 1984

LANDMARK EVENTS

1 Casting vote by the chair: The only time a presiding officer of RS cast his vote was on August 5, 1991 when voting was tied 39-39 on a statutory resolution moved by opposition seeking disapproval of the CrPC (amendment) ordinance, resulting in opposition victory

2 Prez rule not just by RS: President Rule extended in Tamil Nadu and Nagaland in 1977, and for Haryana in 1991, only by RS when LS was dissolved

3 Removal of a judge: RS adopted a motion for removal of

a judge in respect of Justice Soumitra Sen of Calcutta HC in 2011. He quit before the motion was taken up in LS

4 Expulsion of members: RS adopted a motion in 1976 to expel Subramanian Swamy after his activities were found to be derogatory to the dignity of the House. Chattrapal Singh was expelled in 2005 after the ethics panel found him guilty of accepting money for raising questions. Sakshi Maharaj was expelled in 2006 for irregularities in MPLAD projects

Rajya Sabha

- The **maximum strength** of the Rajya Sabha is **fixed at 250**, out of which, 238 are to be the representatives of the states and union territories (elected indirectly) and 12 are nominated by the president.
 - The representatives of states are elected by the elected members of state legislative assemblies.
 - The representatives of each union territory are indirectly elected by members of an electoral college specially constituted for the purpose
 - The seats are allotted to the states in the Rajya Sabha on the basis of the population.
- The Rajya Sabha (**first constituted in 1952**) is a **permanent body** and **not subject to dissolution**.
 - However, **one-third** of its members **retire every second year**.
 - The retiring members are eligible for re-election and renomination any number of times.
- The Constitution has **not fixed the term of office of members of the Rajya Sabha** and left it to the Parliament.

Note:



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- Accordingly, the Parliament in the Representation of the People Act (1951) provided that the term of office of a member of the Rajya Sabha shall be **six years**.

➤ **Special Powers of Rajya Sabha** include:

- It can authorize the Parliament **to make a law** on a subject enumerated in the **State List (Article 249)**.
- It can **authorize** the Parliament **to create new All-India Services** common to both the Centre and states **(Article 312)**.

- The **Banking Service Commission (Repeal) Bill, 1978** passed at a joint sitting in **2018**.

- The **Prevention of Terrorism Bill, 2002** passed at a joint sitting in **2002**.

- Joint sitting is extraordinary machinery provided by the Constitution to resolve a deadlock between the two Houses over the passage of a bill.

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019

Why in News

The Parliament passed the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019.

Key Features

- **Definition of a transgender person:** The Bill defines a transgender person as one whose gender does not match the gender assigned at birth. It includes transmen and trans-women, persons with intersex variations, gender-queers, and persons with socio-cultural identities, such as kinnar and hijra.
- **Certificate of identity:** A transgender person may make an application to the District Magistrate for a certificate of identity, indicating the gender as 'transgender'.
- **Prohibition against discrimination:** The Bill prohibits discrimination against a transgender person, including denial of service or unfair treatment in relation to:
 - Education, employment, healthcare.
 - Access to or enjoyment of goods, facilities, opportunities available to the public.
 - Right to movement, right to reside, rent, or otherwise occupy property.

- Opportunity to hold public or private office.
- Access to a government or private establishment in whose care or custody a transgender person is.

➤ **Health care**

- The Bill also seeks to provide **rights of health facilities** to transgender persons including separate HIV surveillance centres, and sex reassignment surgeries.

- It also states that the government shall review medical curriculum to address health issues of transgender persons, and provide comprehensive medical insurance schemes for them.

➤ It calls for establishing a **National Council for Transgender persons (NCT)**.

- **Punishment:** It states that the offences against transgender persons will attract imprisonment between six months and two years, in addition to a fine.

Concerns

- The Bill **does not have any provision for self-determination of gender**. The transgender community has questioned the certificate of identity.
- It **fails** to address the lack of an effective mechanism **to enforce the legal prohibition** against discrimination on the ground of gender identity.
- It **does not make provision for affirmative action in employment or education** despite the Supreme Court's mandate in National Legal Services Authority NALSA v. Union of India (UOI) case (2014).
- The Bill sets out **lighter sentences for several criminal offences**, such as "sexual abuse" and "physical abuse", when they are committed against transgender people.

Pros and cons

SALIENT FEATURES	COMMUNITY'S RESPONSE
• Definitions do not differentiate between transgenders, transsexuals, intersex persons and genderqueer	• Community differentiates between transgender, transsexual and intersex persons and dismisses the 'one-solution fits all' idea
• Prohibition against discrimination in education, employment, healthcare, public facilities etc. Also prevents forced labour	• Lack of enforceability dilutes provision. Lived experiences riddled with discrimination
• Certificate of identity can be obtained at the DM's office and a revised certificate is to be obtained if sex is changed	• Shuns provision as impinging on their right to self-determination. Fear it'll lead to bureaucratic discrimination
• Government welfare measures and provisions of healthcare, including HIV surveillance centres, and sex reassignment surgeries	• Step forward but medical community lacks knowledge of transgender bodies
• Transgender persons may only change their first name	• Prefer to take Guru's name since many have severed ties with their birth family
• Setting up of a National Council for Transgender persons (NCT), including various Ministers and five transgender persons	• Desire greater representation in decision making that affects them directly

SOURCE: PIES INDIA

Note:

Bill to Change Stature of Official Languages

Why in News

Recently, a private member's bill was introduced in the ongoing Winter Session of the Parliament to **give all 22 languages** mentioned in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution **the stature of national official languages**.

What the Bill Proposes

This proposed (Constitutional Amendment) Bill seeks to amend:

- **Original Provision: Article 343** of the Constitution, which states that the official language of the Union shall be Hindi in Devanagari script.
 - **Proposal:** The bill proposes to substitute this with, "the official language of the Union in addition to Hindi in Devanagari script shall be the languages mentioned in the Eighth Schedule to this Constitution".
- **Original Provision: Subclause-3 of Article 343** which states that "Parliament may by law provide for the use of the English language".
 - **Proposal:** The bill seeks to add to this subclause, "Parliament may by law provide for the use of the English language or the languages mentioned in the Eighth Schedule to this Constitution".

Purpose

- As India is known for unity in diversity, also enshrined in the Preamble to the Constitution, it is necessary that all the regional languages recognized in the **Eighth Schedule** be encouraged, developed and used as the official language of the Union. This will promote national integrity.

Eighth Schedule and Related Constitutional Provisions

- **Part XVII** of the Indian constitution deals with the official languages in **Articles 343 to 351**.
- The Constitutional provisions related to the **Eighth Schedule** are:
 - **Article 344:** Article 344(1) provides for the constitution of a Commission by the President on expiration of five years from the commencement of the Constitution.

- **Article 351:** It provides for the spread of the Hindi language to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India.

22 Official Languages

- The Eighth Schedule to the Constitution consists of the **following 22 languages**:
 - (1) Assamese, (2) Bengali, (3) Gujarati, (4) Hindi, (5) Kannada, (6) Kashmiri, (7) Konkani, (8) Malayalam, (9) Manipuri, (10) Marathi, (11) Nepali, (12) Oriya, (13) Punjabi, (14) Sanskrit, (15) Sindhi, (16) Tamil, (17) Telugu, (18) Urdu (19) Bodo, (20) Santhali, (21) Maithili and (22) Dogri.
- Out of all these languages, 14 were initially included in the Constitution.
- **Sindhi** language was added by the **21st Amendment Act of 1967**.
- **Konkani, Manipuri, and Nepali** were included by the **71st Amendment Act of 1992**.
- **Bodo, Dogri, Maithili and Santhali** were added by the **92nd Amendment Act of 2003**.

Committee on Official Languages

- As the evolution of dialects and languages is dynamic, influenced by socio-political developments, it is difficult to fix any criterion for languages whether to distinguish them from dialects or for their inclusion in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India.
 - Consequently two committees viz. the **Pahwa (1996)** and **Sitakant Mohapatra (2003)** Committees were formed by the government.
- A Committee was set up in September 2003 under the Chairmanship of Shri Sitakant Mohapatra to evolve a set of objective criteria for inclusion of more languages in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.
 - The Committee submitted its report in 2004, which is still under the government's consideration in consultation with the concerned Minorities/Departments.

Private Member Bill

- It refers to the **bills introduced by any member of Parliament who is not a minister**.
- Its introduction in the House requires **one month's prior notice**.

Note:

- Its **drafting is the responsibility of the member concerned**.
- Its rejection by the House has no implication on the parliamentary confidence in the government or its resignation.
- The last time a private member's bill was passed by both Houses was in 1970.
 - It was the Supreme Court (Enlargement of Criminal Appellate Jurisdiction) Bill, 1968.
- **14 private member's bills** — five of which were introduced in Rajya Sabha — have become law so far. Some other private member bills that have become laws include-
 - Proceedings of Legislature (Protection of Publication) Bill, 1956, in the Lok Sabha;
 - The Salaries and Allowances of Members of Parliament (Amendment) Bill, 1964, introduced by in the Lok Sabha and
 - The Indian Penal Code (Amendment) Bill, 1967 introduced in the Rajya Sabha.
- The government bills can be introduced and discussed on any day, private member's bills can be **introduced and discussed only on Fridays**.
- Recently, the members of parliament has demanded for consideration of private members' Bills on Wednesdays instead of Fridays.
- It has been observed that most of the members of the parliament as well as Prime Minister are found absent on Fridays which reduces significance and impact of presentation of private member's bill in the house.
- They have also demanded that time allotted for **private member's bill** consideration should not be cut short unless there is an issue of national significance to be discussed in the House.

Starred Questions In Parliamentary Proceedings

Why in News

The ongoing **Winter Session of 17th Lok Sabha** has **taken all the 20 starred questions** for the first time since 1972.

- The **previous record** was created during the **5th Lok Sabha (1972)** when **14 starred questions were answered**.

- Also, in the **5th Lok Sabha (1972)**, the number of **starred questions** was **fixed at 20** per Question Hour. Similarly, for the **Rajya Sabha**, the number is fixed at **15**.
- **Members of Parliament have a right to ask questions** which is one of the devices available to them to seek information on matters of public importance.
- The **Question Hour is one such mechanism** in which the members ask questions on varied aspects of administration and governmental activity.

Question Hour

- The **first hour of every parliamentary sitting** is termed as **Question hour**.
- It is mentioned in the **Rules of Procedure of the House**.
- During this time, the members ask questions and the ministers usually give answers.
- The questions are of **three types**, namely,
 - **Starred questions**
 - It requires an **oral answer** and hence supplementary questions can follow.
 - The list of these questions is printed in green colour.
 - These are **distinguished by an asterisk**.
 - **Unstarred questions**
 - It requires a **written answer** and hence, supplementary questions cannot follow.
 - The list of these questions is printed in white colour.
 - **Short notice questions**
 - The **matters of public importance and of urgent character** are considered under this type of questions.
 - It is asked by giving a **notice of less than ten days**.
 - It is **answered orally**.
 - The list of these questions is printed in **light pink colour**.
- In addition to the ministers, the **questions can also be asked to the private members**.
 - **Question to private members**
 - These questions are **mentioned under Rule 40 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha**.
 - A question may be addressed to a private member if the subject matter of the question relates to

Note:

some bill, resolution for which that member is responsible.

- The list of these questions is printed in **yellow colour**.

Legislative Council

Why in News

There is a **resolution by Odisha Legislative Assembly** for the **formation of a second chamber** — the State Legislative Council. However, the resolution is pending with the Central Government.

Legislative Council

➤ Base For Formation

- India has a **bicameral system of legislature**. Just as Parliament has two Houses, the states can also have a Legislative Council in addition to the Legislative Assembly through Article 169 of the Constitution.

➤ Six States having a Legislative Council: Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Karnataka.

- Recently, the **Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Council has been abolished** through the J&K Reorganisation Bill, 2019, which reduced the State of J&K to the **Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh**.

➤ Abolition or Creation - Article 169

- The Parliament can abolish a legislative council (where it already exists) or create it (where it does not exist) by a simple majority, that is, a majority of the members of each House present and voting, if the legislative assembly of the concerned state, by a special majority, passed a resolution to that effect.
- Special majority implies
 - A majority of the total membership of the assembly and
 - A majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of the assembly present and voting.

➤ Composition

- Under **Article 171** of the Constitution, the Legislative Council of a state shall not have more than **one-third of the total strength** of the State Assembly, and **not less than 40 members**.
- Like the Rajya Sabha, the legislative council is a continuing chamber, that is, it is a permanent body and is not subject to dissolution.

- The tenure of a Member of the Legislative Council (MLC) is **six years**, with **one-third of the members** retiring every two years.

➤ Manner of Election

- **One-third of the MLCs** are elected by the state's MLAs,
- Another 1/3rd by a special electorate comprising sitting members of local governments such as municipalities and district boards,
- **1/12th** by an electorate of teachers and **another 1/12th** by registered graduates.
- The remaining members are **appointed by the Governor** for distinguished services in various fields namely, literature, science, art, cooperative movement and social service.

➤ LC vis-à-vis Rajya Sabha

- The legislative power of the Councils are limited. Unlike Rajya Sabha which has substantial powers to shape non-financial legislation, Legislative Councils lack a constitutional mandate to do so.
- Assemblies can override suggestions/amendments made to legislation by the Council.
- Again, unlike Rajya Sabha MPs, MLCs cannot vote in elections for the President and Vice President. The Vice President is the Rajya Sabha Chairperson while a member from the Council itself is chosen as the Council Chairperson.

➤ Arguments in Favour

- A Legislative Council can help check hasty actions by the directly elected House.
- The Legislative Council also enables non-elected individuals to contribute to the legislative process.

➤ Arguments Against

- Legislative Council can delay legislation.
- It can also be used to park leaders who have not been able to win an election.

70th Constitution Day

Why in News

India marks the **70th anniversary** of the **adoption of the Indian Constitution** on **November 26, 2019**. The day is celebrated as **Constitution Day** (also known as 'Samvidhan Divas').

Note:

Key Points

- On 26 November 1949, the Constituent Assembly of India adopted the Constitution of India, and it **came into force on 26 January 1950**.
- Jammu and Kashmir will celebrate it for the first time since the **abrogation of Article 370**.
- It aims:
 - To publicize the glorious and rich composite culture and diversity of our nation.
 - To create awareness of Fundamental Duties as enshrined in the Indian Constitution.
 - To reiterate and reorient the citizens towards the values and principles expressed in the Indian Constitution.
 - To encourage all Indians to play their rightful role in strengthening Indian Democracy.

Abrogation of Article 370.

- On **5th of August 2019**, the President of India promulgated the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 2019.
- The order effectively abrogates the special status accorded to Jammu and Kashmir under the provision of **Article 370** - whereby provisions of the Constitution which were applicable to other states were not applicable to **Jammu and Kashmir (J&K)**.

Fundamental Duties

The Government is planning to assign its different Ministries with the task of spreading awareness about Fundamental duties among people.

- The idea of Fundamental Duties is inspired from the **Constitution of Russia**.
- These were incorporated in **Part IV-A of the Constitution by the 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1976** on the recommendations of **Swaran Singh Committee**.
- **Originally 10 in number**, one more duty was added through the **86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002**. All the eleven duties are listed in **Article 51-A** of the Constitution (the **sole Article in Part-IV-A**).
- The fundamental duties serve as a reminder to citizens that while enjoying their rights, they have also to be quite conscious of duties they owe to their country, their society and to their fellow-citizens.
- However, **like the Directive Principles**, the duties are also **non-justiciable** in nature.

List of Fundamental Duties

- To abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem;
- To cherish and follow the noble ideals that inspired the national struggle for freedom;
- To uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India;
- To defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so;
- To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women;
- To value and preserve the rich heritage of the country's composite culture;
- To protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures;
- To develop scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform;
- To safeguard public property and to abjure violence;
- To strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement; and
- To provide opportunities for education to his child or ward between the age of six and fourteen years (added by the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002).

Consultative Committees

Why in News

Farooq Abdullah and Pragya Thakur have been nominated as members of the consultative committee of Parliament for the Ministry of Defence.

- The committee comprises **12 members from the Lok Sabha and 9 from the Rajya Sabha** and is chaired by the **Defence Minister**.

Consultative Committees

- **Formation**
 - These committees are constituted by the **Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs**.

Note:



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- These are normally constituted after the new Lok Sabha is constituted and **stand dissolved upon dissolution of every Lok Sabha.**
- **Composition**
 - These consist of **members of both the Houses of Parliament.**
 - However, the membership of these committees is **voluntary** and is left to the choice of the members and the leaders of their parties.
 - The **maximum** membership of a committee is **30** and the **minimum is 10.**
- **Functions**
 - These committees are attached to various ministries/ departments of the Central Government.
 - The Minister/Minister of State in charge of the Ministry concerned acts as the chairman of the consultative committee of that ministry.
 - These provide a forum for informal discussions between the ministers and the members of Parliament on policies and programmes of the government and the manner of their implementation.
- The Consultative Committees are not **Parliamentary Committees.**
 - A **parliamentary committee** means a committee that:
 - Is appointed or elected by the House or nominated by the Speaker/Chairman.
 - Works under the direction of the Speaker/Chairman.
 - Presents its report to the House or to the Speaker/Chairman.
 - Has a secretariat provided by the Lok Sabha/ Rajya Sabha.

Citizenship by Registration

Why in News

The **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** has **cancelled the citizenship** of Chennamaneni Ramesh who is a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) from Vemulawada in Telangana.

- The MHA held that Ramesh obtained citizenship under **section 5(1)(f)** of the **Citizenship Act, 1955** in the year 2009 by means of fraud, false representation

and concealment of facts and thus, his action attracts provisions of **section 10(2)** of the Act.

- It is to be noted that a person who is not an Indian citizen is not eligible to contest or vote in any election.

Section 5(1)(f)

- Section 5 of the Citizenship Act 1955 deals with **acquisition of citizenship by registration.**
- Section 5(1)(f) states **one of the categories eligible** for the case of registration. That is, a person of full age and capacity:
 - Who or either of his parents, was earlier citizen of independent India, and
 - Has been residing in India for one year immediately before making an application for registration.

Section 10(2)

- Section 10 deals with **deprivation of citizenship.**
- Section 10(2) provides that the **Central Government** may, by order, deprive a citizen (who is such by registration) of Indian citizenship, if it is **satisfied that:**
 - The registration was obtained by means of fraud, false representation or concealment of any material fact; or
 - That citizen has shown himself by act or speech to be disloyal or disaffected towards the Constitution of India; or
 - That citizen has, during any war in which India may be engaged, unlawfully traded or communicated with an enemy or been engaged in, or associated with, any business that was to his knowledge carried on in such manner as to assist an enemy in that war; or
 - That citizen has, within five years after registration or naturalisation, been sentenced in any country to imprisonment for a term of not less than two years; or
 - That citizen has been ordinarily resident out of India for a continuous period of seven years.
- The law, however, also **provides for checks to ensure that citizenship is not cancelled arbitrarily.**
 - Section 10(3) of the Act says that the Central Government shall not deprive a person of citizenship under this section unless it is satisfied that it is not conducive to the public good that person should continue to be a citizen of India.

Note:



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Water Quality Report

Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution** has released **Water Quality Report for State capitals & Delhi** as analysed by the **Bureau of India Standards (BIS)**.

- The study focused on the quality of piped drinking water and also ranked the States, smart cities and districts accordingly.
- This study was in line with **Jal Jeevan Mission** which aims to **provide tap water to all households by 2024**.

Key Points

- Tests were conducted on various parameters:
 - Organoleptic and Physical Tests
 - Chemical test
 - Toxic substances
 - Bacteriological tests
 - Total Dissolved Solids (TDS)
 - Turbidity
 - Total hardness
 - Total alkalinity
 - Minerals and metals
 - Presence of Coliform and E Coli
- A vast majority of the samples have failed to comply with the requirements in one or more parameters.
- Tap water in **Mumbai** is the **safest for drinking** while **Delhi's** water is one of the **worst**.

Challenges

- Lack of initiatives in tap water systems due to the expanding packaged drinking water.
- High dependence on groundwater in fast-growing urban clusters where piped water systems do not exist.
- Lack of accountability of the official agencies.
- Absence of robust data in the public domain on quality testing.

Way Forward

- It should be legally binding on agencies to achieve standards and empowering consumers.
- State governments should take an integrated view of housing, water supply, sanitation and waste management.

- A scientific approach for water management should be adopted.
- A separate agency in each state should be entrusted for regular testing rather than relying on the same agency.
- Data on water should be made public on the same lines as air quality which would put pressure on governments to act.

Jal Jeevan Mission

- The Jal Jeevan Mission aims to bring piped water to households and resolved to spend more than ₹3.5 lakh crore in the coming years.
- India has 16% of the world population, but only 4% of freshwater resources.
 - Depleting groundwater level, overexploitation and deteriorating water quality, climate change, etc. are **major challenges** to provide potable drinking water.

Lokpal and Lokayukta

Why in News

Recently, a **new logo** and a **new moto** were launched for the **Lokpal**, apex anti-corruption ombudsman.



- “**Ma Gridhah Kasyasvidhanam (Do not be greedy for anyone's wealth)**” is the new motto.

Lokpal

- The **Lokpal and Lokayukta Act, 2013** provided for the establishment of **Lokpal for the Union** and **Lokayukta for States**.
- These institutions are **statutory bodies** without any constitutional status.
- They **perform the function of an "ombudsman"** and **inquire into allegations of corruption against certain public functionaries** and for related matters.
- In India, the **concept of constitutional ombudsman was first proposed by the then law minister Ashok Kumar Sen** in Parliament in the early **1960s**.
- The **terms Lokpal and Lokayukta were coined by Dr. L. M. Singhvi**.

Note:

Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu (Merger of Union Territories) Bill, 2019

Why in News

Recently, a Bill to merge the Union Territories (UTs) of Daman and Diu (D&D) and Dadra and Nagar Haveli (DNH) has been introduced in the Lok Sabha. It seeks to provide better delivery of services to the citizens of both Union Territories by improving efficiency and reducing paperwork.

Key Points

- The merger will help in achieving the government's goal to have **"Minimum Government, Maximum Governance"**.
 - Both UTs have two separate constitutional and administrative bodies which lead to a lot of duplicacy, inefficiency and wasteful expenditure.
- Both of them have **small population and limited geographical area** so the merger will not be challenging and the services of officers will be used efficiently.

Minimum Government, Maximum Governance

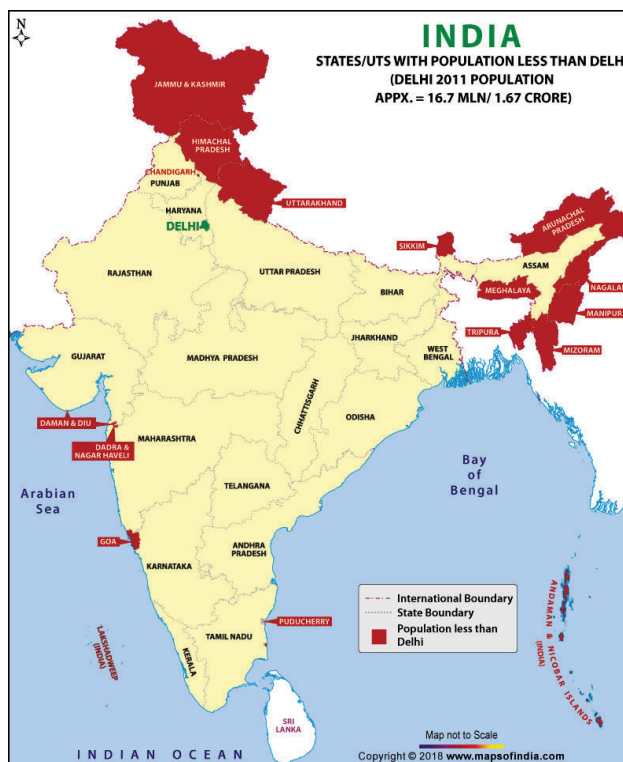
- It is the **motto of the central government** to achieve a citizen-friendly and accountable administration.
- It aims to **bring Government closer to citizens** so that they become active participants in the governance process and reduce their time and efforts.
- An important step for Good Governance is the **simplification of procedures and processes in the Government** so as to make the entire system transparent and faster.
- **Identification and repeal of obsolete laws and rules**, identification and shortening of various official forms, leveraging technology to bring in transparency in public interface and a robust public grievance redress system are other aspects of it.

Daman and Diu and Dadra and Nagar Haveli

- These two UTs are located in the **western region of India**.
 - **Daman and Diu** are situated on the southern side of Gujarat. Daman is an enclave on Gujarat's southern coast and Diu encompasses an island off

the southern coast of Gujarat's Kathiawar Peninsula. It is in close proximity of the UT of DNH.

- **Dadra and Nagar Haveli** consists of two separate parts. Dadra is surrounded by the state of Gujarat and Nagar Haveli lies on the borders of Maharashtra and Gujarat.
- Both were **colonised by the Portuguese** and were liberated in December 1961.
- In **1987**, when Goa got statehood, Daman and Diu were made a separate Union Territory from the previous Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu.



National Institute for Sowa Rigpa

Why in News

The Union Cabinet has approved setting up of **National Institute of Sowa-Rigpa (NISR)** at Leh, **Union Territory of Ladakh**.

- It will be an **autonomous** national institute under the **Ministry of AYUSH** with the mandate to undertake **interdisciplinary education and research programmes** in Sowa-Rigpa in collaboration with national and international institutes.

Note:

- NISR will act as an **apex institute** for Sowa-Rigpa system. It will develop synergy among the existing Sowa Rigpa institutions namely, Central University of Tibetan Studies, Varanasi and Central Institute of Buddhist Studies, Leh.
 - The **existing Sowa-Rigpa institutions work under the Ministry of Culture**.
- It will also help to revive Sowa-Rigpa in the Indian sub-continent and also link the traditional wisdom of Sowa-Rigpa with modern science, tools, and technology.

Sowa-Rigpa

- Sowa-Rigpa (the science of healing) is a **traditional system of medicine** practised in the Himalayan belt of India.
- It **originated in Tibet** and popularly practised in countries namely India, Nepal, Bhutan, Mongolia and Russia.
- **Yuthog Yonten Gonpo** from Tibet is believed to be the **father of Sowa Rigpa**.
- In India, it is widely practised in Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Darjeeling (West Bengal), Himachal Pradesh and the Union Territory of Ladakh.
- The majority of theory and practice of Sowa-Rigpa is **similar to "Ayurveda"**.

Convention on Global Cybercrime

Why in News

India voted in favour of a cybercrime resolution led by Russia in a committee of the United Nations General Assembly. The resolution seeks to set up new cyber norms considered as counter alternative to the US backed Budapest Accord..

Budapest Convention

- The **Council of Europe's (CoE) Cybercrime Convention** is also known as the **Budapest Convention**. It was open for signature in 2001 and came into **force in 2004**.
- The convention is the **sole legally binding international multilateral treaty on cybercrime**.
- It serves as a guideline for any country developing comprehensive national legislation against Cybercrime and as a framework for international cooperation between state parties to this treaty.

- The Budapest Convention is supplemented by a **Protocol on Xenophobia and Racism** committed through computer systems.
- **Significance:** Almost all stakeholders agree that the current form of cross-border data sharing for law enforcement through the **Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT)** is insufficient for the digital age. However, there is an ongoing debate whether to revamp MLAT or form an entirely new system for cybercrimes in the form of this Convention.

Russia-led Resolution

- The Russian proposal entitled "**Countering the use of information and communications technologies for criminal purposes**" was recently put forth in the **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)**.
 - This recent UN proposal follows previous Russian initiatives, including the "**Draft United Nations Convention on Cooperation in Combating Cybercrime**" in 2017 to develop a UN convention on cybercrime.
- The Russian proposal calls for creation of a committee that will convene in August 2020 in New York in order to establish a new treaty through which nation-states can coordinate and share data to prevent cybercrime.
- If this resolution will be passed by the UNGA, it will become the second international convention on cybercrime.
- **Russia and China question the Budapest Convention** on the grounds of national sovereignty issues, thereby proposing their own treaty at the UN.

India's Stand

- India maintained its status as a **non-member of the Europe-led Budapest Convention**. Although, India **voted in favour of a Russian-led UN resolution** to set up a separate convention.
- According to the Intelligence Bureau (IB), data sharing with foreign law enforcement agencies infringes on national sovereignty of India.
- India has also previously argued that it will not sign onto the Budapest treaty since it was drafted without its participation.

Data Laws in India

- **Information Technology Act, 2000:** IT Act contains provisions regarding cyber and IT-related laws in India.

Note:

- **Section 43A:** Compensation for failure to protect data.
- **Section 72A:** Any disclosure of information, knowingly and intentionally, without the consent of the person concerned has been made punishable with imprisonment for a term extending to three years.
- However, these provisions neither protect any breach of information on the one hand nor enforce a right-based framework on privacy.
 - Supreme Court in **Justice K. S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) Vs Union of India (2017)** unanimously held that citizens have a constitutionally protected fundamental right to privacy that forms an intrinsic part of life and liberty under **Article 21**.
- Therefore, in order to establish a strong data protection regime, the government has proposed the **Draft Personal Data Protection Bill, 2018** (based on the recommendation of Justice BN Srikrishna Committee).

Steps to Curb Abuse of Synthetic Drugs

Why in News

To deal with the problem of **abuse of synthetic drugs and New Psychotropic Substances (NPS)**, the government is considering generic scheduling of drugs to replace the practice of substance-by-substance scheduling.

- Apart from this, the **Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD)** discussed the issue of large scale heroin trafficking from neighbouring countries, the diversion and abuse of pharmaceutical preparations, and poppy (Opium) cultivation in the country.

New Psychoactive Substances

- NPS are **defined as** “substances of abuse either in a pure form or a preparation, that are not controlled by the United Nations drug conventions but which may pose a public health threat”.
- NPS are also known as “**legal highs**”, “**bath salts**” and “**research chemicals**”. For clarity, the **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)** uses the term “New Psychoactive Substances”.
- NPS have similar effects as substances under international control such as **cannabis, cocaine, heroin, Lysergic Acid Diethylamide (LSD), ecstasy (methamphetamine or MDMA)**.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

- It was established in **1997**.
- It acts as the **Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention** by combining the **United Nations International Drug Control Program (UNDCP)** and the **Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division of the United Nations Office at Vienna**.
- It was named the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in 2002.
- UNODC publishes **World Drug Report**.

- Since NPS are not controlled under the International Drug Control Conventions, their **legal status can differ** widely from country to country.

India and the Issue of Drug Trafficking

- **National Security:** India is vulnerable to narcotic drug trafficking as it is located between **two largest Opium producing regions of the world, i.e., Golden Crescent in the west and Golden Triangle in the east**.
 - **Golden Crescent region of South Asia**—comprising of **Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan**—is a principal global site for opium production and distribution.
 - **Golden Triangle** represents the region coinciding with the rural mountains of **Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand**. It is Southeast Asia’s main opium-producing region and one of the oldest narcotics supply routes to Europe and North America.
- **Social Issue:** Drug abuse and misuse largely affects the youths who once get involved in it and later on find it difficult to overcome. It impacts drug abusers’ lives as well as their families and the community at large.
 - **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is responsible for spreading awareness** regarding drug demand reduction and rehabilitation of drug addicts.
- **Constitutional Ethos:** **Article 47** of the Indian Constitution directs the State to endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drugs injurious to health.
- **Legislative Provisions:** The broad legislative policy is contained in the **three Central Acts**, viz., **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, and The Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1988**.

Note:



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- The **Narcotics Control Bureau** is the **apex coordinating agency** under the **Ministry of Home Affairs** constituted through the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985.
- **Global Conventions:** India is a signatory to the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs 1961, the Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1971 and the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988.

Road Accidents in India-2018

Why in News

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has released the **annual report** on Road Accidents in India.

- The report shows **53 crashes and the loss of 17 lives every hour**.
- The **road traffic injuries** were the **eighth** leading cause of death in India in 2018.

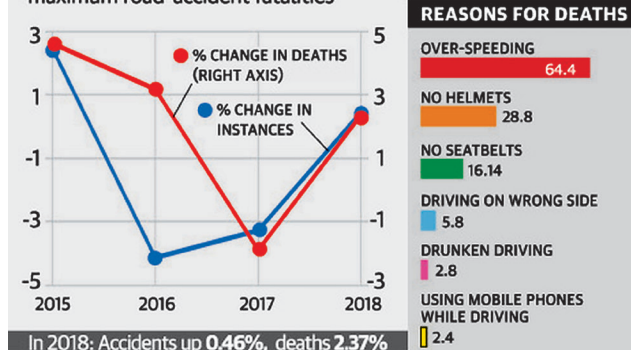
Key Points

- **Global Analysis:**
 - According to **World Road Statistics (2018)**, India reports the **highest** number of road accident deaths followed by the US and China.
 - World Road Statistics is released by the World Road Federation.
 - As per the **WHO Global Report on Road Safety 2018**, India accounts for almost **11%** of the **accident-related deaths in the world**.
- **National Analysis:**
 - **The road accidents numerics:**

- It kills almost **1.5 lakh people annually** in India.
- The accidents, as well as accident-related deaths in the period 2010-2018, dropped drastically compared with the previous decades, despite the very high rate of growth of automobiles.
- The road accident severity (the number of persons killed per 100 accidents) has **increased** by 0.6% in 2018 compared to 2017.
- **Major Cause:**
 - **Over-speeding** is a major cause, accounting for 64.4% of the persons killed. As the maximum number of road accidents occurred on straight roads.
 - Two-wheelers accounted for the highest share (35.2%) in total accidents in 2018.
- **Age:**
 - The **young adults (18-45 years)** accounted for nearly **69.6%** of road accident victims.
 - **Minors** involved in road crash deaths were at 6.6% of the total deaths.
- **Gender:**
 - The share of males in the number of total accident deaths was 86% while the share of females was around 14% in 2018
- **State-wise Analysis:**
 - As in 2017, the State of **Tamil Nadu** recorded the **highest** number of road accidents in 2018.
 - Similarly, as in 2017, the **number of persons** killed in a road accident was the **highest** in **Uttar Pradesh** in 2018.
 - Delhi has been ranked first in the total number of road fatalities compared to other Indian cities.

Speed hazards

Instances of road accidents and deaths increased in 2018 compared to 2017. Over-speeding was the reason for the maximum road-accident fatalities



Steps Taken at Global Level

- **Brasilia Declaration on Road Safety (2015):**
 - The declaration was signed at the **second Global High-Level Conference** on Road Safety held in Brazil. The **first conference** was held in **Russia (2009)**.
 - Through the **Brasilia Declaration** countries plan to achieve the **Sustainable Development Goal 3.6** i.e. to half the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents by 2030.
 - United Nations has also declared **2010-2020** as the **decade of action for Road Safety**.

Note:

➤ UN Global Road Safety Week:

- It is celebrated every two years, the fifth edition of the **UN Global Road Safety Week** (6-12 May 2019) highlighted the need for strong leadership for road safety.

➤ The International Road Assessment Programme (iRAP):

- It is a registered charity dedicated to saving lives through safer roads.

Steps Taken by Indian Government

- India has signed the **Brasilia declaration** and committed to reduce the number of deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents.
- **Motor Vehicles Amendment Act, 2019**
 - It hikes the penalties for traffic violations, defective vehicles, juvenile driving, etc.
 - It provides for a Motor Vehicle Accident Fund, which would provide compulsory insurance cover to all road users in India for certain types of accidents.
 - It also provides for a National Road Safety Board, to be created by the Central Government through a notification.
 - The act also provides for the protection of good samaritans.
- **Justice K.S. Radhakrishnan Committee**
 - Supreme Court had set up the three-member KS Radhakrishnan panel on **road safety** in 2014. The SC had termed the roads in India as “giant killers”.

National Skills Study

Why in News

According to a study conducted by the **National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)**, 7 crore additional individuals in the working-age (15-59 years) are expected to enter the labour force by 2023. Of this **84.3%** will be in the **age group 15-30 years**.

- The NSDC has projected trends in the country's labour market potential during 2019-23 based on:
 - Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) for 2017-18,
 - Crude Death Rates (CDR) at gender and region (rural/urban) level, and
 - Employment-Unemployment Survey (EUS), 2011-12 (68th round).

Key Findings

- **Gender:** According to the study, **one out of five persons (15-30 years age)** entering the labour force is expected to be a **female** by **2023**.
 - **Female labour force participation rate for 15 years and above** is estimated at **23.3%**.
 - According to World Bank data, India's female labour force participation rate ranks much **lower than other Asian economies in 2019**.
- **Education:** Many female candidates in the age group of 15-19 years may not be actively present in the labour force. They would instead opt for higher education.
- **Age:** Of the total youth entrants (aged 15-30 years) during these four years (2019-23), half are expected to come from the 15-20 years age group.
- **State-wise:**
 - Only **six states** – Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka are expected to account for 50% of the new youth entrants (15-30 years) during 2019-23.
 - Among female youth (15-30 years), the highest numbers of new entrants are expected in the years 2021 and 2023 each, while among male youth, the highest number of new entrants are expected in 2023.

National Skill

Development Corporation (NSDC)

- It is a public-private-partnership working under the aegis of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship.
- NSDC aims to promote skill development by catalyzing the creation of large, quality and for-profit vocational institutions. It acts as a catalyst in skill development by providing funding to enterprises, companies, and organizations that provide skill training.
- NSDC is the implementation agency for skills training in the country.

Supplementary Grants

Why in News

Finance Minister tabled the first batch of **Supplementary Demands for Grants** for the financial year **2019-20** in both the **Houses of Parliament**.

Note:



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Supplementary Grants

- When the authorised grants fall short of the required expenditure, an estimate is presented before the Parliament for **Supplementary or Additional grants**.
 - The Comptroller and Auditor General of India bring such excesses to the notice of the Parliament.
 - The Public Accounts Committee examines these excesses and gives recommendations to the Parliament.
 - These grants are presented and passed by the Parliament before the end of the financial year (1st April to 31st March).

Other Grants

Additional Grant

- It is granted when a need has arisen during the current financial year for additional expenditure upon some new service not contemplated in the budget for that year.

Excess Grant

- It is granted when money has been spent on any service during a financial year in excess of the amount granted for that service in the budget for that year.
 - It is voted by the Lok Sabha after the financial year (since it is regulated by the same procedure which is applicable in the case of a regular budget, i.e. voted by the Lok Sabha).
 - Before the demands for excess grants are submitted to the Lok Sabha for voting, they must be approved by the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament.

Vote of Credit

- It is granted for meeting an unexpected demand upon resources of India, when on account of the magnitude or the indefinite character of the service, the demand cannot be stated with the details ordinarily given in a budget.
 - Hence, it is like a blank cheque given to the Executive by the Lok Sabha.

Exceptional Grant

- It is granted for a special purpose and forms no part of the current service of any financial year.

Token Grant

- It is granted when funds to meet the proposed expenditure on a new service can be made available by reappropriation.

- A demand for the grant of a token sum (of Re 1) is submitted to the vote of the Lok Sabha and if assented, funds are made available.
- Reappropriation involves transfer of funds from one head to another. It does not involve any additional expenditure.

Votes on Account

- The Constitution has authorised the Lok Sabha to make any grant in advance in respect to the estimated expenditure for a part of the financial year, pending the completion of the voting of the demands for grants and the enactment of the appropriation bill. This provision is known as the 'vote on account'.
 - It is passed (or granted) after the general discussion on budget is over. It is generally granted for two months for an amount equivalent to one-sixth of the total estimation.

Note:

Supplementary, additional, excess, exceptional grants and vote of credit are regulated by the same procedure which is applicable in the case of a regular budget.

Constitutional Provision

- Supplementary, additional or excess grants and Votes on account, votes of credit and exceptional grants are defined in the Constitution of India 1949.
- Provisions under these Articles are:
 - **Article 115:** Supplementary, additional or excess grants.
 - **Article 116:** Votes on account, votes of credit and exceptional grants.

Quota for Disabled in Panchayats

Why in News

The Chhattisgarh Cabinet has approved an amendment to the **State Panchayati Raj Act, 1993**, which makes the presence of a person with disabilities, mandatory in all panchayats across the state.

- This implies that if differently abled members are not elected through the electoral process, then one member, either male or female, would be nominated by the government.

Note:

- The Cabinet has also **decided to remove educational qualification as a requirement for the members of Panchayat.**

Key Points

- Chhattisgarh will be the **only State** to have **Persons with Disabilities (PwD) as members in all panchayats.**
 - It needs to be noted that there is no such quota for the disabled community in the elections to the central, state legislative assemblies and Panchayats (in general).
- The State government would also **nominate two such members, one male and one female, to Janpads and Zilla Panchayats.**
- Only being literate would be enough to contest election. The cabinet has **decided to remove the educational stipulations** of Class V and Class VII for members of the Panch and those above Panch, respectively.
 - This in contrast to the **Supreme Court's judgement in 2015 (Rajbala v. the State of Haryana)** where it upheld the decision of the Haryana government which mandated **"minimum" educational qualifications as an eligibility** to contest panchayat elections in the State.

Constitutional and

Legal Provisions Related to PwD

- **Article 41** of the **Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP)** states that State shall make effective provision for securing 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.
- The subject of **'relief of the disabled and unemployable'** is specified in the State List of the **Seventh Schedule** of the constitution.
- The **Right of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016** provides reservation of 4% in government jobs and 5% in higher education institutes.

Panchayati Raj Institution in India

- **Formation**
 - The term **Panchayati Raj in India** signifies the system of **rural local self government.**
 - It has been established in all the states of India by the Acts of the state legislatures to build democracy at the grass root level.

- It was constitutionalised through the **73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992.**

➤ Constitutional Provisions

- The **Part-IX** to the Constitution of India has been entitled as **'The Panchayats'.**
- It consists of provisions from **Articles 243 to 243 O.**
- The **Eleventh Schedule** to the Constitution contains **29 functional items** of the Panchayats.

➤ Three - Tier System

- **Gram Panchayat** at the **village level.**
- **Janpad Panchayat** at the **intermediate/ block level.**
- **Zilla Panchayat** at the **district level.**

➤ Election of Members

- All the members of panchayats at the village, intermediate and district levels are **elected directly** by the people.
- The **State Election Commission conducts** elections to the panchayats.
- There is a **five-year term** of office to the panchayat at every level.

➤ Reservation of Seats

- Reservation of seats (both members and chairpersons) for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in panchayats **at all three levels.**
- Reservation of **one-third seats** (both members and chairpersons) **for women** in panchayats at all the three levels.
- It is to be noted that providing **reservation** of seats (both members and chairpersons) **for backward classes** in panchayats at any level is a voluntary provision.

➤ Powers and Functions

- The State Legislature may endow the Panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government.

Maharashtra Bill to Protect Mediapersons

Why in News

The **President of India** has given assent to the **Maharashtra Media Persons and Media Institutions (Prevention of Violence and Damage or Loss to Property) Bill, 2017.**

Note:



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- Maharashtra is the **first state** to pass legislation which ensures **protection for journalists**.

Key Provisions

- The bill considers violent **attacks on media persons** a **non-bailable offence**.
 - The offence shall be **cognizable** (police officer has the authority to make an arrest without a warrant and to start an investigation with or without the permission of a court) and **triable by a first-class judicial magistrate**.
- Anyone who **commits or attempts to commit any act of violence** against journalists or media houses, shall be punished **with a jail term up to three years** or with a **fine** up to Rs 50,000 or with **both**.
 - A **media institution** has been defined as any registered newspaper, news channel, news-based electronic outlet or news station establishment.
 - A **media person** means a person whose principal vocation is that of a journalist, who is employed as a journalist whether on a regular or contract basis.
- Any offence against a media person will be investigated by a police officer above the rank of a Deputy Superintendent of Police.
- The assailant would also be **liable to reimburse** the medical expenditure incurred by the media persons in the attack.
- The offender is also **liable to pay compensation** for damage or loss caused to the property of the media person or the media house as determined by the court.

Significance

- The act will ensure the safety of journalists in exercising freedom of speech and expression.
- It ensures the implementation of the **"Safety and Security of Journalists" advisory (2017)** by the Ministry of Home Affairs.
 - The advisory was issued days after Bengaluru-based journalist Gauri Lankesh was shot dead in 2017.
- It will help to improve ranking under the **World Press Freedom Index**.
 - India ranked 140th out of 180 countries in this index released by 'Reporters Without Borders'.
 - According to the report, violence against journalists including police violence, attacks by Maoist fighters and reprisals by criminal groups or corrupt politicians is one of the most striking characteristics of the current state of press freedom in India.

Cases Under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act

Why in News

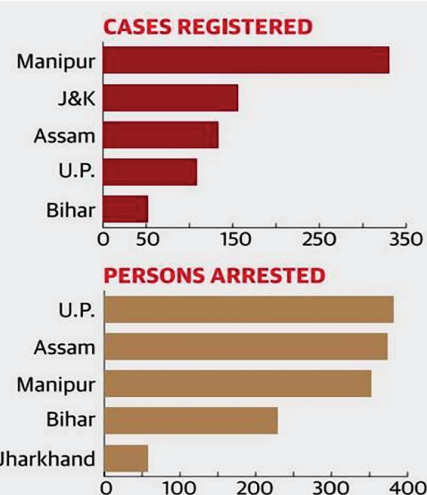
As per the **National Crime Records Data (NCRB)**, more than 35% cases registered under the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)** were recorded in **Manipur**.

Key Points

- Of all cases registered under UAPA in 2017, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) recorded 17%, Assam recorded 14%, Uttar Pradesh recorded 12% and Bihar accounted for 5% of total cases.
- **Uttar Pradesh** topped the States in the number of **arrests made** with 382 arrests (nearly one-fourth) of the 1,554 persons.
- It is followed by Assam-374, Manipur-352, J&K-35 and Jharkhand-57.

Stringent Act

While Manipur registered the highest number of cases under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), Uttar Pradesh recorded the most arrests as of 2017



Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act

- It was passed in **1967** and aims at effective prevention of unlawful activities associations in India.
- The **2004 amendments**, added **"terrorist act"** to the list of offences to ban organisations for terrorist activities, under which 34 outfits were banned.
 - Till 2004, **"unlawful"** activities referred to actions related to secession and cession of territory.
- Under the UAPA, the investigating agency can file a charge sheet in maximum 180 days after the arrests and the duration can be extended further after intimating the court.

Note:

- The Act assigns absolute power to the central government, by way of which if the Centre deems an activity as unlawful then it may, by way of an Official Gazette, declare it so.
- It has death penalty and life imprisonment as highest punishments.
- In August, Parliament cleared the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Bill, 2019 to designate individuals as terrorists on certain grounds provided in the Act.

UNDP's Accelerator Lab

Why in News

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has launched its Accelerator Lab in India. The project has been launched in collaboration with the government's Atal Innovation Mission and will look to solve issues through innovative solutions.

- This lab will seek to address some of the most pressing issues facing India, such as air pollution, sustainable water management and client-resilient livelihoods through innovation.
- The vision is to make faster progress in meeting the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the U.N. by 2030.

Accelerator Lab

- The Accelerator Lab is a new innovative initiative by the UNDP, State of Qatar and the Federal Republic of Germany to find 21st century solutions to today's complex new challenges.
- India's Accelerator Lab will be part of a network of 60 global labs covering 78 nations, that will test and scale new solutions to global challenges like climate change and inequality.

Atal Innovation Mission

- It is a flagship national innovation initiative of the Government of India under the NITI Aayog. It aims to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship.

UNDP

- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the UN's global development network. It provides expert advice, training and grants support to developing countries, with increasing emphasis on assistance to the least developed.
- UNDP India's country programme for 2018-2022 has three major focus areas:
 - Inclusive growth
 - Environment and energy
 - Strengthening systems and institutions countries.



Note:

Economic Scenario

Highlights

- GDP Growth
- Essar Insolvency Case
- Currency Swap Arrangement for SAARC
- Hong Kong Convention for Ship Recycling
- Industrial Corridors
- Automotive Mission Plan (2016-26)
- Deposit Insurance
- Chit Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2019
- Organic Food Regulatory System in India
- Shadow Banking

GDP Growth

Why in News

As per the data released by the National Statistical Office, India's **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** growth slipped to a 26-quarter low of 4.5% in the second quarter (Q2 i.e. July-September) of the financial year 2019-20.

- The growth is the lowest in six years and three months with the previous low recorded at 4.3% during the January - March 2013.
- In terms of quarterly growth, India has lost the tag of the fastest growing economy to China which posted a growth of 6% in the September quarter.
- Reasons for fall in growth include contraction in manufacturing, weak investment, and lower consumption demand.
- The global economy is also facing a slowdown and this has hurt demand for India's exports, which have slumped in recent months.

Key Points

- Growth in Gross Value Added (GVA) dipped to 4.3% in Q2 of 2019-20 from 6.9% in Q2 of 2018-2019.
- Manufacturing Sector Growth contracted 1% as against 6.9% growth last year during the same quarter.
- Agriculture, forestry and fishing sector recorded a growth rate of 2.1% as against 4.9% last year.

(in % / July-September)

As quarterly growth drops...		
	2019-20	2018-19
Agriculture	2.1	4.9
Industry	0.5	6.7
Services	6.8	7.3
GDP	4.5	7.0

... will annual projections be realised?	
Agency	% growth rate
Fitch	5.5
Moody's	5.8
OECD	5.9
World Bank	6.0
RBI	6.1
IMF	6.1
S&P	6.3

- The 'Financial, Real Estate & Professional Services' category saw growth slow to 5.8% in Q2 of 2019-20, compared with 7% in Q2 of the previous year.
- Private final consumption expenditure, the closest proxy in the data to a measure of consumption demand, grew 5.06% in Q2 of 2019-20 as against the growth of 9.79% in Q2 of the previous year.
- Gross fixed capital formation, which is a measure of the level of investment in the country by both the government and the private sector, grew only 1.02% in Q2 of 2019-20 as against the growth of 11.8% in Q2 of last year.

Recent Signs of Economic Slowdown

- The collapse of IL&FS in September 2018.
- The financial sector is on the brink as indicated by huge number of **Non-Performing Assets (NPAs)**.
- Though the **Reserve Bank of India has cut the key policy rates (like Repo rate)**, the banks have not transferred the same to the final consumers. Thus, the two critical needs of the industry i.e. cost of credit and availability of credit, have not been met fully.
 - The cumulative cut of 135 basis points by the RBI over the last nine months has translated into a meager 29 basis points (just over a fifth), with banks still retaining a huge spread.
 - Cost of credit continues to remain high for most companies and the worst affected are small and medium enterprises.

Way Forward

- The government should give a high priority to implementing measures to bolster manufacturing output and kick-start an upturn in the investment cycle.

Note:

Note:

- **Gross Value Added (GVA)** provides for value of the amount of goods and services that have been produced in a country, minus the cost of all inputs and raw materials that are directly attributable to that production. It is used to measure the output or contribution of a particular sector.
- **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** is the single standard indicator used across the globe to indicate the health of a nation's economy. It is the sum of private consumption, gross investment in the economy, government investment, government spending and net foreign trade (difference between exports and imports).
- Accelerated spending by the government is another way out but this action would be opposite to the government's fiscal deficit target of 3.3% of GDP.

Essar Insolvency Case

Why in News

The Supreme Court has recently given its judgement in the **Essar Insolvency case**. The Judgement has paved the way for ArcelorMittal and Nippon Steel to take over debt-laden Essar Steel.

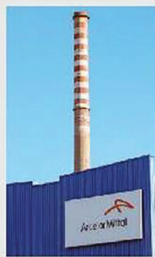
Takeover troubles

The SC on Friday paved the way for ArcelorMittal's takeover of Essar Steel. A brief timeline of how the bid unfolded:

October 4, 2018: SC uses extraordinary powers under Article 142 to give ArcelorMittal and Numetal a chance to pay off the NPAs of corporate debtors as a pre-condition to buy Essar Steel

Oct. 18: Arcelor informs resolution professional it has paid off the debts

Oct. 19: Arcelor



re-submits resolution plan for Essar

Oct. 25: Essar's committee of creditors' (CoC) approves Arcelor's final negotiated resolution plan

March 8, 2019: NCLT says financial and operational creditors should get equal treatment

July 4: NCLAT holds that in a resolution plan, there can be no difference between a financial creditor and an operational creditor in the payment of dues. CoC moves SC in appeal

Background

- In March 2019, **National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)** approved global steel-giant ArcelorMittal's bid for Essar Steel.

- The **Committee of Creditors (CoC)** approved the resolution plan offered by the ArcelorMittal. Under the resolution plan, ArcelorMittal offered an advance cash payment of about ₹42,000 crores to the financial creditors and capital infusion of ₹8,000 crores in the next few years. However, the **offer did not have much for operational creditors** to Essar Steel.
- In 2019, the **National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT)** cleared the CoC's plan but **changed the financial distribution plan** by ordering an **equal recovery plan** for all creditors, including **financial and operational creditors**.

Highlights of the Judgement

- **Wisdom of CoC:** It is the **commercial wisdom** of the **requisite majority (66%)** of the CoC under the **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)** to negotiate and accept a resolution plan, which may involve differential payment to different classes of creditors.
- **Principle of Equality:** The Court held that the equality principle **cannot be stretched** to treating unequals equally. Equitable treatment is to be accorded to each creditor depending upon the class to which it belongs: secured or unsecured, financial or operational.
- **Restriction on Tribunals:** Tribunals have **no "residual equity jurisdiction"** to interfere in the merits of a business decision taken by the CoC. This implies that the **NCLT and NCLAT cannot interfere** with the commercial decisions taken by the CoC.
- **Financial vs Operational Creditors:** The Court upheld the primacy of **financial creditors over operational creditors** in the distribution of funds received under the corporate insolvency scheme.
 - The Court explained that **financial creditors** are **capital-providers for companies**, i.e. help companies to purchase assets and run business operations.
 - **Operational creditors**, in a way, are **beneficiaries of amounts lent by financial creditors**.
- **Relaxation of Resolution Deadline:** The Supreme Court has done away with the **330-day mandatory** deadline for the resolution of insolvency and bankruptcy cases after which liquidation is invoked. The bench allowed a bit of flexibility by allowing exceptions where the resolution plan is on the verge of being finalised.
 - The 330-day mark is a **violation of Article 14** (right to equal treatment) of the Constitution and **Article 19(1)(g) (Right to carry any business)** of the Constitution.

Note:



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Likely Impact of the Judgement

- **Impact on Banks:** Banks will recover Rs. 42,000 crore against admitted debts of Rs. 49,473 crore- a recovery of about **85%** compared to the **average recovery of 53%** in other resolution cases. This would help banks in boosting their **capital adequacy**.
- **Speedy Resolution:** The verdict is likely to **reduce legal wrangling** between **financial and operational creditors** and accelerate resolution process.
- **Foreign Investment:** It will attract investors who were getting **wary of the nation's bankruptcy process**.
 - India is trying to attract foreign capital to its bad loan cleanup, as it battles the **worst nonperforming loan ratio** among the world's major economies.
- **Upheld the Spirit of IBC:** The removal of a **mandatory 330-day** deadline will facilitate resolution, the ultimate objective of the IBC.

Insolvency Resolution Process in India

- **Eligibility:** Under IBC, companies (both **private and public** limited company) and **Limited Liability Partnerships (LLP)** can be considered as defaulting corporate debtors.
 - **A corporate debtor** is any corporate organization which owes a debt to any person.
- **Default Amount:** The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code can be triggered if there is a **minimum default of Rs 1 lakh**. This process can be triggered by way of filing an application before the **National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)**.
- **Resolution Initiation:** The process can be initiated by two classes of creditors which would include financial creditors and operational creditors.
 - **Creditors:** A Creditor means any person to whom a debt is owed and includes a financial creditor, an operational creditor, etc.
 - **Financial Creditors:** The financial creditor in simple terms is the institution that provided money to the corporate entity in the form of loans, bonds etc. E.g. banks.
 - **Operational Creditors:** An operational creditor is an entity who has a claim for providing any of the four categories to the defaulted corporate- goods, services, employment and Government dues (central govt, state or local bodies).
- **Appointment of Interim Resolution Professional:** As soon as the matter is admitted by the NCLT, the NCLT proceeds with the appointment of an Interim Resolution

Professional (IRP) who takes over the management of the defaulting debtor.

- **Committee of Creditors (CoC):** A committee consisting only of the financial creditors i.e. the CoC is formed by the IRP.
 - Only operational creditors having aggregate dues of at least **10%** of the total debt are invited into the meeting of CoC (Operational creditors are not a member of CoC). The operational creditors don't have any voting power.
- **Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP):** It includes necessary steps to revive the company such as raising fresh funds for operation, looking for a new buyer to sell the company as going concern, etc.
 - The CoC takes a decision regarding the future of the outstanding debt owed to it. The resolution plan can be implemented only if it has been approved by **66% of the creditors** in the CoC
- **Liquidation Proceedings:** In the event, a resolution plan is not submitted or not approved by the committee of creditors (COC), the CIRP process is deemed to have failed. In such a situation the liquidation proceedings commence subject to the order of the tribunal.

Currency Swap Arrangement for SAARC

Why in News

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has revised the framework on **currency swap arrangement** for the **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)** countries for **2019-2022**.

- This has been done to further financial stability and economic cooperation within the SAARC region.

Key Points

- The **SAARC currency swap facility** came into operation on **15th November, 2012**.
- Under the revised framework,
 - The RBI will continue to offer a swap arrangement within the overall corpus of **USD 2 billion**.
 - The swap drawals can be made in US dollar, euro or Indian rupee. The framework provides certain concessions for swap drawals in Indian rupee.
 - The facility will be **available to all SAARC member countries**, subject to their signing the bilateral swap agreements.

Note:



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- The framework is **valid from 14th November, 2019 to 13th November, 2022.**

Currency Swap Arrangement

- The word **swap means exchange**. A currency swap between the two countries is an **agreement or contract to exchange currencies** with predetermined terms and conditions.
- Central banks and Governments engage in currency swaps with foreign counterparts **to meet short term foreign exchange liquidity requirements** or to ensure adequate foreign currency **to avoid Balance of Payments (BOP) crisis** till longer arrangements can be made.
- **Example**
 - India and Japan in the year 2018 signed a bilateral currency swap agreement.
 - RBI will get a certain amount of yen and the Bank of Japan will get an equivalent amount in Indian rupees on a decided swap rate.
 - After a specified period, both the countries will repay the amount at the same swap rate.

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

- SAARC was established with the signing of the **SAARC Charter in Dhaka (Bangladesh)** on 8th Dec. **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.

Hong Kong Convention for Ship Recycling

Why in News

The Union Cabinet has approved accession to the **Hong Kong International Convention for Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships, 2009**.

- The Convention was **adopted** at a diplomatic conference held in Hong Kong, China, from 11th-15th May **2009**.
- **Aim**
 - To ensure that ships, when being recycled after reaching the end of their operational lives, do not pose any unnecessary risks to human health and safety and the environment.

Objectives

- To address all the issues around ship recycling, including the probable presence of environmentally hazardous substances such as asbestos, heavy metals, hydrocarbons, ozone-depleting substances and others.
- To address concerns about working and environmental conditions in many of the world's ship recycling facilities.

Scope

- It covers the design, construction, operation and preparation of ships so as to facilitate safe and environmentally sound recycling, without compromising the safety and operational efficiency of ships.
- The operation of ship recycling facilities in a safe and environmentally sound manner.
- The establishment of an appropriate enforcement mechanism for ship recycling, incorporating certification and reporting requirements.

India and Ship Recycling

- India has a **share of over 30%** of the market in the global ship recycling industry.
- The Union Cabinet has recently approved the proposal for enactment of **Recycling of Ships Bill, 2019**.
 - The Bill restricts and prohibits the use or installation of hazardous material, which applies irrespective of whether a ship is meant for recycling or not.
 - However, restriction or prohibition on the use of hazardous material would not be applied to warships and non-commercial ships operated by the Government.
 - The Provisions of the Hong Kong Convention will be implemented under the provisions of the Recycling of Ships Bill, 2019 and rules and regulations framed there under.

Industrial Corridors

Why in News

Government has approved the development of the **five industrial corridor projects** which will be implemented through **National Industrial Corridor Development and Implementation Trust (NICDIT)**.

Note:

- NICDIT is an apex body under the administrative control of the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry** for coordinated and unified development of the 5 Industrial Corridors in India.
- In 2017, the **Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor-Project Implementation Trust Fund (DMIC-PITF)** was re-designated as NICDIT.
- NICDIT supports project development activities and appraisal, approval and sanction of projects. It also coordinates and monitors all central efforts for the development of Industrial Corridor projects.

The Five Industrial Corridors		
S.No.	Industrial Corridor	States
1.	Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC)	Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra
2.	Amritsar Kolkata Industrial Corridor (AKIC)	Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal
3.	Chennai Bengaluru Industrial Corridor (CBIC)	Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala
4.	East Coast Economic Corridor (ECEC) with Vizag Chennai Industrial Corridor (VCIC) as Phase-1	West Bengal, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu
5.	Bengaluru Mumbai Industrial Corridor (BMIC)	Karnataka, Maharashtra

Industrial Corridors

- Industrial corridors offer **effective integration between industry and infrastructure**, leading to overall **economic and social development**. Industrial corridors constitute:
 - High-speed transportation network – rail and road
 - Ports with state-of-the-art cargo handling equipment
 - Modern airports
 - Special economic regions/industrial areas
 - Logistic parks/transshipment hubs
 - Knowledge parks focused on catering to industrial needs

- Complementary infrastructure such as townships/ real estate
- Other urban infrastructure along with enabling policy framework
- These are spread across India with a strategic focus on inclusive development to boost industrialization and planned urbanization.
- Industrial Corridors are expected to play a critical role in raising the share of contribution of the manufacturing sector from approximately 16% to 25% by 2025.
- Smart cities are being developed along these corridors which will house the new workforce that is required to power manufacturing, in turn leading to planned urbanization.

Automotive Mission Plan (2016-26)

Why in News

The Automotive Mission Plan (AMP) 2016-26 is a **collective vision by the Government of India and the India Automotive Industry** to lay down the roadmap for the development of the industry.

- It provides vision on where vehicles, auto components and tractor industry should reach over the next 10 years in terms of size, contribution to India's GDP and global footprint in technology, competitiveness and capabilities.
- **AMP(2006-16) has been successful** which made India not only an automobile producing hub but also a designing and development hub.

Vision 3/12/65

- The Indian automotive industry aims to be **among the top 3 of the world** in engineering, manufacture and export of vehicles and auto components, growing in **value to over 12% of India's GDP**, and generating an **additional 65 million jobs**.

Objectives

- **Boost to manufacturing:** AMP(2016-26) aims to propel the Indian automotive industry to be the **engine of the "Make in India" programme**; as it is amongst the foremost drivers of the manufacturing sector.
 - The Indian automotive sector comprises more than 40% of the manufacturing sector.

Note:

- **Employment:** It intends to make the Indian automotive industry a significant contributor to the “Skill India” programme and make it one of the largest job creating engines in the Indian economy.
 - The industry has numerous backward and forward linkages across manufacturing and service sectors.
- **Mobility:** It seeks to enhance universal mobility to promote safe, efficient and comfortable mobility for every person in the country.
- **Export:** It also aims to increase net exports of the Indian automotive industry and to become one of the major automotive export hubs of the world.
- **Electric Vehicles:** It also includes vision on new technologies like electric vehicles and associated infrastructure with new fuel-efficiency regulations.

Considering the **recent slowdown in the automobile sector**, rigorous implementation of the above automotive plan is expected to improve the overall scenario in the industry.

Deposit Insurance

Why in News

Recently, the failure of the Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative (PMC) Bank reignited the debate on the **low level of insurance** against the deposits held by customers in Indian banks.

- Currently, in case of a bank collapse, a depositor can claim an amount up to a **maximum of ₹ 1 lakh per account** as the insurance cover (**even if the deposit in their account is greater than ₹ 1 lakh**). This amount is termed ‘**deposit insurance**’- the insurance cover against the deposits of an individual in banks.
- The insurance cover is provided by the **Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC)**.
- Recently, the issue of depositor protection was also in the news when the **Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance (FRDI)** Bill was introduced in Parliament in 2017. The FRDI bill became controversial because of its suggestion that bank depositors be asked to share part of the cost of resolution of a failed bank.
 - The Bill was brought in to create a single agency for resolution of financial firms such as banks, insurance companies, non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and stock exchanges in case of insolvency.

Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation

- DICGC came into existence in 1978 after the merger of **Deposit Insurance Corporation (DIC)** and **Credit Guarantee Corporation of India Ltd. (CGCI)** after passing of the **Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation Act, 1961** by the Parliament.
 - It serves as a deposit insurance and credit guarantee for banks in India.
 - It is a **fully owned subsidiary** of and is **governed by the Reserve Bank of India**.
- DICGC charges 10 paise per ₹ 100 of deposits held by a bank. The premium paid by the insured banks to the Corporation is paid by the banks and is not to be passed on to depositors.
- DICGC last revised the deposit insurance cover to ₹ 1 lakh on May 1, 1993, raising it from ₹ 30,000 since 1980. The protection cover of deposits in Indian banks through insurance is among the lowest in the world.
 - The **Damodaran Committee on ‘Customer Services in Banks’ (2011)** had recommended a **five-time increase** in the **cap to ₹5 lakh** due to rising income levels and increasing the size of individual bank deposits.
- Banks, including regional rural banks, local area banks, foreign banks with branches in India, and cooperative banks, are **mandated** to take deposit insurance cover with the DICGC.

Chit Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2019

Why in news

The Parliament has passed the **Chit Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2019**. It will streamline operations of collective investment schemes or chit funds, with the aim to protect investors that primarily comprises economically weaker sections of the society.

Chit Funds

- In this, the people agree to pay a certain amount from time to time into a fund. Periodically, one of the subscribers is chosen by drawing a chit to receive the prize amount from the fund.

Note:



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- Chit funds are **legal and registered** and are different from ponzi schemes as well as unregulated deposits.
- It is used by the poor as it acts as **both a source of finance and an avenue for savings**.

Ponzi Scheme

- It is an investment fraud that pays existing **investors with funds** collected from **new investors**. Ponzi scheme organizers often promise high returns with little or no risk.
- It leads victims to believe that profits are coming from product sales or other means, and they remain unaware that other investors are the source of funds.

Need of Amendment

- **To Protect Investor Interest:** It highlights the crucial role chit funds play in India's rural economy, providing people with access to funds and investment opportunities, especially in regions where banks and financial institutions do not have a presence.
- **To Check Fraud:** The Chit Funds Act of 1982 was amended to incorporate stringent measures to stop alleged fraud.

Key Features of the Bill

- **Names for a Chit Fund:** The Act specifies various names which may be used to refer to a chit fund.
 - These include **chit, chit fund, and kuri**.
 - It additionally inserts 'fraternity fund' and 'rotating savings and credit institution' to this list.
- **Presence of Subscribers through Video-Conferencing:** The Act specifies that a chit will be drawn in the presence of at least two subscribers.
 - The Bill seeks to allow these subscribers to join via video-conferencing.
- **Foreman's Commission:** The 'foreman' is responsible for managing the chit fund. He is entitled to a maximum commission of 5% of the chit amount.
 - The Bill seeks to increase the commission to 7%.
 - Further, the Bill allows the foreman a right to a lien against the credit balance from subscribers.
 - Lien is the right of an individual to retain goods and securities in his possession that belongs to another until certain legal debts due to the person retaining the goods are satisfied.

- **Aggregate Amount of Chits:** Under the Act, chits may be conducted by firms, associations or individuals.
 - The Act specifies the maximum amount of chit funds which may be collected. These limits are:
 - Currently, one lakh rupees for chits conducted by individuals, and for every individual in a firm or association with less than four partners, and Six lakh rupees for firms with four or more partners. The Bill increases these limits to three lakh rupees and 18 lakh rupees, respectively.
- **Application of the Act:** Currently, the Act does not apply to: (i) any chit started before it was enacted, and (ii) any chit (or multiple chits being managed by the same foreman) where the amount is less than Rs 100.
 - The Bill removes the limit of Rs 100, and allows the state governments to specify the base amount over which the provisions of the Act will apply.

Organic Food Regulatory System in India

Why in News

The Union Minister for Commerce and Industry informed about the existent organic food regulatory system in the country during the winter parliamentary session (2019).

- **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** is the food regulator in the country and is also responsible for regulating organic food in the domestic market and imports.
- FSSAI had notified the existing certification system through **Food Safety and Standards (Organic Foods) Regulations in 2017**.

Organic Food

- **Organic farm produce** means the produce obtained from organic agriculture, while **organic food** means food products that have been produced in accordance with specified standards for organic production.
 - According to FSSAI, 'organic agriculture' is a system of farm design and management to create an ecosystem of agriculture production without the use of synthetic external inputs such as chemical fertilisers, pesticides and synthetic hormones or genetically modified organisms.

Note:

Existing Certification Systems

- **National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP)**
 - NPOP grants organic farming certification through a process of third party certification.
 - It involves the accreditation programme for Certification Bodies, standards for organic production, promotion of organic farming etc.
 - It is implemented by **Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)**, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
 - The NPOP standards are recognized by the European Commission, Switzerland and USA as equivalent to their respective accreditation systems.
- **Participatory Guarantee System for India (PGS)**
 - PGS is another process of **certifying organic products**.
 - The certification is in the form of a **documented logo or a statement**.
 - It is implemented by the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare**.
 - The organic farmers have full control over the certification process.
 - PGS certification is only for farmers or communities that can organise and perform as a group. **Individual farmers or groups of farmers smaller than five members are not covered under PGS.**
 - PGS is **applicable on on-farm activities** comprising of crop production, processing and livestock rearing, etc.
- Organic foods are also required to comply with the requirements of labelling of **FSSAI in addition to that of NPOP or PGS-India**.

Shadow Banking

Shadow banking is a **term used to describe bank-like activities (mainly lending)** that take place outside the traditional banking sector.

- It is **also referred as non-bank financial intermediation** or market-based finance.
- Generally, it is not regulated in the same way as traditional bank lending.
- The term 'shadow bank' was **coined by Paul McCulley in 2007**.
- **Examples** of shadow lenders include Special Purpose Entities, Non Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs), Hedge Funds etc.
- These institutions function as **intermediaries between the investors and the borrowers**, providing credit, thus, leading to financial inclusion and hence generate liquidity in the system.
 - However, the **2008 financial crisis** has shown that **shadow banking can be a source of systemic risk** to the banking system.
 - After the financial crisis, central banks including that of USA, Britain and the European Union (EU) have introduced many strong measures to control shadow banking.
- In **India**, the crisis of the NBFCs that was triggered by the **liquidity problems of IL&FS** in 2018, has brought back the attention to shadow banking sector.



Note:

International Relations

Highlights

- OPEC +
- Viability of BRI and CPEC
- Indian Diaspora Largest in the World: UN Report
- New START Treaty
- World Anti-Doping Agency
- Kimberley Process
- ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus
- West Bank Settlements
- Bougainville
- U.S. Minimises its Share in NATO Budget

OPEC +

Why in News

According to the **International Energy Agency (IEA)**, the **Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC+)** plus might face sharp **demand fall** due to a **recent surge in crude oil production** from the countries like **USA, Norway, and Guyana**.

- The **non-OPEC countries** which **export crude oil** are termed as OPEC plus countries.
- **OPEC plus countries** include **Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Oman, Russia, South Sudan and Sudan**.

Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)

- The **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** is a **permanent, intergovernmental organization**, created at the **Baghdad Conference in 1960**, by **Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela**.
- It aims **to manage the supply of oil in an effort to set the price of oil in the world market**, in order to avoid fluctuations that might affect the economies of both producing and purchasing countries.
- It is **headquartered in Vienna, Austria**.
- OPEC membership is open to any country that is a substantial exporter of oil and which shares the ideals of the organization.
- Gabon terminated its membership in January 1995. However, it rejoined the Organization in July 2016.
- As of 2019, OPEC has a total of 14 Member Countries viz. Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates(UAE), Saudi

Arabia, Algeria, Libya, Nigeria, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Republic of Congo, Angola, Ecuador and Venezuela are members of OPEC.

International Energy Agency

- The International Energy Agency (IEA) is an autonomous organisation which works to ensure reliable, affordable and clean energy.
- It was established in the wake of **1973 (set up in 1974) oil crisis** after the OPEC cartel had shocked the world with a steep increase in oil prices.
- It is **headquartered in Paris, France**.
- The IEA has four main areas of focus, i.e. **4Es**:
 - Energy security,
 - Economic development,
 - Environmental awareness and
 - Engagement worldwide.
- India became an associate member of the **International Energy Agency** in **2017**.
- **Mexico** officially became the International Energy Agency's **30th member country** in February **2018**, and its **first member in Latin America**.

OPEC Membership, 2019



Note:

Viability of BRI and CPEC

Why in News

Recently, U.S. criticised China's international development projects and lending practices under its **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** and has questioned the **China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)**, on its commercial viability.

- **Belt & Road Initiative (BRI)** is an ambitious project that focuses on connectivity and cooperation among multiple countries spread across the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe. BRI spans about 150 countries (China's Claim).
- Initially announced in the year 2013, the project involves building networks of roadways, railways, maritime ports, power grids, oil and gas pipelines, and associated infrastructure projects.
- The project covers **two parts**.
 - **Silk Road Economic Belt:** It is land-based and is expected to connect South East Asia, South Asia. China with Central Asia, Eastern Europe, and Western Europe.
 - **21st Century Maritime Silk Road:** It is sea-based and is expected to connect China's southern coast to the Mediterranean, Africa, South-East Asia, and Central Asia.
- **China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)** is one of the flagship projects of BRI which is seen by India as infringing its sovereignty.

Key Points

- **Opacity on Lending:** China does not provide any report on the lending despite being the largest lender globally which makes it difficult for the Paris Club or IMF to monitor the financial transactions.
 - Lack of transparency works as a means to hide risks from the countries that borrow from China.
 - Failure to repay the loans stops further development and leads to the surrender of strategic assets diminishing the sovereignty of such countries.
 - Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka and a runway in the Maldives are examples of China financing projects of questionable commercial viability, resulting in unsustainable debt. In 2017, Sri Lanka handed over a majority stake and a 99-year operating lease to Chinese state-owned enterprises as it could not service the debt owed to China.

- China benefited after its **Open Door Policy** when U.S., European and Japanese companies opened their stores/centres in China, but it has not done the same in Pakistan under CPEC.
- Even though **China is not a member of the Paris Club**, it offers finances and loans to other countries.
- Such issues have raised doubts on the ulterior motive of China in the garb of BRI.

Open Door Policy

- It was a **trade agreement** between the United States, China, Japan and several European countries.
- It was issued in **1899-1900** and intended to protect the rights of all countries to trade equally with China and confirming multi-national acknowledgement of China's administrative and territorial sovereignty.

Paris Club

- It is an **informal group of official creditors** whose role is to find coordinated and sustainable solutions to the payment difficulties experienced by debtor countries.
 - It provides debt treatments to debtor countries in the form of rescheduling (postponement) or by concessional rescheduling (reduction in debt service obligations during a defined period).
- It was **founded in 1956** and has **22 members** currently.

China Pakistan Economic Corridor

- It is a **bilateral project** between Pakistan and China, intended to promote connectivity across Pakistan with a network of highways, railways, and pipelines accompanied by energy, industrial and other infrastructure development projects.
- CPEC links the Western part of China to the Gwadar Port in Balochistan, Pakistan running some 3000 km from Xinjiang to Balochistan via Khunjerab Pass in the Northern parts of Pakistan.

India's Stand

- India has objected to part of the corridor that runs through **Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK)** because it infringes Indian sovereignty.
- India is a **member of the Quad** (India, the U.S., Australia and Japan) which can provide real-



Note:

istic alternatives for countries looking for infrastructure and be an alternative to China.

Indian Diaspora Largest in the World: UN Report

Why in News

As per International Organisation for Migration's (IOM) latest report, 'Global Migration Report 2020', India continues to be the largest country of origin of international migrants with a **17.5 million-strong diaspora** across the world.

- India also received the highest remittance of \$78.6 billion from Indians living abroad.

Key Points

- **Migrants**
 - The total number of international migrants in 2019 is now estimated at 270 million.
 - This is a very small percentage of the world's population (at 3.5%), that is, the vast majority of people globally (96.5%) are estimated to be residing in the country in which they were born.
 - The top destination country remained the United States (50.7 million international migrants).
 - More than half of all international migrants (141 million) live in Europe and North America.
 - The top three countries of origin of international migrants – **India (17.5 million)** > Mexico (11.8 million) > China (10.7 million).
- **Remittances**
 - The international remittances increased to \$689 billion in 2018.
 - The top three remittance recipients were India (\$78.6 billion) > China (\$67.4 billion) > Mexico (\$35.7 billion).
 - The United States remained the top remittance-sending country (\$68 billion) followed by the United Arab Emirates (\$44.4 billion) and Saudi Arabia (\$36.1 billion).
- **Reasons for migration**
 - **Economic:** Apart from U.S., other important migration corridors from poorer countries to richer nations were France, Russia, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

- The Gulf countries have some of the largest numbers of temporary labour migrants in the world, including the United Arab Emirates, where they make up almost 90% of the population.
- **Conflicts and Violence:** Ongoing conflicts and violence in Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Myanmar, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen have led to massive internal displacement in the last two years. A total of 41.3 million people were forced to flee their homes at the end of 2018 — a record since monitoring began in 1998.
- Syria has the highest internal population of displaced people, at 6.1 million, followed by Colombia (5.8 million) and the Congo (3.1 million).
- **Climate and Weather:** Impact of climate and weather disasters, such as Typhoon Mangkhut in the Philippines contributed to 3.8 million displaced people, the largest number globally.

International Organisation for Migration

- IOM, or as it was first known, the Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movement of Migrants from Europe (PICMME), was born in 1951 out of the chaos and displacement of Western Europe following the Second World War.
- It is the leading inter-governmental organization, working under the mandate of the **United Nations**, in the field of migration and works closely with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners.
- With 173 member states, and further 8 states holding observer status, IOM is dedicated to promoting humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all. It does so by providing services and advice to governments and migrants.

Way Forward

- These data are critical for understanding the important role of migrants and migration in the development of both countries of origin and destination. Facilitating orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people will contribute much to achieving **Sustainable Development Goals**.

New START Treaty

The New START Treaty is a **treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation**

Note:

on measures for the further reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms.

- It entered into force on 5th February, 2011.
- It is a **successor to the START framework of 1991** (at the end of the Cold War) that limited both sides to 1,600 strategic delivery vehicles and 6,000 warheads.
- It continues the bipartisan process of verifiably reducing U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear arsenals by limiting both sides to 700 strategic launchers and 1,550 operational warheads.
- It will **lapse in February 2021** unless extended for a five-year period.

Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty

- INF Treaty is **another treaty that was signed during the Cold War**.
- It was a **nuclear arms-control accord** reached by the United States and the Soviet Union in 1987 in which the two nations agreed to eliminate their stocks of intermediate-range and shorter-range (or “medium-range”) land-based missiles (which could carry nuclear warheads).
- The **United States withdrew from the Treaty** on 2nd August 2019.

Note:

- The term ‘**strategic offensive arms**’ applies to nuclear warheads deployed by **Strategic Nuclear Delivery Vehicles (SNDVs)**.
- SNDVs are **Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs)** with a range exceeding 5,500 kilometres, strategic bombers, warships (including strategic submarines) and cruise missiles, including air and sea-launched cruise missiles.

World Anti-Doping Agency

Why in News

Recently, one of the **World Anti-Doping Agency’s (WADA)** panels has suggested banning Russia for four years from competing in international events, including the **Tokyo (2020 Summer) Olympics**.

World Anti-Doping Agency

- It was established in 1999 as an international independent agency composed and funded equally by the sport movement and governments of the world.

- Its foundation was initiated by the IOC to promote, coordinate and monitor the fight against drugs in sports.
- It is headquartered in Montreal, Canada.
- Its key activities include scientific research, education, development of anti-doping capacities, and monitoring of the World Anti-Doping Code (Code) – the document harmonizing anti-doping policies in all sports and all countries.
- Integrity, Accountability and Excellence are the core values of the agency.

International Olympic Committee

- It is a not-for-profit independent international organisation that is committed to building a better world through sport.
- It was created on 23rd June 1894 and is the supreme authority of the Olympic Movement.
- It ensures the regular celebration of the Olympic Games, supports all affiliated member organisations and strongly encourages, by appropriate means, the promotion of the Olympic values.

Kimberley Process

Why in News

The plenary meeting of the **Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS)** is being hosted by India from 18th to 22nd November 2019 in New Delhi.

Significance of KPCS

- India has been actively involved in the development of the **Kimberley Process (KP)** as an important protocol in trade of diamonds which has ensured that **99.8% of the diamonds in the world are conflict-free**.
 - The Kimberley Process (KP) is a **commitment to remove conflict diamonds** from the global supply chain.
 - Conflict Diamonds means **rough diamonds** used by rebel movements or their allies to finance conflict aimed at undermining legitimate governments.
- The importance of KPCS is immense to India as more **than one million people are directly employed** by the diamond industry.

Note:



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Kimberley Process Certification Scheme

- The KPCS came into effect from **1st January 2003** and evolved into an effective mechanism for stopping the **trade in conflict diamonds**.
- India is one of the founder members of the KPCS. India had earlier chaired KPCS in the year **2008**.
- The Kimberley Process is a **joint initiative** involving Government, International Diamond Industry and Civil Society to stem the flow of Conflict Diamonds.
- It is also described in **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** resolutions.
- At present, KPCS has **56 members** representing 82 countries including **EU with 28 members**.
- It is chaired on a **rotating basis** by participating countries.
- Since 2003, India has been actively participating in the KPCS process and is a member of almost all Working Groups of KP (except the Working Group on Artisanal and Alluvial Production (WGAAP)).
 - **Department of Commerce** is the **nodal Department**, and
 - Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) is designated as the KPCS Importing and Exporting Authority in India. GJEPC is responsible for issuing KP Certificates and is also the custodian of KP Certificates received in the country.

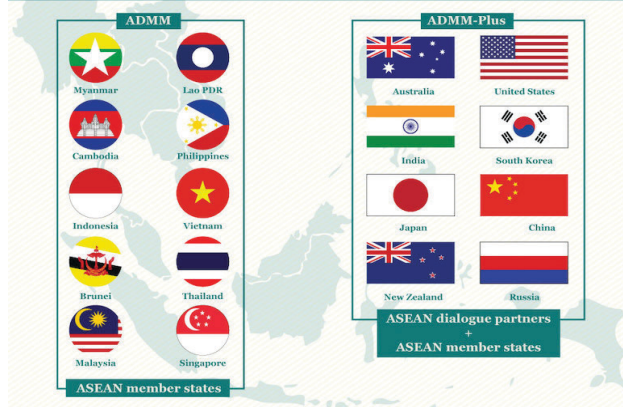
ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus

Why in News

The 6th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) is to be held in Bangkok on 20th Nov. 2019.

- The ADMM-Plus is a platform for **ASEAN (The Association of Southeast Asian Nations)** and it's **eight Dialogue Partners** to strengthen security and defence cooperation for peace, stability, and development in the region.
 - The ADMM-Plus countries include ten ASEAN Member State and eight Plus countries, namely Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, ROK, Russian Federation, and the United States.
- It aims to promote mutual trust and confidence between defence establishments through greater dialogue and transparency.

ADMM / ADMM-Plus



- The first ADMM-Plus was convened at Ha Noi, Vietnam in **2010**.
 - **2nd ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM)** in **2007 at Singapore** adopted a resolution to establish the ADMM-Plus
- The chairmanship of the ADMM-Plus **follows** the chairmanship of the ADMM.
 - **Currently**, the ADMM and ADMM Plus is **chaired by Thailand**.
- It has **five areas** of practical cooperation, namely maritime security, counter-terrorism, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, peacekeeping operations and military medicine.

West Bank Settlements

Why in News

The **United States** has declared that it **does not** consider **Israeli settlements on the West Bank a violation of international law**.

- The U.S.A.'s stand is different from that of most countries on the issue.
 - Even the USA considered the West Bank settlements as illegitimate since 1978. However in 2016, the US did not veto a resolution that called for an end to Israeli settlements.
- The current stand of the USA reverses four decades of U.S. policy.

West Bank Settlements

- West Bank (about one and a half times the size of Goa) is a landlocked territory in West Asia. It also contains a significant section of the western dead sea.

Note:



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- It was captured by Jordan after the **Arab-Israeli War (1948)** but Israel snatched it back during the Six-Day War of 1967 and has occupied it ever since.
- At present, there are around 130 formal Israeli settlements along with 26 lakh Palestinians at West Bank.



Global Stand over West Bank Settlements

- Majority of the countries' consider West Bank settlements illegal and an occupied territory.
- The **United Nations General Assembly**, the **UN Security Council**, and the **International Court of Justice** have declared that the West Bank settlements are violative of the Fourth Geneva Convention.
- Under the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949), an occupying power "shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies".

Way Forward

- Under the Oslo Accords of the 1990s, both Israel and the Palestinians agreed that the status of settlements would be decided by negotiations. But the negotiations process has been all but dead for several years now. Thus the world at large needs to come together for a peaceful solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Bougainville

Why in News

The people of **Bougainville** (a small South Pacific island) voted for a referendum to gain **independence from Papua New Guinea**. If the referendum is passed,

Bougainville would become the **world's newest and possibly the smallest independent country**.



Background

- Bougainville is currently a province of Papua New Guinea, one of the most populous Pacific island states. It forms the **part of the Solomon Islands archipelago**.
- In the late 1970s, a decentralized system of provincial government was introduced in Bougainville. The current autonomy arrangements were implemented following the constitutional enactment of the **Bougainville Peace Agreement**.
 - The Bougainville Peace Agreement, signed in **2001**, brought autonomy and an end to the violent conflict between the people of Bougainville and the government of Papua New Guinea.

Issues Leading to Referendum

- The dissatisfaction among Bougainvilleans over implementation of the agreed arrangements for Bougainville autonomy (2001) was the major bone of contention.
 - The **Autonomy Bougainville Government (ABG)** was legally entitled to the financial grants but the Papua New Guinea National Government did not provide them.
- Also, the **historic plunder of the resource-rich island** and the **unequal distribution of wealth** that followed was the major issue.
 - Bougainville has large deposits of **copper**.
 - The **Panguna mine** (also known as the **Bougainville Copper Mine**) holds some of the world's largest reserves of copper. It is the **world's largest open-cut copper mine**.
 - The export of copper extracted from the Panguna mine contributed significantly to Papua New Guinea's economy.
 - The mine also created job opportunities for people from Papua New Guinea and Australia,

Note:



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leading to conflicts with Bougainvilleans who reported cases of discrimination and racism at the hands of foreigner mine workers.

- Mining activities over the years also caused environmental degradation of Bougainville's lands and water.

U.S. Minimises its Share in NATO Budget

Why in News

The U.S. contribution to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's (NATO) operating budget has been cut down at the cost of an increase in Germany's payments to the alliance. This move comes after repeated criticism of European members of the organisation by the U.S.

- This will come into effect from 2021, wherein the U.S. and Germany will contribute equally to NATO budget.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

- It is a **military alliance established by the North Atlantic Treaty** (also called the Washington Treaty) of April 4, 1949, by the United States, Canada, and several Western European nations to provide collective security against the Soviet Union.
- It is **headquartered at Brussels, Belgium**.
- A key provision of the treaty, the so-called **Article 5**, states that if one member of the alliance is attacked in Europe or North America, it is to be considered an attack on all members. That effectively put Western Europe under the "nuclear umbrella" of the US.
 - NATO has **only once invoked Article 5**, on September 12, 2001, following the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center in the US.
- **NATO's protection does not extend to members' civil wars or internal coups.**
- As of 2019, there are 29 member states, with Montenegro becoming the latest member to join the alliance in 2017.



Note:

Science and Technology

Highlights

- Seismometers Defunct in Earthquake-Prone Zones
- Smog Tower Planned For Delhi
- Cartosat-3
- Space Internet
- Solar Eclipse

Seismometers Defunct in Earthquake-Prone Zones

Why in News

20 out of 35 seismometers and accelerographs in earthquake prone zones (Seismic zone III and IV) of **Maharashtra were found defuncting**.

- The seismometer is an instrument used to measure and record earthquakes, whereas accelerographs prints the intensity of earthquakes.
- The seismic zone III and zone IV fall under moderate and strong earthquake categories under Earthquake prone zones in India.

Seismic Waves

- Vibrations from an earthquake are categorised as P or S waves. They travel through the Earth in different ways and at different speeds. They can be detected and analysed.
 - **P-waves (P stands for primary)**
 - These are the first waves detected by seismograph.
 - These are longitudinal waves i.e. they vibrate along the same direction as it travels.
 - Other examples of longitudinal waves include sound waves and waves in a stretched spring.
 - **S-waves (S stands for secondary)**
 - These waves arrive at the detector after primary waves.
 - These are transverse waves i.e. they vibrate at a right angle to the direction in which they travel.
 - Other examples of transverse waves include light waves and water waves.

- Both types of seismic waves can be detected near the earthquake centre but only P-waves can be detected on the other side of the Earth.
 - P-waves can travel through solids and liquids (since they are longitudinal waves) whereas S-waves can only travel through solids (as they are transverse waves). This means the liquid part of the core blocks the passage of S-waves.
- The earthquake events are scaled either according to the magnitude or intensity of the shock.
 - The magnitude scale is known as the Richter scale. The magnitude relates to the energy released during the earthquake which is expressed in absolute numbers, 0-10.
 - The intensity scale or Mercalli scale takes into account the visible damage caused by the event. The range of intensity scale is from 1-12.

Earthquake Prone Zones in India

- **Earthquake** is the violent shaking of the ground due to the release of accumulated stress of the moving lithospheric or crustal plates.
- Over 59 % of India's land area is under threat of moderate to severe earthquakes.
- **Bureau of Indian Standards**, based on the past seismic history, divided the country into **four seismic zones, viz. Zone II, III, IV and V**.
 - The regions away from the Himalayas and other inter-plate boundaries were considered to be relatively safe from damaging earthquakes.
 - However, occurrence of the Killari earthquake in Maharashtra (1993) resulted in revision of the seismic zoning map in which the low hazard zone or **Seismic Zone I was merged with Seismic Zone II**. Thus Zone I does not appear in mapping.

Note:

- Zone V is the most seismically active region, while zone II is the least active region.

- The zones are divided on the basis of Modified Mercalli (MM) intensity, which measures the impact of earthquakes.
- The area covered under different seismic zones include,

- **Zone II:**

- It falls under low intensity zone.
- It covers 40.93% area of the country.
- It comprises of major parts of peninsular region and Karnataka Plateau.

- **Zone III:**

- It falls under moderate intensity zone.
- It covers 30.79% area of the country.
- It comprises of Kerala, Goa, Lakshadweep islands, remaining parts of Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and West Bengal, Parts of Punjab, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

- **Zone IV:**

- It falls under severe intensity zone.
- It covers 17.49% area of the country.
- It comprises of remaining parts of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi, Sikkim, Northern Parts of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, parts of Gujarat, small portions of Maharashtra near the west coast and Rajasthan.

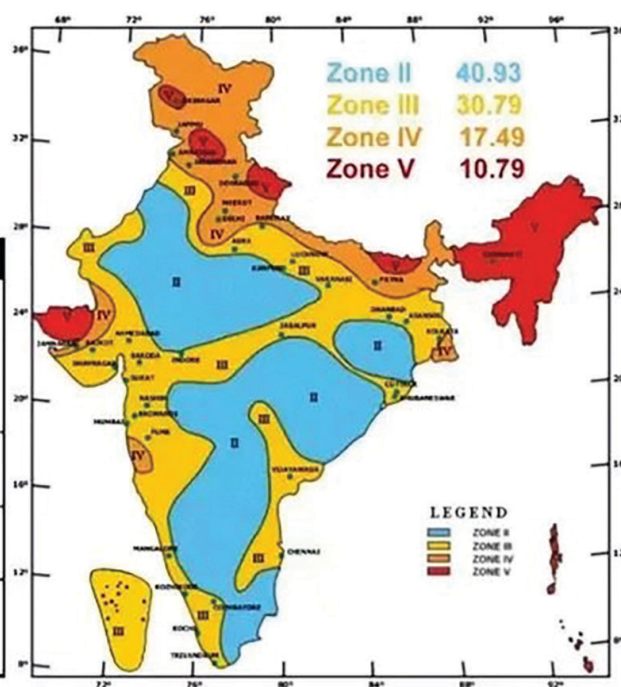
- **Zone V:**

- It falls under very severe intensity zone.
- It covers 10.79% area of the country.
- It comprises of the entire northeastern India, parts of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rann of Kutch in Gujarat, part of North Bihar and Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

Seismic Zone Map of India: -2002

About **59 percent** of the land area of India is liable to seismic hazard damage

Zone	Intensity
Zone V	Very High Risk Zone Area liable to shaking Intensity IX (and above)
Zone IV	High Risk Zone Intensity VIII
Zone III	Moderate Risk Zone Intensity VII
Zone II	Low Risk Zone VI (and lower)



Smog Tower Planned For Delhi

Why in News

A **smog tower** is being planned for the **National Capital Region (NCR)-Delhi** to create a clean air zone in the region.

- The smog tower is **one of the devices to control air pollution** in NCR-Delhi.
 - The other air purifying devices include **Wind Augmentation Purifying Unit (WAYU)** and **High-Efficiency Particulate Arrestance (HEPA)** filters.
- It is expected to **reduce Particulate Matter (PM) by 50%** in the area. It will majorly help to **reduce the severity of air pollution in NCR-Delhi**.
- The filters being installed would use carbon nanofibres as a major component.

Smog Tower

- Smog towers are structures designed to work as **large-scale air purifiers**.
- They are usually fitted with multiple layers of air filters, which clean the air pollutants as it passes through them.
- **China has the world's largest smog tower** and has reduced PM 2.5 by 19% in an area of around 6 sq km in the tower's vicinity.

Note:

- The term **Particulate Matter 2.5 (PM_{2.5})**, refers to tiny particles or droplets in the air that are two and one half microns or less in width. Particles in the PM_{2.5} size range are able to travel deeply into the respiratory tract, reaching the lungs. This can cause health effects such as throat and lung irritation, shortness of breath, etc.

Monitoring Aerosol Optical Depth

The imager payload onboard ISRO's weather satellites INSAT-3D & 3DR, is being used to monitor **Aerosol Optical Depth (AOD)**.

- AOD is an indicator of particles and smoke from biomass burning affecting visibility and increase of PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ concentration in the atmosphere.
- It has been found that AOD, PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ concentrations are higher over Indo-Gangetic Plain covering parts of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar during October and November.
 - A high concentration of these pollutants originates from parts of Punjab and Haryana during stubble burning.

Note:

- Aerosol Optical Depth is a measure of the extinction of the solar beam by dust and haze.
- Particles in the atmosphere (dust, smoke, pollution) can block sunlight by absorbing or by scattering light. AOD tells us how much direct sunlight is prevented from reaching the ground by these aerosol particles.

INSAT-3D & 3DR satellites

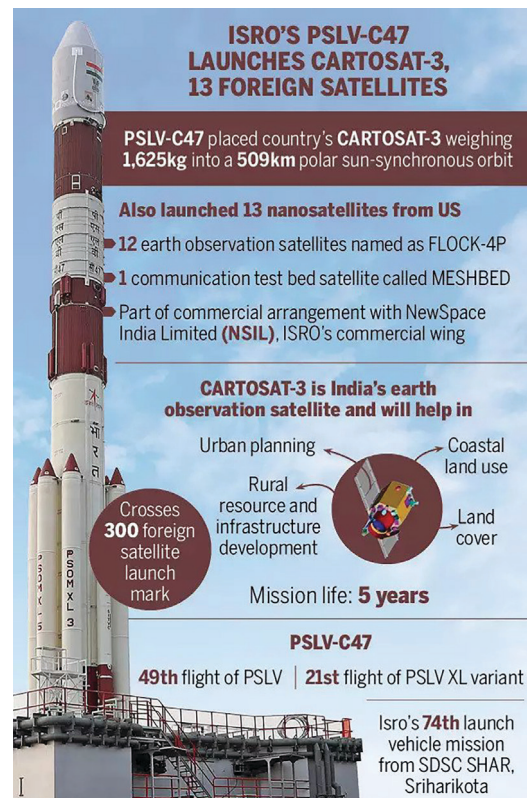
- India gets **weather updates every 15 minutes** through INSAT-3D & 3DR weather satellites.
- INSAT 3DR was launched in 2016 as a follow up on INSAT-3D which was launched in 2013.

Cartosat-3

Why in News

The **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** has launched **Cartosat-3** and **13 commercial nanosatellites** into **Sun Synchronous orbit** from **Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC), Sriharikota**.

- **Cartosat-3** is an **earth-observation remote sensing satellite** which **will replace Indian Remote Sensing (IRS) series**. So far, ISRO has orbited 8 Cartosats since 2005.



- **Remote sensing** is the science of obtaining information about objects or areas from a distance, typically from aircraft or satellites.
- The **13 commercial nanosatellites** are from the USA, which is the **first commercial order for New Space India Limited**, the commercial arm of ISRO which was formed in March 2019.
- **Sun Synchronous orbit** is a **special case of the polar orbit**. Like a polar orbit, the satellite travels from the north to the south poles as the Earth turns below it. In a sun-synchronous orbit, though, the satellite passes over the same part of the Earth at roughly the same local time each day.

Key Points

- Cartosat-3 was **carried by a Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle, PSLV-C47**. PSLV is an indigenously-developed expendable launch system of the ISRO.
- **Resolution**
 - It has the '**sharpest eye**' of **civil remote sensing satellites in the world**. One of Cartosat-3's cameras offers a **ground resolution of 25 cm** - it can pick up an object of a minimum of 25 cm size from a height of around 500 km.

Note:



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- **Weight:** At 1,625 kg, Cartosat-3 is unusually heavy and more than double the mass of the previous eight in its class.
- **Placement:** It has been placed at **97.5 degrees to the equator of the earth**.
- It has many new technologies such as a highly agile or flexible camera; high-speed data transmission, advanced computer system, etc.

Applications

- Data from most of the **Cartosat satellites** are **exclusively used by the armed forces**.
- However, an existing policy allows only government and government authorised agencies to access ISRO's high-resolution imageries below a resolution of 1 metre.
- Cartosat-3's optical imaging will also help to detect precise cartographic or mapping activities.
- The imageries are **also used for** urban and rural infrastructure planning, coastal land use and regulation, utility management such as monitoring road networks, water grids or distribution, creation of land use maps, disaster management, etc.

Cartosat Satellites

- The Cartosat satellites are **earth observation satellites**, used mainly for large-scale mapping of the Earth through high-resolution cameras.
- It also helps to detect changes in natural geographical or man-made features. As their cameras can 'look back and forth' in an angle to generate continuous spot images.
- The **Earth-observation satellites also include the Resourcesat and RISAT series, the Oceansat series.**

Space Internet

Why in News

Recently, the **world's leading private company** in space technology **SpaceX** has launched the **Starlink Network** in **Lower Earth Orbit (LEO)** aimed at providing **low-cost and reliable space-based internet services** to the world.

- Currently, fibre optic cables or wireless networks through mobile towers provide internet services.
- It can be noted that the **idea of space internet system is not new**. It is being used through Geostationary Satellite for selective users.

Starlinks

- **Starlink** is a SpaceX project **to build a broadband network** with a cluster of orbiting spacecraft that could eventually number thousands.
- The Starlink satellites carry Hall thrusters, which **use electricity and krypton gas to generate an impulse**, to manoeuvre in orbit, **maintain altitude** and guide the spacecraft back into the atmosphere at the end of their mission.
- The **Starlink network** is one of several ongoing efforts to start beaming **data signals** from space.

Space Internet with Geostationary Satellite

- Most of the existing **space-based Internet systems** use satellites in **geostationary orbit**.
 - Geostationary orbit is located at a **height of 35,786 km** over the Earth's surface, **directly above the Equator**.
 - Satellites in this orbit move at **speeds of about 11,000 km per hour**, and **complete one revolution of the Earth** at the same time that the earth **rotates once on its axis**.
 - To the observer on the ground, therefore, a satellite in a **geostationary orbit** appears stationary.
- **Advantages:**
 - **Coverage:** The signals from one geostationary satellite can cover roughly a third of the planet — and **three to four satellites** would be enough to cover the entire Earth.
 - **Easier Connectivity:** As satellites appear to be stationary, it is **easier to link** to them.
- **Disadvantages:**
 - **Latency Issues:** The transmission from a satellite in geostationary orbit has a latency of about 600 milliseconds. The geostationary satellites are located at higher altitudes compared to LEO, thus the longer the distance that needs to be covered results into greater latency.
 - The latency is the time lag between a user seeking data, and the server sending that data.

Space Internet with Low Earth Orbit

- The LEO extends **up to 2,000 km above the Earth's surface**.
- **Advantages:**

Note:



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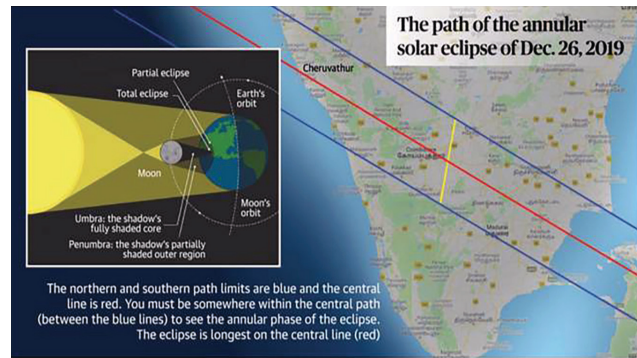
- **Reduced Latency:** The presence of satellite at a lower height from the Earth's surface, will help to bring the **lag down to 20-30 milliseconds**, roughly the time it takes for terrestrial systems to transfer data.
- **More Viable:** The signals from satellites in space can overcome obstacles faced by fibre-optic cables or wireless networks easily.
 - The traditional ways to deliver the internet – fibre-optic cables or wireless networks are not feasible in remote areas or places with difficult terrain.
 - Setting up cables or mobile towers in these areas is not viable.
- **Disadvantages:**
 - **Coverage:** Due to its **lower height**, its signals cover a **relatively small area**. As a result, many more satellites are needed in order to reach signals to every part of the planet.
 - The satellites in these orbits travel at more than double the speed of satellites in geostationary orbit to balance the effects of gravity. Thus, many more satellites are needed in the network to eliminate breaks in transmission of data.
 - **Space Debris:** It will generate more **space debris**.
 - **Difficulty in Space Studies:** The constellations of space internet satellites will make it difficult to observe other space objects, and to detect their signals.
 - **Light Pollution:** There will be an increased risk of light pollution.
 - Light reflected from the man-made satellites can interfere with — and be mistaken for — light coming from other space bodies.

Solar Eclipse

Why in News

Cheruvathur in Kasaragod district, Kerala is one of the three places in the world where the solar eclipse will be most clearly seen on December 26, 2019.

- It will be an **annular solar eclipse** in which the '**ring of fire**' — a characteristic of this kind of solar eclipse could be clearly observed.



Solar Eclipse

- A **solar eclipse** is a phenomenon that happens when the moon comes in the way of the sun's light. The moon's shadow casts itself on Earth, blocking out the sun's light (as seen from Earth).
- The moon's shadow has two parts: a central region (umbra) and an outer region (penumbra). Depending upon which part of the shadow passes over the Earth, one of three types of solar eclipses could be observed:
 - **Total Solar Eclipse** – The entire central portion of the sun is blocked out by the moon.
 - **Partial Solar Eclipse** – Only part of the sun's surface is blocked out.
 - **Annular Solar Eclipse** – The sun is covered in such a way that only a small ring-like sliver of light is seen from the sun's disc. This ring is known as the **ring of fire**.
 - An annular eclipse happens when the moon is farthest from Earth. As the moon is farther away from Earth, it seems smaller and is unable to block the entire view of the sun, because of which the **ring-like structure** could be observed.
- The total eclipse happens about every year and a half somewhere on Earth, while the partial eclipse happens at least twice a year somewhere on Earth.



Note:

Environment and Ecology

Highlights

- International Conference on "Landslides Risk Reduction and Resilience"
- Avian Botulism at Sambhar Lake
- Panna Tiger Reserve
- Atapaka Bird Sanctuary
- Dudhwa National Park
- Etalin Hydroelectric Project
- Living Root Bridges
- SAMEER App
- Assam Roofed Turtle
- Sumatran Rhino

International Conference on "Landslides Risk Reduction and Resilience"

Why in News

The National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) organized the 1st International Conference on "Landslides Risk Reduction and Resilience" on 28th November, 2019 in New Delhi.

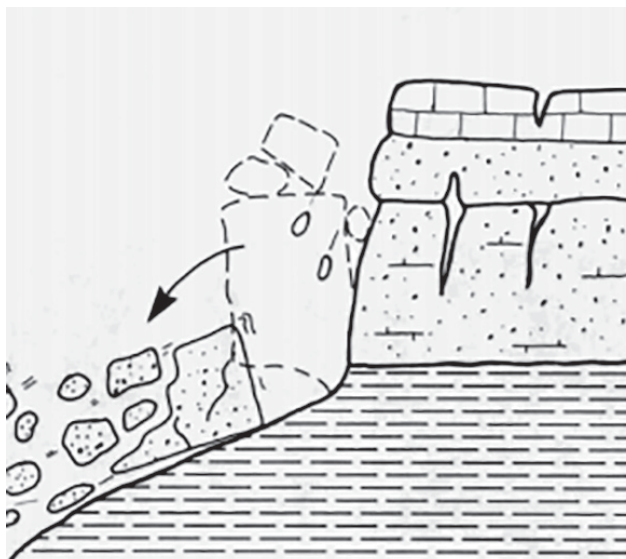
- The aim was to bring together all stakeholders including relevant ministries, universities, as well as experts to discuss/debate/disseminate practically useful knowledge, experiences, information and innovations for landslides risk reduction and resilience at national and international levels.

National Institute of Disaster Management

- NIDM comes under the Ministry of Home Affairs and is located in New Delhi.
- Under the Disaster Management Act 2005, NIDM has been assigned nodal responsibilities for human resource development, capacity building, training, research, documentation and policy advocacy in the field of disaster management.

Landslides

- A landslide is defined as the movement of a mass of rock, debris, or earth down a slope. Landslides are a type of "mass wasting (a geomorphic process)," which denotes any down-slope movement of soil and rock under the direct influence of gravity.



- Several things can trigger landslides, including the slow weathering of rocks as well as soil erosion, earthquakes and volcanic activity.
- **Loss Due To Landslides**
 - Based on Global Fatal Landslide database 2004-2016, globally in 4,862 distinct landslide events 55,997 fatalities were recorded (earthquake triggered landslide events were not taken in account in this study).
 - Continent-wise, Asia suffers the maximum damages / losses due to landslides.
 - Among the Asian countries, South Asian nations are the worst sufferers and India is one of the worst affected by landslides.
 - As landslides are frequent and widespread, the annual cumulative losses worldwide amount to

Note:

tens of billions of USD in terms of lost property, environmental damage, repair works, and the maintenance of defence measures.

- As per Geological Survey of India, the window of economic loss due to landslides may reach between 1-2% of the gross national product in many developing countries.

Avian Botulism at Sambhar Lake

Why in News

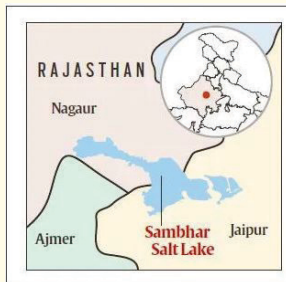
The Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), Uttar Pradesh has confirmed avian botulism as the reason for mass mortality of birds, at **Sambhar Lake, Rajasthan**.

Avian Botulism

- It is a **neuro-muscular illness** caused by **Botulinum (natural toxin)** that is produced by a **bacteria** called **Clostridium botulinum**.
- The bacteria is commonly found in the **soil, rivers, and seawater**. It **affects both humans and animals**.
- It affects the nervous system of birds, leading to paralysis in their legs and wings.
- The outbreaks of avian botulism tend to occur when average temperatures are above 21 degrees celsius and during droughts.
- The botulism outbreaks are likely to become more frequent as climate change alters wetland conditions to favour bacteria and pathogens.

Sambhar Lake

- It is **India's largest inland saltwater body** located near **Jaipur, Rajasthan**.
- The lake is surrounded on all sides by the Aravali hills.
- It is the source of most of Rajasthan's salt production.
- Sambhar has been designated as a **Ramsar site** because the wetland is a key wintering area for tens of thousands of **flamingos** and other **migratory birds** from northern Asia.



Mass Mortality at Sambhar Lake

- The **possible causes** for avian botulism at Sambhar lake are:
 - **Reduced water levels:** This might have increased salinity levels leading to the death of living organisms.
 - **A bird-to-bird cycle:** Since only insectivorous and omnivorous birds were affected and not herbivores, the birds feeding on dead birds could have been a possible cause of such mortality.

Steps Need to be Taken

- The establishment of rescue and medical centres along with the mitigation of climate change need to be considered by the government as a precautionary measure for the future.

Panna Tiger Reserve

Why in News

The tiger reintroduction project in Panna tiger reserve has completed a decade making it one of the best models of conservation in the world.

- The **Panna tiger reserve** is situated in the **Vindhya mountain range** in the northern part of **Madhya Pradesh**.
 - Madhya Pradesh has the highest number of tigers in the country.



Note:

- **Ken river** (a tributary of the Yamuna River) flows through the reserve.
- The region is also famous for Panna diamond mining.
- **Ken-Betwa river interlinking project** will be located within the tiger reserve.
 - The Ken-Betwa Link Project (KBLP) is a river interlinking project that aims to transfer surplus water from the Ken river in Madhya Pradesh (MP) to Betwa in Uttar Pradesh (UP) to irrigate the drought-prone Bundelkhand region spread across the districts of two states mainly Jhansi, Banda, Lalitpur and Mahoba districts of UP and Tikamgarh, Panna and Chhatarpur districts of MP.

Atapaka Bird Sanctuary

Why in News

The **Atapaka Bird Sanctuary at Kolleru Lake** has become a safe breeding ground for two migratory species namely, Grey Pelicans and Painted Storks.

- **Grey Pelican** and **Painted Stork** both are **near threatened species** under **IUCN Red List of Threatened Species**.

Kolleru Lake

- Kolleru lake is **located between the deltas of the Krishna and Godavari rivers** in **Andhra Pradesh**.
 - The lake serves as a **natural flood-balancing reservoir** for the two rivers.
- It is an important habitat for an estimated 20 million residents and migratory birds like Grey or Spot-billed pelicans.



- It was **notified as a Wildlife Sanctuary in 1999** under **India's Wild Life Protection Act, 1972**.
- It was declared a **wetland of international importance in 2002** under **Ramsar convention**.
 - The **Convention on Wetlands, called the Ramsar Convention**, is the intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.
 - **India has 27 Ramsar Sites** which are Wetlands of International importance.

Dudhwa National Park

Why in News

Recently, the elephant safari at Dudhwa National Park was banned, as most of the trained elephants have been deployed in patrolling duties.

Dudhwa Tiger Reserve

- The **Dudhwa Tiger Reserve** is a protected area in **Uttar Pradesh** located on the **India-Nepal border**.
 - It stretches mainly across the **Lakhimpur Kheri** and **Bahraich** districts.
- It comprises of:
 - Dudhwa National Park through which **Suheli and Mohana** streams flow,
 - **Kishanpur Wildlife Sanctuary** through which **Sharda River** flows, and
 - **Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary** through which **Geruwa River** flows.
 - All of these rivers are tributaries of the Ghagra River.
- The Dudhwa National Park has a number of species of birds, reptiles, wild elephants, aquatic animals, one-horned rhinos, wild elephants besides its enriched flora and fauna. Its undisturbed natural forest cover, vast spans of grasslands and wetlands.
 - It is the only place in U.P. where both **Tigers and Rhinos** can be spotted together.

Etalin Hydroelectric Project

Why in News

The Central Government has recommended a biodiversity study of the proposed **3,097 MW Etalin**

Note:

Hydroelectric Project in Arunachal Pradesh by a credible international institute since the current environmental impact assessment was found to be “completely inadequate”.

➤ **Location**

- The Project is based on the **river Dibang**. It is proposed to be completed in 7 years.
 - Dibang is a **tributary of the Brahmaputra river** which flows through the states of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam.
- It envisages construction of two dams over the **tributaries of Dibang: Dir and Tagon**.
- The Project **falls under the “richest bio-geographical province of the Himalayan zone”** and would be located at the junction of the Palaeartic, Indo-Chinese and Indo-Malayan bio-geographic regions.

➤ **Significance**

- The Project is in **accordance with the Government’s push to establish prior user rights on rivers** that originate in China and an effort to fast-track projects in the north-east.
- It is expected to be one of the biggest hydropower projects in India in terms of installed capacity.

➤ **Concerns**

- A total of 18 villages consisting of 285 families are expected to be affected by the proposed project.
- It would entail felling 2,80,677 trees and threatens the existence of globally-endangered mammal species.

Note:

- The **Biogeographic Zones** are the large distinctive units of similar ecology, biome representation, community and species, e.g., The Himalaya, The Western Ghats.
- **Palaeartic Zone** includes arctic and temperate Eurasia, and all islands surrounding the continent in the Arctic, in the sea of Japan, and the eastern half of the North Atlantic. It thus also includes the Macaronesian islands, Mediterranean North Africa and Arabia.
- **The Indo-Malayan Zone’s** natural boundaries contain tropical Asia from the Balochistan mountains of Pakistan eastward to the Indian subcontinent south of the Himalayan crest, including the tropical southern fringe of China with Taiwan, the whole of SouthEast Asia, and the Philippines.

Living Root Bridges

Living root bridges (also known as **Jing Kieng Jri**) are the **aerial bridges** that are **built by weaving and manipulating the roots** of the **Indian rubber tree**.

- A root bridge uses traditional tribal knowledge to train the roots of the Indian rubber tree to grow laterally across a stream bed resulting in a living bridge of roots.
- It spans between **15 and 250** feet and is built over centuries.
- They have been serving as connectors for generations in the Indian state of **Meghalaya**.
 - The bridges are primarily a **means to cross streams and rivers**. They have also become **world-famous tourist attractions**. The two most popular tourist spots are - **Riwai Root Bridge** and **Umshiang Double Decker Bridge**.
- They have **three main properties**:
 - They are elastic
 - The roots easily combine
 - The plants grow in rough and rocky soils

SAMEER App

It is one of the **air pollution mitigation measures** which provides hourly updates on the **National Air Quality Index (AQI)**.

- The app is developed by the **Central Pollution Control Bureau (CPCB)** which provides information on air quality for more than 100 cities across the country.
- The app represents the listed cities in a **colour-coded format** based on their AQI levels.
- The app can also be used to **file or track complaints** related to garbage dumping, road dust, vehicular emissions or other pollution issues in a particular area.

National Air Quality Index

- It is an **index for reporting daily air quality**.
- It focuses on health effects one might experience within a few hours or days after breathing polluted air.
- AQI is calculated for **eight major air pollutants**:
 - Ground-level ozone
 - PM10
 - PM2.5
 - Carbon monoxide

Note:



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- Sulfur dioxide
- Nitrogen dioxide
- Ammonia
- Lead

- **Ground-level ozone and airborne particles** are the two pollutants that pose the greatest threat to human health in India.

Assam Roofed Turtle

The **Assam Roofed Turtle (Pangshura sylhetensis)** is a small freshwater turtle.

- **Habitat:** Primarily in running waters in the hills of northeastern India and northeastern and southeastern Bangladesh.
- **Threatened by**
 - Logging of primary forests that causes siltation,
 - Capture for food and the pet trade, and
 - Incidental capture in fishing gear.
- **Protection Status**
 - IUCN: Endangered
 - CITES: Appendix II.
 - India's Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 : Protected under Schedule I.



Sumatran Rhino

Why in News

The **Sumatran rhinoceros** has become extinct in **Malaysia**, after the death of the last rhino in the country.

- Its scientific name is **Dicerorhinus sumatrensis** and is the **smallest of all rhino species**. These are the only Asian Rhino with two horns. Other species with two horns are Black Rhinos & White Rhinos both found in Africa.
- **IUCN Red List – Critically Endangered.**
- The **World Wildlife Forum (WWF)** estimates that there are only about 80 of them and are left mainly in Sumatra and Borneo in Indonesia.
- Black Rhino, White Rhino, Greater One-Horned Rhino, Javan Rhino and Sumatran Rhino are the **five different species of Rhino**.
 - The three species of Rhino in Asia — **Greater one-horned, Javan and Sumatran**. **Javan and Sumatran Rhino** are **critically endangered** and the **Greater one-horned (or Indian) rhino** is **vulnerable** in the IUCN Red List.
 - They are spread across India, Nepal, Bhutan, Indonesia and Malaysia. These countries are also known as **Asian Rhino Range Countries**.
 - Only the Great one-horned rhino is found in India.



Note:

Art & Culture

Highlights

- Maha Bodhi Temple Complex
- Ain-i-Akbari
- Rani Lakshmibai

Maha Bodhi Temple Complex

Bhutan's Foreign Minister recently visited **Maha Bodhi Temple in Bodh Gaya, Bihar**.



- The Maha Bodhi Temple Complex is **one of the four holy sites** related to the **life of the Lord Buddha**, and particularly to the **attainment of Enlightenment (Bodhi)**.
 - The other **three** are: **Lumbini (Birth)** in **Nepal**, **Sarnath (Dharma-Chakra-Pravartana - 1st Sermon)** and **Kushinagar (Mahaparinirvana- death)** in **Uttar Pradesh**.
- The **original structure** was built by the **Mauryan emperor Ashoka**. However, it was **reconstructed** entirely in brick in late **Gupta period**. The present temple dates from the **5th or 6th centuries**.
- The site of the Mahabodhi Temple provides exceptional records of the events associated with the **life of Buddha** and subsequent worship.
- A descendant of the Bodhi tree under which the Buddha is said to have sat until he attained enlightenment stands adjacent to the temple.
 - Ashoka's stone slab purporting to mark the exact position where the Buddha sat is traditionally called the Buddha's vajrasana (literally "diamond throne" or "thunder seat").
- It was recognized as a **UNESCO World Heritage site** in 2002.

World Heritage Site

- World Heritage site, any of various areas or objects inscribed on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage List.
- The sites are designated as having "**outstanding universal value**" under the Convention Concerning the Protection of the **World Cultural and Natural Heritage 1972**.
- It provides a framework for international cooperation in preserving and protecting cultural treasures and natural areas throughout the world.

Ain-i-Akbari

- Ain-i-Akbari is a **16th century** document.
- **Written by:** Akbar's court historian **Abu'l Fazl** in **Persian language**.
- Deals with: the **administration of Mughal Emperor Akbar**.
- Background: Beginning in **1589**, **Abu'l Fazl** worked on the '**Akbar Nama**' for **thirteen years**. The **Akbar Nama** is divided into **three** books:
 - The **first** book dealt with **Akbar's ancestors**.
 - The **second** recorded the **events of Akbar's reign**.
 - The **third** is the **Ain-i Akbari**. It deals with Akbar's administration, household, army, the revenues and geography of his empire. It provides rich details about the traditions and culture of the people living in India. It also got statistical details about crops, yields, prices, wages, and revenues.
- In the early twentieth century, the Akbar Nama was translated into **English by Henry Beveridge**.
- Other Literary Work during Akbar's Reign:

Note:



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Sr. No.	Book	Author
1	Muntakhab ul-Tawarikh (also known as Tarikh-i-Bidauni)	Abdul Qadir Badaoni
2	Tabakat-i-Akbari	Nizamuddin
3	Takmila-i-Akbarnama	Inayatulla
4	Sursagar (written in Brij Bhasha)	Sur Das
5	Ramcharitmanas (written in Awadhi- eastern hindi dialect)	Sant Tulsi Das

Rani Lakshmibai

The Prime Minister paid tributes to **Rani Lakshmibai** on her **191st birth anniversary**. She was one of the leading figures of the 1857 war of independence.

- She was born on **19th November 1828** in **Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh**.
- Rani Lakshmibai was one of the brave warriors of India's struggle for Independence. In 1853, when the Maharaja of Jhansi died, the East India Company took advantage of the situation and applied the **Doctrine of Lapse to annex Jhansi**.
- Lakshmibai fought bravely against the British and gave a tough fight to **Sir Hugh Rose** so as to save her empire

from annexation. She died fighting on the battlefield on June 17, 1858.

- When the **Indian National Army** started its first female unit (in 1943), it was named after the valiant queen of Jhansi.

Doctrine of Lapse

- It was an annexation policy followed widely by **Lord Dalhousie** when he was India's **Governor-General** from 1848 to 1856.
- According to this, any princely state that was under the direct or indirect control of the East India Company where the ruler did not have a legal male heir would be annexed by the company.
 - As per this, any adopted son of the Indian ruler could not be proclaimed as heir to the kingdom.
- By applying the doctrine of lapse, Dalhousie annexed the States of:
 - Satara (1848 A.D.),
 - Jaitpur, and Sambalpur (1849 A.D.),
 - Baghat (1850 A.D.),
 - Udaipur (1852 A.D.),
 - Jhansi (1853 A.D.), and
 - Nagpur (1854 A.D.)



Note:

Social Issues

Highlights

- International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women
- Child Abuse Prevention and Investigation Unit
- World Children's Day
- SAANS Campaign
- Bhopal Gas Tragedy

International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

Why in News

The **United Nations (UN)** observes **25th November** as the **International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women** every year.

- The official **theme** for 2019 is "**Orange the World: Generation Equality Stands Against Rape**".
- For 2020-2022, the **UN Secretary-General's UNiTE (to End Violence against Women campaign)** will specifically focus on the issue of rapes committed against women in times of peace or war.

Key Points

- **Global Scenario**
 - Every third of all women and girls experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime.
 - 1 in 2 women killed worldwide were killed by their partners or family in 2017; while only 1 out of 20 men were killed under similar circumstances.
 - Only 52% of married women freely make their own decisions about sexual relations, contraceptive use, and healthcare.
 - 71% of all human trafficking victims worldwide are women and girls in which 3 out of 4 women are sexually exploited.
- **National Scenario**
 - According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report, 3.59 lakh cases of crime against women were reported in the country in 2017.
 - Uttar Pradesh reported the highest number of

crimes against women whereas Madhya Pradesh registered the highest number of rape cases in the country.

- Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura - registered the lowest figures of crimes against women.

Global Conventions

- The **Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979** was adopted by the UN General Assembly to prevent violence against women and girls worldwide.
- The **Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women** was issued by the UN General Assembly in **1993**.
 - It defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in physical, sexual or psychological harm including threats of such acts, deprivation of liberty, etc. occurring in public or in private life."
- **Sustainable Development Goal - 5 (SDG-5)** targets for **gender equality** in the world by 2030.

Steps Taken by the Indian Government

- **Constitutional Safeguards**
 - **Fundamental Rights:** It guarantees all Indian women equality (Article 14), no discrimination by the State on the basis of gender (Article 15(1)) and special provisions to be made by the State in favour of women (Article 15(3)).
 - **Directive Principles of State Policies (DPSP):** It ensures equal pay for equal work (Article 39 (d)).
 - **Fundamental Duties:** Practices derogatory to the dignity of women are prohibited under Article 51 (A).

Note:



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➤ **Legal Provisions**

- **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005:** It provides victims of domestic violence with a means for practical remedy through prosecution.
- **The Dowry Prohibition Act 1961:** It prohibits the request, payment or acceptance of a dowry.
- **The sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and redressal) Act, 2013:** This legislative act seeks to protect women from sexual harassment at their place of work.

Child Abuse Prevention and Investigation Unit

Why in News

The **Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)** has set up an **Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (OCSAE)** Prevention/Investigation Unit at its **headquarter** in **New Delhi**.

- The unit will function under the **CBI's Special Crime Zone**.
- The unit's **territorial jurisdiction** would be throughout the country.

Functions of the Unit

- It will probe offences covered under various provisions of the **Indian Penal Code (IPC)**, the **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act** and the **Information Technology (IT) Act**, apart from other relevant laws.
- It will collect and disseminate information on **online child sexual abuse and exploitation**.

Background

- The incidence of online child sexual abuse and exploitation generally transcends international borders.
- Numerous references related to dissemination of **Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM)** have been received from the **Interpol** and other national/international organisations.

Central Bureau of Investigation

- CBI is the **premier investigating** police agency in India.
- It functions under the superintendence of the **Ministry of Personnel, Pension & Public Grievances**.

- However for investigations of offences under the **Prevention of Corruption Act**, its superintendence vests with the Central Vigilance Commission.
- It is the **nodal agency** in India which coordinates investigation on behalf of Interpol member countries.

International Criminal Police Organization

- The International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) is an intergovernmental organization that helps coordinate the police force of **194** member countries.
- Each of the member countries hosts an INTERPOL National Central Bureau (NCB). This connects their national law enforcement with other countries and with the General Secretariat.
- The General Secretariat provides a range of expertise and services to the member countries.
- It is **headquartered** in **Lyon, France**.

World Children's Day

Why in News

World Children's Day is celebrated on **20th Nov.** each year to promote international togetherness and awareness among children worldwide and improve children's welfare.

- 20th November is an important date as:
 - The **United Nations (UN) General Assembly** adopted the **Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1959**.
 - The UN General Assembly **adopted** the Convention on the Rights of the Child in **1989**.
- To commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the **United Nation Children's Fund (UNICEF)** undertook the 'Go Blue' campaign wherein landmark buildings around the world lit up blue on 20th November 2019 to show support for child rights.
 - Indian Parliament was also part of the same.

Initiatives Taken by India

- India celebrates **Children's Day on 14th November** every year.
- India **ratified** the Convention on the Rights of the Child in **1992**.
- The under-5 mortality rate has fallen significantly from the 1990 level of 117 per 1000 live births to 39 in 2016.
- The number of children having access to drinking water has increased from 62% in 1992 to 92% in 2019.

Note:

Convention on the Rights of the Child

- It is a treaty adopted by the **United Nations General Assembly** in **1989**.
 - Under the Convention, every human being under 18 years old is recognized as a child.
 - It sets out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of every child, regardless of their race, religion or abilities.
 - It includes rights such as Right to Education, Right to Rest and Leisure, Right to Protection from Mental or Physical Abuse including Rape and Sexual Exploitation.
 - It is the **world's most widely ratified** human rights treaty.
-
- The **National Policy for Children, 2013** was adopted to affirm the Government's commitment to a rights-based approach in addressing the continuing and emerging challenges in the situation of children.
 - **The Right to Education Act 2009**, has increased primary school attendance rates for girls from 61% to near-universal in the same period.
 - **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006** saw the prevalence of child marriage declining from 47% girls married before age 18 in 2005-2006, to 27% in 2015-2016.
 - With novel programmes and approaches like **Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao**, child friendly schools, child budgets and **POSHAN Abhiyan**, the States and the Union government are ensuring that children have adequate protection and opportunities for growth and development.

Steps Need to be Taken

- The Government needs to **focus on the nutrition of children** as presently 21% of children under age five years are wasted and 36% of children under age five years are underweight.
- The Government also needs to **ensure inclusive education** by placing special focus on securing education to the more vulnerable differently-abled children.

SAANS Campaign

Why in News

The **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** has launched a campaign in **Gujarat** named **Social Awareness and Action to Neutralise Pneumonia Successfully (SAANS)**.

- The aim is to **reduce child mortality** due to **pneumonia**, which contributes to around **15%** of deaths of children under the **age of five annually**.

Key Features

- It aims to protect children from pneumonia, and train health personnel and other stakeholders to provide prioritised treatment to control the disease.
- A child suffering from pneumonia will be treated with a pre-referral dose of antibiotic amoxicillin by **Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA)** workers.
- **Pulse Oximeter** (device to monitor oxygen saturation) will be used at the Health and Wellness Centre for identification of **low oxygen levels in the blood** of child and if required, the child can be treated by the use of oxygen cylinders.
- A mass awareness campaign will be launched about the effective solutions for pneumonia prevention like breastfeeding, age-appropriate complementary feeding and immunization etc.

Pneumonia

- Pneumonia is an infection that inflames the **air sacs (alveoli)** in one or both lungs. The air sacs may fill up with fluid or pus, causing symptoms such as a **cough, fever, chills and trouble breathing**.
- **Agents:** Many germs can cause pneumonia. The most common are **bacteria and viruses** in the air that humans breathe.
- It is **preventable** through **vaccination**.
- **Vulnerable Population:** Infants and young children, people older than age 65, and people with weak immune systems.
- **The prevalence rate among Infants in India:** Under-five mortality rate in the country is 37 per 1000 live births, of which 5.3 deaths are caused due to pneumonia.
- **Step Taken by India:**
 - The government aims to achieve a target of reducing pneumonia deaths among children to **less than three per 1,000 live births** by **2025**.
 - In 2014, India launched '**Integrated Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Pneumonia and Diarrhoea (IAPPD)**' to undertake collaborative efforts towards prevention of diarrhoea and Pneumonia related **under-five deaths**.

Note:



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Bhopal Gas Tragedy

Why in News

Recently, a research study on **congenital deformities** in children born to women exposed to the **1984 gas leak** in **Bhopal** was stopped from being published by an expert committee on the grounds of methodological flaws, poor design and inconclusive findings.

- The expert committee consisted of scientists from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi; the National Institute for Research in Environmental Health (NIREH), Bhopal; and the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR).

Key Points

- The study found out that babies born to women exposed to gas were significantly more likely to have “congenital malformations” than those born to women unexposed to gas.
- The findings came in response to a question under the Right To Information Act and were made public by an association of activists fighting for those affected by the leak.
- The **Supreme Court has admitted a curative petition**, which demands more compensation for those affected by the disaster. Data on congenital defects in children were important in bolstering the case for compensation.

Congenital Malformations

- These can be defined as **structural or functional anomalies** that occur during intrauterine (within the uterus) life and can be identified prenatally, at birth, or sometimes may only be detected later in infancy.
- These are also **known as birth defects**, congenital disorders or congenital anomalies.

Background

- Post-midnight on December 3, 1984, **Methyl Isocyanate (MIC)** (Chemical formula- CH_3NCO or $\text{C}_2\text{H}_3\text{NO}$) leaked from the pesticide plant of Union Carbide (now Dow Chemicals), an MNC, in Madhya Pradesh capital Bhopal.
 - It is estimated that about 40 tonnes of gas and other chemicals leaked from the Union Carbide factory.
 - **Methyl isocyanate is extremely toxic gas** and if its concentration in the air touches 21ppm (parts per million), it can cause death within minutes of inhaling the gas.
- It is one of the worst chemical disasters globally and still continues to have its ill effects on the people of the affected areas.
- After the tragedy, the government of India enacted a **Public Liability Insurance Act (1991)**, making it mandatory for industries to get insurance, the premium for this insurance would contribute to an Environment Relief Fund to provide compensation to victims of a Bhopal-like disaster.



Note:

Security

Highlights

- Defence Acquisition Council
- Defence Industrial Corridors
- MK-45 Naval Guns
- Exercise Mitra Shakti
- SURYA KIRAN - XIV
- Bilateral Maritime Exercise Za'ir-Al-Bahr

Defence Acquisition Council

Why in News

The **Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)** has approved the **procurement of weapons and equipment** worth **₹22,800 crore**.

- The **focus was on 'Make in India' initiative** i.e. on indigenous design, development and manufacturing of weapons and equipment.

Weapons and Equipment Approved

- **Thermal Imaging Night Sights for Assault Rifles:** These would enable troops to undertake long range accurate engagements in dark and all weather conditions thereby enhancing the night fighting capabilities.
- **Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft for the Indian Air Force (IAF).**
 - These platforms would provide **on-board command & control and 'early warning'** which would assist the Indian Air Force (IAF) in achieving effective air space dominance in the least possible time.
 - Induction of these aircraft will greatly enhance both the **Air defence and offensive capabilities** of the IAF.
 - The shortage of such force multipliers was felt during the aerial engagement with the Pakistan Air Force, a day after the **Balakot air strike** in February, 2019.
- **P8I long range patrol aircraft for the Indian Navy:** These aircraft would greatly strengthen the Navy's capabilities for maritime surveillance, Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) and Anti-Surface Vessel (ASV) strike. These would be procured from the United States.

Defence Acquisition Council

- The Defence Acquisition Council is the **highest decision-making body in the Defence Ministry** for deciding on new policies and capital acquisitions for the three services (Army, Navy and Air Force) and the Indian Coast Guard.
- The **Minister of Defence is the Chairman** of the Council.
- It was formed, after the **Group of Ministers recommendations on 'Reforming the National Security System'**, in 2001, **post Kargil War (1999)**.
- **Twin Engine Heavy Helicopters (TEHH) for the Indian Coast Guard:** These aircraft would enable the Coast Guard to undertake missions to prevent maritime terrorism, infiltration of terrorists by sea routes as well as search & rescue operations.

Defence Industrial Corridors

Why in News

The Government has set up defence industrial corridors in **Uttar Pradesh** and **Tamil Nadu**.

- These defence corridors will facilitate a well-planned and efficient industrial base that will lead to **increased defence production in the country**.
 - According to data released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), **India topped the list of arms importer** accounting for 13% of the trade in weapons platform between **2012-2018**.
- The corridors **overlap with existing defence public sector companies**, and aim to ensure connectivity among various defence industrial units.

Note:

Note

- Connecting Cities in **Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor (6)**: Lucknow, Kanpur, Agra, Aligarh, Chitrakoot and Jhansi.
- Connecting Cities in **Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor (5)**: Chennai, Hosur, Salem, Coimbatore and Tiruchirappalli.

MK-45 Naval Guns

Why in News

The United States of America has approved the sale of thirteen **MK-45 naval guns** and related equipment to India.

- The MK-45 (MOD 4) naval gun system will provide the capability to conduct **surface warfare and air defence missions** while enhancing interoperability with the US and other allied forces.
- It has a **range of more than 20 nautical miles or 36 km**.
- India has become one of the few countries that the US decided to sell the latest version (MOD 4) of its naval guns.
 - The other countries are **Australia, Japan, Thailand, and South Korea**.
- It can be noted that the **USA has recently signed a number of defence-related pacts with India, namely:**
 - **General Security Of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA)**
 - It allows militaries of both the countries to share the intelligence gathered by them.
 - **Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA)**
 - It allows both countries to have access to each other's designated military facilities for refuelling and replenishment.
 - **Communications and Information Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA)**
 - It aims to provide a legal framework for the transfer of highly sensitive communication security equipment from the US to India.
 - **Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA)**
 - BECA will allow India and US to share geospatial and satellite data with each other.

Exercise Mitra Shakti

Why in News

The **7th edition of India-Sri Lanka joint military training exercise Mitra Shakti – 2019** is scheduled to be conducted in **Pune** from **1st - 14th Dec. 2019**.



- The exercise aims to build and promote **positive relations between armies of India and Sri Lanka** for counter-insurgency & counter-terrorism operations in the urban and rural environment under **United Nations** mandate.
- The joint exercise also aims for **incorporating the current dynamics of United Nations peacekeeping operations** through practical & comprehensive discussions and tactical exercises.

SURYA KIRAN - XIV

Why in News

The joint military exercise 'SURYA KIRAN – XIV' between India and Nepal will be conducted in Nepal from **3rd - 16th Dec. 2019**.



- The exercise will comprise of 300 soldiers from both Indian and Nepal Army who would be sharing their experience in conduct of various counter insurgency and counter terrorism operations as also various humanitarian assistance missions by both the Armies.
- The exercise is an annual event which is conducted alternatively in Nepal and India.
- The **13th** (previous) edition of the exercise was conducted in Uttarakhand, India.

Note:

Bilateral Maritime Exercise Za'ir-Al-Bahr

Why in News

The bilateral maritime exercise **Za'ir-Al-Bahr (Roar of the Sea)** is conducted between **India and Qatar**.

- It majorly focuses on the fight against terrorism, maritime piracy, and maritime security.
- The participation of **INS Trikand** and **Patrol Aircraft P8-I** will be noteworthy during exercise.
 - The P8-I Maritime Patrol Aircraft incorporates the latest technology for maritime surveillance.



Note:

Miscellaneous

Highlights

- Jharkhand Foundation Day
- Sisseri River Bridge
- National Agrochemicals Congress
- Plastic Parks in India
- Persecution of Uighurs
- Willingdon Island
- Jayakwadi Dam
- Mhadei River
- Pavor-Uliya Island
- 8th International Conference on Agricultural Statistics (ICAS-VIII)
- Target Olympic Podium (TOP) Scheme
- Srisailem Dam
- Tear Gas
- Winter Grade Fuel in Ladakh
- Pink Ball Cricket
- Golden Rice
- Rohtang Tunnel

Jharkhand Foundation Day

On **November 15**, the **State of Jharkhand** celebrated its **foundation day**. The state was **carved out of Bihar** in **2000** after the Parliament passed the **Bihar Reorganization Act, 2000**.

- The day coincided with the **birth anniversary of tribal leader Birsa Munda** also known as **Bhagwan Birsa**.

Birsa Munda

- Born in **1875** in the **Munda tribe**. He is often referred to as '**Dharti Abba**' or the **Earth Father**.
- He led the rebellion that came to be known as **Ulgulan** (revolt) or the **Munda rebellion** against the British government-imposed feudal state system.
- He awakened the masses and sowed the seeds of revolt in them against the landlord as well as the Britishers.
 - He organized masses to stop paying debts/interest to moneylenders and taxes to the British. By this, he led a revolt to bring an end to Victorian rule and the establishment of Munda Rule in Jharkhand (erstwhile Bengal Presidency region).
- He formed two military units- one for military training and armed struggle, the other for propaganda. He combined religion with politics and traveled across villages giving discourses and building a politico-military organization.
- His struggle against the exploitation and discrimination against 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.

Sisseri River Bridge

Recently, the Defence Minister inaugurated the **Sisseri River Bridge** located at lower **Dibang Valley in Arunachal Pradesh**. The **200m** long bridge provides connectivity between **Dibang Valley and Siang**.

- The bridge was constructed by '**Project Brahmanak**' of **Border Roads Organisation (BRO)**.
 - There are four projects of BRO in Arunachal Pradesh namely **Vartak, Arunank, Brahmanak, and Udayak** to not only meet the strategic requirement of India but also contribute to the socio-economic development of the region.
- This bridge is strategically important from the military viewpoint and will be a part of **Trans Arunachal Highway**.
 - The Trans-Arunachal Highway was ₹10,000-crore two-lane highway project that aimed to connect **Tawang** in the west to **Kanubari** in the east of Arunachal Pradesh. It was conceived in **2008**.
- The Government has adopted the **Border Area Development Programme (BADP)** for infrastructural upgradation of the area, necessary for the security of the North-East and the entire country.

Border Area Development Programme

- BADP was started in the year **1986-87** for balanced development of border areas of states bordering

Note:

Pakistan, namely, **Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Gujarat, and Rajasthan**. It was subsequently extended to all the **land borders**.

- The programme is administered by the **Department of Border Management** of the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**.
- States are provided a **100% non-lapsable Special Central Assistance fund** under BADP to meet the special developmental needs and well being of the people living in remote and inaccessible areas situated near the international border.
- The programme was amended in **2015** to provide the provision for third party inspection and quality control mechanism under MHA for random inspections of the BADP schemes.

National Agrochemicals Congress

The first-ever **National Agrochemicals Congress** was held at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), New Delhi from 13th - 16th November 2019. It will be conducted **every three years**.

- The **theme** of the Congress is '**Country's Status on Various Fronts of Agrochemicals**'.
- Agrochemicals imply chemicals used in agriculture, such as a pesticide or fertilizer.
- The Congress was conducted in view of the role chemical pesticides still continue to play in pest management as more and more target-specific and environment-friendly products are being introduced.
- It was conducted by the **Society of Pesticide Science India, headquartered** at Division of Agricultural Chemicals, IARI, New Delhi.
- **Recommendations:**
 - Labelling of pesticide indicating the mode of action,
 - To rethink on restrictive banning of pesticides in view of risk-based considerations,
 - Policy regarding data protection of imported technical pesticides and
 - Policy for the introduction of safe nano-formulations and empowerment of farmers through training and extension.

Indian Agricultural Research Institute

- IARI is the leading institution for agricultural research, education and extension in the country.
- It comes under the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)**, an **autonomous** organisation under the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**.
 - The Council is the apex body for coordinating, guiding and managing research and education in agriculture including horticulture, fisheries and animal sciences in the entire country.

Plastic Parks in India

Why in News

Odisha has become the **first state** to start working on developing a '**Plastic Park**', located in **Jagatsinghpur district**.

Key Points

- India's **domestic production** meets **only 50%** of its demand for plastic, which is increasing with the growth of construction and infrastructure sector.
 - Many construction companies are using plastic materials. The components used include everything from plastic screws and hinges to bigger plastic parts that are used in decoration, electric wiring, flooring, wall covering, waterproofing and so on.
- To **reduce imports**, the **Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers (MoCF)**, had formulated a scheme for setting up of four **Plastic Parks in Assam (Tinsukia), Madhya Pradesh (Raisen), Odisha (Jagatsinghpur) and Tamil Nadu (Thiruvallur)**.
- **Two plastic parks** in the States of **Jharkhand (Deogarh)** and **Madhya Pradesh (Bilaua)** have also been given '**final approval**' in 2018-19.

Persecution of Uighurs

Why in News

- According to leaked Chinese government documents, there was a clampdown on **Uighurs and other Muslims in the country's western Xinjiang region**.
 - According to the United Nations experts and activists, at least 1 million **Uighurs and members of other largely Muslim minority groups** have been detained in camps in Xinjiang in a crackdown.

Note:



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- The documents reveal that the Chinese leadership's fears were heightened by terrorist attacks in other countries and the U.S. drawdown of troops from Afghanistan.
- Uighur is a predominantly **Turkic-speaking ethnic group**.
- They are primarily confined in China's northwestern region of Xinjiang and is one of the largest Muslim group in that region.

Willingdon Island

- Willingdon Island is a **seaport** located in the city of **Kochi, Kerala**.
- It is the **largest man-made/artificial island** of India and is surrounded by **backwaters** (a part of a river in which there is little or no current).
- It was carved out of **Vembanad Lake** and is connected via road and rail. The island is connected to the mainland by the **Venduruthy Bridge**.
- It is a major commercial centre and is home to the **Kochi Naval Base** of the Indian Navy, the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology and the Port of Kochi.
- It was named after the **Viceroy Lord Willingdon** and was created **artificially** in **1936** during his rule to improve the trade relations of British India with the rest of the world.

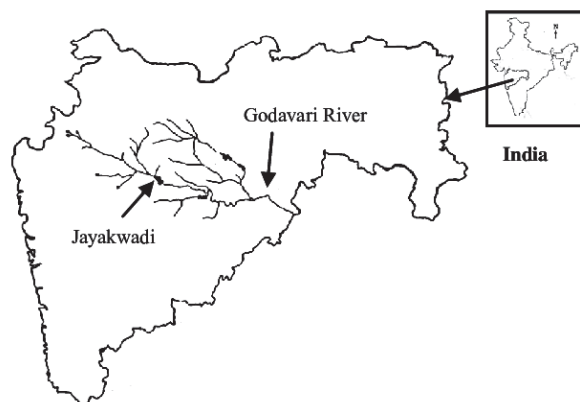
Lord Willingdon

- He served as the **22nd Viceroy and Governor-General** of India from 1931 to 1936.
- Important events of this period include:
 - Second (1931) and Third (1932) Round Table Conferences
 - Relaunching of Civil Disobedience Movement
 - Communal Award by Ramsay MacDonald (1932)
 - Poona Pact (1932)
 - Government of India Act 1935
 - Separation of Burma from India.

Jayakwadi Dam

Why in News

Recently, several instruments like **seismometer**, **piezometer**, **slope meter** stopped functioning properly at the Jayakwadi dam. The seismometer was installed at the Jayakwadi dam after the devastating earthquake in Latur district, Maharashtra in 1993.



- Jayakwadi Dam is located on the **Godavari river** in **Aurangabad** district of Maharashtra
 - The dam aims to address the dual problems of flooding along the banks during monsoon months, and that of drought during the rest of the year, particularly in the Marathwada region.
- The **seismometer** is an instrument used to measure and **record seismic waves**. Seismic waves study helps geologists to map the interior of the Earth, and measure and locate earthquakes and other ground motions like volcanic eruptions, explosions, etc. precisely.
- A **piezometer** is an instrument used for measuring the pressure of a liquid or gas or things related to pressure (such as the compressibility of liquid). It measures the strain of a liquid or fuel. They are often placed in boreholes to monitor the pressure or depth of groundwater.
- A slope meter is used to measure the angles of slope, elevation or despair of an object.

Mhadei River

Why in News

Goa and Karnataka have had long disputes over water sharing issues of the Mhadei river.

Note:



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- Mahadayi or Mhadei, the **west-flowing river** originates in **Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary (Western Ghats)**, Belagavi district of **Karnataka**.
- It is essentially a rain-fed river also called **Mandovi in Goa**.
- It is joined by a number of streams to form the Mandovi which is one of two major rivers (the other one is Zuari river) that flows through Goa.
- The river travels 35 km in **Karnataka**; 82 km in **Goa** before joining the **Arabian Sea**.

Kalasa-Banduri Nala Project

- It is undertaken by the **Government of Karnataka** to improve drinking water supply to the three districts of **Belagavi, Dharwad, and Gadag**.
- It involves building across **Kalasa and Banduri**, two tributaries of the Mahadayi river to divert water to the Malaprabha river.
 - **Malaprabha river** supplies the drinking water to Dharwad, Belgaum, and Gadag districts.
- Kalasa-Banduri project was planned in **1989**; Goa raised an objection to it.
 - The Mahadayi Water Disputes Tribunal was set up in 2010. Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra are parties to the tribunal.

Pavoor-Uliya Island

Pavoor-Uliya is an island in the **middle of the river Netravati**, about 10 km off Mangalore, Karnataka.

- The Netravati River has its origin in Chikkamagaluru district of Karnataka.
- It merges with the Kumaradhara River at Uppinangady before flowing to the Arabian Sea.
- This river is the main source of water to Bantwal and Mangalore.

8th International Conference on Agricultural Statistics (ICAS-VIII)

The **8th International Conference on Agricultural Statistics (ICAS-VIII)** is being held from 18th to 21st November 2019 in New Delhi.

- **Organised by:** Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare in collaboration with the Ministry of Statistics

and Programme Implementation, International Statistical Institute - Committee on Agricultural Statistics (ISI-CAS), Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and various other organizations.

- **Theme:** Statistics for Transformation of Agriculture to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals
- **ICAS**
 - ICAS is a series of conferences, sponsored by the **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), World Bank (WB)**, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and other international development agencies.
 - It was started in **1998** based on overarching need for agricultural data worldwide. It is conducted every three years and the last conference was held in **Rome** in **2016**.

Target Olympic Podium (TOP) Scheme

Target Olympic Podium (TOP) Scheme was formulated in **2014** under overall ambit of **National Sports Development Fund (NSDF)** with the aim to identify, groom and prepare potential medal prospects for the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

- **High priority category** has been created to put focus on those sports disciplines played in the Olympics in which India has won medals in the last conducted Asian Games as well as Commonwealth Games or in which India has a good chance of winning medals.
 - Presently, nine sports disciplines viz., (i) Athletics, (ii) Badminton (iii) Hockey (iv) Shooting (v) Tennis (vi) Weightlifting (vii) Wrestling, (viii) Archery and (ix) Boxing have been categorised as 'High Priority'.
- The National Sports Development Fund (NSDF) was established in November, 1998 under Charitable Endowments Act, 1890 with the aim of promotion of sports and games in the country.

Srisailem Dam

Why in News

- Several floods in the region have created a need for repair and maintenance of the Srisailem dam.

Note:



- The Srisailem dam is constructed across the Krishna River in Andhra Pradesh.
- It is located in the Nallamala hills.

Krishna River

- The Krishna River is the **second biggest river** in **peninsular India** after the **Godavari River**.
- It originates near **Mahabaleshwar (Satara)** in **Maharashtra**.
- It runs from four states **Maharashtra** (303 km), **North Karnataka** (480 km) and the rest of its 1300 km journey in **Telangana and Andhra Pradesh** before it empties into the **Bay of Bengal**.
- **Tributaries:** Tungabhadra, Mallaprabha, Koyna, Bhima, Ghataprabha, Yerala, Warna, Dindi, Musi and Dudhganga.
- **Pattiseema Lift Irrigation project** is the **first river-linking project** in India, connecting Godavari with Krishna through the Polavaram right canal. It will divert surplus Godavari water to Krishna river.

Tear Gas

Definition: Tear gas, also called **lacrimator**, is a group of substances that irritates the mucous membrane of the eyes. This causes a stinging sensation and tears. They may also irritate the upper respiratory tract, causing coughing, choking, and general debility (physical weakness).

- The effects of tear gases are temporary and reversible in most cases. Gas masks with activated charcoal filters provide good protection against them.

Substances Used: The substances most often used as tear gases are synthetic organic halogen compounds. They are not true gases under ordinary conditions but are liquids or solids that can be finely dispersed in the air through the use of sprays, fog generators, or grenades and shells.

Two Major Types:

- **1-chloroacetophenone (CN)** - is widely used in riot control which chiefly affects the eyes, and
- **O-chlorobenzylidene malononitrile (CS)** - is a stronger irritant that causes burning sensations in the respiratory tract and involuntary closing of the eyes.

Winter Grade Fuel in Ladakh

It was launched to address the problem of loss of fuel during extreme winter conditions.

- Motorists in high-altitude areas of Ladakh face the problem of **freezing of diesel** in their vehicles when winter temperatures drop to as low as **minus 30-degree celsius**.
- The special winter-grade diesel is **developed by the Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL)**.
 - It has a **pour point of minus 33-degree celsius** and does not lose its fluidity even in the region's extreme winter weather unlike normal grade diesel, which is difficult to use in sub-zero temperatures.
 - The **pour point** of a liquid is the **temperature below which the liquid loses its flow characteristics**.
 - It also **meets Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) specification of BS-VI grade**.

BS-VI

- **Bharat stage norms are emission control standards** put in place by the government to keep a check on air pollution based on the **European regulations (Euro norms)**.
- These standards **set limits** on the release of air pollutants from equipment using internal combustion engines, including vehicles.
- BS VI's key improvement in fuel quality over BS IV include:
 - **Lower Sulphur Content:** It has lowered sulphur content of **10 parts per million (ppm)**. Sulphur in fuel contributes to fine particulate matter emissions.
 - **Harmful Hydrocarbon:** It seeks to reduce the level of certain harmful hydrocarbons in the emissions that are produced due to incomplete combustion of fuel.

Note:

Pink Ball Cricket

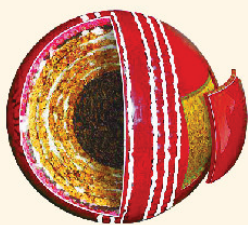
India recently played its first pink-ball, day-night Test match against Bangladesh at Eden Gardens (Kolkata).

- For this match the pink ball has been **manufactured by Sanspareil Greenlands (SG)**, a Meerut-based sports company.

Need for a Pink Ball

- **Visibility:** Pink was the consensus colour after ball makers tried optic yellow and bright orange, which were **easy to spot on the grass**.
 - The conventional red Test cricket ball is dipped in grease but this cannot be done with pink ball since grease would dull the fluorescent pink, affecting the visibility of the ball under lights.
 - The ball is sprayed with a thick coat of pink colour so that it sparkles for long, making visibility easier.
- **Manufacturing:** Like Red and White, Pink balls are also made of same core using similar production techniques.
 - The **colour of the dye, and the difference in 'finishing' decide** in which format a ball is used.
- **Slow Deterioration:** An advantage of using the Pink Ball is that they deteriorate slowly as compared to the White Balls (used in limited over matches) which makes them ideal for day-night Test matches.
- **India's Stand:** India had earlier refused to participate in the Pink-ball Test matches. India was the only major Test-playing nation to not have played a Day-night Test.

RED BALL VS PINK BALL

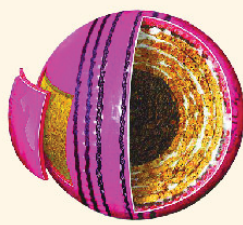


White seam, provides initial movement

Grease applied on the surface

The red ball has dyed leather. Bowlers get reverse swing later in the innings

Shine stays for **25-30** overs



More pronounced black seam, provides more bounce

Grease not applied on the surface

Extra coat of pigment and lacquer, as a result it will swing initially

Shine stays for more than **60** overs

- Saurabh Ganguly, now being the President of BCCI approved the first Pink-ball test which is being held in Eden Gardens, Kolkata.

Day-night Test

- A day-night Test match is played either totally, or partially under floodlights (artificial stadium lighting) in the evening or at night.

Golden Rice

Why in News

Bangladesh is to be the **first country** to approve **golden rice planting** in the country.

- Golden rice is a **genetically modified variety of rice**.
- It is developed by the **Philippines-based International Rice Research Institute (IRRI)**.
- This variety of rice is claimed to be able to **fight vitamin A deficiency**.
 - Vitamin A deficiency is the **leading cause of blindness** among children and **can also lead to death** due to infectious diseases such as **measles**.
- The **presence of beta-carotene pigment** is the reason for its golden colour.
 - The conventional rice is naturally low in the pigment beta-carotene.
 - The beta-carotene is used by the human body to make vitamin A.

Vitamin A Deficiency

- Vitamin A is a **fat-soluble vitamin** that maintains healthy vision, skin, bones and other tissues in the body.
- **Vitamin A Deficiency (VAD)** can lead to night blindness, a higher risk of the throat, chest, and abdomen infections, follicular hyperkeratosis (dry, bumpy skin), fertility issues and delayed growth in children, etc.

International Rice Research Institute

- It is an **independent, non-profit, research and educational institute**, founded in **1960** by the **Ford and Rockefeller Foundations** with support from the Philippine government.
- The institute, headquartered in **Los Baños, Philippines**, has offices in **17 rice-growing countries in Asia and Africa**.
- The **IRRI South Asia Regional Centre** is located at **Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh)**.

Note:



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Rohtang Tunnel

Why in News

The **world's longest tunnel (8.8km)** above 10,000 feet is under construction to connect villages in **Lahaul-Spiti (HP)** to the rest of the country even during winters.

- In winters, heavy snowfall in the Rohtang pass cuts off villages in Lahaul-Spiti From the rest of the country.

Rohtang Pass

- Rohtang Pass (elevation 3,978 m) is located in the state of **Himachal Pradesh**.
- It is present on the **Pir Panjal Range** of Himalayas.
- It **connects the Kullu Valley with Lahaul and Spiti Valleys of Himachal Pradesh**.
- The **Ravi river rises west of the Rohtang pass** in the Kullu hills of Himachal Pradesh.



Note:



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Summary

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Summary